

## ***“With A Little Help from my Friends”: External Advisory and Oversight Bodies in the Development of Archives***

by **LARRY J. HACKMAN**

New York was one of the last state governments in the United States to create a formal state archives, passing legislation in 1971 and opening the State Archives for research only in 1978.<sup>1</sup> During the 1980s that fledgling archives, with a staff of barely twenty, was transformed into a statewide archives and records management agency, the New York State Archives and Records Administration. By 1990, it had obtained much broader legislative authority, increased its staffing to nearly 110, operated nine new regional offices, and was distributing more than \$10 million in grants each year to strengthen records programmes in local governments and in historical records repositories across the State.<sup>2</sup>

A 1992 case study in the *American Archivist* describes these changes and explains some of the techniques used to build the support to bring them about.<sup>3</sup> Most of this will not be repeated here. Rather, this article will focus on one important “networking” technique used frequently by the New York State Archives—the creation of external advisory and oversight groups, their participation in assessment of archival conditions and in planning how to address priority needs, and their subsequent advice and advocacy to bring about the desired changes.<sup>4</sup> These New York examples may suggest the roles that external groups could play elsewhere in strengthening archival programmes and in expanding archival resources—the chief goals of “networking” in my view.<sup>5</sup>

Each of the four examples below describes the role of one external group: the State Historical Records Advisory Board, the Local Government Records Advisory Council, the Visiting Committee for the State Archives, and the Board of the State Archives Partnership Trust. The third and fourth examples are very much works in progress, and a full evaluation of them must wait until later. Described here are their early development and the vision for what they might become over time. The examples are discussed in order of the date of creation of the external group at issue.

### ***1. The New York State Historical Records Advisory Board and the Establishment of a Statewide Archives and Records Agenda<sup>6</sup>***

At the beginning of the 1980s, the archives and records community in New York had no tradition of evaluating conditions and working together to improve them. The still new State Archives had barely had time to begin to provide statewide leadership in archival affairs. This changed dramatically over the next several years when New York, sooner and more ambitiously than other states, seized on support from the federal government to undertake statewide archival assessment and planning. Doing so enabled New York to establish a widely accepted statewide archival agenda for the first time.

Several factors made this possible. First was the strong desire of the State Archives leadership to establish the State Archives as the catalyst and coordinator for statewide archival activity in a state that badly needed this. Second, and of particular interest here, was a strong and supportive New York State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB), appointed by the Governor chiefly to meet a federal requirement that such a board be created in each state wishing to participate in the new historical records grant programme of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).<sup>7</sup> Third, was a new NHPRC grant category offering modest funds (up to \$25,000) to each state that would follow the Commission's general guidelines in undertaking statewide assessment and planning.

These three factors provoked New York's first ambitious assessment of conditions and needs and of methods to address them. The findings and recommendations were then brought to the organizations and associations already most interested in records—and to a much larger audience as well.

The State Historical Records Advisory Board was crucial to success. Any archival agenda likely to be accepted and acted upon needed to convey that it was based on broad fact-finding and consultation, and was not a self-serving agenda created by the State Archives. Also helpful would be sponsorship by the major groups whose support would be needed to address the agenda. In New York, this meant not only the state government, but also local governments (including New York City), non-government historical records repositories, the private sector, and professionals in archives and records administration. The SHRAB's membership itself provided such representation, and its organization for the assessment project reinforced this.<sup>8</sup>

For the assessment project, the SHRAB was broken into four sub-committees, one each for State government records, local government records, non-government repositories, and cross-cutting issues. Each was chaired by a well-regarded and well-known member of the Board. The State Archives itself assigned high-level staff resources to support the project, rather than relying on consultants as was done in some other states; New York's approach both increased the influence of the State Archives in the project and saved federal funds, which could then be used almost exclusively for the design, publication, and distribution of 25,000 copies of a very attractive report. Although most of the specific proposals in the final report, *Toward A Usable Past: Historical Records in the Empire State*, were developed or

refined by the State Archivist and his staff, the process and the report gave substantial visibility to SHRAB members. Issued in the Board's name and only after its formal approval, the report was viewed in the state as substantially the report of the Board, not merely as the views of state archival bureaucrats.

