

## CTG AWARDED GRANT

### Gateways to the Past, Present, and Future: Practical Guidelines to Secondary Uses of Electronic Records

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Every year New Yorkers claim that this year is the worst winter ever. Snow and ice storms get bigger, longer, and more treacherous. How can anyone tell when the biggest snow fall occurred or when hail was the largest? A record is kept of every snowfall for every day for every year. The recordings are used when meteorologists analyze current and previous snowstorms and for the Farmer's Almanac, which predicts each year's winter forecast. All bits of weather information are electronically recorded for forecasting and historical purposes, although they are not often used by anyone other than weather specialists. There are a number of other uses for the information which rarely ever come to fruition because of accessibility issues. The Center for Technology in Government in partnership with the State Archives is pursuing a project, thanks to a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, that will open gateways to secondary uses of these and other electronic records.

Awarded over \$350,000 from the **National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC)**, CTG will research a multitude of secondary uses for archived electronic records. Over the two year project, **CTG** and the **New York State Archives** will expand their existing partnership to develop a set of practical guidelines to support and promote secondary uses of electronic records. Through a combination of best practices and project-based research, the project will address recordkeeping requirements in the context of the broad spectrum of historical and other secondary uses. The project is designed to produce robust records management processes and models to ensure that the data maintained by government agencies will be available and useable for the widest variety of contemporary and future public needs.

While the primary use of records in government is to support and document specific business processes, responsible records managers must also ensure that these records are available for other important uses: to support business processes in other agencies; to give the public access to needed information; to support the scientific analyses that are used to evaluate programs, inform policy-making, or plan facilities; and, finally, to serve as a legal and historical record of government decisions and operations. From creation to the historical archive, these uses can be facilitated by technologies such as the Internet that make it easy to share information, and data warehousing and data mining, whose timely syntheses of process data can translate traditional historical analysis into a strategically useful day-to-day planning tool. The historical record is essential to these secondary uses, the totality of which often rivals in importance and impact the primary business use of the information.

The project will address critical electronic records research issues. It will explore methods for ensuring long-term access to electronic records of outstanding social, cultural, and informational value for secondary research. It will investigate the use of innovative and emerging technologies for accomplishing this goal. The project will directly address the cost and benefits of preserving and making available electronic records of social and cultural significance. The project will also explore the use of innovative resource-sharing approaches and emerging technologies to reduce the cost of preservation, access, and use. Most importantly, this project will conduct applied research that will yield practical tools with wide applicability across both public and private sector organizations. It will involve a critical partnership between records creators, a leading archival institution, and an award winning research institute known for applying academic knowledge to practical problems and generating implementable solutions.

## **Project Goals**

The "***Gateways to the Past, Present, and Future: Practical Guidelines to Secondary Uses of Electronic Records***" project will produce the following deliverables:

- a best practices report on public sector efforts including policies, management strategies, technology tools, and resource sharing models to support and promote secondary uses of electronic records;
- a research report on incentives and barriers associated with supporting and promoting secondary use of electronic records;
- a research report on incentives and barriers associated with supporting and promoting secondary use of electronic records;
- a cost-benefit framework for assessing the value of alternative models of maintenance and access for secondary uses; and
- practical guidelines and strategies for building maintenance, preservation, and access for secondary uses into both the design of new systems and the functionality of operational ones.

For more information about the project, visit the Web site at **<http://www.ctg.albany.edu/projects/gateways/gatewaysmn.html>** or call the Center for Technology in Government at 518-442-3892.