# 2023-2024 Annual Report

HIGHLAND
COUNTY • OHIO
**RECORDS CENTER
& ARCHIVES**

Executive Summary

Upon establishment of the Highland County Record Center & Archives in 2023, many records were hidden in attics and basements with poor storage conditions. Most had never been inventoried, or documentation had been lost to time.

This report describes the development and growth of the Highland County Records Center & Archives from its establishment in March 2023 to the close of 2024. This office is responsible for a wide variety of record services as shown below.
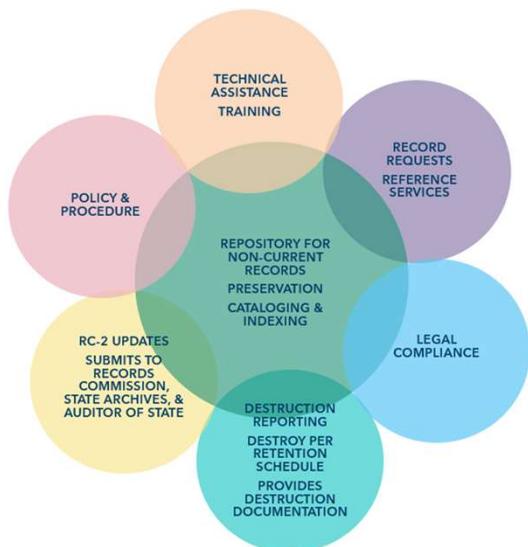

Prior to the project departments managed records internally. The Records Manager role did not exist, and only a few departments had strong record management systems.

Objective

This report describes the development and growth of the Highland County Records Center & Archives from its establishment in March 2023 to the close of 2024.

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Major Successes

RC-2 Creation or Update by Department

20

15

10

5

0

AUDITOR
BOARD OF ELECTIONS
BOARD OF REVISION
BUDGET COMMISSION
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CLERK OF COURTS
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMON PLEAS COURT
COUNTY COURT
COURT OF APPEALS
DOG & KENNEL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPEMTN
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
ENGINEER
GENERAL
HUMAN RESOURCES
JOB & FAMILY
JUVENILE COURT
LAND BANK
MAINTENANCE
PLANNING COMMISSION
PROBATE COURT
PROBATION
PROSECUTOR
RECORDER
RECORDS CENTER
RECORDS COMMISSION
SEWER DISTRICT
SHERIFF
TAX MAP & GIS
TREASURER
VICTIM WITNESS
VETERAN'S SERVICES

Major Successes

Boxes Processed or in Progress

Since these records were primarily unmanaged before the Records Center & Archives was founded, many boxes had not been opened in decades.

Relocation
5214
Boxes Processed/in Progress
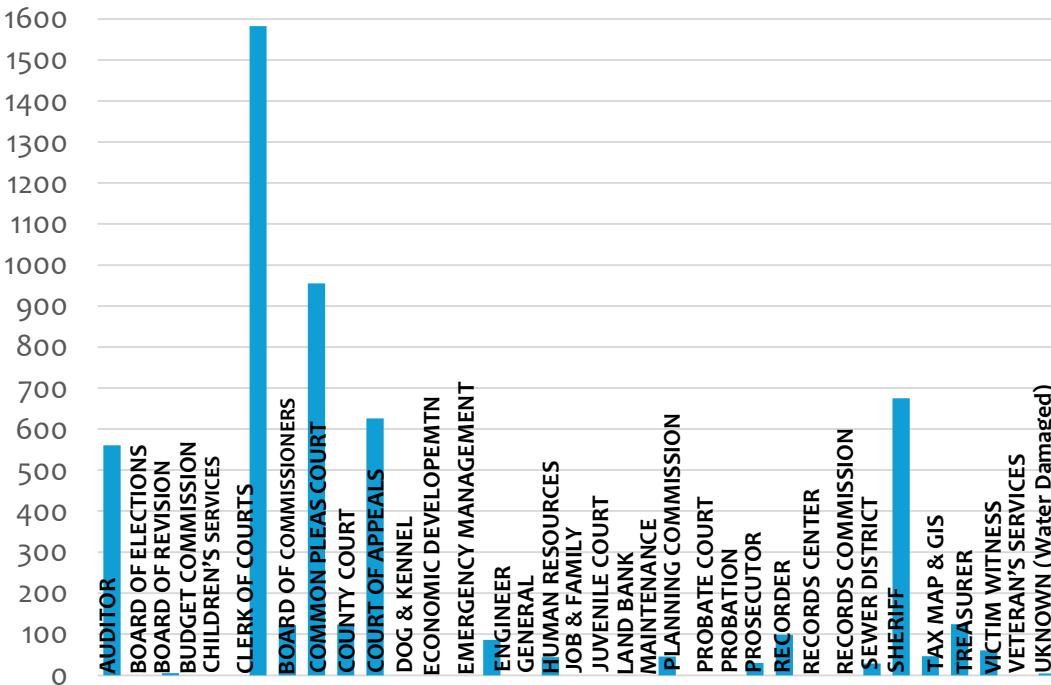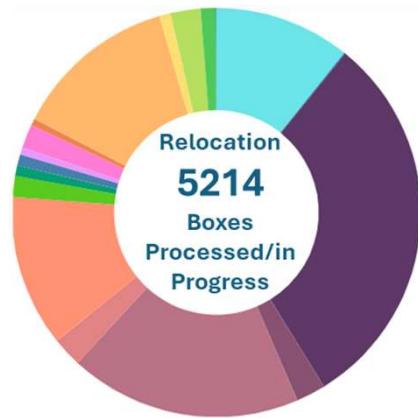
Record Requests

Unsurprisingly, most of our requests were in-house. I expect this will change once our website is live and we have a brick-and-mortar location. More than half of our record requests were to support county administration.

