

To: CHG
Fr: Susan B.
Re: Historical Town Records
Date: June 19, 2007

The planning for this is still in at a very preliminary stage, but I wanted to give you a heads up and to see if certain elements might be appropriate for inclusion in our committee's request for consultation services.

The Library and the Town Clerk's office have been engaged in discussions for the past several months about how the two departments might best collaborate around our shared responsibilities concerning the town's archival materials. Last Tuesday we convened a brainstorming session with an array of Lincoln's other historical stewards, including representatives from the Cemetery Commission, the Lincoln Historical Society, FOMA, the Lincoln Minute Men, the Lincoln Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission, the Lincoln Review, the Board of Selectmen, and the Lincoln 250th Committee.

Two clear notes were sounded by those assembled, and I would characterize them this way: (1) an almost universal desire to see our school system(s) institutionalize the inclusion of local history elements in the curriculum, and (2) a similar yearning for a comprehensive, on-going, readily accessible method of cataloging, storing and retrieving historic town records over the internet.

While we don't yet know what model(s) might best serve this latter objective, we do know that such an effort needs to include a records management system (to oversee the indexing, storage and ultimate disposition of official town records); an on-line research capacity (e.g., digitized records linked to new or existing databases); as well as a more traditional archival unit, with adequate staffing and storage.

It is in regard to this second element, what we've called the "on-line research capacity," that expert assistance is needed. What software and what methodologies should we use? If we scan documents, how readily can they be searched? Do we use OCR [optical character recognition]? What are the existing databases to which we might want to link the town's various collections? At what cost? In what format?

If CHG were to deem such an approach worthy of exploration, is it appropriate and would it be willing to seek some such technological evaluation services from the CLRP consultant?

Food for thought. See you in the morning, and in the evening.