Without the active involvement and the formal sponsorship of the Board, the impact of the report would have been much diminished. Appointment of the Board by the Governor, rather than by the State Archives or its parent agency, increased the Board's prestige and strengthened the credibility of its report. The political skills and relationships of several Board members, especially elected local officials, helped build acceptance among their peers. Sponsorship by the Board also helped gain the attention and cooperation of some organizations—such as the State Court of Appeals and the Office of Court Administration—that had not responded to the new State Archives in the past.

In retrospect, State Historical Records Advisory Board coordination of a statewide assessment project seems an obvious approach: in New York, it was—and not merely because NHPRC required it. At the time, however, few, if any, other states had undertaken such a broad and open effort, or had such ambitious hopes to make use of its results. In the past, statewide archival needs were often described, if at all, by a state archives itself—from its own perspective, and often with a request for resources for itself. What was usually missing was legitimization of findings through participatory survey and discussion, with conclusions and recommendations based on that process, and with formal sponsorship of the process and the conclusions by a body representative of, and connected to, those whose interests were at stake. The partnership of the State Archives and the State Historical Records Advisory Board accomplished that for New York. Neither could have done so alone. Drawing on NHPRC funds and guidelines, and using each other—perhaps the best way to describe the relationship—the Archives and the Board produced a highly credible tool that was used to foster important, successful initiatives over the next decade.<sup>9</sup> The most impressive progress was on local government records.

## ***2. The Local Government Records Advisory Council and the “Quiet Revolution” for New York’s Local Government Records***

In 1984, when *Toward A Usable Past* was issued, the State Archives had a staff of four professionals assigned to fulfill the State's broad advisory responsibilities, under a 1911 law, for records management and disposition in nearly four thousand local governments statewide. Five years later, the New York State Archives and Records Administration was operating under a modern (1987) local records law, had a local records staff of more than thirty, was providing technical assistance to local governments through nine regional offices, and could draw on a special fund of \$10 million each year to make grants to local governments ready to develop sound records and archives programmes. While the State Archives's own hard work contributed greatly to this progress, it would have been impossible without the new New York State Local Government Records Advisory Council (LGRAC).

Anticipating, and then drawing on, recommendations in *Toward A Usable Past*, the State Archives began to communicate and "network" much more aggressively with local governments and their associations during the mid-1980s. Recognizing the State Archives's very limited resources, the Archives staff also concentrated on producing a few tools that would be useful to all local governments: consolidated and simplified general schedules for records disposition, the first-ever manual on records management for all New York local governments, and the draft of a modern statute clarifying the responsibilities of both local governments and State government for local government records. Reflecting a recommendation in *Toward A Usable Past*, the discussions of a new statute included consideration of an advisory body to provide a continuing voice for local governments on State policies and services and a continuing locus for dialogue between the state and local sectors.

A new local government records statute, introduced in the Legislature in 1986, was revised and passed in 1987. One major feature, in retrospect *the* most important, was the provision for a twenty-five-member Local Government Records Advisory Council, to be appointed by the Commissioner of Education. The new law also required this new Council to prepare a report to the Governor, appropriate committees of the Legislature, and the Commissioner of Education on the condition of New York's local government records and on the main actions needed to improve them.

The State Archives quickly recommended suitable candidates to the Commissioner, who then appointed them to the new Advisory Council.<sup>10</sup> The Archives, which was renamed the State Archives and Records Administration by the State Board of Regents at about this time, provided strong staff support to the leadership of the new Council as it prepared the report and recommendations required in statute. That report, *The Quiet Revolution: Managing New York's Local Government Records in the Information Age*, as with *Toward A Usable Past* before it, was received very positively, not only because of its impressive content, but because the Advisory Council included individuals widely recognized by local governments and their associations. Like the earlier assessment report, *The Quiet Revolution* was an important educational tool for those not previously informed about local government records management. Its section on "Principles and Assumptions" also indicated that a rough philosophical consensus had been reached between the SARA and LGRAC regarding shared State and local responsibilities for local government records; *Toward A Usable Past* had suggested that this matter needed careful discussion and resolution.

