

# ATTACHMENT A

# County of Santa Barbara Digital Archive Project

## Board of Supervisors Legislative Record, 1850-2000

### **Overview**

This project consisted of scanning, digitizing and permanent archival storage of approximately 2.7 million pages of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors' Legislative History. The records dated from November 18, 1850 to December 31, 2000. The project was divided into three phases related to the condition and type of the records. In Phase I we digitized 17 bound ledgers containing 7,000 pages of handwritten minutes dating from 1850 to 1907. In Phase II we digitized 110,000 pages of typed minutes dating from 1907 to 1977. In Phase III we digitized 2.5 million pages of microfilmed records dating from 1977 to 2000. All records since 2000 were already online.

As completed in April of 2016, the legislative record of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors from 1850 to present is available online for viewing and download, on the County webpage. In conjunction, to highlight the minute books and their importance to the history of our community, Clerk of the Board staff curated a three month exhibition at the Channing Peake Gallery in Santa Barbara showcasing the handwritten ledgers dating from the first meeting of the Board in 1850. The show included highlighted passages from the ledgers with corresponding historical photos, art and three dimensional objects.

### **Challenges and Objectives**

A primary objective was to increase government transparency through public access to this important record. Prior to this effort, access to this record was only through physical inspection at the County Administration Building in Santa Barbara.

Another primary objective was preservation of the historic ledgers. Although a majority of the handwritten ledgers are in remarkably good condition considering their age, limiting the amount of physical handling of the books is critical in extending the life of the documents.

In addition, the permanent archival storage of the minute books was another objective. Through our partnership with the University of California at Santa Barbara, the books are being moved to the Department of Special Collections at the UCSB Library where environmental conditions such as light, temperature and humidity are controlled to preserve books in good condition and to prevent any existing damage from becoming worse.

A final key objective was to reduce the number of hours spent by County staff fulfilling record search requests including Public Record Act Requests for documents that are now available online. These requests can be time consuming, divert staff from other duties and often involved the retrieval of fragile documents from offsite locations.

In addition to the benefits derived from the online public access to the archive and the long term preservation of the historic books, It's estimated that the project will pay for itself within a few years and continue to provide cost savings going forward.

## **Innovation and Originality**

As of April 2016, 2.7 million pages had been placed online for public inspection providing the opportunity for members of the public, historians, law offices, engineers, and others to search for and retrieve historic County documents in a cost effective and efficient manner.

Santa Barbara County is the only County in the state providing an online archive of the minutes of the Board of Supervisors from 1850 to present. All online documents from 1907 to present possess Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology providing full text search capability with key words and phrases.

These records are an amazing window into our past and help us understand where we came from and who we are today. As California became the 31<sup>st</sup> State in the Union on September 9, 1850, this historic thread began and continues to grow with each day. As one of California's original 27 Counties, we're excited to be able to provide these historic records online.

## **Collaboration**

Santa Barbara County was fortunate to partner with private individuals, academic institutions, and not for profit organizations. Partners included former Third District Supervisor Doreen Farr, the Special Collections and History Departments at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the Santa Barbara Historical Society Museum, Santa Barbara County Information Technology Division of the General Services Department and the Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture. In addition, the project received the generous support of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors.

## **Results**

The reaction to this project has far exceeded our expectations and highlights the demand for this type of County service. The entire archive went live online in April, 2016. Over the past 12 months we've achieved the following results:

Over 2,800 online users; Over 673,000 pages viewed; 502 Gigabytes downloaded (This is the equivalent of the entire archive from 1850 to 1977 downloaded 16 times)

The ability to search for and view these documents online has significantly reduced search requests in the Clerk of the Board Office, provides efficiencies in other County departments in reduced staff time by allowing staff to search for historical records at their desks, and for the first time, provides the public with the same access to historical records as County staff. In October of 2016, this project was the recipient of a California County Information Systems Directors Association Award. The awards are designed to recognize innovative IT initiatives in California Counties. The award was in the Business Process Re-Engineering and Automation category for Counties with a population under 700,000.

Thank you for considering this project for a 2017 CSAC Challenge Award in the Government Finance, Administration and Technology category for Suburban Counties.

## **Program Contact**

Michael Allen  
Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board  
Santa Barbara County Executive Office  
805-568-2245  
allen@co.santa-barbara.ca.us