

STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD (SHRAB) MEETING
DECEMBER 9, 2010
11:00 AM

A meeting of the State Historical Records Advisory Board was held on December 9 in Room G-24 of the State Museum Building. The following board members attended: Lee Arnold, Michael Dabrichus, James Gerencser, Susan Hamburger, David Haury, June Lloyd, Heidi Mays, and Pamela Whitenack. PHMC staff who attended were: David Shoff, Susan Hartman, George Ellis, Linda Ries, Joshua Stahlman, and Teresa Clouser. Absent were board members James Beidler, Douglas Hill, and Laurie Rofini.

CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Haury at 11:00 AM who welcomed all attending members. Dr. Haury extended an invitation to take members over to the Archives after the meeting to get a sneak-peek at the renovations which are in progress. Ms. Ries also offered members a tour of the William T. Clarke exhibit, "Wood on Glass." Mr. Clarke photographed Pennsylvania's lumber region from 1910-1920. The State Museum's new mastodon exhibit will be in place by the time the board meets again and staff will offer tours to members at that time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 17, 2010 MEETING

The minutes of the June 17, 2010 meeting were reviewed; Dr. Hamburger noted that four corrections needed to be made: Ms. Hamburger has the title of Doctor, the full name of AASLH was incorrect, Kathleen Roe's last name was spelled incorrectly, and Casey's needed to have the "s" dropped. There was a motion to accept the minutes with the noted corrections by Ms. Whitenack, and Dr. Hamburger seconded the motion. All were in favor of approving the minutes with the noted corrections.

PROGRESS OF ITINERANT ARCHIVIST PROJECT AND STATES ARCHIVES' PROJECTS

Mr. Ellis informed the board that Heather Heckman, Itinerant Archivist, welcomed a new son, Ben, to the family in October and that the third year of the Itinerant Archivist project was officially approved by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) on August 24, 2010. Six counties applied for assistance this time around and all six will be accommodated. Before maternity leave, Ms. Heckman worked with Cumberland County which was interested in having records policies in place. Beginning in January, Ms. Heckman will work first with Luzerne County followed by Adams, Northumberland, Clinton, and Potter Counties. Mr. Ellis noted that Luzerne County has been in the news these past few months because of storage space issues and other problems. He and Ms. Hartman have visited the county several times in the recent past to give records management advice.

Dr. Haury commented that Pennsylvania's Itinerant Archivist project is now being considered a model program and is spreading across the country. The project was actually modeled on Georgia's program, but Pennsylvania's involves a much longer timeframe of six to eight weeks in each locale, whereas Georgia's itinerant archivist spent a few days in each location. Ms. Heckman's high level of skills and on-the-ground experience are proving to be very helpful to the counties.

Ms. Whitenack wondered where the county programs stood a year later after their experience with Ms. Heckman. Ms. Hartman stated that Ms. Heckman had been helping some of the counties apply for grants, but then funding for PHMC grants was wiped out last year. Mr. Ellis said that Ms. Heckman instilled county staff with a much greater awareness of archival issues and records management. Mr. Shoff noted that Ms. Heckman meets with all county commissioners as well so that they are aware of their own archival and records management issues and needs. Each county also contributes \$2,500 to the project so each has a vested interest in the success of the program.

Mr. Ellis and Mr. Stahlman traveled to Connecticut this past August to be trained to deliver a web-based course, Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records (IPER), developed by the Council of State Archivists (CoSA). The basis of the course is to teach records managers how to identify and protect essential records (vital records) and how to create a disaster response plan. The course will consist of four 1.5 hour sessions. Audrey Ellen Gaines, from the Office of Administration, also attended the training. The plan is to wait until Governor-elect Tom Corbett takes office before the course is rolled out to State employees.

The first course is scheduled for January 11, 13, 18, and 20 and is being offered to the constituents of the PA Boroughs Association and the PA State Association of Township Supervisors, with seats still available. The cost is only the charge for the long-distance call. Continuing educations credits are also being offered at the completion of the course.

Mr. Stahlman announced that he, Ms. Ries, and Mr. Ellis are planning on conducting four more Archives Without Tears workshops in 2011. Locations and dates are: Beaver County Historical Research and Landmarks Foundation, April 5-6; Historical Society of Pennsylvania, May 10-11; Bradford County Historical Society, June 7-8; and one tentatively for the Harrisburg local area, date and location to be determined. Mr. Stahlman explained that day one of the workshops focuses on archival basics "A to Z" and during day two, Ms. Ries discusses photographic media while he and Mr. Ellis teach disaster preparedness and response. At the workshops in 2009 and 2010 there were over 228 attendees representing 163 organizations (mostly local historical societies). Those workshops were conducted in Erie, Somerset, Harrisburg/Middletown, Westmoreland County, Lycoming County, and Chester County and were very successful. The cost to attend the workshops is a nominal fee of \$15 since the vast majority of the expenses are covered by grant funds. Organizations are contacting staff to offer free facility space if a workshop is conducted in their area.