Top, see who is requesting records. Below, see the departments where the records requested originate. Size of the blocks corresponds to that department's quantity of requests.

Inventory & Cataloging

- Collaborated with departments to classify records & retention periods in a RC-2
- Established initial inventory with record ownership, retention period, and location
- Identified metadata and legal requirements for each record type
- Established record relationships

Laserfiche Repository

- Established Laserfiche Records Repository
- Mapped routing to department folders & subfolders
- Set retention periods
- Implemented version tracking
- Built redaction reasons
- Created stamps (reviewed, etc.)
- Set up existing locations
- Designed Eforms & Process Automations

Plans & Policies

- Created Collections Management Policy
- Designed Directory of County Records and Services
- Established Environmental Monitoring & Preventative Maintenance Plan
- Completed a File Plan
- Constructed Long-Range Plan
- Made Pocket Record Disaster Mitigation Plan
- Implemented Public Records Policy – A Guide for Constituents
- Produced Record Disaster Mitigation Plan
- Completed Records Management Manual – A Guide for Employees

Toughest Challenges

Late Adoption

Gaining buy in for our centralized record repository project was a challenge. Trust had to be earned. I started with the early adopters and through their enthusiasm was able to recruit additional departments. As we approach our building's completion date additional new departments are requesting to participate, leading to unnecessary and avoidable complexity. Building relationships was vital to minimize this issue.

Continuing Education

Finding local and affordable continuing education is one of our largest obstacles. Due to the travel ban, we were able to utilize only about 10% of the training funds allocated. In 2025 we plan to utilize virtual Laserfiche training to earn Administrator Certification, and staff will earn a GARA Certificate with free online training.

Siloed Data

Historically, each department made their policies, utilized specialty software, and controlled all record management practices. This led to the problem that some records may only be opened with proprietary software. Some of these programs are not compatible with Laserfiche, meaning we cannot move data to or from their systems.

Record Evolution

Many historical records look different than their modern-day counterparts. Names of the document might change over time, or legal requirements could alter the data collected. Correctly identifying these documents can be time-intensive.

Finances: Continuing Education

Ohio History Connection Classes $60

Continuing Education $310

Professional Organizations $250
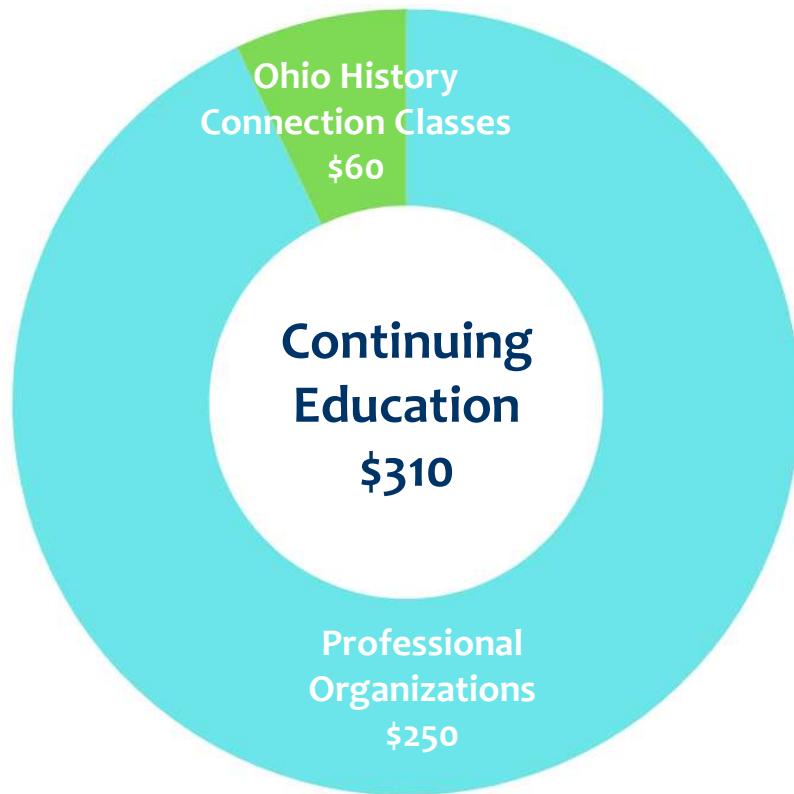
Records Manager Julie Wallingford earned her Government Archives and Records Administration (GARA) Certificate in 2025. The GARA Certificate Program was created to recognize the achievements of government officials in obtaining a knowledge base to help them more effectively care for and manage their records.

