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Maine Historical Records Advisory Board

Strategic Plan 2005-2010

James S. Henderson, State Coordinator

Maine State Archives

State House Station #84

Augusta, ME 04333

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Summary

Created by Executive Order of the Governor in 1989, the Maine Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB) has been active in the grants program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), both as reviewer and grantee. The eleven member Board has been at or near full strength since its inception.

This plan is based on the recent 1999-2004 Plan, as revised through occasional planning sessions with the Board. It takes into account recent experience with three regrant projects, two Board Administrative Support grants, the State Archives Digital Records Planning grant, other NHPRC-directed grant proposals, and events within the historical records community in Maine.

Based on these and an extensive planning session on September 9, 2004, the Board reviewed and revised its assessment of *strategic issues* and related objectives and activities, its *statement of priorities for Board action* and its *statement of priorities for grant funding*. Most of these implicitly reflect the previously articulated Board priority of "Develop[ing] long-term management plans in historical records repositories providing for basic evaluations of collections, adequate storage, access to ... collections and disaster plans."

MHRAB Background

Mandates

The Board's mission is framed by the original Executive Order creating it, the guidelines developed by the NHPRC, and by the Board's interpretation of its role as the lead coordinating entity in the state regarding historical records. Public Law 2001, chapter 704 established the Board in Maine statutes: 5 M.R.S.A. Part 1, Chapter 6:

§98. Maine Historical Records Advisory Board

The Maine Historical Records Advisory Board, established by section 12004-I, subsection 18-D and referred to in this section as the "board," is within the office of the State Archivist and serves to encourage the preservation of and access to historical records within the State.

1. Duties. In support of its mission, the board shall conduct the following activities:

- A. Make recommendations to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission regarding the funding of proposals seeking support from that commission;
- B. Develop, maintain and execute a strategic plan supporting the board's priorities for funding recommendations and other activities;
- C. Seek, receive and administer nonstate funds to support its priority activities;
- D. Work cooperatively with other state historical records advisory boards, especially those in New England;

E. Report biennially to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs and over state and local government matters on the board's activities and on the condition of historical records in the State; and

F. Other activities it determines appropriate.

2. Authority. In order to carry out its mission, the board may make expenditures in accordance with the following:

A. Beginning with the 2004-2005 biennium, the Governor shall include in the budget submitted to the Legislature each biennium a line item to allow the expenditure by the board of any non-General Fund revenues received by the board, including federal funds, grants or gifts; and

B. Beginning with the 2004-2005 biennium, the Governor shall include in the budget submitted to the Legislature each biennium a line item to allow the expenditure by the board of any non-General Fund revenues received by the board to fund a full-time position.

3. Membership. The board consists of at least 7 and no more than 11 members who are appointed to serve as follows:

A. Except as provided in paragraph B, the Governor shall appoint all of the members, the majority of whom must have experience in the administration of historical records or in a field of research activity that makes extensive use of historical records;

B. The Director of the Maine Historical Society and the State Archivist are members ex officio and are voting members; and

C. The Governor shall appoint either the Director of the Maine Historical Society or the State Archivist to serve as the Maine Historical Records Coordinator and to serve as the chair of the board. The coordinator shall serve a term of 4 years and may not be compensated but may receive the reimbursements allowed members of the board.

All members, with the exception of the coordinator, serve 3-year terms. All members serve without compensation. All legally allowed expenditures incurred by the members in the performance of their duties may be reimbursed by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission or by other funds available to the board.

4. Maine Historical Records Advisory Board Fund. The Maine Historical Records Advisory Board Fund, referred to in this section as the "fund," is established for use by the board. Balances in the fund may not lapse and must be carried forward and used for the purposes of this section. The board may accept and deposit in the fund money from private and public sources.

Mission Statement

The Maine Historical Records Advisory Board has taken the broad view that it should use its mandates to coordinate and encourage the preservation of and access to historical records in a variety of ways. These include strengthening the organizational and physical capabilities of repositories by providing information and training to those responsible for historical records; guiding the preparation of grant requests to the NHPRC and reviewing those requests; developing an informational base regarding the condition and needs of historical records; promoting the importance of historical records to policy-makers and the general public, and encouraging priority preservation and access projects through advice, grant reviews and the Board's grant programs (from NHPRC-funded re grants or other sources).

The Board pursues collaborative ventures, where appropriate, such as advising the State Archives on its Archaeological-Archival Materials grant program and coordinating Board planning with Maine Archives and Museums, an association of individuals, organizations, and repositories.

