

State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB)

Phone Meeting

June 22, 2020

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: David Carmicheal (SHRAB coordinator) John Paul Deley, Martina Soden, Nancy Avolese, Stacey Peeples, Adam Bentz, Ed Galloway, Jack McCarthy, Jim Beidler, John Ertell, Richard Jenkins, Caroline Boyce, Heidi Mays, Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh.

Staff Attending: Cindy Bendroth, Josh Stahlman, Tyler Stump

David Carmicheal (DWC) started the meeting at 2:02 by welcoming everyone on the call and reminding everyone to keep their phones muted unless they are speaking.

DWC did the roll call.

DWC asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting (January 29, 2020). Nancy Avolese (NA) made the motion and it was seconded by Richard Jenkins (RJ). The SHRAB voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

DWC then gave some brief updates about the State Archives. The archives was very well prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic and government shut-down in Pennsylvania (in fact, it was one of the most prepared agencies in the Commonwealth). Reference staff have been able to answer almost all reference questions from the public and only had to enter the archives building a few times for record requests. Archives staff wrote several technical leaflets and manuals on records management, teleworking, and other archives topics (<https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Records-Management/Pages/default.aspx>). Staff also contacted other agencies to remind them to preserve historically valuable records related to COVID-19. Archivist Tyler Stump gave a presentation to Department of Health staff about historical records that was attended by about 500 people.

The State Archives has also been working with PHMC social media staff to share documents and materials from our holdings online. Archives staff also made a website that turns archives' photographs in to puzzles that has been particularly popular (<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/PASStateArchives>). Archives staff have also been indexing 465 volumes of historical PA land surveys so that patrons can search individual records by warrantee name, surveyor, adjacent owner, and other categories. Several SHRAB members were very excited and noted how this will have a big impact on access to these records.

DWC reported that Governor Wolf has instructed all government agency staff to telework as much as possible even when government reopens, so the majority of archives staff will continue working from home for the foreseeable future. The State Archives is planning on reopening to the public on a limited basis in mid-July by appointment only. [POST-MEETING NOTE: Due to further orders from the Governor's Office the opening has been postponed until further notice.]

DWC also noted that construction on the new State Archives building began on May 21. An official groundbreaking wasn't possible because of the government shutdown and mandated social distancing.

SHRAB members did not have any questions about the State Archives and DWC invited members to report on their own institutions during the past few months and how they've dealt with COVID-19 and the shutdown.

Ed Galloway (EG) said today was the first day Archives & Special Collections at the University of Pittsburgh was open. They got permission to open some buildings on campus, and they decided to open the archives by appointment only, with strict rules to protect visitors and archives staff. He said it's been a challenge to have enough work for staff while they were at home the last few months and that many staff were working on transcription projects.

John Ertell (JE) said he and his colleagues at the Phoenixville Historical Society have been trying hard to stay involved with the public while they were shut down. They filmed "mini-tours" of their facility with staff that they shared with their local school district. The films were then used by social studies teachers in their distance learning and instruction. He also mentioned that staff were working on accessioning some collections that could be worked on digitally. They have held two board meetings via Zoom since the shutdown and are planning an in-person meeting soon in an outdoor location where everyone can be socially distanced.

Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh (RGR) reported on her work at Elizabethtown College. They have been collecting COVID-19 related materials (mostly from students and faculty). The response from their community has been much more successful than anticipated, and they have a sizable collection of podcasts, poems, photographs, and other types of media which she found very encouraging.

DWC then asked Josh Stahlman (JS) to give an update on SHRAB's NHPRC funding. JS reported that the State Archives was planning on holding two Archives Without Tears (AWOT) workshops this summer that had to be canceled because of COVID-19. The archives is working on developing a condensed recorded version of the AWOT workshop that will be available online, hopefully in the late summer or early fall. He also noted that the annual Archives and Records Management (ARM) seminar held in the fall will probably be held virtually as well (it is usually an in-person event streamed live online).

JS also reported that the State Archives just submitted paperwork for the next State Board programming grant for 2021-2023 a \$41,833 project with \$13,076 of NHPRC funds. This grant will cover AWOT workshops, the ARM seminar, SHRAB meetings, administrative costs, and materials like Archives Month posters. This grant cycle we also added a "Community Archives Initiative" component to the grant (which DWC will discuss shortly).

JS said the Historical & Archival Records Care (HARC) grants have been impacted by COVID-19. 2019-2021 cycle grants are in progress, but many grantees have had to close their offices (or the vendors they work with have) so many projects are being delayed. The State Archives is trying to accommodate these delays with extensions as much as possible. JS mentioned that most projects are still making progress, as evidenced by interim reports that were just received by all grantees. As for the 2020-2022 grant cycle, only 13/29 grantees have been paid grant funds so far. The State Comptroller's Office is holding up some of the funds, but we are checking with them regularly and hope the funds will move to the recipients soon. We were given approval by the Governor's Office to continue with the next grant cycle, so 2021-2023 will open for applications on July 1 (deadline is October 1). Two webinars on grant writing tips will be held on July 22 and July 29.

NA asked JS how a group would get an extension if they were behind on their project? JS said that each situation is different, and that anyone should reach out to him directly with any questions or concerns.

Jack McCarthy (JM) asked if funding was secure for the next HARC cycle? DWC said it is as secure as we can hope at the moment, and we have no indication that the funding will be rescinded. The Governor's Office is trying to pay all grant funds from the Commonwealth. The only cause for delay in opening the new cycle is that some of the payments from the last cycle have not finished yet.

