

A RECORD OF TRUST

If architect McDonald Lovell, AIA, were alive today, he would discover anew how well NCARB takes care of his professional Record—indefinitely.

Lovell (1895-1960) is the architect whose credentials are documented in the file called NCARB Record No. 1. The delivery of the paper version of his Record from a highly secure off-site storage facility to NCARB's Washington, DC, office in December 2010 signaled the completion of NCARB's significant effort to digitize all the Records of past and present Record holders.

The work extends NCARB's efficiency in evaluating information in customer's Records and in sharing the information in Records with architectural registration boards that grant architects the ability to practice in their jurisdictions. Digitizing of all Records is a part of NCARB's commitment to data integrity and stewardship in general.

"Seeing Mr. Lovell's paper file labeled Record No. 1 was personally satisfying and meaningful," said NCARB CEO Lenore Lucey, FAIA, NCARB, CAE. "By satisfying, I mean that we had come to the end of a long process to electronically archive all our paper records. By meaningful, I mean that I treasured the connection to the history of the profession that NCARB stewards."

A NEW DIGITAL DIRECTION

Starting in 1995, NCARB's Administration Directorate has worked to scan all key documents for its Record holders into digital images for management in NCARB's Customer Information System (CIS) database. That amounted to the scanning of Records for 160,000 individuals. Key documents for each Record scanned make up what is called the "transmittal file" these are the items most commonly requested

for Record evaluation and for forwarding copies to jurisdictions.

The "transmittal file" includes academic transcripts, academic grades, licensure registration, references, internship evaluation, history of the person's testing through the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®), and renewal documentation. By comparison, a "full record" file includes all supplemental and tertiary documents, including correspondence with the Record holder and registration board(s).

NCARB is legally obligated to maintain each Record's paper version, which totals more than 4.5 million documents today.

When considered together, the digital and paper Records held by NCARB represent its extensive and comprehensive effort for the sake of maintaining each Record holder's information and for ensuring operational efficiency for registration boards.

"As technology continues to advance, NCARB takes the necessary steps to improve the way we do business, all for the sake of the architects and the registration boards," said Guillermo Ortiz de Zárate, Director, Information Systems. "With the advent of digitized records, we take another step forward in efficiency and security of operations."

A LEGACY OF RECORD SECURITY

Creating an all-digitized database of NCARB Records is not the first time the organization bolstered its Records security. Starting in 1979, NCARB created a microfiche version of all of its Records when that technology offered a new opportunity to protect, store, and access documents. Now, with the advent of digital document tech-

nology, NCARB serves as custodian of architects' Records in at least two—and sometimes three—formats: paper, microfiche, and digital.

NCARB's latest effort to digitize Records comes with triple protection of the documents that are vital for architects to practice. NCARB's digital property is located on three servers located in three different locations around the United States, which is standard practice for organizations and businesses needing to protect its records.

NCARB maintains an equally stringent policy on record confidentiality. The NCARB staff has strict rules governing the management and security of customer Records. The details of a Record holder's documentation or file content can only be discussed with the Record holder directly (or with their designee with written authorization) or with the registration board(s) identified by that Record holder.

Increasingly, new incoming documents do not have to be scanned once received. Today, more than half of the documentation being added to Records is already in digital format even before it is sent to NCARB. Internship experience for a new Record holder is a completely digital process now. Interns track their progress for the Intern Development Program

(IDP) online through the electronic Experience Verification Reporting system, or e-EVR.

By going digital, NCARB demonstrates an ongoing a commitment to advanced practices in Record maintenance and security, and to improved efficiency in managing its services. This benefits both registration boards and Record holders.

With continued advances in digitized documentation, NCARB has long-range goals to manage digitized data itself and not just images of data. This will represent another key step forward to extending the availability of Records' information and efficiency of Record services. In time, this will allow NCARB to provide statistical analysis of its performance and show benchmarks and trends in the profession comparing, for instance, 1945 to 1960 to 1994 to 2011.

"We are fast advancing from a place of reliance on paper and even images of that paperwork to a place of structured data integration and analysis," said Ortiz de Zárate.

"At NCARB, every Record holder's documentation is valued, maintained, and archived in the same advanced way as is Record No. 1, belonging to architect McDonald Lovell," Lucey said. **DC**

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