

## **Project Summary**

### **1. Purpose and Goals of Project**

Over the past five years, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania have worked diligently to address the challenges posed by electronic mail. Each state has worked with a variety of groups to establish best practices and to develop guidelines. Additionally, they have reached out to different constituencies to reinforce the need for ongoing efforts to manage and preserve electronic mail. However, they have used different software clients to manage e-mail in the absence of a federally compliant DoD/NARA 5015.2 system.

In 2004-2005, a NHPRC fellowship awarded to Druscilla Simpson of the North Carolina State Archives provided the genesis for an electronic mail preservation solution. Fellowship funds were used to develop a software application to capture electronic mail and transform it from its native format into an XML "preservation copy," and to push the XML out to HTML for access and viewing purposes. The software is built on hMailServer, an open- source, free software registered on SourceForge. It supports open e-mail standards POP3, SMTP, and IMAP4 and supports both MySQL and Microsoft SQL Server.

The North Carolina State Archives, the Kentucky State Library and Archives, and the Pennsylvania State Archives propose to work in collaboration to test the e-mail preservation software in real time on a larger scale. For this grant, we want to work with identified high level offices that produce archival correspondence and have high public interest within each participating state. One possibility is the Office of the Governor within each state. Additionally, we propose to do a select number of test cases within our own departments. This partnership involves working with content producers, information technology support staff, records analysts, and employees in the agencies.

There are four main goals of the project:

1. Continue the development of the e-mail preservation software to convert attachments from their native formats into the more stable XML format and complete written documentation for the program.
2. Test the software to determine its scalability, efficiency, and employee compliance, using records retention schedules.
3. Produce different types of training methodologies, including web-based training, implementing work under development by Pennsylvania.
4. Test ways of providing access to these XML files and the feasibility of doing so, whether through existing online catalogs, a third party vendor, or web interfaces.

### **2. Significance and Relationship to NHPRC Goals and Objectives**

NHPRC supports projects to research and develop means to preserve authentic electronic records, assist archivists through a network of state partners, and improve professional education for archivists and historical documentary editors. This project speaks to those goals by automating a process of capturing and normalizing e-mail file formats into a more stable XML file, the preferred format for information of enduring value. Through this proposed partnership, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania can test the robustness and feasibility of the system in a variety of settings. Additionally, we can use this opportunity to educate employees about records management practices, so that pertinent information contained in e-mail does survive.

This grant will give the staff in each state the opportunity to improve its archival knowledge and test what needs to be adjusted to fit new technologies and methodologies. We can build upon existing relationships within our state agencies and between sister states to promote the NHPRC's goals of preserving and making accessible records and archives.

Perhaps most importantly, this will offer a low cost solution, complete with documentation and training materials, to archives or memory institutions which struggle with the documentation of American history in the digital era. For institutions with limited funding, the open-source software would give them a tool to capture important records.

### **3. Plan of Work for Grant period (including references to techniques)**

Project staff will consist of one information technology professional, based in North Carolina and funded through the grant, who will work to enhance the functionality of the software to handle attachments, finalize the software, write documentation for the software, and assist project managers in implementing solutions. Each state will have a project manager, funded by the respective state, and/or additional staff who will coordinate efforts to create training materials, conduct training, and evaluate the software and training materials.

Each institution will establish an e-mail archive (using hMailServer) that contains state government e-mail records and will work to establish a seamless process by which agencies can file permanent records and transfer them from their e-mail server to the archive server. Prior to installing the program within high-level state offices, project staff will work as beta testers for the software. This will allow the staff to become familiar with the software, test for any outstanding issues, and develop staff skill sets. Work on training materials and documentation will also begin.

Within each state, project staff will finalize Memoranda of Understanding with the government offices and technical support staff with whom they will be working. The application will then be installed at the appropriate locations (individual desktops of top administrators or the office's e-mail server, depending upon the environment of each participating office). Preliminary training will be provided. Once the e-mail preservation application is deployed, project staff will meet regularly with the testing agencies to get feedback on both the system and the training. This feedback will be shared regularly with other partners through scheduled conference calls. A final meeting is planned to evaluate final results and determine how to disseminate what the staff has learned through this project.

### **4. Products and Publications to Be Completed During Grant Period**

At the end of the grant period, North Carolina, Kentucky and Pennsylvania propose to have three major deliverables:

1. A tested program for e-mail preservation, based on the hMailServer, that handles the text portion of messages and attachments.
2. Documentation for the e-mail preservation program.
3. Training materials, including a web-based component, for use by other institutions.
4. Published articles in leading archival professional journals, as well as presentation opportunities at a minimum of at least one professional conference.

### **5. Key Personnel**

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