



Downtown Macon, ca. 1910. Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History.

GEORGIA ARCHIVES WEEK: An Event Planning Guide

June 2001



FDR Election Campaign, ca. 1940. Courtesy of the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation.

Archives Week is sponsored by the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Board, the Georgia Department of Archives and History, Office of Secretary of State, the Society of Georgia Archivists, the Georgia Records Association, and the Walter H. Hopkins Company.

Planning for Archives Week

Archives week is an annual celebration of the value of Georgia's historical records and the repositories that care for them. The theme varies each year. Through public programs, every Georgia group and institution working with historical records can publicize the many ways our historical records enrich our lives.

Why Should You Participate in Archives Week?

Archives Week helps the general public and resource allocators such as trustees, administrators, and office holders appreciate and understand that historical records have a contribution to make to modern society. By participating in Archives Week, you show off your collections of historical records and your work with your collection to your community, colleagues, and resource allocators, demonstrating the value of the records and the significance of the work you do with them. Many people in your community will recognize and appreciate your collections. Creative ideas for how to use those collections in public programs can draw new interest and support for your work with historical records.

If your institution or group regularly uses historical records as part of your work, Archives Week is an opportunity to hold public programs that highlight your work and the ways historical records make it happen. Similarly, if your business or organization creates records that in time become valuable for understanding our history, Archives Week is the best time to call attention to your role as a creator of historical records and your contributions to saving important evidence of the past.

Purpose of this Guide

Archives Week is a great opportunity for you to stage an event for the local community and to invite local media coverage. Such events can include interpretive displays, lectures or workshops. This guide provides tools to plan such an event and tips for coordinating planning and publicity. The checklist is very helpful when coordinating the many details required of public programs.

In the publicity section you will find a list of the many types of media and public relations tools available as well as tips on how to create and use them effectively. Lessons learned in this guide can be used beyond Archives Week too! Historical records repositories are encouraged to maintain good relationships with local media to further outreach goals. Use this guide to assist you in planning and promoting other events throughout the year.

Creation of this Guide

Text in this manual was adapted from the *Archives Week: Action Guide* by the State Archives and Records Administration of New York and the *1988 Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Resource Marketing Guide*, created by the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission.

Program Ideas

Be imaginative! Involve as many people in your area as you can! The following list of program ideas is only meant to suggest possibilities. Brainstorm with others in your community and in your institution to come up with other ideas that fulfill the spirit of Archives Week and that work for you.

- Create an exhibit from your collections that shows activities, people, businesses, buildings, and streetscapes. Use records such as maps, store ledgers, city directories, photographs, newspapers, and bird's eye views. Use the exhibit to kick-off a collection campaign for contemporary records and materials from your local downtown or business organizations.
- Conduct a "Look-up" contest for school children by reproducing sections of historic photographs from your collections and encouraging the children to find the items in the community. Decorative items on buildings such as lion heads and gargoyles are especially popular.
- Tape record or videotape oral history interviews discussing the history of the community with long-time downtown merchants, employees, building owners, or civic leaders. Invite one of the interviewees to give a lecture for the local community.
- Mount a "Who Built This Building?" exhibit, which shows the people behind your town's most prominent buildings.
- Ask your local newspaper to reproduce a historic building photograph from your collections each day and ask readers to identify where the building is. The answer can be printed in the next day's edition.
- Work with a local teacher to conduct a project: comparing and contrasting your downtown business mix in 1900 with the business mix today, developing a coloring book designed from historic photographs from your collections, or creating contemporary bird's eye maps similar to historic bird's eye maps from your collections.
- Prepare a "Then and Now" exhibit displaying historic and contemporary photographs side by side of the same downtown scene, building, or business. Make a public appeal for photographs of your downtown in conjunction with your exhibit.

