

State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB)
Zoom Meeting
January 31, 2024
10:00 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.

Board Members Present: Adam Bentz, Celia Caust-Ellenbogen, Richard Jenkins, Jack Ertell, Nick Hartley, Cara Curtis, Rachel Dreyer, Rayah Levy, Bill Whitaker, Kathy Haas, Bruce Laverty, Barbara Zaborowski, Robert Stakeley

Board Members Not Present: Cathy Boyer, Molly Tighe

PA State Archives Staff Attending: David Carmicheal, Cindy Bendroth, Natasha Margulis, Josh Stahlman, Tyler Stump, Anne Marie Ickes

David Carmicheal (DWC) began the meeting at 10:00. He briefly gave a report on the Pennsylvania State Archives, including the status of its new archives building which opened to the public on December 13, 2023.

DWC briefed the Board on the Digital Archives and Digital Records Center (DADRC) which staff are currently engaged in developing with Libnova. Celia commented that this sounds exciting.

DWC also announced the next SHRAB meeting would be held on June 11 in person at the PA State Archives building in Harrisburg. It will begin at 11:30am and will include a tour of the building and lunch.

DWC then moved to discuss the Historical and Archival Records Care (HARC) grant program and addressed the lack of funding for this cycle, noting that he is 99% hopeful, and that PHMC's executive director also believes, that HARC funds will return next year. DWC explained that HARC is funded by Keystone funds, which were impacted this past year in two ways: 1. Keystone funds had to be set aside to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to support the as-yet-unknown operating costs of the first year in the new building, and 2. Keystone funds rely on real estate transactions, which were significantly less than in previous years.

Josh Stahlman (JS) then gave a report on currently active HARC grant cycles. There are currently 60 active HARC grant projects. HARC cycle "Clyde" (2021-2023) had all grant projects end on July 31, 2023. All 27 final reports have been submitted to the State Archives and a summary of this grant cycle has been compiled. HARC cycle "Dudley" (2022-2024) has 33 grant projects. 10 projects are completed and final reports have been received and there are 23 grant projects still underway. A call for extensions was recently issued for projects that had unforeseen delays, final projects are scheduled to end by May 31, 2024. HARC cycle "Edna" (2023-2025) has 37 grant projects still underway. Second interim reports will be due on May 31, 2024 and final projects are scheduled to be completed by May 31, 2025.

With no questions about the HARC grant program, DWC moved on to discuss the Empowered History (EH) grant program for community-led archives. Tyler Stump (TS) gave an overview of the grant program and its current status. Today (January 31) is the deadline for applications. As of 9am this morning 96 applications have been received, far more than were anticipated for this grant. Applications have been received from all across Pennsylvania and from a large range of different types of organizations and community groups. A preliminary review of applications indicates that many are worthy history projects, but do not meet the grant project requirements (namely that they must be a community-led/community organization, and that projects must cost less than \$1,000 and can be completed in

under 6 months). The majority of applications appear to be from archival organizations that have collections that document a community's history, or from organizations looking to get money to go towards larger projects that in total cost more than \$1,000 or will take longer than 6 months to complete. We suspect that the absence of the HARC grant this year spurred many groups to apply for an EH grant to fund "HARC-style" projects. Though the majority of applications are not appropriate for the EH grant, there are still many more quality applications than there is funding available for right now. Many of the applications are not appropriate for an EH grant, but we will encourage them to apply for HARC grants in the future as they are still worthy projects.

TS also noted that SHRAB members Barb Zaborowski (BZ) and Rayah Levy (RL) will be reviewing these grants and will finish reviewing by the end of February. Grants will be awarded shortly after. A second cycle of EH funding will open later in 2024.

With no questions, DWC moved on to announce the upcoming Mid Atlantic Regional Archives Conference scheduled to be in Harrisburg in 2025. TS is a member of the Local Arrangements Committee and mentioned that the meeting will be held at the Hilton Hotel on Second Street and the reception will be at the State Archives building. All SHRAB members and their staff are encouraged to attend the conference which will be in early May 2025.

DWC then moved on to facilitate a conversation with all SHRAB members on two questions that had been shared before the meeting on improving the State Archives' outreach efforts and its Archives Without Tears (AWOT) workshops.

The conversation began by discussing State Archives outreach programs. DWC noted that most of the archives' current efforts revolve around archival training and education. Should the archives do other things? What can be done within current staffing levels and resources?

RL said in her previous public library work she found it helpful to form relationships with colleagues in the field and then reach out to them to participate in presentations and other speaking events. They may be more willing to speak without a fee (especially when this is a good platform for them to share their work and expertise). She also likes the idea of the State Archives getting high school students involved with and exposed to the archives. Maybe reach out to teachers and see if they could form history or archives clubs who could do work or research projects at the archives?