Professional Organizations make the bulk of our training possible at low cost. They offer access to presentations and discussions on diverse topics related to government records management, including electronic records, preservation strategies, compliance issues, and emerging technologies. Of particular importance in our constantly changing political landscape are coverage of new regulations and laws. Current Professional Organizations:

- Society of American Archivists (SAA)
- National Association of Government Archives & Records Association (NAGARA)

We also utilize free classes from numerous professional organizations, universities, and companies, including:

- Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA)
- County Archivists and Records Managers Association (CARMA)
- American Institute for Conservation/Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (AIC/FAIC)
- Digital Library Federation (DLF) Project Managers Group
- Laserfiche Software
- Cities Digital (CDI)
- Society of Ohio Archivists (SOA)
- Northeast Document conservation Center (NEDCC)
- National Archives
- American Library Association
- Pratt Institute

Inventory $30,021

Laserfiche Software $17,141

Record Destruction 2 dates $6,394

Labels Full size box labels, waterproof **$250**

Computer Carts These rolling carts with pegboards are our mobile office, and especially helpful when inventorying. **$344**

Rocky Fork Lake Sewer Classification & Organization Project Classified all Rocky Fork Sewer records based on parcel number. **$58**

Stabilizing Bound Volumes Many of our bound volumes have degraded bindings, torn pages, and other structural issues that must be addressed prior to our move. Purchases included acid-free paper, paper dispenser, and cotton tape for tying so that wraps can be reused. **$1329**

Building & Roadway Plans Organization & Inventory Identified and organized all building and roadway plans, surveys, and more. Purchases include a variety of square tubes. **$460**

Consumables Everyday supplies like pens, and binder clips. **$143**

"Frankencomputer" Our computer made of spare parts (only one part was purchased!) was such a good investment. However, it cannot support our newest software updates and will need to be replaced in the coming year. **$20**

Color-Coding Labels Colored stickers used to identify boxes to be destroyed **$17**

Paige Brand Miracle Boxes Heavy-duty boxes used to store most records. **$2,510**

Mobile Printer & Supplies Our mobile printer allowed on-the-go printing while inventorying and has an internal power bank for locations without power. **$715**

Strategic Goals

Goals Completed

2023
PLANNING, DISCOVERY, & ANALYIS
Defining the project scope, objectives, and deliverables. Interviewed vendors to identify software that beat met our needs. Began inventorying previously unmanaged records.

2024
PHYSICAL RECORDS
Detailed project plans created, as well as policies and employee manuals. Built Laserfiche Record Repository. Continued Inventorying. Created relocation plan.

Five-year Plan

2025
ELECTRONIC RECORDS & RELOCATION
Relocating records from multiple locations throughout the county to our new records center. Importing electronic records into Laserfiche, planning digitization projects, establishing a website, and archiving email, socials, and phone data.

2026
DIGITIZATION
Scanning and metadata import of high-priority records.

2027
IMPROVED DESCRIPTIONS
Currently our record analysis and labeling are minimal. Many types of records need enhanced organization or descriptions such as turn-of-the-century court records.

2028
COLLECTIONS CONDITION SURVEY
Identify records in need of preservation and create plan to address restoration.

2029
CITIZEN ARCHIVIST PROGRAM
Volunteer program to transcribe or enter metadata.

Julie Wallingford, Records Manager

As Records Manager, Julie directed all aspects of the Highland County Record Center & Archive's record management, inventory, and Laserfiche record repository since the program's inception in March 2023. Julie has over nine years of experience in record management. She earned a Master of Informatics degree from Northern Kentucky University in 2015 and a GARA Certificate in 2024.

Halle Jones, Records Assistant

Halle was an intern through the ACCESS/Ohio Means Jobs program, then became a valued part-time employee. She plans to stay on staff through college. She is a high school senior who also attends Southern State. Halle qualified for a generous scholarship from Wilmington College and will be pursuing a double major in Agriculture Business and Marketing.

Austin Neville, Records Assistant

Austin is a recent hire who earned an Associate of Arts in Arts & Science from Southern State Community College and a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Cincinnati. He was awarded the Lenore F. McGrane Prize for the Most Promising Student in U.S. History. Also, he was nominated for the George Newberger Capstone Prize, Best Research Essay (U.S. History) for his capstone project "King Cotton: Southerners' Arguments for Economic Independence."

Completed Projects

Completed Plans & Policies

Collections Management Policy

The Collections Management Policy governs all aspects related to the development, management, preservation, and the use of the Highland County Record Center & Archive's collections. It serves as a guide to staff and volunteers in performing their collection-related responsibilities. The policy also provides the public with information about objects and information the organization collects and preserves and how the organization performs these functions. Read the policy in full.

Environmental Monitoring & Preventative Maintenance

These checklists outline the Record Center & Archive's responsibilities for preventative maintenance of structure and collections. Read the policy in full.

File Plan

A file plan is a map of sorts that shows where different types of files are stored in the repository, how they are named, and how they are managed. This classification simplifies management, offering an easy way to identify, locate, and retrieve records. Read the plan in full.