Event Planning: A Comprehensive Checklist

Below is a very comprehensive line item checklist to use when planning your event. It was designed by the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission to be all-inclusive so that “nothing falls through the cracks.” Do not be overwhelmed by its size. Ignore the items that do not pertain to your event. Begin by answering these critical “first questions” before proceeding to the more detailed list:

- **What is the goal with this project or event?**
- **Who is our target audience?**
- **How much money do we need and where will we get it?**
- **Who do we want to help get the job done?**
- **Who will be the project leader?**
- **What liability and safety issues need to be considered?**

From this list you can establish a master time line as well

General			
	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
Budget finalized and cleared.			
Date and time set; does not conflict with any other local or regional event.			
Site booked and confirmed; rain location chosen.			
Food and beverage arrangements made.			
Insurance needs finalized. (Review rain insurance policies.)			
Safety measures determined.			
Legal matters addressed.			

Staging			
	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
Time line of activities.			
Map of site/location.			
Parking.			
Power sources.			
Location of outlets, extension cords.			
Electrician available.			
Thermostat to control temperature.			
Sound equipment, microphones, special lighting.			
Stage Podium			
Seating, clear view from all seats.			
Special AV equipment, person to test and operate.			
Musicians, taped music.			
Special effects.			
Setup and rehearsal arrangements.			
Photographer, videographer.			
Necessary lodging, transportation, trucking.			
Storage.			
Signs.			
Displays, exhibits.			
Cellular phones message board.			
Coat room and restrooms.			
Registration, tickets.			
Food, catering.			

Staging			
	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
Dressing rooms, makeup, stylists.			
Area for reporters and cameras.			
Fire exits clearly marked, escape routes understood.			
Security.			
Emergency numbers, medical personnel.			
Generators for power if needed.			
Waste receptacles.			
Arrange sound system to avoid excess noise for area residents.			
Participants			
	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
Speakers confirmed.			
Performers contracts.			
Speeches approved.			
Visuals prepared and cleared.			
Agenda for event.			
Program for attendees.			
Name tags.			
Invitations			
	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
Guest lists developed.			
Design, approval, printing delivery.			
Mailing date.			
Time, date, local included.			

Invitations

	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
Map of site, location.			
Name and telephone of contact.			
Deadline for RSVP			
Reply card.			
Parking.			
Confirmation letter.			
Reminder phone cards.			
Flyers.			
Posters.			

Publicity Materials

	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	COMPLETED
Media list.			
Advisory inviting reporters/editors to event.			
News release.			
Backgrounder/fact sheet.			
Speech copies.			
B/W photos, slides.			
Bios of speakers.			
Folder to hold the above materials.			
Assembly, mailing.			
Follow-up with reporters.			
Speakers briefed on possible reporter questions.			

Publicity:

How to work with the media

With necessary materials in place and plans underway for Archives Week activities, you should begin making media contacts right after Labor Day. Remember, Georgia Archives Week will be only one of many events during this time that must compete with important news, issues, and developing stories for the attention of media decision-makers. Be prepared to do follow-up calls, to deal with a variety of busy individuals facing daily deadlines, and to be flexible to meet the media's needs for information.

To start, attempt to identify the appropriate individual for you to work with at each media outlet you wish to publicize your event.

Once you have the contact name, mail or fax the pitch letter (see below) and follow up with a phone call a few days later.

For that conversation, use the "talking points" from this guide (see below) to explain further the importance of the event and of archives in general. Keep in mind that you are "selling" your story concept to an individual who might have to decide which article to pursue from a number of opportunities. This selection process could change from day to day depending on what news is happening, the number of staff available and general interest in the topic. You should try to show the media, from your perspective, why Archives Week and your event are so important to their readers or listeners.

You may be asked for further information in writing--e.g. times, dates of events, background on your local archives, what else is happening around the region/state, etc. Make sure you provide this in a timely manner.

You should take responsibility for making appropriate representatives available for a talk show, a newspaper interview or photograph, or other media opportunity. Understanding the time constraints on most media, make such interviews as convenient as possible-- arrange the time on the reporter's schedule, or go to the studio or newspaper if necessary. Make sure the reporter has telephone numbers where you can be reached should breaking news change his/her schedule.

If plans have been made for media coverage during Archives Week, follow up a day or two in advance with a phone call to assure your media contact that everything is ready and to confirm time and place for the interview/photo session.