Most important, the Advisory Council's report stated very directly that no substantial progress could be expected without additional dedicated financial resources to support concentrated, expert effort at both the State and local levels. To obtain these resources, the Council's report proposed the creation of a special "records creation surcharge" to be collected by local governments, the proceeds to be deposited in a new "State Records Retention Fund." This fund would support improved management of local government records, especially those of permanent value. Such a recommendation, if made by the State Archives and Records Administration, would have been regarded as naive and self-serving; as a recommendation of the Advisory Council, and with their direct involvement in drafting the legislation to implement it, and in seeking the political sponsorship in the legis-

lature for it, the proposal took on a reality and a momentum never seen before in archives and records affairs in New York. The Council lived up to its promise stated in *The Quiet Revolution* that “The Members of this Council and the organizations and constituencies that they represent will actively call attention to this report and support the implementation of its recommendations.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1989 the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, the law creating the New York Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund. The law authorized county clerks to collect an additional \$5.00 for certain records filing and recording transactions and required that \$4.75 of this increase be deposited in the New York Local Government Records Improvement Fund to be administered by the State Education Department. Each year, up to \$2 million could be used by the State Archives and Records Administration to operate regional offices and otherwise expand and improve its oversight and advisory services to local governments; the remaining funds, now about \$10 million each year, were to be used for grants to local governments, to improve their administration of records, including their archives, awarded through a competitive process based on peer review.

The past five years have brought a now not-so-quiet revolution to local government records affairs in New York. Strong leadership, coordination, and technical expertise from the State Archives and Records Administration have been vital. However, most of the progress would not have been possible without the resources provided by the Improvement Fund, and the Improvement Fund would not have been possible without the strong sponsorship and advocacy by the Advisory Council. That Advisory Council also provides useful ongoing advice and support, as well as a stronger link to both local government officials and to elected State politicians than the Archives could achieve on its own.

Based on a recommendation of the LGRAC, the State Archives and Records Administration has recently created a “mini” advisory council around each of the nine regional SARA offices. At least one LGRAC member serves on each of these regional committees. LGRAC members have themselves also voluntarily provided strong leadership in the New York Association of Local Government Records Officers, a new statewide association of local government officials involved in records and archives administration.

New York now has a strong, productive local government records network almost unimaginable a few years ago. The 1984 recommendation in *Toward A Usable Past* to create a continuing advisory committee of local officials was a sound one. Without the 1987 provision in statute creating the New York State Local Government Records Advisory Council, New York would still be waiting for its quiet revolution.

### ***3. The Regents Visiting Committee: Shining a Brighter Light on the Archives of State Government***

As indicated above, a stronger network and infrastructure were developed for New York’s local government records in the years following the State Historical

Records Advisory Board's assessment report. Once sound recommendations were developed through a process, and by a body, in which local government officials participated and had confidence, they and their associations were ready and able to promote the desired changes. Substantial change, again largely consistent with recommendations in the State Historical Records Advisory Board's 1984 report, was likewise achieved for State agency records management and for the administration of non-government archives.<sup>12</sup> In sharp contrast to these other agenda areas, resources for work on the State's own archives did not increase; in fact they contracted slightly, despite rapidly expanding holdings and researcher demands. Compared with the other areas, the archival records from 350 years of New York's colonial and State government lacked organized or influential advocates.

Creation in 1991 of the Regents Visiting Committee for the State Archives was one attempt to rectify the lack of influential allies.<sup>13</sup> Here is a description of the early activities of the Committee and the State Archives' goals for it.

One goal for the Visiting Committee was to increase attention to State archival needs by the Board of Regents, the governing body of the State Education Department in which SARA is located.<sup>14</sup> This would strengthen the State's archives as a priority in the budget and legislative programmes of the State Education Department, a huge organization with many competing demands. It was proposed, therefore, that the Visiting Committee be created by the Board of Regents, chaired by one of them, and include several additional members from the full Board of sixteen Regents. This has been achieved. The current Chair of the Visiting Committee has become a much stronger advocate for the Archives, and several other influential Regents are members of the Committee. Other members of the Visiting Committee are appointed by the Chair, chiefly upon recommendation of the State Archivist.

A second goal was to increase high-level understanding and support in all three branches of State government served by the State Archives. For example, an important judge on New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, agreed to serve on the Committee; she was an active participant in early Committee discussions. She was recently appointed to be Chief Judge of the Court, an office that not only presides over the Court but also leads the entire statewide Unified Court System. Her increased knowledge of the State Archives will undoubtedly improve policies and resources for judicial archives; she also recommended a strong successor from the Court of Appeals for the Visiting Committee, thereby further expanding the number of prominent judges involved in State archival issues.

