



Tennessee Archives Management Advisory

1999

DEVELOPING MISSION STATEMENTS AND COLLECTING POLICIES FOR LOCAL ARCHIVES

The Tennessee State Library and Archives local government archives development program aims to encourage the establishment and continuous effectiveness of:

- **public records commissions** to guide records appraisal and disposition and to oversee the management of records and archives in every county of Tennessee and in such incorporated cities and towns as need them; and
- **local archives** for the custody, preservation, arrangement, description, and public use of permanently valuable records of the local government.

Each public records commission and each archives should have a mission statement to guide its work. A **mission statement** identifies the institution and states its purpose and functions. The mission statements should be approved and endorsed by resolution or ordinance of the local government.

Each archives should also have a collecting policy that is endorsed by the public records commission and the local governing body. A **collecting policy** identifies the scope and content of material that an archives feels justified in collecting by virtue of its mission.

Sample mission statements for a public records commission and for the government archives of a county or for an incorporated city or town in Tennessee are given below. A sample collecting policy for the government archives of a county or for an incorporated city or town in Tennessee is also given below.

The samples are not rigid. Some adjustment may be made to suit local conditions. However, the general nature and spirit of the two samples should guide the framing of mission statements and collecting policies for local government archives.

Mission Statements

Public Records Commission

In accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 10-7-401, the public records commission of [county/city name] is established by the [county/city name] board of commissioners [council], and its members are appointed in accordance with the same provision by the county mayor. The mission of the public records commission is to

- review and to revise, approve, or disapprove requests for records retention or disposal according to published guidance for local government records by the County Technical Assistance Service [*Municipal Technical Advisory Service*] by issuing records disposition authorizations (RDAs);
- oversee the county [city] records management system and advise the county mayor and commission [council] on ways and means to improve records management services to the county [city] government and citizens;
- review and approve the collecting policy, access policy, and activities of the county [city] archives and to oversee the county [city] archives management system;
- advise the county mayor and commission [council] on ways and means to improve archives management services to the county [city] government and citizens;
- establish and promulgate rules and regulations for the management of county public records; and,
- report to the county executive [mayor] and commission [council] on the state of records management and archives management.

County [City] Archives

In accordance with various provisions of the Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) that require permanent retention of essential records and other records of archival value for public reference, the archives of [*name of county*] is established by the [*name of county/city*] board of commissioners [*council*], and the county archivist has been appointed as director of the archives by the county mayor. The mission of the archives is to

- receive and accession transfers of permanently-valuable local government records, to preserve, arrange, and describe the records, and to make them available to the public according to sound archives management principles and practices; and
- collect and accept donations of other historically-valuable documents according to an approved collecting policy, and to accession them, to preserve, arrange, and describe them, and to make them available to the public according to sound archives management principles and practices; and,
- report periodically to the county mayor and public records commission on the state of the archives and its management.

Archives Collecting Policy

1. The [county/city] archives works closely with the public records commission and with the records officers of [county/city] agencies to receive and accept into the archives inactive records that have been declared by the public records commission to have permanent reference value in the public interest, and to complete such transfers in a timely way so as to relieve operating offices of the obligation and burden of maintaining and managing inactive records.
2. At the specific direction of the public records commission, the archives accepts additional historically-valuable government records, including those that may have been approved for disposal according to prevailing guidance.
3. With the approval of the public records commission, and upon clear demonstration of the capacity to care for them properly, the archives may seek and accept donations of other historically-valuable documents from other sources that complement the local government archives.

NOTE: The opening to broader collecting found in provision number three, above, may be further defined and limited to specific classes and sources of material and may be modified to include cooperative arrangements with a local public library, historical society, genealogical society, college, or other educational institution. The modification should include reflections of agreements among these institutions to defer to each other respecting various classes of materials (e.g., an agreement that the local public library shall collect and be the depository for back issues and microfilm of local newspaper, in which case the archives will not collect the same material).