For advance notice of your Archives Week activities, be sure you send out the press release in time to make the weekly newspapers, calendar listings and other media opportunities. This would probably mean by **September 15**. When you make the initial call to identify your best contact ask about how best to receive advance coverage on your scheduled activities and the media's deadlines for submitting material. **Be sure you make the deadlines.**

Public Relations Tools

Choosing the right PR tactic or “tool” is as critical as the execution. Here’s a look at basic PR tools.

News Release (see appendix for example)

This is the backbone of the public relations business. Reporters receive literally hundreds of news releases each week, so the challenge is to make yours stand out from the clutter.

There is one rule you could consider vital: *Makes sure your information warrants a release.* If the answer is yes, then follow these guidelines to increase your chance for pickup:

- Always follow the Associated Press Style of writing news releases. Your best source for these guidelines is *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*.
- Always double space, use only one side, and leave wide margins so editors can make notes. Include a contact name and phone number in the upper right-hand corner. Since you want to be accessible after sending the release, you may need to include a home number along with the work number.
- Start with a headline that’s short, catchy and carries a news angle. It will make reporters want to continue reading.
- Keep the release focused on a single topic. Write the release assuming the reader has no prior knowledge of the topic.
- Make it easy to read. That means no run-on sentences and no industry jargon.
- Since a newspaper will seldom run the entire release “as is,” get right to the point in the opening paragraph.
- Use the pyramid style of writing—reporting the most important information first and leaving the least important for last.
- Supply a “for more info” phone number for the public to call at the end of the release.
- Apply the “who, what, when, where and why” test in the opening paragraph. Include quotes that are conversational and add information. Avoid “fluff” terminology and adjectives.
- Include the name of your organization in the opening and closing paragraphs.
- Always proofread for grammatical and spelling errors.
- Keep your release to two pages or less. End the first page with the word “—more—” centered on the bottom; end the entire release with “###”. (without the quotes)
- Distribute in a timely fashion, being sensitive to reporters’ deadlines. If you want publicity before your event as a way to increase attendance, send it a month in advance.

Photo With Caption

Photos are powerful publicity tools. If you have a good, clear photo showing work-in-progress or a photo from an existing event, send it to your local paper along with a concise caption. The photo caption must explain the picture to the reader in a very limited space. Begin by making certain the caption tells the story through the “who, what, when and where” in the picture. Check spellings of names and places. Now, remove as many adjectives as possible.

Fact Sheet and Backgrounder

This is an easy-to-read piece that provides the pertinent details about your project or event. Write it using categories of information--project description, who's involved, expected results, important dates. The backgrounder is a more detailed history of your organization. It would include important dates, personnel, and even your mission statement.

Media Advisory

This is a quick and efficient reminder of an upcoming event. Limit it to one page. In a two-column format, list what, when, where, presenters, significance and photo opportunities along with the corresponding information. Like the news release, a contact name and number should appear in the upper right-hand corner. Since reporter assignments are often finalized as late as the morning of your event, fax the advisory one or two days prior for best results. Address the fax to a specific reporter or editor, not just the newsroom. Call the morning of the event with a final reminder.

Calendar Notice

Similar to a media advisory, but this time for the reader, the calendar notice is another way to make people aware of your event. Send the notices to the community calendar section of the media outlet.

Pitch Letter

A well-written letter goes a long way toward generating interest in a story or getting media to use your release. Know the topics the reporter typically covers before you send it, including suggestions on how he or she might use it and a timely news hook. Keep sentences short and hit on only the highlights. When you follow up, first ask if it is a good time to talk. Keep the conversation brief. Don't be shy about pitching your story idea, but don't be angry if an editor or writer doesn't bite. Your best hook may be to offer an exclusive story. Decide which media outlet would be best and if they are not interested, move on to your second choice.

Fam Tour

A familiarization tour to acquaint a reporter with your event can be another way to generate a story. These are best scheduled on a one-on-one basis. Arrange for the reporter to spend some time with people behind the scenes.

