

**Recorder's Office Equipment Upgrades and Records Preservation**

**FY2003 Request: \$300,000**  
**Reference No: 33980**

**AP/AL:** Appropriation  
**Category:** General Government  
**Location:** Statewide  
**House District:** Statewide (HD 1-40)  
**Estimated Project Dates:** 07/01/2002 - 06/30/2003

**Project Type:** Renewal and Replacement  
**Contact:** Sharon Young  
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**Brief Summary and Statement of Need:**

One half of this project (\$150.0) covers the final phase of a project to replace and upgrade the state's land records system infrastructure in fourteen recording locations statewide. Aging and failing equipment affects the component's ability to meet its statutory mandate to provide access to recorded documents. The remainder of the request is for the third phase of an ongoing project to film approximately 6,000 historic original record books that have sustained severe damage and deterioration due to aging, acidic papers and inks, and external conditions.

| <b>Funding:</b> | <b>FY2003</b>    | <b>FY2004</b>    | <b>FY2005</b> | <b>FY2006</b> | <b>FY2007</b> | <b>FY2008</b> | <b>Total</b>     |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| Rcpt Svcs       | \$300,000        | \$125,000        |               |               |               |               | \$425,000        |
| <b>Total:</b>   | <b>\$300,000</b> | <b>\$125,000</b> | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$0</b>    | <b>\$425,000</b> |

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required | <input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased Project | <input type="checkbox"/> On-Going           |
| 0% = Minimum State Match % Required           |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Amendment                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill |

**Operating & Maintenance Costs:**

|                      | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Staff</u> |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Project Development: | 0             | 0            |
| Ongoing Operating:   | 0             | 0            |
| One-Time Startup:    | 0             | 0            |
| <b>Totals:</b>       | <b>0</b>      | <b>0</b>     |

**Additional Information / Prior Funding History:**

The Recorder's Office received \$150.0 in FY99, \$250.0 in FY00 (\$50.0 of which was for the continuation of a separate aperture card conversion project), \$250.0 in FY01 (\$125.0 for equipment and \$125.0 for the archival book filming project), and \$225.0 in FY02 (\$150.0 for equipment and \$75.0 for the archival book filming project).

**Project Description/Justification:**

**Project History:**

This is the fifth and final phase of a project to replace failing and outdated equipment in fourteen recording locations statewide, and the third phase of an ongoing project to film historic original record books. To date the component has replaced one reader/printer machine in each recording office location, acquired scanning equipment for an imaging prototype in Fairbanks, purchased a microfilmer/scanner unit and scanning station for the central archives unit, upgraded a portion of the public access equipment, acquired new plat machines for Juneau and Sitka, and acquired barcoding equipment and software to replace outdated time stamp machines in several offices. The filming project has been contracted to Central Microfilm under a reimbursable services agreement. As of August, 2001, filming of books from two recording districts (Skagway and Haines) had been completed and filming of hundreds of Juneau district books was well underway.

**Project Status:**

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This is the fifth and final phase of the equipment replacement project; it is the third phase of the book filming project. See project history above. Equipment purchases are either planned or in process for the remaining funds. A new RSA will be established with State Archives Central Microfilm for the archival book filming project for FY02.

**Detailed Project Justification:**

This project is necessary to enable the component to meet its statutory mandates under AS 40.17 to receive and record documents in a timely manner and to provide reasonable public access to such records.

**Equipment Upgrades:** This project continues the replacement and upgrade of various types of equipment to meet and ensure basic operational needs at fourteen recording locations throughout the state and the central archives unit. One aspect of this project will be to provide a backup scanning device for the central archives unit in the event the primary microfilmer/scanner sustains down time for an extended period. This would enable the component to continue scanning operations without interruption and without sustaining unmanageable processing backlogs. Additionally, most of the recording office public libraries have inherited older computers and printers that do not have the capability to rapidly display digital images as the component adds these to the records base. The failure rate for much of the older micrographics equipment continues to be very high, as are associated service and maintenance costs. Some equipment is obsolete and parts are no longer available. Funding for major equipment upgrades has been unavailable under ongoing status quo operating budgets, thereby necessitating this phased capital request. Although the component began digital imaging of newly recorded documents in FY01, the fact remains that the bulk of the historical records base still must be manually accessed through the older film and book records. Functional micrographics and library research equipment continues to be critical to this aspect of the component's operations.

**Records Preservation:** This is the third phase of a project that consists of filming approximately 6,000 original books filled with historical recorded and filed documents dating back to the mid-1800's. Because of the high risk of degeneration and deterioration due to the fragile nature of these documents and the poor conditions under which they are now being stored, filming needs to be urgently pursued to completion. Once filmed, these books will be accessioned to State Archives for permanent storage under climate-controlled conditions. Acidic inks and papers cause severe and ongoing deterioration of these fragile records which are critical to the establishment of record ownership and title history of properties located throughout the state.

This project does not leverage private sector or local funds and does not create on-going private sector jobs or transfer responsibility to local or private sector. However, as a result of the equipment replacements covered by this CIP, employees of private industry who utilize the recorder's office on a frequent basis will be able to find the information they need in a faster and more efficient manner, and this equates to significant monetary savings for these private sector companies. Creating the public record of real property and personal property transactions and preservation of the original historic records of Alaska are inherently governmental functions and the state should not relinquish this responsibility into private hands.