Legislators also have accepted appointment to the Visiting Committee, including several influential leaders who were effective advocates for Archives budget and legislative proposals during their terms on the Committee. Unfortunately, one key legislator died in 1992, and two others retired from office in 1993, depriving the Archives, in the short run, of strong allies in both the Senate and the Assembly. While replacements have been very supportive, they cannot be as helpful as their predecessors until they gain more seniority in the Legislature. Visiting Committee members from the Executive Branch, including the Governor's Counsel, have been less active as advisors or advocates to date, and it is likely that additional Executive Branch leader members will be appointed in the months to come.

A third goal of the Visiting Committee was to gain and to share the perspectives of articulate archives users. Hence, the Visiting Committee includes an academic historian and a teacher. Beyond seeking user advice on State Archives services, it was hoped that these members would share their views on why the Archives is important, and how it is used with more influential members of the Visiting Committee who lack direct research experience. To date, these members have ably fulfilled the purposes described above.<sup>15</sup>

A fourth goal was to extend the Archives "family" by drawing into the Visiting Committee individuals who have expressed a strong personal interest in the Archives and whose organizations are positioned to provide sound counsel, advocacy, or other important cooperation. This purpose accounts mainly for the early appointment to the Visiting Committee of the Chancellor of the State University of New York, the statewide system of public higher education, and of the editor of a daily newspaper in the Capital District. Another example is the recent appointment of the Executive Director of the New York Society of Certified Public Accountants. Future appointees are likely to include interested leaders from the New York State Bar Association and the New York State Business Council.

Finally, the Archives has made certain that experts in archives and information management, such as the Records Manager at the United Nations, are appointed to the Visiting Committee. These members participate especially actively and knowledgeably in Committee discussions of technical issues. Where they agree with recommendations of Archives's staff, which is the case most of the time, they lend considerable credibility to these recommendations.

During its first years, the Regents Visiting Committee for the State Archives has begun to fulfill the State Archives's hopes for it. It has engaged in intense discussions of the condition of the State Archives, its major needs, and alternative ways to address them. The Committee has given particular attention to the need to improve archival facilities and increase fiscal resources, the importance to archives of obtaining sound State government information policies and practices, and the need for programmes that reach the general public. These discussions have led to vigorous oral and written reports to the Regents Committee on Cultural Education and to the Full Board of Regents. Service on the Visiting Committee itself has very clearly increased the understanding and support of several Regents.

The Committee has discussed the State Archives budget proposal at an appropriate time each year, and the Members from the Legislature have then worked directly on behalf of the Archives request as the Legislature has considered the State Budget. Sometimes this effort has produced increased funding for the State Archives, or has helped prevent a threatened reduction. Ironically, but still positively, legislative relationships developed through the Visiting Committee also have led legislators to act effectively on behalf of SARA interests beyond State archival records.

Most important to date, discussions between the State Archives and Visiting Committee prompted and then shaped a legislative proposal to create the State Archives Partnership Trust described below. The principles involved were discussed in several Committee meetings prior to drafting and discussion of the detailed proposal. Legislators on the Visiting Committee then served as the chief

sponsors of the legislation for the Trust, which was adopted by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in 1992. In part this action was taken as a memorial to a legislator on the Visiting Committee who died during the legislative session.

To date, the Visiting Committee has demonstrated that it can bring together a diverse group of experts, influential individuals, and representatives of important organizations, who can offer good counsel and strong support to improve the State's archival programme. The membership and methods of the Visiting Committee for the State Archives are likely to continue to evolve over the next several years. Fortunately, the Visiting Committee is a flexible entity that can easily be expanded and adapted to serve changing needs and interests and to realize its full potential.

#### ***4. The New York State Archives Partnership Trust: In Search of Influence and Resources***

The New York State Archives Partnership Trust (APT) is a new public benefit corporation created by legislation in 1992. Its mandates are to: create an endowment to help preserve archival records and to make them accessible through research, exhibits, and public programmes; inform the citizens of New York about the status, availability, and potential uses of the archives of state government; and create a partnership among the three branches of state government and the broader community for advice and support on state government records of enduring value. The Trust is governed by a nineteen-member Board appointed by the Governor, the Majority and Minority Leaders in each house of the Legislature, and the Board of Regents. The statute indicates that board members "shall be appointed for their interest in the history of New York, especially of its government; their knowledge and experience regarding resources for cultural and educational programmes; and their support for the purposes of the Archives Partnership Trust." The State Archivist serves as the Executive Officer of the Trust.<sup>16</sup>