Essential Records Plan

Our plan helps to identify, use, and protect essential records. These records are necessary to ensure an organization's continuity of operations and to protect the legal and financial rights of the organization and the public during an emergency. Read the plan in full.

Record Disaster Mitigation Plan & Pocket Plan

To protect and preserve county functions as well as irreplaceable historic records, the Record Center has prepared this Record Disaster Mitigation Plan.   While we have a county-wide emergency plan, we need a plan that specifically addresses record salvage and prioritization. In an emergency, our Emergency Management Director will lead activities to counteract or prevent damage to buildings, infrastructure, and systems. The Records Center Staff will be responsible for leading the record salvage effort, documenting losses, and restoring the record repository. Read the plan in full.   Read the pocket plan in full.

Directory of County Records & Services

Outlines all county Departments with their location, contact information, document types and services. Read the directory in full.

Employee Manual

This manual establishes standards and procedures to streamline records management County-wide. We wish to create an accurate and complete documentation of policies and transactions of the Highland County Government. Simplification of records creation, maintenance, and transfer, will enhance transparency. Read the manual in full.

Public Record Policy – A Guide for Constituents

Our public record policy explains the definition of public records, outlines the request process, how to address grievances, and the legal basis for our policies. Read the full policy.

Completed Software Projects

Laserfiche Record Repository

Established a Laserfiche records repository. Laserfiche was chosen because of the vast opportunities for process automation primarily and was the most competitively priced software we reviewed.

I mapped routing to department folders & subfolders, set retention periods, and built all the record types needed by our departments, then implemented version tracking. While Laserfiche doesn't have a location feature out of the box, I found that an application could be created, which is in development. Many useful features like redaction reasons, stamps (reviewed, received, etc.) have been created.

Eforms & Process Automations

There are many ways to harness the power of Laserfiche Eforms and Workflows. Key differentiators:

- Accurate – Much less prone to typos
- Low Technical Barrier - Low-code
- Ensures regulatory compliance rules are followed
- Connects to but doesn't disrupt information systems
- Routine tasks are performed the same way each time
- Bots work 24/7 around the clock and on holidays
- Workers dedicate more time to engaging, interesting tasks
- Increased productivity due to faster processing

Internal Record Request

Eforms simplify employee record entry and makes processes analogous across the organization. The Internal Record Request Eform, below, will standardize record requests. When an employee completes the form, it creates a task for record center staff. Many data points can be retrieved to monitor employee performance, including time spent, person or organization making request, and communications to clarify request if needed. Redaction reasons can be supplied at the touch of a button.   If a request must be denied the user has pre-loaded denial reasons that site Ohio Revised Code.
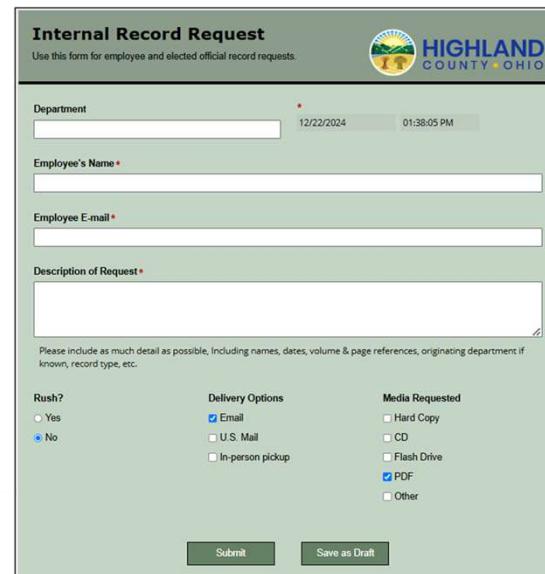
Physical Record Entry Form

The Physical Record Entry Form is used to input boxes or other hard-copy records into the Laserfiche record repository. The department field determines which record types are displayed in the record title field to narrow search parameters. Location can be entered by scanning the bar code on the shelf of may be entered manually. The form is designed to drill down on locations, showing only the floors available in each building, then showing only the rooms or aisles located on the floor selected, and so forth. The schedule number and retention period autofill based on a lookup table, decreasing staff time.

Agenda & Minutes

This two-part eForm is currently in testing. Depending on the commission name selected, it will send the completed agenda form to commission members along with any prior minutes, retention schedules, or destruction forms that need to be approved.
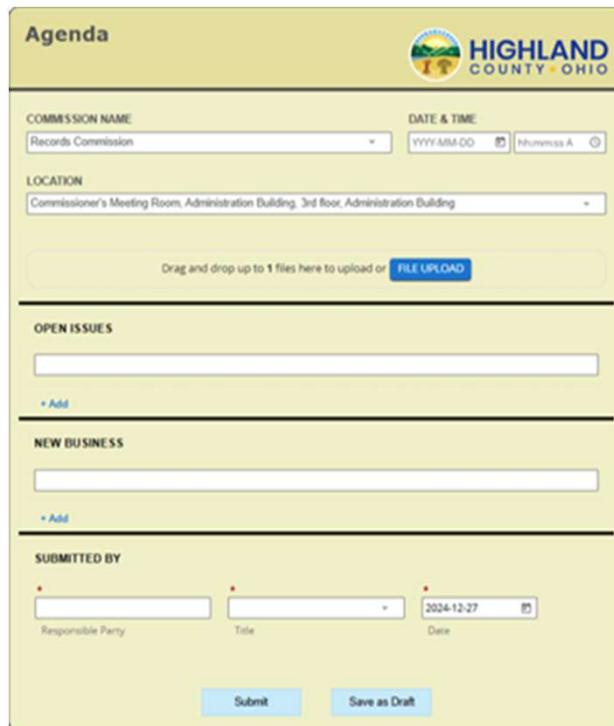
Upon submittal, the minutes form is available to record roll call, location, and movements to approve or adjourn.

