



# News Release

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## Michael Heskett, longtime TSLAC state and local records management leader, succumbs to cancer

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**AUSTIN, Texas** – Staff and associates of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) are saddened by the loss of Dr. Michael W. Heskett, longtime head of the agency's State and Local Records Management division. Heskett, labeled by his peers as the "Father of Texas Local Government Records Management," died of cancer on Friday, April 10, 2009.

Dr. Heskett worked for TSLAC for over 26 years and stepped down from his duties on February 28. The agency's commissioners honored him with a TSLAC Resolution on March 31 in Houston. He also received a certificate of recognition from the Legislative Budget Board for exceptional service to the State of Texas, as well as a Texas House of Representatives concurrent resolution (H.C.R. No. 98) for his work at the commission.

"He is one of a kind and was one of the most unique human beings that I have ever been associated with," said Peggy D. Rudd, TSLAC director and librarian. "His contribution to the state is unparalleled."

His colleagues refer to him as the "Father of Texas Local Government Records Management" because he drafted the Local Government Records Act of 1989 and modernized the state agency records management laws in 1997. He was the principle author of the local government records retention schedules issued by the commission and of other administrative rules governing the management and disposition of local government records.

Heskett joined the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in 1983 under a personal service contract to develop the *Texas Municipal Records Manual*. His contract was extended to revise the *Texas County Records Manual*, and then he was hired full-time in 1986. In 1989, his position changed to manage the research and development of records retention standards for all local governments.

"He is the father of Texas government records management, and the Texas records management laws and programs are well respected because of his work," said Tim Nolan, TSLAC program planning and research specialist in the State and Local Records Management division. Nolan also said that Heskett loved delving into the details and tackling large projects which he completed in a thorough and exemplary manner.

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Throughout his career, Heskett prepared numerous records management manuals, records retention guidelines for state agencies and local governments, administrative rules governing the microfilming and electronic storage of governmental records, and the rules prescribing the means by which real property documents may be filed electronically with county clerks. Heskett also took the lead when the 79<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature tasked the commission with producing the *Required Reports Prepared by State Agencies and Institutions of Higher Education*.

Heskett was a native of Ohio and held a PhD in British history from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He had a true love for baseball that extended to his participation in fantasy baseball leagues. He also was an avid genealogist and loved reading, hiking, and bird watching. He was a passionate follower of each legislative session and was a detailed note-keeper while tracking bills going through the legislative process.

His wife Julia, whom he met at TSLAC when she was employed at the agency, survives him.

“He made the world a better place,” said Rudd. “We are saddened by his loss and wish his family the very best.”

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#### **ABOUT THE TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES COMMISSION**

*TSLAC helps Texans find the information they seek. The people of Texas utilize TSLAC services and programs to effectively use information and materials that improve their lives, the lives of their families, and their communities. Since 1909, TSLAC has carried out a commitment of making information work for all Texans by providing history and genealogical services, federal and state government documents, electronic research, and library services to Texans of all ages who are unable to read standard print material due to visual, physical, or reading disabilities. For more information, go to <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us> or email [pio@tsl.state.tx.us](mailto:pio@tsl.state.tx.us).*