



September 18, 2012

Governor Nathan Deal  
206 Washington Street  
Suite 203, State Capitol  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Deal:

As Presidents of Georgia’s Council of Media Organizations (GaCOMO), comprised of the Georgia Association for Instructional Technology, the Georgia Library Association and the Georgia Library Media Association, with almost 1,800 combined members from archives and libraries of all types across our state, we are concerned and saddened by the announcement last week that the Georgia Archives will be closed to the public (except for very limited appointments) on November 1, 2012. We believe that Secretary of State Brian Kemp’s decision is a dangerous precedent for Georgia to set. Even in tight budget times, no other American state has closed public access to its archives. As one user stated, “There’s not much point in having archives if the public can't access them.”

Staff and hours at the Georgia Archives already have been slashed (to only two days each week for public visits) during past budget cuts. Why must the Georgia Archives take the full impact of the \$732,626 budget cut that Secretary Kemp needs to find within his agency?

From the Georgia Archives’ own web page “Why We Exist” (<http://www.sos.ga.gov/archives/About/default.htm>):

- We support legislators and state agencies by providing background information and context for proposed legislation and current issues.
- We maintain records that protect your legal and property rights, as well as those of the state government and the counties.
- We decrease the liability, and increase the efficiency, of state agencies through proper records management, [storing] the inactive records of state agencies until ... the end of their retention period.
- We make historic records of permanent research value available to the public [and are responsible] for accessioning and physical processing of records; [and we] help the public use archival records on-site and by e-mail.

Although some of the materials at the Georgia Archives have been digitized, the vast majority are still only accessible through a personal visit to consult physical records and excellent, trained staff. Closing the Archives to the public is counter to the tenets of open government and open access to information that undergird the country’s democracy.

All Georgians will be affected directly or indirectly by the closure of the Georgia Archives. Faculty and students from all higher education institutions will lose ready access to primary sources for research. Children in schools will lose the opportunity to visit a place where history comes to life. One of the largest groups affected will be genealogical researchers. Authors trying to piece together Georgia history will lose one of their most important resources. Fewer books, journal articles, and documentaries about the history and cultural heritage of Georgia will be produced.

We urge you to reverse this pending decision. Find a way to help the Georgia Archives remain open to the public. Its closure will affect not only future generations of Georgians but also those outside the state who wish to study Georgia history and culture. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Pamela C. Kelly  
Media Specialist  
Alpharetta High School  
President, GAIT

Elizabeth L. Bagley  
Director of Library Services  
Agnes Scott College  
President, GLA

Betsy Razza  
Media Specialist  
Druid Hills High School  
Past President, GLMA