When 'Submit for Approval' is clicked , a copy will be sent to the president of the Board of Commissioners for approval, and all members will receive a copy of the minutes.

Court Record Entry

This project was inspired by the historic Clerk of Court record collection that has never been inventoried or described. These records are primarily Common Pleas but also include Circuit Court, Mayor's Court, and Supreme Court. Upon initial examination we found many exciting glimpses into history and decided to prioritize this group of records.
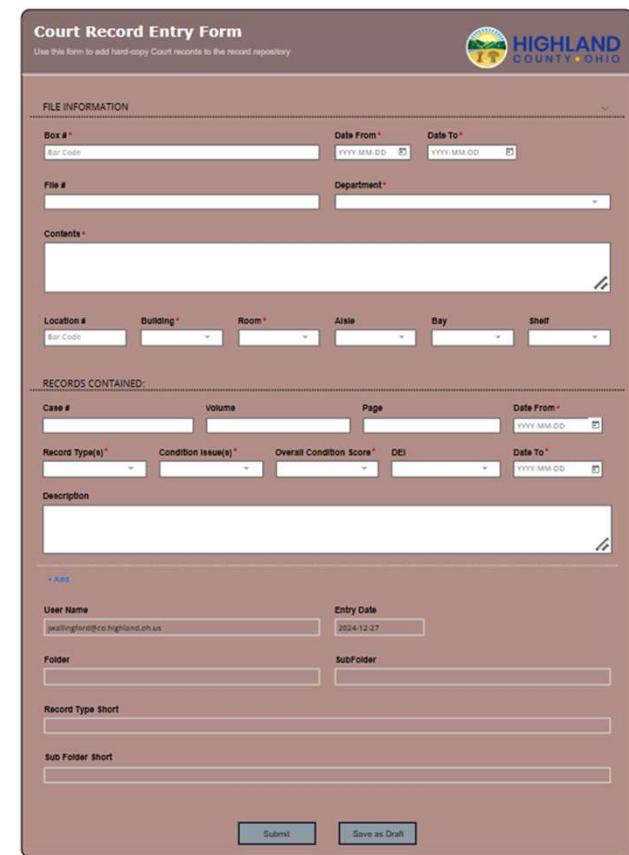
Completed Inventory Projects

Clerk of Court Inventory

Identified and physically marked all missing folders in Administration building basement and supplied list of missing folders to Clerk of Court's office.

## HR Record Classification & Organization

Extensive project to organize all HR records.

Organization & Classification – Administration Building

Organized, assigned record types, reboxed, and labeled records. Many of these records were labeled 'keep' or 'misc' and required a large investment of time to process.