RJ asked if there was any press or announcements about the webinars that the State Archives should share? JS said that PHMC Communications wants to wait to issue a press release until July 1, and Josh will share information and the press release with everyone then.

Moving on, John Paul Deley (JPD) asked about PHMC budget priorities. Since there is an uncertainty in the Commonwealth's budget, has there been any consideration about moving funds or resources from closed PHMC sites and facilities to archives initiatives? DWC said no, all PHMC sites have still had staff working at them throughout the government shutdown even though they're closed to the public. Money that could in theory be freed up by their closure is frozen by the Governor's office and can't be spent elsewhere. Also, since sites are closed, gate sales have been dramatically reduced so any money freed up from closing would be lost from no revenue.

DWC then moved on to discuss the Community Archives Project. The State Archives has been planning on having a meeting in Harrisburg on September 12th to start a dialogue with community groups and organizations interested in collecting and preserving their own history. Still holding the meeting in September is uncertain at this time but we are hopeful it will still happen then. The goal is to help communities collect and preserve on their own historical materials, or to find a good local repository to protect their materials. Some groups have reached out to the State Archives in the past and we aren't always a good fit for these collections. Many of these groups don't have as much written documentation, instead they have oral traditions, large collections of artifact materials, etc. We're planning on having speakers from the State Museum, LGBT Center of Central PA, and other speakers with experience working with community groups. DWC asked SHRAB members to suggest other speakers if they knew any in Pennsylvania. We are starting with a pilot meeting for groups in the Harrisburg area and hope to expand this if it works well and more funds are available from NHPRC.

JPD suggested looking at the Balch Institute collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Rau Jewish Archives at the Heinz Center as models. Perhaps we could find a handful of model communities/projects to hold up as potential pathways community groups could take? He also suggested the Veteran Voices of Pittsburgh Oral History Project. DWC said these were good ideas and asked other members to email him suggestions if they thought of any other models.

Adam Bentz (AB) asked if local historical societies could be involved? Would we suggest community groups reach out to local repositories in their area? DWC said we're not sure at this point but could like to have community groups and local repositories in the same room together. AB agreed and thought this would also be a good way to open the dialogue between local repositories and the State Archives too.

JS then moved on to discuss Pennsylvania historical repository surveys. There has been some discussion in SHRAB meetings about this already. SHRAB has been interested in establishing a repository database

for Pennsylvania. JS recently spoke with Dr. Rhonda Clark from Clarion University. She is applying for a grant to document all municipal repositories in the state that hold historical records. She also wants to include information on how records are being stored and their condition. We were able to share the PA Department of Community and Economic Development's municipal government contact database with her to help her project. Former SHRAB member Ben Goldman also recently completed a GIS map of historical repositories in the US with their locations shown. They have a large list of about 3,000 locations in PA

NA asked where are we going with this? Are we going to wait for someone else outside of SHRAB to make a PA repository list or should we get involved with them? We had talked about this in late 2018 and haven't done anything with it yet. JS suggested using Goldman's list and expanding on it. JPD mentioned the "HAPI Project" that had been proposed at the (date?) SHRAB meeting, its plan was to inherit inventories done in the past and updating them. He reminded everyone its not just important to make a database, but to also maintain it and put it somewhere people can find it easily. JPD doesn't think the Society of American Archivists will do this and asked if we could find funds for this to we can? DWC asked NA and JPD to follow up with Goldman and see what the best next steps are to discuss at the next meeting.

JPD then asked about COVID-19 grant ideas. He mentioned the CARES Act and that it created several large pots of money that could be of interest to SHRAB. There are also emergency federal grants, foundation grants, and Department of Education grants that could help Pennsylvania repositories. JPS asked how we can/should get involved? Or help local groups get some of these funds?

JPD also said that SHRAB has an action plan from 2000, could a group of board members use this to determine what our highest priorities are currently so we can target certain grant funds? Distance learning is important now with so many schools closed, can the archival community in Pennsylvania get grants to help provide resources for schools? How do we start this dialogue? NA and AB said they would be willing to help with this.

AB also asked if the Pennsylvania Historical Association would be a good partner to help with this? JPD said he has already been in contact with the PHA. There are a lot of good materials online from Pennsylvania repositories, but people might now know how to find them. DWC also suggested utilizing the PA Power Library's resources. Martina Soden (MS) said that she had planned on meeting with a library group about working with SHRAB on this subject the other month, but that meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19. NA, AB, and JPD will meet separately to discuss a good strategy to move forward with and report back to SHRAB before the next meeting.

DWC then asked if any members had other topics or announcements to discuss before the end of the meeting.

Jim Beidler (JB) discussed Stanford University's mapping website for historical newspapers. The website runs on a flash player, and since Adobe is discontinuing flash support next moth the website will be inaccessible. JB encouraged SHRAB members to reach out and help preserve this important online resource if they're able: <http://westcenter.stanford.edu/projects/us-newspapers/index.html>

JPD mentioned that the SAA Foundation has an archival workers emergency fund to help unemployed archivists or archivists facing other hardships. This is especially important now that COVID-19 and the

economic shutdown are causing many archives to furlough staff or close permanently. He encouraged SHRAB members to donate to the fund if able.

JM asked about reviewing the next round of HARC grant applications- will they be divided up or will reviewers have to review all of them? Reviewing all grants last cycle was burdensome and he hoped that that would not be the case this next time. DWC said we will not know the best way until we know how many applications are submitted, but we will keep this in mind when we do decide.

With no other business to discuss, DWC adjourned the meeting at 3:07.