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*Collin County
District Clerk*



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Preservation, Restoration and Records Archive Plan

Fiscal Year 2015

COLLIN COUNTY DISTRICT CLERK

Andrea S. Thompson

FY'15 Preservation, Restoration and Records Archive Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the FY'15 plans for the restoration and preservation of records maintained by the Collin County District Clerk's Office. In general, the State Library and Archives Commission requires **permanent retention** of all case papers and trial dockets dated prior to 1950, *and* "case papers from any period that, because of notoriety or significance, might possess enduring value." In addition, certain court documents after 1950 are required to be retained permanently, or for specific periods of time. It is the intent of the District Clerk to follow the guidelines set forth by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission as they relate to records in the District Clerk's office. This document addresses the restoration and preservation needs of the Collin County District Clerk's records archive only, no other departments are addressed.

Funding

The Texas Legislature has provided a means to raise revenue for records management and preservation of court records. Records preservation and restoration efforts are funded by the collection of fees added to specific types of cases filed in the District Clerk's Office as found in the Texas Local Government Code Sections 51.305 (District Court Records Technology Fee) and 51.317(b)4(c) (Records Management Fee). These fees are "user" fees and are an alternative to raising taxes or spending from the general fund. The fee amounts are approved by the Collin County Commissioners' Court, and itemized as part of the County's annual budget. The funds generated from the collection of these fees are used, as mandated, for preservation and restoration services performed in connection with maintaining the District Court archives.

Historically Significant Records

In FY'12 and FY'13, funding was used to professionally preserve and restore 59 historical books for use by generations to come. These restored treasures include Collin County District Court Civil Minutes and Index books dating from 1846-1952, and Criminal Court Minutes and Index books dating from 1846-1960. In addition, these books were digitally scanned so that the documents can be viewed, and copies reproduced, electronically.

FY'15 Funding

The process to restore and preserve documents maintained by the Collin County District Clerk's office is an ongoing project as records continue to age. In FY'15, the District Clerk's office will undertake two preservation projects. The first project will involve the replacement of boxes and file folders that are currently storing our oldest case files which are on permanent retention. These court records which date back as far as 1846 are showing significant deterioration. The rate and severity of deterioration can result from internal and external factors: most importantly, the

composition of the paper and the conditions under which the paper is stored. Specifically, the level of acids present in the paper and in the environment (e.g. air pollution, temperature, moisture, poor-quality enclosures), over time leads to the degradation of the paper. In line with recommendations from the U.S. Library of Congress, improving environmental storage conditions (including the use of archival quality storage containers and folders) will significantly slow the rate of degradation and extend the life of these historic paper documents. Considerations which will be used in the selection of new archival quality storage boxes and folders includes whether: the materials are acid and lignin free; the pH value is greater than 7.0; color that will not bleed; the materials are “buffered” (have an alkaline substance which counteracts acids which may form in the future).

The second preservation project focuses on the imaging of files that have not been previously digitized and stored. Through a contract in 2006, criminal files for the period 1846-1999 were microfilmed, digitized and indexed into Laserfiche. Files opened from 2000 to the implementation of the Odyssey case management system have created a gap of non-digitized case files. Plans are to procure a vendor to start imaging these case files directly into Odyssey. This effort will not only preserve the documents, but will also give electronic viewing access to the District Attorney, Sheriff, Juvenile Probation, and CSCD office as well as Judges, Constables, attorney subscribers, and the public.