Organization & Classification – North High

Organized, assigned record types, reboxed, and labeled records.
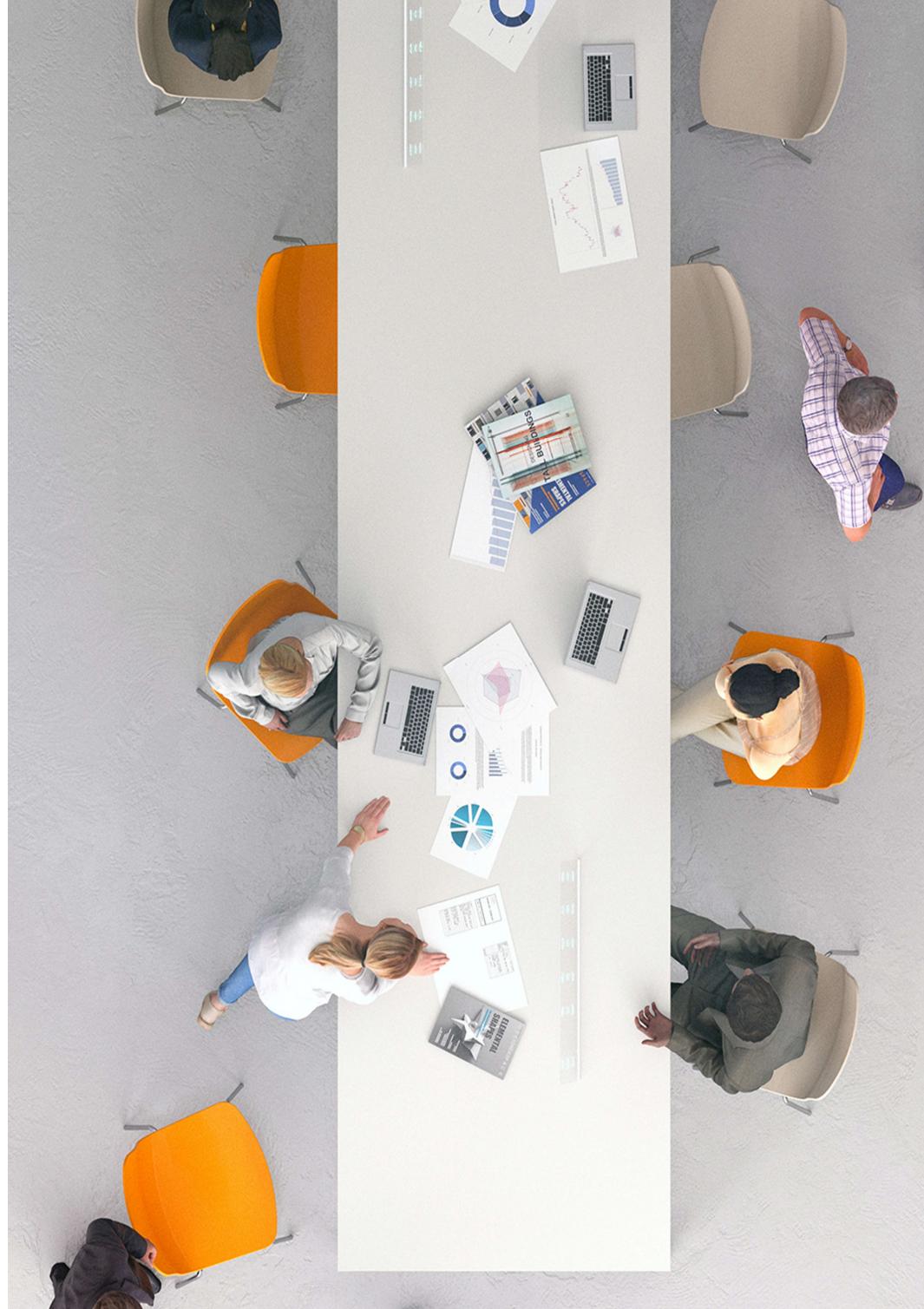
Other Completed Projects

Record & Furniture Relocation Request for Bids

Complete RFB Package outlining records and furniture from seven buildings and twenty-one departments. Explains handling, moving, and cleaning policies, and includes current and future locations for each record. Read the RFB in full.

Pre-training Questionnaire

Questionnaire designed to establish computer skills in advance of Laserfiche training.

Grants

Multiple grants have been identified for record center projects, and we hope to begin applying in 2025.

Current Projects

Current Inventory Projects

Rocky Fork Sewer Record Classification & Organization

Project to organize, index, and classify homeowner records according to parcel number. Utilized Tax Map, GIS, Engineer, Auditor, and Recorder databases. Expected to be a six-week project with one full-time and one part-time staff. Organized funding from loans and grants; correspondence with the public, homeowners, elected officials, and staff; easements, surveys, deeds, and other property records; court transcripts, rulings, and legal opinions.

Common Plea & County Court Record Classification & Organization

Our major focus right now are Common Pleas and County Court records which were boxed up haphazardly during a water emergency. Records must be matched to their case numbers, but much information is missing or out of context.

Citizen Archivist Program

Initial planning for a citizen archivist program modeled on the National Archive's has been completed, where participants would use an Eform to transcribe or tag records.

Website

We are currently developing a website that will house policies and procedures, finding aids, employee training, visitor information, records commission agendas and minutes.

Stabilizing Bound Volumes

Many historic bound volumes need to be wrapped prior to the move due to poor condition. The pages are very brittle and are fragmenting significantly around the margin of the page. We must do this to preserve the value of the object from a structural standpoint, but more importantly, to preserve the historical value.

Current Policy Development

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Laserfiche software utilizes AI to summarize records, and I anticipate that AI functions will increase exponentially over time. This report will list all the ways that Laserfiche uses AI for transparency.

Collections Care Policy

Outlines guidance on storage, housing, and housekeeping.

Digitization Policy

One of my major goals for 2025 is to create a digitization plan outlining prioritization, procedures and best practices. We can utilize FamilySearch scanning for public records, which is free if the records will be available online. We can also utilize FamilySearch's volunteers in addition to our citizen archivist program and our own staff to transcribe or tag records. The Southern Ohio Genealogy Society has also expressed interest in involvement.

This plan documents preservation of digital content for future use; sets priorities; specifies file formats; and ensures compliance with standards and best practices for responsible stewardship of digital information. Addresses content creation, integrity, maintenance, and management.

Current Laserfiche Projects

Record Backup & Recovery Plan

Plan designed to regularly create copies of critical software data (like applications, configurations, and system files) and ensure its accessibility for restoration in case of system failure, data corruption, or other disruptions.

Services Report

Quantifies the number of requests, complexity, and response time. Also includes the originating department, record type, and requester data. The services report will help determine priorities for scanning.

Disaster Planning Report

Triggers workflow that downloads copies of all essential digital records. Report and Downloads are sent to Record Manager and Emergency Management Agency.

Audit Reports

Our audit report will track activities performed within the Laserfiche Record repository, show compliance with legal regulations, and also contribute to the system's security.