Creation of the Trust is based on several assumptions. It reflects a belief that the State Archives needs to be much better known and valued beyond government if it is to be better supported by government itself. It reflects a belief that this understanding and appreciation are more likely if influential private citizens, starting with members of the Trust Board, become highly involved with the Archives. Board members can then help advance work on the State's archives in several ways. First, they and others to whom they have access can offer fresh perspectives or valuable expertise on how to bring the importance of Archives to a broader audience who will then value it and promote its interests. This is already apparent in the good advice from the several initial appointees to the Trust Board. Second, Board members can take the lead in creating a network of influential private citizens—almost entirely lacking in the past—who will emphasize the importance of the Archives to senior State decision makers and advocate support for it. Third, they can themselves make major gifts or grants to the Trust, and provide contacts with individuals, corporations, and foundations who can offer such donations, to support priority work on the State's archives.



The Trust reflects the belief that individuals who provide such financial support, or convince others to do so, will thereby become more directly engaged in the welfare of the Archives and will continue to support it in ways described above. Creation of the Trust also reflects a view that obtaining substantial financial support from the non-government sector will make it easier to obtain additional State funds—that is, the authorities who appoint members to the Trust Board will recognize their contributions and respond to their calls for appropriate State support for the State's own archives. Consistent with this is the expectation that, when \$5 million has been raised from non-State sources for the Trust endowment account, an effort will be made for a similar appropriation of \$5 million from the State general fund for the Trust endowment account. If this is successful, the proceeds from the endowment could increase by up to 50 per cent the funds available each year for preservation and access work on the 350 years of records in the State Archives.

Although still in a very early stage of development, the Trust has already taken several impressive steps. It has obtained a \$1 million "Challenge Grant" from the National Endowment for the Humanities—impressive evidence that the Trust is soundly conceived, that its work is important from a national perspective, and that it can provide a useful model for other government archives. The private foundation directed by the first Chair of the Trust Board has itself granted \$250,000 to the Trust, a very strong "lead" gift as an example for other Board members and other foundations. Another Board member has given the first "Archives Society" level gift (\$50,000 or more), and the Trust has also received an early grant of \$50,000 from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the private foundation in the United States best known for leadership and expertise in funding preservation and access work in archives and libraries. Trust Board members and its Executive Officer and Director of Development are now meeting with foundation and corporate leaders and with individuals identified as promising prospects for gifts and grants to the Trust.

At the initiative of a legislative member of the Regents Visiting Committee for the State Archives, an amendment was adopted in 1993 that provides \$300,000 per year to support the fund raising campaign for the Trust endowment and for special projects, and to support the operation of the Trust Board itself.

Planning is under way for how the Trust Board members can form the core of a network that ultimately extends statewide to include leaders in each region of the State, as well as in professional and other sectors that should have a particular interest in the State Archives, such as lawyers and leaders in business and health services. A working group of experts in public relations and marketing will also be formed.

In some ways, the State Archives Partnership Trust is a variation on efforts of some other government archives in the United States to develop "friends" organizations that provide volunteers, supporters, and even modest financial support. The Trust differs from these in that it has very ambitious goals, including financial ones; it is created in statute and governed by a board appointed by key officials in State government who themselves have much to do with the fate of the State's archives. In addition, the membership sought for the Trust is restricted largely to highly influential individuals, few of whom will have had prior involvement with

the State Archives. While it is too soon to know whether the Trust will broaden understanding of the State's archives and increase financial support for it, this experiment is likely to be highly revealing to the government archives community in the United States.

### **Conclusion**

The late American humorist, Will Rogers, used to say that he had never met a man he did not like. At the New York State Archives and Records Administration, we might change that to the claim that we have not encountered an external advisory or oversight group that we did not like—and find helpful in our work! However, we might footnote that statement by admitting that its validity has much to do with the fact that, in nearly every case, we proposed creation of the external body in question, or influenced selection of its members, or helped shape its agenda and recommendations—or all of these. Lest this sound overly manipulative, we believe as well that we always have provided the information and support needed for each group to explore issues fully and to take as much initiative and independence as it desired in any facet of its work, and especially in its recommendations.<sup>17</sup>

New York's experience suggests that external advisory and oversight groups can be highly useful in the advancement of archival programmes. They can provide a range of advice—technical, administrative, and political. They can greatly increase the credibility of studies and recommendations when they share in developing them and formally endorse them. Most important, they can help make the recommendations a reality by using their relationships with decision makers and resource allocators whose support is needed. Finally, they help an archives regularly open itself up to the perspectives of experts, clients, and the public. This reduces the likelihood that the archives will become close-minded, protective, and self-serving in its attitudes and actions.<sup>18</sup> These are all worthy ends for this form of archival networking!