Public Service Announcement

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are the sole domain of nonprofit organizations and must be in the public interest or they do not qualify for free airtime. PSAs can range from a simple, live statement written out on a 3x5 card to a pre-taped radio or television spot with sound effects and music. Contact your local radio and television stations to determine what format they prefer for PSAs. Does the station prefer 10-, 15-, 30- or 60-second spot? If you're writing your own, remember to be conversational in style, include main messages, and provide an emotional appeal, giving people a reason to attend.

Print Interview Checklist

Your first contact at a daily newspaper should be with a section editor (features, community, weekend, travel). They will then direct you to a reporter. If it is a weekly newspaper, start with the editor. As part of your preparation for a print interview, pay attention to the following:

- The reporter's deadline.
- The types of information the reporter wants.
- Be prepared to offer specifics and anecdotal information to back up your statement. To help the reporter write informatively and colorfully, "tell it, don't just say it."
- Send background information in advance that will help guide the interview.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, say so, and offer to get the information as soon as possible.
- Offer names of other people the reporter might like to talk to as part of the story.
- Ask when you can expect the story to run.

Broadcast Interview Checklist

For television news, ask for the assignment editor, since that person decides what stories reporters will cover. For radio, ask for the news director. If you would like to get someone from your organization on a talk show, either television or radio, get in touch with the program producer. For broadcast interview, the rules change a bit from the print scenario.

Special Considerations for pitching broadcast news (Television)

- If you cannot offer "good visuals" to tell your story, then it is not for television. Television reporters do not like "talking heads."
- Be patient when pitching. Many times, television news reporters/editors have limited staffing and cannot commit to stories until the morning of the event/feature opportunity.
- Watch local television at all different times of the day. This will give you an idea of the format of each newscast, as well as which stories fly when and who reports them.
- Look for live interview opportunities on "noon" programs, "feature-oriented" newscasts or "news/public affairs" programs. This will sometimes get you around the need to provide a lot of visuals, and also may give you more time to tell your story.
- If your story idea is extremely complex, try to develop your pitch around one angle. Most television news stories are one-to-two minutes in length, which is not enough time to address every aspect of an issue.
- Just as with newspapers, whenever possible, personalize your story idea. For example, offer interviews with the descendants of the family that is mentioned in the historical record, or with researchers who have made "discoveries" in the archives.
- Make television pitches very early in the day. Do not call near/during the broadcast times of any newscasts.

Special considerations when doing a television interview

- Remember to develop your must-air points in simple, succinct phrases. Most times a reporter will choose about 15 seconds out of your taped interview to use in the actual broadcast.
- Watch your “ums” and “ahs.” It is a killer to listen to those on LIVE TV.
- The camera/cameras will find you. Don't stare into the lens, just talk with the reporter and ignore the technology (unless you have been given special instructions under different circumstances).
- Do not wear white as it can cause a glare. Avoid busy prints that will make the screen jump.
- For a live interview, ask any questions that you have over the telephone when you are confirming the interview. Don't wait and hope to talk with the interviewer ahead of time, because usually you are just rushed right out and into the hot seat.

Special considerations for pitching broadcast news (radio)

- Listen to a variety of different stations to get a feel for the talk show hosts and the topics that they discuss. Also take note of the length of the talk shows or segments. It shows that you have done your homework. Do not pitch an extremely complex topic to a host who does a series of five-minute interviews on different topics.
- If it is a call-in program, listen to the type of people that call in and the questions that they ask. This is the audience the host has to entertain. These are the people who have to be interested in your topic in order for a host to have you on the show. You have to make your topic interesting to this audience.
- Contact the host or the producer of a talk show program to pitch a story. Many times the host produces the program, but sometimes there is a separate contact.
- Make your pitch as succinct as possible. Show that you have done your homework...you have listened to the program. This may involve referring to other topics that the host has covered that you have enjoyed, etc.
- Do not call the media contact close to or during the talk show program.
- When you have a guest booked on a show, fax the host a written confirmation. This should include the phone number that he or she should telephone the interviewee at. This is very important, because during a LIVE show, a host does not have time to fumble around for a lost number. Also include the name of the guest, his or her title, the topic, the date and time of the interview, and your phone number in case there is a problem.
- Fax the host a background sheet about your organization and a fact sheet about the topic. Radio people love these, because it allows them to keep the information at their fingertips. If they forget something LIVE on-the-air, they can refer quickly to the fact sheet.