Capture Profile

A capture profile is in development to allow us to import box label data into Laserfiche with a simple photo.

Location Services

A physical record (box or bound volume) location tool is in development to allow employees to pinpoint the exact location of a physical record.

Integrations

Laserfiche can directly integrate with other applications such as Microsoft, GIS, and DocuSign. This allows us to add DocuSign activity to Eforms, capturing signatures through Laserfiche. We can also import records directly from word processing programs or use GIS to attach locations to records by address.

Audit Events Created

Records events in the Laserfiche Repository. Specifies actions to be recorded and whether to audit success, failure, or both. Assists in troubleshooting workflows or determining a record's changes over time.

End-User Training

A manual has been created with all basic training, but I would like to develop this further to include gamification, events, and awards.
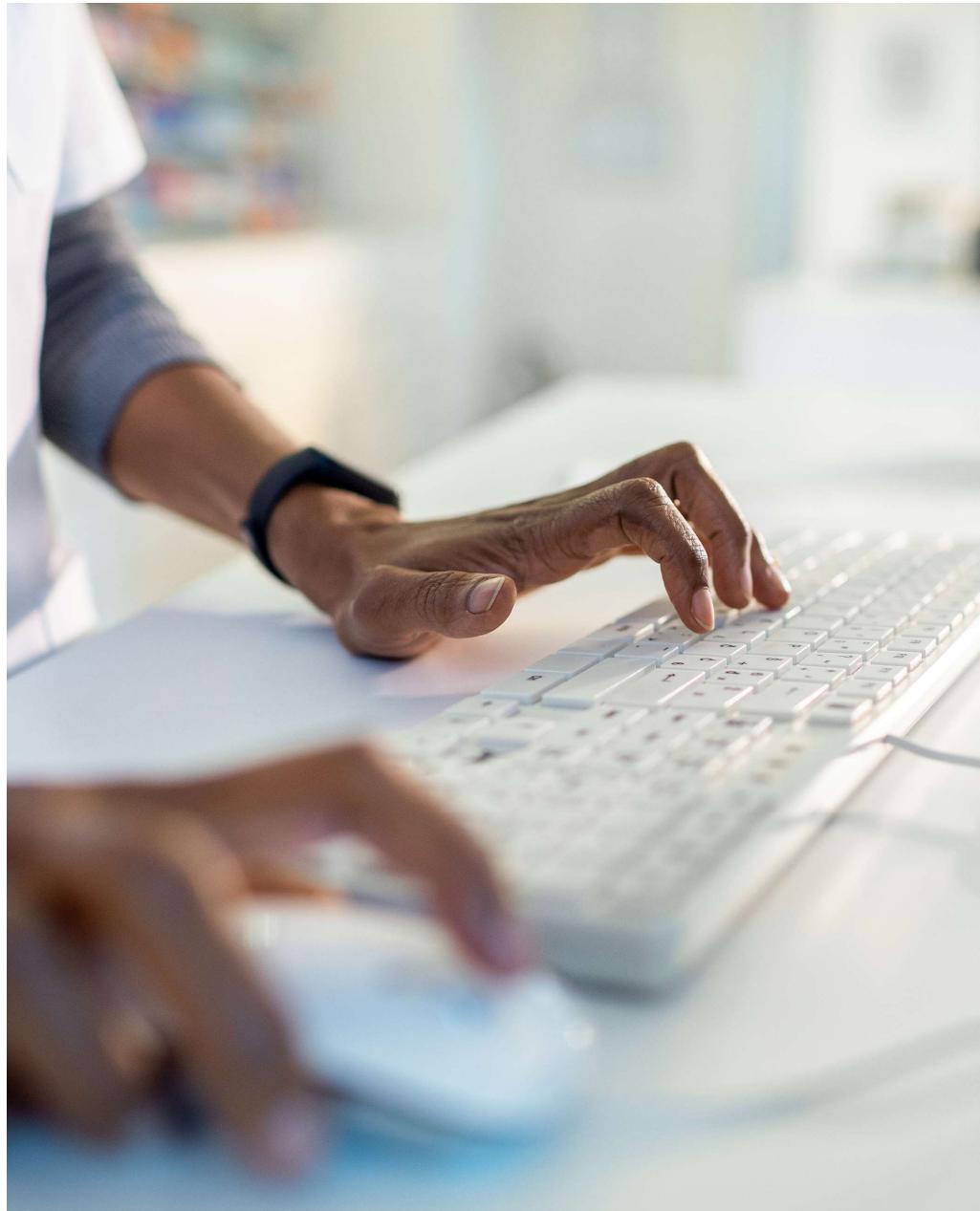
Record Center & Archives Services Request

The Services Request Form is a 'help desk' type of application. Under request categories, the user can choose from access, record destruction or storage, record documentation, repository modification, training, or other, leading to sub-categories that further refine the service needed. For troubleshooting, there is a search box that will deliver links to articles that may resolve their issue or will allow the user to send the request to record center staff if unresolved. Like the record request form, we can also track variables related to the service.