Celia Caust-Ellenbogen (CCE) Agreed with RL about outreach to students. She asked if the State Archives had ever participated in National History Day before? DWC said we had before the construction of the archives building began several years ago but it's been a while. That could be something to resume.

Kathy Haas (KH) suggested leveraging existing grant programs not outreach efforts- a grant recipient could come to the archives and present on their work. Or perhaps host a meeting of grant recipients to show them what else the State Archives can help them and members of their community with, other than grant funding (records, advise, etc.).

BZ asked if the State Archives had considered partnering with larger historical museums or organizations to get a presence in other parts of Pennsylvania? As an example, if a group in Erie did a workshop on genealogy a State Archives staff person could zoom in to the meeting to present. The Erie group could advertise their event as a 'State Archives' event which would be nice. She also suggested collaborating with existing historical communities in the state such as the PA Historical Association. This coming

October the PHA will be meeting in Johnstown, it would be great if there was a State Archives table there to share a display, brochures, etc. [Note: Post-meeting, TS suggested the Archives might put our Passport to History box at a table like this for people to look at facsimiles of archival documents?]

Adam Bentz (AB) agreed that a regional approach to outreach is helpful here. Find willing organizations to partner with and participate in their events. He also advised the State Archives being a place that hosts other organizations and sharing what they are doing. It would be great if groups or clusters of county historical organizations could meet at the State Archives to learn what their neighbors are doing.

RL said walking or traveling exhibits that can be installed at other historical organizations is a great way to easily do outreach without needing staff people all across PA.

Rachel Dreyer (RD) agreed with these ideas. She said she often knows what her historical society is doing, but not what other nearby ones are. She wondered if the State Archives could invite other historical societies and groups to the archives to share what they are doing, and then the State Archives can share these presentations on our social media and other platforms? She also suggested some sort of “fireside chat” program where the State Archivist sits down with an archives grant winner to talk about their work preserving and sharing history. This would be a good way to showcase grant projects and demonstrate how the State Archives is helping people.

AB also said it would be nice to use the State Archives as a space where people who work in the history field can socialize with each other outside of specific projects and presentations. This is a good way to get to know others in the field.

With no other suggestions, DWC moved on to talk about the AWOT workshop program. He noted it has been very popular in the past and has had participants from across PA. In recent years the State Archives distilled and recorded these workshop sessions into a “Key Concepts” video series and posted it on YouTube. What about this program needs updating?

JS also added that AWOT began in 2006 and originally was a 2-day workshop based on an AASLH “Archives 101” course.

KH said she watched the online videos. She noted the automatic transcript YouTube generates for each video isn’t very helpful, and it would be nice to have some sort of script that viewers could read separately. She also asked if the State Archives could share templates and sample documents that are discussed in videos (i.e. collecting policies, reading room procedures, digitization standards). She also asked for more content on deaccessioning.

RL found the videos informative but thought they could drag on at times and may lose the attention of viewers. She liked the Appraisal and Accessioning video particularly and the tone of the presentation. She suggested having tighter presentations with options to “click here for more” when viewers want more in-depth content. She also asked if future in-person AWOT workshops could be fully recorded and then made available for anyone who wants a much more detailed training?

Cara Curtis (CC) said this training is great for volunteers and others who are brand new in archives, but not for people who have already had an introduction but are ready for more advanced training. Can there be an AWOT Part II? She also asked for more advanced content on digitization and disaster response for archives.

RD suggested making modules more interactive to make it easier to stay engaged while watching. Could self-check/comprehension be added to the end of videos? Perhaps a quiz that covers major points? She said YouTube may not be the best venue for this, but having activities or scenarios is incredibly helpful for people trying to learn and retain this information.

BZ agreed with the need for an AWOT and AWOT Part II. She suggested breaking up in-person AWOT trainings into a morning basic session and afternoon advanced session. Or having the morning for instruction and the afternoon for hands-on archives work (reviewing a real archives policy, etc.).

RL asked if SAA or other professional archival organizations have new resources that the State Archives could borrow from or implement in AWOT? DWC said the State Archives does keep an eye on new resources as they come out and encouraged SHRAB members to share any new resources they come across that would be useful to adopt or at least share in future AWOT events.

AB reported a few cases in the videos where audio doesn't match up with text on the screen and a few minor typos. He also suggested having a more conversational tone in these videos.

Jack Ertell (JE) echoed these comments and also suggested using better and more vibrant images on slides. He also suggested switching between slides more often (not leaving a single slide on the screen for 5 or more minutes) and updating the digitization module.

JE asked how AWOT trainings are currently advertised? DWC said that no matter how much the State Archives advertises it's never enough. More is always better. DWC also reminded everyone that these videos were created during the pandemic when staff were limited in what they were able to create.

DWC wrapped up discussion of the AWOT program and thanked everyone for their ideas.

With no other business, DWC adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.