



Society Strategies

Federation of Genealogical Societies

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Set I Strategies for Societies

Creating Society Archives

by Art Rubeck

Supplemental Page

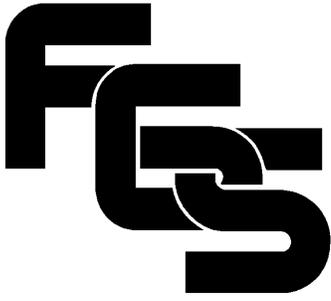
This strategy paper, written some years ago, is an FGS *Classic* that contains ideas and strategies still relevant today in society management.

This paper offers thought-provoking ideas about the considerations of having an official society archives location for the society's historic records, and the bylaws provisions that will direct the implementation of the endeavor.

The information on page 4 which directs the interested person on how to obtain copies of this paper is incorrect. The FGS office no longer reprints the SSS papers, and has phased out paper copies of the SSS papers altogether.

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Set I Strategies for Societies Creating Society Archives

by Art Rubeck

INTRODUCTION

A major push of the Federation these days is records preservation and access. While most activities are aimed at public vital records, we are all aware of the importance, usefulness, and appeal of private, non-vital records.

Whether we are fleshing out the lives of those we know about, or trying to find friends and associates of a problem ancestor with the hope of discovering clues, we need to have available to us the many records that show bygone activities and interests. Newspapers help as do military and religious records. But the records of local groups, including genealogical societies, can also be significant, if those records exist.

What will future researchers find about your organization? Are your records being preserved? Are you doing for others as you have wished others had done for you?

PRACTICE WHAT WE PREACH

For us to preach the doctrine of creating, saving, preserving, cataloging, and making available the kinds of documents that genealogists crave, we must first set the example. We must practice what we preach. This may sound easy in theory. But how do we practice this?

The answer is not difficult. It is possible to force the issue by adding a section to your society's bylaws or standing rules concerning records management. Specify what records your society shall create, who creates them, where they are stored temporarily, and, finally, which archives is the final recipient.

The Bylaws of the Dallas Genealogical Society (Texas), include such a section. The version in effect as of spring 1999, is reprinted with permission on page 2.

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DALLAS GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Dallas, Texas

Bylaws and Standing Rules:

Article XI - Records of the Society

Section 1. Society Records

All records of the Society, printed or electronically generated, prepared by a member or nonmember in pursuance of activities, projects, or as a part of their job in the Society shall be the property of the Society. These records shall include, but are not limited to, the newsletters, quarterlies, publications, syllabi, membership and other lists, documents, research records, and other Society materials.

Section 2. Society Archives

The Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division of the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library in Dallas, Texas, or its legal successor shall be the repository for the archival collection of the Society. This collection shall contain the bound minutes of the meetings, a printed copy of the yearly official membership list, and any other material the president or the board of directors shall decide to place in the archive collection.

Section 3. Society Minutes

Society minutes attachments, reports, and newsletters shall be bound each year by the president and placed in the archives of the Society.

Section 4. Placement of Records

Each year the president of the Society shall place at least one (1) copy of Society records, other than the bound Society minutes, in the Society archives or the genealogy section of the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library. A listing of the records and their placement shall be bound with the Society minutes and placed in the recording secretary's notebook. The secretary shall place a copy of the official membership list in the Society archives by January of each year.

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PROCEDURE

The procedure is simple. At the end of each society year, the outgoing president collects the minutes and other documents and takes them to Dallas County Archives, where they are placed in permanent storage.

Newsletters and journals are kept in the Dallas Public Library's Genealogy section. Does your organization do this? If not, now is the time to act.

TAKE ACTION

While this example may not fit your specific requirements, the general outline should be followed and adapted to your needs. The main points to specify in your bylaws are:

- What permanent records should your society create
- Who creates them
- Who distributes and stores them while they are active
- Who prepares and delivers them for archival storage
- Where are they stored permanently

The amount of detail to include in your bylaws varies with each organization. Some organizations want to be quite specific. Others prefer to put details elsewhere to avoid frequent bylaw changes. The types of permanent records to be created, for example, might go into Standing Rules or a Policy and Procedures Manual.

You may want to add other requirements, such

as who approves the records, when certain actions are to be accomplished, and who should police this to assure nothing drops through a crack.

SUPERVISION

Is a "policeman" necessary? Absolutely. Because of the seemingly non-urgent demand for this kind of activity, it tends to be "set aside for later." Having the activity monitored or supervised acts as a motivator to get it completed.

In addition to satisfying the need for creating and preserving the records which future genealogists and historians crave, two side benefits may result from this: member awareness and archive creation.

MEMBER AWARENESS

Promoting records preservation and access is one thing; being directly involved, at a local level, is another concept altogether. Bringing this issue out in the open, asking your leaders to obey your requirements, and eventually making this activity a way of life for your society will instill in each member the importance of archival storage.

Some may take this important step to other groups they are involved in, once the need is acknowledged and the solution accepted. You may find a champion or two who gets the archival ball rolling in other public and private arenas. Awareness creates involvement, which leads to action.

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ARCHIVE CREATION

The second benefit of adding a records management section to your society bylaws will only involve those who lack a local archival repository. Records cannot be stored if there is no place to store them. While many—hopefully most—societies exist in areas that have an active archival facility, those who do not face a real challenge; to create one.

Perhaps this will not affect any reader, but if it does, your task becomes larger and, of course, beyond the scope of this article. Any repository must be readily accessible if it is to be of value to genealogists, whether it is at the state, county, or local level. Local is better for society records because you know your job.

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

If your society does not have a section in your bylaws or standing rules requiring records maintenance, now is the time for change. Only then we can convincingly sing the praises of records preservation and access.

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