Onboarding

Too large to show in its entirety, this form will simplify onboarding through rules that duplicate data on various pages, making forms faster to complete. The exact process is still evolving but we are excited about the possibilities.
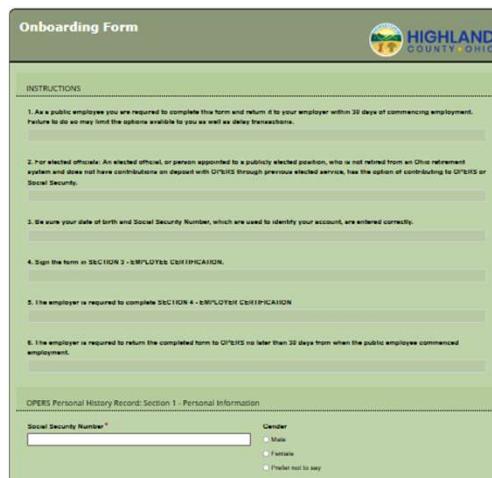
Other Eforms

Other Eforms I'd like to develop in 2025 include:

- Loss or Unauthorized Destruction of Records Form
- Feedback forms
- Record deletion or destruction
- Job Applications
- Job Separations
- Employee Evaluation
- Environmental monitoring log
- Disaster Documentation
- Bid Comparison
- Record Request Log
- Electronic record entry
- Daily Staff Update

Closing Statement
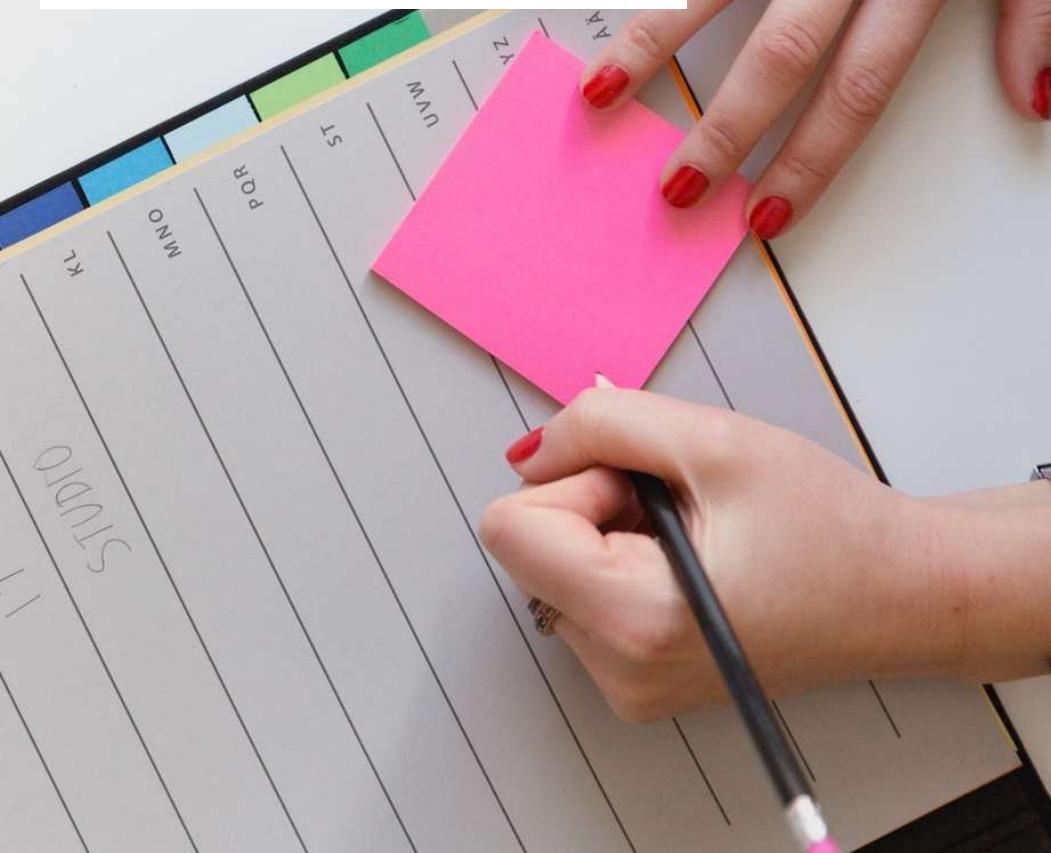
As we look ahead to 2025, the Highland County Records Center & Archives is committed to building upon our policies and procedures to increase availability and improve maintenance of our records. We hope to increase the transparency of government processes, to embrace new opportunities, and to deliver technological enhancements for County employees.

In 2024, we made significant progress on the inventory of previously unmanaged records, sifting through nearly every known storage area, with only about 20 percent of North High records remaining unidentified. We have destroyed decades of records past retention. Plans and policies are in place to chart a course for our archive in the future.

Our Laserfiche record repository will allow us to track all aspects of a record's life cycle, make siloed records available from anywhere in the world, and streamline complicated multi-departmental workflows utilizing process automation.

We could not have achieved our goals without the buy-in from managers, elected officials, subject matter experts, and stakeholders. Many employees generously added to our organizational knowledge. We look forward to future collaborations and technologic advances to achieve our ambitious strategic goals next year and in the years ahead.

Thank You

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