Ms. Ries gave the board an update on the NHPRC funded basic processing grant project in which archivists Amanda Ashour and Amy Noll were hired to process 26,000 cubic feet of backlogged archival material at the PA State Archives over an eighteen-month period. Objectives of the project are: 1) to assign series titles and numbers to unprocessed accessions; 2) to create series descriptions of the unprocessed material; 3) confirm the correct shelf locations for all materials; and 4) to streamline the approval and accessioning process. Weekly meetings of all project staff were held during the last five months which have proved to be very useful. About half of the material can be processed without any trouble; however, much of the material is very disorganized; requires new housing, and will need further attention. Some of the material needs to be deaccessioned and the first meeting on this topic was held last week. If the State Library has duplicates of some of the records, deaccessioning might be an option. Eighty-three cubic feet of space was created in the tower when some of this material was consolidated and re-boxed. To stay on track with the original timeframe of the project, the goal was to write twenty series descriptions per week; however,

because of problems staff is encountering, realistically only about twenty series descriptions are being examined each week. The project will end in June of 2012.

REVIEW OF NHPRC GRANT PROPOSALS

Dr. Haury asked if any board member needed to recuse himself or herself from the following discussions, but all stayed and participated.

Pennsylvania State Hospital – Board members commented that the application demonstrated a lack of knowledge of current cataloging standards; was outdated; the description of the records was minimal, buried, difficult to discern, and did not distinguish between volumes and loose records in their overall scope, as the latter take significantly longer to process. Further comments included that the author did not seem to be professionally trained in archival standards and that the application demonstrated a poor utilization of time as arranging and describing minutes is not a drawn out affair.

Other comments were that the application needs to convey a compelling reason for folder level processing and failed to do so, and, further that there is no plan to eliminate backlogs and the budget request for 20,000 folders was excessive. Others noted that conservation services were being requested even though it is unknown, at this time, if the services would actually be needed.

There was some difference in opinion on the level of significance of the records. One suggested that the collection is more of local or regional significance as opposed to national while another thought the materials are of national significance as the records represent the first Pennsylvania hospital as well as the first organized in the nation.

Several members suggested they first pursue a basic processing grant to better assess the materials, related conservation needs, and what would warrant detailed processing.

As for strengths, a member pointed out the significance of Thomas Kirkbride, the Kirkbride Plan, patient photographs, and the potential of the records as teaching tools while another mentioned the significance that the collection has remained in the same building, never moving, which affords a level of continuity, and minimizes lost records.

The board asked if they had received NHPRC funding previously, which Mr. Shoff and Mr. Ellis verified, but specified that it was not a basic processing project for this particular collection. Dr. Haury noted that the applicant has received funding from NHPRC twice previously.

Mr. Shoff pointed out that this was the only detailed processing project applied for by a Pennsylvania institution. A board member suggested it important to retain integrity in the selection process. Dr. Haury mentioned that the topic of integrity was discussed by NHPRC staff, and that boards need to be critical or SHRAB reviews could be disregarded.

Mr. Shoff pointed out that applicants would receive comments from NHPRC staff, the SHRAB, and other reviewers and then have two to three weeks to make revisions. The board suggested that the proposal be rejected.

Discussion shifted to the Michener Museum's application --- Board members comments: the budget is confusing in regards to salaries and wages; the composition of the artist files is unclear; further clarification is needed for other collections that are mentioned; they seem to be requesting item level supplies for a basic processing project; the institutional archives seems to be secondary in the proposal; the significance of the project seems to be regional rather than national; the misuse of terms demonstrated a lack of understanding; and there seemed to be little evidence supporting sustainability after the project is finished. On the positive side, the museum realizes that it must pursue archival processing. Funding for this project is not being recommended.

Discussion shifted to the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania's application --- Board members comments: Strong application. Pilot projects conducted before the submission of the application were good. However, the budget section needs a lot of work; no plan on addressing the backlogs after the project; not enough information is conveyed about the collections; requesting funds for travel is unacceptable. The proposal is a major improvement over previous submissions; however, the board still does not recommend funding for this project.

CONSIDERATION OF THE NEW SNAP GRANT

Mr. Shoff explained to the board members that recent and past SNAP grant funds have been used to pay for board travel to Harrisburg meetings, Archives Without Tears (AWOT) workshops, and the annual Archives and Records Management seminar. The upcoming SNAP grant submission deadline is in the spring, but the funds would be received in 2012. Does the board have any other suggestions as to what to do with funds that would be received? The funds must be used for educational outreach. There are two levels of funding: basic SHRAB administrative costs up to \$20,000 and then an additional \$50,000 could be available for statewide initiatives beyond basic administrative costs.

Dr. Hamburger suggested one possible use would be to fund some grant writing workshops. Or, another suggestion would be to give those counties, where the Itinerant Archivist worked, some grant funds to go above and beyond the work that was completed by Ms. Heckman. Mr. Ellis mentioned that he and Ms. Hartman have gotten the word out across the state that if anyone needs advice in writing a grant they should call and ask them for help. Ms. Hartman stated however, that NHPRC is reluctant to give out grant funds to small organizations because of the fact that many do not have professional staff on board. Ms. Lloyd agreed and noted that many medium-sized organizations are also run by volunteers and interns.