The Planning Process

Historical Records Assessment

In January 1990, MHRAB began an eighteen-month statewide assessment of Maine's historical records. The Board acted primarily in an advisory and editorial capacity; the Maine State Archivist (James Henderson) was project director; a full-time Field Director (Janet Roberts) was hired; and Howard Lowell, State Archivist for Delaware was hired as a consultant to provide an outside perspective. The report assessed the condition of records overseen by historical societies, libraries, and museums, as well as those held by local and state government agencies. The resulting information was analyzed and recommendations were made for improving the condition of Maine's historical records, taking into account opportunities for statewide cooperation and coordination. The report, *Fading Images: Maine's Memory at Risk*, was published and distributed to legislators, records repositories, granting agencies, libraries, and interested citizens. The survey information was also used to produce "A Guide to Maine's Historical Records Repositories".

In 1998, the Board participated in the Historical Records Repositories survey coordinated by the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators. Results from the survey have been reviewed by the Board and serve as a basis for its future plans.

Maine's Statewide Preservation Planning Project

In 1991-1992, the Maine State Archives sponsored an NEH-funded effort to develop a plan to insure that Maine's valuable cultural resources would be available to future generations. This project used the strategic planning process and covered the full range of cultural material, including archival and library resources, artifacts, and art objects with historical/cultural value. The goal of this coordinated planning project was improved access to collections, better organization and understanding of collections, and a plan for insuring that the collections will be available for future scholars to study. Members of MHRAB participated in the project, and many of the results were directly applicable to the work that MHRAB is doing.

The project resulted in the publication of the general report entitled *An Action Agenda for Preservation Planning in Maine* and *Preserving Your Collections: A Planning and Resource Manual*, which is being revised as part of a current planning grant from the NHPRC.

Planning Assumptions: A Summary of Environmental Conditions

The Board, in its planning sessions, and from its recent collective and individual member experiences, identified certain elements that were considered significant to the current planning process.

- The Cultural Resources Information Center (CRIC), created in 1992 to assist in disseminating technical information and enhance cooperation and collaboration among professionals and organizations, has been discontinued, then reconstituted, as a State budget cuts come and go.
- • The U.S. Newspaper Project in Maine continues only as occasional funding is found.
- Economic conditions, grim in the past few years, show no clear opportunities to restore State support for MHRAB priorities. The Maine State Archives, through the Maine Cultural Affairs Council, continues to advocate for funds for archival grants.
- Recent and current regrant projects have increased the pool of trained custodians and has provided incentives and models for local projects.
- Volunteerism is viewed as a valuable, but fragile asset, requiring expert management to maintain consistent, useful results. Economic and demographic variations will shift the volunteer pool continuously.
- NHPRC support for regrants has been helpful, but is not a guaranteed, consistent source of continued funding for local projects.
- Apparently overlapping missions of the NHPRC and the NEH, The Library of Congress, IMLS and other organizations regarding preservation of historical records provides both opportunities and confusion.
- The emergence of the Internet, the Archives listserv, and the Maine Cultural Organizations listserv symbolize the continuing rapid change in the area of electronic communication. Increased use of the Internet demonstrates the new approaches to research strategies by scholars and students, and the need for staff training to take advantage of these changes.
- The creation of individual Internet pages for many museums, historical societies and other repositories, both by the repositories and through a program sponsored by Maine Archives and Museums and the Maine Office of Tourism, may have attracted more users to unprepared repositories.

- Greater use of historical records by K-12 and college students was noted in our earlier planning sessions. It may have been related to an emphasis on community values and local history supported by teachers and their increased use of libraries and archives. In recent years, that use has expanded with the introduction and use of laptop computers in all middle schools and some high schools.
- In 2001, the Maine Community Cultural Initiative, a \$3.6 million legislative effort to gain support for archival and other cultural projects, raised awareness of issues of importance to the MHRAB and provided an alternate source for funding historical records projects that could supplement the NHPRC-funded regrant projects.
- The availability of *Preserving Your Collections: A Planning and Resource Manual* and *Maine's Historical Records: A Guide to Repositories* on the Internet will make these important resources widely available.
- An expanding number of qualified archival consultants, supported in part by regrant projects, provides an important resources for historical records repositories.
- Northeast Historic Film provides a resource for expertise about, and storage of, moving images related to Maine.
- The Maine Memory Network of the Maine Historical Society is expanding popular and educational interest in historical records, and, through its outreach activities, is increasing awareness within small repositories of the need for improved care and of the opportunities for assistance from the Board's grant program.