Most of the time, radio news departments are separate from talk shows. Sometimes, however, new directors/anchors do host longer public affairs shows on the weekends, so keep this in mind for pitching purposes. If you are holding a press conference or releasing “news” on a particular day, you should contact the news director at the radio station. Do not call this person to do feature interviews for newscasts, because most of the time this is inappropriate.

Talking Points

These talking points can be used when talking to the media, pitching a story, or giving interviews. They are useful for selling Archives Week as well as archives and historic record repositories in general.

1. Archives Week is a time to focus on the importance of archives and archival material and to enhance public recognition for the people and programs responsible for maintaining our communities' vital historical records.
2. Although the week is designated as a period of celebration and recognition, archives serve the public—and the media--throughout the year.
3. There are numerous historical records programs across the state of Georgia including libraries, museums, businesses, county and local historical societies, and civic organizations. Historical records can also be found in more than 2,000 local governments in the state. Collectively, they contain enormous, valuable information for media to:
 - Put developing news stories into context;
 - Explain current issues in historical terms;
 - Help their readers and viewers understand their local communities;
 - Demonstrate how a local activity or topic relates to a larger issue;
 - Better inform and entertain their subscribers and audiences.
4. Historical records are unique, one-of-a-kind sources of information.
5. Archivists, through their understanding or research and contacts with fellow professionals, can help media locate information about select topics throughout Georgia.
6. Media maintain their own "archives" --files of newspaper articles (the "morgue" to veteran newspaper reporters) and videotapes--that are essential to their reporting. They should consider public historical records programs as a similar resource.
7. To the eye of a trained journalist, many archives would reveal a number of feature article "leads."
8. Historical records programs in the local community often contain information that could help media "localize" national or statewide trend stories.

APPENDIX: Sample News Release

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
J. Jones-Director Anytown Public Library
(414) 555-5555

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAIN STREET PHOTO EXHIBIT SHOWS OFF ANYTOWN'S HISTORY

Anytown, Ga. (September, 2000) - Anytown Public Library and the Anycounty Historical Society announced today an upcoming joint exhibit of historic photographs of Anytown Main Street as part of Georgia Archives Week, a statewide celebration of the importance of historical documents. The photos will be displayed in the Oneida Room of the Anytown Public Library beginning on October 22, 2000, when Archives Week begins.

The photographs depict almost 100 years on Anytown's Main Street, and include images of people going about daily activities, festivals and events, and historic building and businesses. Over fifty photographs will be on display.

"Photographs are some of the most important resources in the study of history," states library director J. Jones. "They give a great deal of detailed information about the conditions those who came before us had to face. It is very easy for us to learn important historical lessons by simply studying photographs from different times."

The Anytown Historical Society donated over half of the photographs on display. Society director M. Smith said the photos tell us not only about our community but also about

--more--

our families as well. "You can find a wealth of information about your family in an old photograph," he said.

One of the Anytown photographs on display dates from 1910 and shows the prominent businessman B.L. Hall in front of his dry goods store on Main Street. "Main Street was once the center of business and commercial activity in Anytown," Smith said. "These photographs let us look at an earlier time in the history of our city, and to see how our ancestors lived, to see what they saw."

Admission to the exhibit is free and is open during the normal operating hours of the library: M-F 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m., Sat 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Attendees of the exhibit will receive a free interpretive brochure. A sneak preview of the exhibit is now available on the Anytown Public Library's website at <http://www.Anytown.net/lib/news.html>.

The exhibit is part of the annual Georgia Archives Week, whose theme for 2001 is "Investigate Your History." Archives and other historical records repositories throughout Georgia are putting on numerous public programs to show off the wealth of Georgia's historical treasures. For more general info about Georgia Archives Week visit <http://www.soga.org/aw/2001/aw.html>. For more information about the Anytown Public Library and the Anycounty Historical Society's display contact . . .

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