Cost estimates for equipment are based on current prices for similar equipment in the state's contract award manual or equivalent sources. The cost for the filming portion of the project is based on a continuation of the costs incurred in prior phases of the project, including contractual service for microfilm technician, film and processing, and packaging, handling and transportation expense.

There are no realistic alternatives to the equipment upgrade project. If the equipment is not replaced, the component will not be able to fulfill its statutory mandate to create, preserve and provide access to the public record of the state of Alaska. As for the book project, one alternative considered was to image the documents directly instead of filming them. However the imaging costs are significantly higher than filming, and would not result in the production of a permanent archival medium. At this point, having these important records permanently preserved on microfilm, which is an archival medium, is more important than having the records digitized, which is not an archival medium. Another alternative would be to do nothing, although this would be highly irresponsible as eventually these documents would be lost forever due to the severity of deterioration that is occurring in this record series. Loss of these records would also mean that the component would not be able to fulfill its statutory mandate to provide public access to recorded documents.

Maintenance and operating costs for existing equipment are already included in the component's operating budget. Since this project essentially provides replacements of existing equipment, the maintenance and operating costs would then tie to the new equipment items. No new funding would be required. The book filming project will eventually result in lease cost savings as the state would require less floor space for recording offices once all the books are filmed.

**Project Benefits**

The scanning and public access equipment will enable the public to have faster access to document images. By having more reliable equipment, staff will be able to assist customers in obtaining information quicker. There is no direct creation of new jobs in the private sector associated with these purchases. However, as a result of the equipment replacements covered by this CIP, employees of private industry who utilize the recorder's office on a frequent basis will be able to find the information they need in a faster and more efficient manner, and this equates to significant monetary savings for these private sector companies.

This filming project will benefit the state by preserving on microfilm hundreds of thousands of documents which could otherwise be lost forever due to deterioration and poor storage conditions. The original books, after being filmed, would then be transferred to State Archives for permanent storage under climate-controlled conditions. The filming will free up storage space in fourteen recording offices statewide, thus reducing lease expenses for the state in an amount estimated at \$50,000 per year. Filming will improve customer service by providing a usable retrievable media for producing copies of these historical documents. Finally, filming will save staff time in searching through thousands of old books and manually photocopying documents pursuant to customer requests.

Filming the historic books and replacement of outdated and malfunctioning equipment won't result in new revenues for the state. However, it will enable the public to find the information they need in a faster and more efficient manner, thus reducing the time demands on recording staff to assist customers with problematic equipment or research tools. Immeasurable savings to the citizens of the state of Alaska would be gained by the creation of a permanent archive media to replace the non-existent or poor quality film media and rapidly deteriorating historic record books so critical to the establishment of private land titles within the state

**Specific Spending Detail:**

Contractual Services - \$100.0 - filming project  
Supplies - \$ 50.0 - filming project  
Equipment - \$150.0 - equipment project

The project includes acquisition of a high-end scanner for the central archives unit. This unit will serve as a backup scanner in the event the primary microimager is down for an extended period of time. This scanner will also be used for other purposes in the administrative and archive units. Cost is estimated at \$20.0.

Five recording offices (Sitka, Bethel, Nome, Homer and Kodiak) will each receive a new multi-functional digital copier to replace single function photocopiers. Each unit functions as a copier, fax machines, and network scanner, thereby replacing three separate pieces of equipment with one. Cost estimate is \$60.0 based on an individual price of \$12.0.

This phase of the replacement project will enable the component to complete the upgrade of computers and printers in all public access areas at recording offices statewide. Six laser printers will be purchased with one going to each multi-staff recording office. In addition, ten new computers will be purchased and distributed as follows: three for UCC Central; two for Anchorage and one each for Fairbanks, Palmer, Kenai, Ketchikan, and Juneau. Cost is estimated to be \$12.0 for laser printers \$20.0 for the computers. This is based on a per unit cost of \$2.0.

Additional equipment purchases include an archive writer machine (cost estimate \$15.0), a quality control station for the archives unit (cost estimate \$3.0) and a film digitizer to decrease reliance on costly micrographics reader/printer machines (cost estimate \$20.0).

The component has contracted with State Archives (Central Microfilm) for this filming project. This project entails the inventory and packaging of historical books in fourteen recording offices; shipment to Juneau by a contracted transportation firm; purchase of silver halide film; creation of archive media including one archival silver master, one working silver master, and silver duplicate film from the silver master for each office's library facility; shipment of the duplicate film to the outlying area offices; database documentation of the documents; the packaging and shipment of the original books to State Archives for permanent storage, along with the archival silver master; and the shipment of the working silver master for off-site storage in Anchorage.

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State Archives is dedicating one full-time microfilm technician to this ongoing film project. Costs include \$80.0 for contractual services for filming; \$20.0 for packaging, handling, transportation, hazards inventory, and accessioning; and \$50.0 for film and processing.

**Project Support:**

Major users of the recording system (including financial institutions, title companies, and real estate and mining industries) support the component's efforts to improve equipment and upgrade technology in recording offices. There is significant user support for creation of a stable medium to reproduce the valuable historical records.

**Project Opposition:**

The component is not aware of any public opposition to this project.