Strategic Issues

These are **issues that must be addressed** as critical to the success of the Board's mission. They are divided into two priority levels; within each level issues have equal importance. Level 1 priorities will generally receive higher recommendations for NHPRC or Regrant funding. Level 2 priorities are recognized as having importance but are subsidiary to Level 1 priorities.

Level 1 Priority Strategic Issues

Institutional Development: Many organizations lack the organizational competencies and physical facilities to insure, at minimum, the safe storage of historical records.

Basic Training: Many custodians of historical records still lack the training to properly assess and care for archival records both in general repositories and local governments.

Loss of Records: Records are currently being lost to out-of-state repositories or buyers or to the dump. On-line auction sites, such as eBay, provide a special challenge.

Preservation and Access: Many of Maine's historic records are not in archival housing, do not have finding aids, and/or are in electronic format, each of which inhibits long-term access and preservation. They may be in local governments, academic institutions, private archives, historical societies, museums and libraries.

Level 2 Priority Strategic Issues**Collections Information:** It is difficult for researchers to discover which Maine repositories hold archival records and the scope and content of those holdings.

Archives in the schools: Many teachers do not have the knowledge or the perceived time to use archival records effectively in the classroom.

Electronic Records Issues: Although state government has begun to deal with its electronic records, Maine's ability to document current important issues and institutions for the future is not assured. Will organizations retain their electronic records so there will be an archival record to give to repositories? Will repositories be able to deal with the electronic records they receive?

COULD WE REALISTICALLY ADDRESS THIS? (JH)

Promote Public Awareness: The public and lawmakers are often unaware of the value of Maine's historical records and the role of historical records caretakers.

Centralized Information: There is a need for a single source for preservation planning and technical/human resources; providing information on funding sources, fundraising, and grant mechanisms; and referring researchers to appropriate repositories. [??]

Strategic Agenda - Goals

Based on the environmental assessment and identification of strategic issues, the Board established an agenda of achieving certain strategic goals during the five year planning horizon.

Level 1 Priorities

- Insure the safe storage of historical records in competent organizations with proper facilities.
- Insure that historical records custodians receive proper training in basic archival planning and management, appraisal, processing and preservation techniques.
- Insure that local government officials receive proper training.
- Prevent the sale of important historical records other than to Maine repositories.
- Place more significant records in archival housing.
- Create more finding aids for significant records.

Level 2 Priorities

- Provide researchers with information about Maine collections.
- Provide teachers with information on the effective use of archival records in the classroom.
- Create an awareness of the problem of electronic records among creators.
- Raise level of awareness among legislators.
- Raise the level of public awareness.
- Create a source for information and referral for repositories and researchers.

Board Funding Priorities

The Board will consider the following objectives in priority order when evaluating the merits of proposals directed to the NHPRC and to the Board's Historical Collections grant program. It will also consider other criteria to insure the most effective use of grant resources.

Priority Objectives

1. Provide basic archival training for historical records custodians.
2. Provide advanced archival training for historical records custodians .
3. Help local governments improve compliance with Maine State Archives regulations governing their records.
4. Prevent the sale of government records.
5. Prevent the sale of important historical records other than to Maine repositories.
6. Obtain the placement of 100 cubic feet of historical records in archival housing in each year in which a historical collections grant program exists.
7. Create finding aids for 100 cubic feet of historical records in each year in which a historical collections grant program exists..
8. Create more collections level descriptions.
9. Provide repository and collections level directories to researchers.
10. Support increased use by secondary schools of Maine historical records.
11. Encourage cooperation with libraries, possibly via the Maine Library Association.
12. Provide information about historical records directly to legislators.
13. Promote news stories regarding historical records issues.
14. Develop notices, flyers, and posters for distribution in communities.
15. Support the Cultural Resources Information Center (CRIC) sponsored by the Maine State Museum and the Maine State Archives.
16. Determine unmet research needs: what projects are frustrated from a lack of documentation or information about the location of that documentation?

Other Criteria

The Board will encourage and give higher rankings to proposals that fit within the Board's priorities. In addition to applying the NHPRC criteria, the Board would be unlikely to recommend funding for projects in which:

- the applicant has not completed long-term planning for its archival collection
- does not have a disaster plan, including strategically placed emergence materials
- the institutional stability of the organization is in question
- item-level conservation is required
- the applicant has not determined whether its collection is duplicated elsewhere and has not checked with either local or statewide organizations to see if a cooperative approach is warranted.

The Board will give higher priority to projects which:

- demonstrate a high level of cooperation with other organizations, and which reflect a state-wide integrated approach to archival preservation
- show evidence of having proper storage facilities

Issues and Goals Linked to Objective and Activities

These are the goals and objectives intended to deal with the priority strategic issues, along with specific activities that support those objectives. Each activity designates specific responsibility and a time frame for its execution.