### **Notes**

- 1 Before this, the State Library had served since 1847 as a repository for State archives when an agency or programme went out of business or could no longer administer archival records. Since 1950, the State Education Department (SED) had legal responsibility to review requests of State agencies to dispose of records; this was carried out by the Office of State History within the SED. When archival records were transferred to SED, they were deposited in the Manuscripts and Special Collections programme of the State Library.
- 2 The term "historical records repositories" is used in this paper to mean libraries, historical societies, museums, and other programmes that collect historical documents, as well as institutional archives. Most of these are in the non-profit sector, and receiving government funding, if at all, only through competitive grants.
- 3 Larry J. Hackman, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs: New York as a Case Study," *American Archivist* 55 (Fall 1992), pp. 578-99.
- 4 This article is based on a paper prepared for the Fourth European Conference on Archives at the University of Lancaster, 13-16 September 1994.
- 5 External advisory groups are created frequently and in many forms by governments at all levels in the United States. What may distinguish the cases described here is the direct role of the government programme (the State Archives) likely to be most affected, in fostering creation of new exter-

nal bodies by organizations other than the State Archives itself, and in shaping the charge to, and membership of, these external bodies. While the State Archives itself has directly created a number of advisory committees, these are ordinarily of a more technical nature or for a project of limited duration. The external bodies described in this article have much greater potential influence than advisory groups named directly by the State Archives.

The kinds of external groups described in this paper may be especially appropriate to the United States, even New York, where decisions on resources and policies are relatively open to external influence. For example, decisions on what resources are requested or provided for the State Archives and Records Administration each year can be influenced by external advocacy at several points, e.g., when the State Education Department is assembling its budget proposal; when that proposal is being considered by the Division of Budget and Governor's office; and when the Governor's proposal is being considered by the Legislature.

- 6 The organization of the statewide assessment project, and the role of the State Historical Records Advisory Board in it, are described in Larry J. Hackman, "From Assessment to Action: Toward a Usable Past in the Empire State," *The Public Historian* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1985), pp. 23-34.
  - 7 New York's State Historical Records Advisory Board had been created in 1976, with appointments by the Governor generally in line with the recommendations of the State Archivist and with Federal regulations. The latter required a majority of the Board to have "recognized experience in the administration of government records, historical records, or archives." The Board's earliest priority had been to strengthen the State Archives, which had no permanent professional staff for State archival records. The Board helped secure resources for the State Archives by endorsing its request for Federal grant funds, by contacting key members of the State Legislature, and by drawing public attention to the lack of priority given to the new Archives by the State Education Department.
- Over the years, the State Historical Records Advisory Board has provided advice and co-sponsorship for a series of grant projects of statewide consequence, largely supported by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The statewide newsletter, *For The Record*, has been cosponsored by the Advisory Board, although edited entirely by the State Archives staff. As additional external groups have been created whose members have greater influence on particular issues, the importance of the SHRAB itself has diminished somewhat. This reduced role has also resulted from the great difficulty in obtaining timely reappointments or replacements on the Board from the Governor's Office.
- 8 Under Federal regulations, the Governor had no alternative to appointing the State Archivist as Chair of the Board. The fact that NHPRC operated through state archivists on the development of its new records grant programme, meant that New York's State Archivist was able to greatly influence the Governor's appointments to the Board. Thus, it was no accident that the New York Advisory Board was well suited to undertake the assessment project and was anxious to do so.
  - 9 Several external advisory groups were created later to foster action on particular recommendations of the State Historical Records Advisory Boards: 1) a Judicial Records Committee was created by the Chief Administrator of the Unified Court System to advise a major project to assess the condition of court records statewide, to develop disposition schedules for all of them, and to recommend other actions need to improve judicial records. The proposal for this project, largely supported by a Federal grant, was drafted chiefly by the State Archives, although the grant was to the Office of Court Administration. As a result of the project, the Chief Court Administrator issued sound schedules for the first time and created a new cabinet level committee on records, archives, and libraries; 2) a New York Document Conservation Advisory Council was created as part of another project to explore in detail issues relating to conservation and preservation, and to issue a report to guide work in this area. This project, carried out in cooperation with the State Library, was also supported chiefly through a Federal grant in response to a proposal written by the State Archives; and 3) The Local Government Records Advisory Council, the most influential and successful of all, is one of the examples described in this article.
  - 10 In suggesting appointees to the Board, the Archives recommended a membership that, taken together, met several criteria: recognized leadership in the local government community, strong interest in improving the administration of local government records statewide, professional knowledge of accepted methods in archives and records management, a respect for the leadership of the State Archives and a degree of agreement with its goals, and potential influence with key leaders in State government, especially the legislature.
  - 11 *The Quiet Revolution: Managing New York's Local Government Records in the Information Age* (Albany, NY, 1987), p. 6.

