

Strategic Long Range Plan

Mission Statement

- Encourage the support of professional archival programs in the state.
- Encourage programs that preserve or improve access to records.
- Heighten awareness of records issues throughout the state.
- Establish priorities for grant funding requests and overall priorities for records projects in the state.
- Review grant proposals submitted to NHPRC and judge them in part on how they fit within these priorities.

Role and functions of SHRAB

The State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) was established in 1976, with a coordinator and board members appointed by the governor. The board operates under procedures established in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Most board members must have recognized experience in the administration of historical records or archives. Changes in the CFR in 2006 make the head of the state archival program or agency the ex officio coordinator. The board developed and approved long-range planning documents in 1982, 1995, 2006, 2014, and 2023.

The SHRAB is an advisory body, and most activities rely on institutional efforts. The SHRAB role is to provide whatever support and assistance it can to further the preservation of and improved access to historical records and to meet any other mandated activities. The Board acts as a state-level review

body for proposals as defined in the National Historical Publications and Records Commission's (NHPRC) grant program guidelines. The board provides a mechanism for regular and formal communication among the state's three major repositories if all three are represented on the board. There is a need to encourage and extend that cooperation and coordination of activities to all groups and organizations with an archival component throughout North Dakota. The SHRAB needs to raise the awareness level for records issues and to act as the spokesperson for records issues. A basic, consistent message needs to be broadcast regarding the importance of the state's history and the dangers of historical documentation being lost or destroyed. Key to the preservation of that documentation is the support of archival institutions.

The following principles outline the SHRAB's main priorities:

Access

- Researchers should have ready access to historical records regardless of the format of the record or its physical location. Individuals seeking information from historical records should be able to find the information they need with as few obstacles as possible.

Obstacles to access:

- Space or staffing limitations.
- Inadequate organization or description of records - Records of many businesses and other community institutions as well as personal papers of individuals have not been identified or preserved. Some reside in attics or basements without much consideration of their value.
- Records will not be accessible in the future if they are not properly indexed, described, and preserved.
- Electronic records creators need to commit to the cost and planning for ongoing preservation of records that will have to be migrated and authenticated each time software and hardware are upgraded.

Action steps:

- Publicize the Cultural Heritage grant program and encourage historical organizations to apply for funds to improve physical space or hire consultants or interns to inventory or rehouse collections.
- Board members will visit local historical societies and museums, when possible, to suggest potential grant projects.

Care of Collections

- **Environmental conditions** - While records may be saved from conscious destruction, they may still be destroyed by their storage environments or by the composition of the records themselves. Institutions and organizations responsible for acquiring, preserving, and making available historical records should be housed in facilities with adequate space, equipment, and environmental controls.
- **Electronic record management and preservation** - Creators of electronic records need training and funding to plan for and ensure their ongoing preservation and access.
- **Basic preservation supplies and skills** - Museums and historical societies around the state have archival materials in their collections with no basic preservation skills, supplies, or proper storage conditions to ensure the long-range preservation of these items.
- **Emergency preparedness** – Record keepers need to have an inventory of their holdings and any legal documents concerning collections located offsite and have an up-to-date list of contacts for supplies and services in case of disaster.

Action steps:

- Offer a variety of workshops on collection management, for both analog and digital materials, when possible.
- Board members will be available upon request to guide collection managers throughout North Dakota with record related preservation inquiries.

Heightened public awareness -

- Records professionals must adequately inform private citizens of the value of historical records and of the needs relating to their preservation.
- Public officials must be aware of their legal responsibilities for insuring the appropriate preservation or disposition of records in their custody.
- Other institutions, such as religious, civic, fraternal, or cultural organizations, also need to be aware of the value of their records in documenting the life of their communities.
- Increased cooperation among historical organizations results in exchange of information and expertise and the ability to leverage more resources.

Action steps:

- Support bills in Congress for supporting historical records initiatives which if passed will bring money to North Dakota to be regranted by the SHRAB to organizations around the state to aid in the preservation of and access to records.
- Support bills in the North Dakota legislature related to records management and historical records initiatives.

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North Dakota State Historical Records Advisory Board

For more information related to the mission of the North Dakota Historical Records Advisory Board, please visit www.history.nd.gov/archives/outreach.html