Level 1 Priority Strategic Issues

Institutional Development:

Many organizations lack the organizational competencies and physical facilities to insure, at minimum, the safe storage of historical records.

Goal: Insure that historical records repositories have the organizational competencies and physical facilities to insure, at minimum, the safe storage of historical records.

Objective: *Create minimum organizational competencies for historical records repositories.*

Activity: Require submission of a mission statement and collections policy as a prerequisite to receiving regrant funding.

Activity: Require submission to the organization's governing board of consultant reports and final reports from grants.

Activity: Allow "organizational training" for a governing board as an appropriate grant project for repositories that justify the need.

Objective: *Create minimum safe storage conditions for historical records.*

Activity: Require a clear statement of the storage conditions in which records involved in a grant request will be housed, including seasonal estimates of ranges of relative humidity and temperature; pest infestations; security, fire, and water alarms and procedures.

Activity: Determine the Board's ability to use regrant funding for dehumidification and air-conditioning equipment.

Activity: Promote and provide grants to assess storage conditions and options for meeting minimum standards for housing historical records.

Basic Training:

Many custodians of historical records still lack the training to properly assess and care for archival records both in general repositories and local governments.

Goal: Insure that historical records custodians receive proper training in basic archival planning and management, appraisal, processing and preservation techniques.

Objective: *Provide incentives for custodians to obtain training.*

Activity: Require basic training as a prerequisite to receiving regrant funding.

Objective: *Provide opportunities for custodians to obtain training.*

Activity: MHRAB coordinates self-funded basic archival training workshops

Goal: Insure that local government officials receive proper training.

Objective: Help local governments improve compliance with Maine State Archives regulations governing their records.

Activity: MHRAB encourages local governments to apply for grants to improve compliance with Archives regulations by .[what mechanism]?

Activity: MHRAB encourages the Maine Municipal Clerk's Association to include records management training in its programs for certification by .[what mechanism]?..

Loss of Records:

Records are currently being lost to out-of-state repositories or buyers or to the dump.

Goal: Prevent the sale of important historical records other than to Maine repositories.

Objective: *Prevent the sale of government records.*

Activity: MHRAB annually issues statement with press release to support State Archives attempt to inform dealers and public that such sales are illegal and undermines Maine's documentary heritage.

Activity: MHRAB commissions poster contest in schools to design media for distribution to public places: libraries, town offices, community bulletin boards, etc.

Activity: Maine State Archives informs clerks and selectmen annually; places notice in *Maine Townsman*.

Activity: Maine State Archives posts notice on its web site regarding the law in this area.

Objective: *Prevent the sale of non-government records. (?)*

Activity:

Preservation and Access:

Many of Maine's historic records are not in archival housing, do not have finding aids, and/or are in electronic format, each of which inhibits long-term access and preservation. They may be in local governments, academic institutions, private archives, historical societies, museums and libraries.

Goal: Place more significant records in archival housing.

Objective: *Obtain the placement of 100 cubic feet of historical records in archival housing* in each year in which a historical collections grant program exists.

Activity: MHRAB provides regrant funds to place records in archival housing.

Goal: Create more finding aids for significant records.

Objective: *Create finding aids for 100 cubic feet of historical records* in each year in which a historical collections grant program exists.

Activity: MHRAB promotes and provides regrant funds to develop finding aids.

Activity: MHRAB develops and distributes information on creating finding aids.

Goal: Provide repositories with "best practices" guidance on the documentation, management and storage of electronic records

Objective: State Archives will post guidance on its Internet site.

Activity: State Archives post its Digital Records Management Plan on its Internet site.

Activity: State Archives post its GeoArchives project documents on its Internet site.

Activity: State Archives post its E-mail Management Guide on its Internet site.

Level 2 Priority Strategic Issues

Collections Information:

It is difficult for researchers to discover which Maine repositories hold archival records and the scope and content of those holdings.

Goal: Provide researchers with information about Maine collections.

Objective: *Create more collections level descriptions.*

Activity: MHRAB requires descriptions to be developed for collections assisted with regrant funds.

Objective: *Provide repository and collections level directories to researchers.*

Activity: MHRAB posts Historical Records Repository Guide on the Internet

Activity: Regrant requires use of NUCMUC reporting for collections served by a regrant.

Archives in the schools:

Many teachers do not have the knowledge or the perceived time to use archival records effectively in the classroom.

Goal: Provide teachers with information on the effective use of archival records in the classroom.