- 12 A new law in 1988 created the Documentary Heritage Programme—a statewide technical assistance and grants programme, operated by the State Archives, for non-government programmes that administer historical records. These repositories formed the primary advocacy network for this new law.
- In 1987, legislation proposed by the Governor's Office of Management and Productivity, working in close concert with the State Archives, transferred records management responsibilities from the State Office of General Services to the State Archives, which became the State Archives and Records Administration (SARA). In a few short years, highly visible improvement was apparent in the administration and disposition of State agency records as a result of improved records management advice and assistance from SARA. Supported by records service charges to State agencies, SARA's records management staff expanded from two professionals to nearly twenty.
- 13 *The Visiting Committee's charge extends only to State archival records, not to the other programmes and interests of the State Archives and Records Administration. At the same time this Visiting Committee was created, so were visiting committees for the State Library and the State Museum, the Archives's sister programmes within the Office of Cultural Education, which is one of the major offices in the State Education Department. The development of the Visiting Committee for the State Archives has had the very strong support of the Deputy Commissioner of Education for Cultural Education.*
- 14 The Regents are elected by the State Legislature, some by district and some at-large. The Board of Regents, in turn, selects and oversees the Commissioner of Education who carries out the responsibilities of the State Education Department, including those for records management and archives. The responsibilities of the Education Department are extremely broad, encompassing higher education, elementary and secondary education, vocational education and educational disabilities, regulation of the professions, and cultural education, i.e., archives and records, libraries, museums, and public broadcasting. This broad range of responsibilities makes it impossible for the Board of Regents to function fully as a board of trustees for custodial programmes such as the State Museum, State Library, and State Archives.
- 15 Several years ago the State Archives also created a separate Archival Services Advisory Committee, which provides direct advice to archival staff, especially on reference services. This Committee includes academic historians, genealogists, government researchers, a teacher, and a journalist.
- 16 As of April 1995, fifteen members had been appointed. They include, for example, the president of a major New York foundation; the former Majority Leader of the State Assembly, who is now President of the United Hospital Fund of New York; the former President of the New York Public Library, who is a member of the board of several foundations; the new Chair of the fund-raising campaign of the United Jewish Appeal in New York City, who also chaired the highly successful capital campaign for a women's college; the Chief of Communications for the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Governor's Director of State Operations; the former President of Queens College; a member of the State Assembly recognized for his expertise and interest in history; senior partners in major law firms in Buffalo, Albany, and New York; and experienced leaders in art, dance, and historic preservation organizations. All Board members are expected to contribute directly to the Trust endowment campaign.
- 17 At times, particular external groups have acted more as a partner to the State Archives and Records Administration than as an independent outside body. SARA and an external body may have come to share not only a "vision" on how to address an important goal, but also a working consensus on how SARA and members of the external group will each use their expertise, relationships, or financial resources to achieve the shared vision. Sometimes the partnership has been a highly informal one and has extended at the operational level only to a portion of the members of the external group, normally those with the most interest and the greatest influence to bring about the desired change. These "partner" members usually have had the greatest influence in shaping the views and strategies of the State Archives.
- 18 This is not to say that there are no costs or risks in promoting the creation of external bodies and working with them, even when a strong partnership develops. Such work takes political sensitivity, negotiating skill, and time and effort from the archives's leadership and staff. It requires a long-range perspective, a willingness to invest resources in the short-term to achieve results in the future, and a good deal of patience. At times it may require the archives to give up some degree of control over decisions in order to acquire the support needed to be more effective. In short, it requires archival leadership.