Ms. Whitenack thought to expand upon the AWOT workshops which are geared towards helping small historical societies staffed by volunteers. Ms. Ries stated that many historical societies are making requests for hands-on conservation training. Perhaps the AWOT workshops could be expanded to include this level of training. Dr. Hamburger asked if archival supply samples were part of the workshops and suggested that staff contact the vendor, Gaylord, for free supply kits to hand out as part of the workshop. Mr. Stahlman replied that supply catalogs, disaster wheels, CDs, folder samples, etc. are distributed at the workshops. Ms. Lloyd thought the AWOT expansion sounded like a good idea.

Ms. Ries asked if the Itinerant Archivist program could be expanded to include historical societies, but Ms. Hartman replied that the reason counties were chosen was because there are only sixty-

seven of them, whereas local historical societies are simply too numerous and the logistics would be much harder to establish.

Mr. Shoff asked the board to email him or Mr. Stahlman with any further suggestions or ideas.

REPORT FROM THE STATE ARCHIVIST

Dr. Haury stated that the meeting in Washington, DC with NHPRC staff on November 19 found members to be in low spirits over the federal budget and the failure of the commission to be reauthorized. The importance of reauthorization is high because any US legislator can request to have funding eliminated to a program that is not reauthorized; however, the US Department of State hasn't been authorized for the last fifty years and it still retains funding. Still, members are worried because of the economic climate. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is expecting a 9.8% cut in its budget. NHPRC is planning a retreat in February to look at all program categories for 2012; some might be eliminated if there are fewer resources. NHPRC is also concerned about too much competition and smaller organizations just giving up and not even bothering to try to compete for funds. So far the NHPRC has ninety proposals asking for \$12 million, but there is only \$4 million to give out. This was the first meeting in four or five years where the commission could not follow all staff recommendations for funding. The proposal submitted by the Society of American Archivists was criticized and not funded.

Dr. Haury said the Archivist of the United States is a supporter of NHPRC, but also noted that a representative from Utah introduced a bill that requires NHPRC to fund only federal archives, which is the exact opposite of its current mission.

Dr. Haury said that State Archives staff is still working on reining in Governor Rendell's papers. Many records are coming to the State Archives even though Pennsylvania law does not mandate that the governor turn over any records. The State Archives has been fortunate enough to have obtained records from all but two twentieth century governors. Each governor receives funding to transition back to private life and some have used those funds to hire someone to process their papers. Dr. Hamburger stated that the law should be changed, and Dr. Haury noted that the PHMC is trying to get it changed, but the process is difficult. He noted that the state of New York is trying to change their law as well.

Mr. Dabrichus asked if the library to be named in honor of US Congressman Arlen Specter would actually be funded, but Dr. Haury noted that private groups have been lashing out against this library and the building to be named in honor of US Congressman John Murtha. The Governor has asked for \$1 billion in bonds for capital projects to be signed off by the Auditor General and Treasury before he leaves office, but neither department would sign off. Ultimately \$600 million was approved to keep current projects moving forward. There was ten million dollars slated for each of the projects for Specter and Murtha in the original proposal, but it is unknown if these have been cut. Pennsylvania's system of releasing capital funds is unique; in other states, there is more cooperation between the legislature and the governor. In Pennsylvania, the legislature appropriates funds without consideration for what the governor wants. Money for PHMC's own new State Archives building and new State Records Center was appropriated years ago by the legislature, but the Governor never released the money! As far as capital projects go, much of the money in recent years has gone to the new judicial center in Harrisburg, the convention center in Philadelphia, and prison expansion.

Dr. Hamburger wondered if the new governor cares about archives and Dr. Haury stated that Governor-elect Tom Corbett thinks the PHMC is a worthwhile endeavor and that he taught history before he entered law school. Also, his wife is on the board of the Gettysburg Foundation and will have a relationship with PHMC when her husband takes the oath of office next month. However, the state budget remains rather dismal. In FY 11/12, the state must cut 3.5 to 4 billion dollars from its budget which would equate to a 15-20% cut across the board. Since the PHMC has had its budget cut 40% in the recent past, another 20% would be devastating to say the least. However, if some agencies are not cut at all, this 15-20% reduction could translate to a 30-40% reduction for the others. Today, the Bureau of Archives and History is half of what it used to be and the State Records Center is now fee-based. At this point, there are no hints as to what will actually be cut, but the press is pushing the new governor for a look at the budget.

Dr. Haury noted that the renovations to the Search Room will result in a larger, more attractive research room for the public's use, and the archives will reopen in early February.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Ries announced that Charter Week will be held from March 11-20.

Dr. Hamburger noted that the Paterno Library, University Park, is searching for a head of special collections and is conducting eight or nine telephone interviews.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:15 PM.