Objective: Support programs to increase primary and secondary school use of historical records.

Activity: Offer grants to organizations providing training or materials that promote school use of historical records.

Electronic Records Issues:

Although state government has begun to deal with its electronic records, Maine's ability to document current important issues and institutions for the future is not assured. Will organizations retain their electronic records so there will be an archival record to give to repositories? Will repositories be able to deal with the electronic records they receive?

Goal: Create an awareness of the problem of electronic records among creators.

A viable goal for MHRAB?

Promote Public Awareness:

The public and lawmakers are often unaware of the value of Maine's historical records and the role of historical records caretakers.

Goal: Raise level of awareness among legislators.

Objective: *Provide information about historical records directly to legislators.*

Activity: MHRAB sends notice of regional meetings to area legislators.

Activity: MHRAB participates in awareness programs at the State House

Activity: State Archives, through the Cultural Affairs Council, informs legislators about historical records preservation needs.

Goal: Raise the level of public awareness.

Objective: *Promote news stories regarding historical records issues.*

Activity: Contact news media serving areas in which regional meetings are held.

Activity: Contact news media regarding regrant announcements.

Objective: *Develop notices, flyers, posters for distribution in communities.*

Activity: MHRAB commissions poster contest in schools to design media for distribution to public places: libraries, town offices, community bulletin boards, etc. (See Level 1 priority **Loss of Records**.)

Centralized Information:

There is a need for a single source for preservation planning and technical/human resources; providing information on funding sources, fundraising, and grant mechanisms; and referring researchers to appropriate repositories.

Goal: Create a source for information and referral for repositories and researchers.

Objective: *Support the Cultural Resources Information Center (CRIC) sponsored by the Maine State Museum and the Maine State Archives.*

Activity: Support cultural initiatives proposed to the legislature by the Cultural Affairs Council and associated cultural agencies.

Activity: Provide basic information on archival issues and problems to CRIC for its use in responding to questions.

Objective: *Determine unmet research needs: what projects are frustrated from a lack of documentation or information about the location of that documentation?*

Activity: Encourage the State Archives and MAM to conduct a survey or other inquiry to determine these needs.

Communication and Evaluation

Distribution to Constituencies

Copies of the Strategic Plan will be circulated to the Board of Maine Archives and Museums and to the Directors of the State Cultural Agencies (the Library, Museum, Historic Preservation Commission, and Arts Commission), the Maine Humanities Council, and the Maine Historical Society. Availability of the plan will be publicized through the MAM newsletter, and copies will be distributed at Board meetings, which are open to the public. The Plan will be posted on the Archives Internet Web site.

Evaluation

The Board will conduct an annual overview evaluation of the Strategic Plan, and will hold a more in-depth review session every even numbered year to make revisions to the Plan. Specifically, the evaluation should include an accounting of how well specific objectives have been met.

Priority Objectives and Outcome Measures

1. Provide basic archival training for historical records custodians
Number of custodians completing basic archival training.
2. Provide advanced archival training for historical records custodians.
Number of custodians completing advanced archival training.
3. Encourage the Maine State Archives to help local governments to improve compliance with regulations governing their records.
Number of local governments improving compliance with regulations.
4. Prevent the sale of government records.
5. Prevent the sale of non-government records other than to Maine repositories.
6. Obtain the placement of 100 cubic feet of historical records in archival housing in each year in which a historical collections grant program exists.
Number of cubic feet of historical records placed in archival housing
7. Create finding aids for 100 cubic feet of historical records in each year in which a historical collections grant program exists.
Number of cubic feet of historical records for which finding aids have been produced
8. Create 30 more collection level descriptions.
Number of collection-level descriptions created
[Recent regrant requirements that projects produce a NUCMC collection description has resulted in over 70 collection descriptions becoming available in that system.]
9. Provide repository and collections level directories to researchers.
10. (Maine Memory)
11. Encourage cooperation with libraries, possibly via the Maine Library Association

Number of new cooperative programs between non-library repositories and libraries

12. Provide information about historical records directly to legislators.

Number and title of reports to the legislature

13. Promote news stories regarding Maine historical records issues.

Number of documented news stories regarding Maine historical records issues

14. Distribute notices, flyers, and posters regarding Maine historical records issues in communities.

Number of items regarding Maine historical records issues distributed.

15. Support the Cultural Resources Information Center (CRIC) sponsored by the Maine State Museum and the Maine State Archives.

Examples of support for CRIC

16. Determine unmet research needs: what projects are frustrated from a lack of documentation or information about the location of that documentation?

Number of people providing comments on unmet research needs