

BACKGROUND

Preservation of historical records is the key to the collective memory of a society and is necessary for the full development of its history, culture, and civic life. The Minnesota State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) is the statewide advisory body for historical records planning and preservation in Minnesota.

The Board promotes projects that support the identification and preservation of historical records and the development of cooperative solutions to records issues where outcome or application have potential for broad impact on the theory and practice of records preservation.

The Board is affiliated with the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), and its goals are similar to those of the Commission. NHPRC was created by Congress in 1934 to provide grants for the identification, preservation, and use of public and private papers and records that further an understanding and appreciation of local, state, and national history. In order to receive federal grants under the records program, states were required to establish state historical records advisory boards in 1973. Minnesota was among the first in the nation to do so.

Another important function of the Board is to encourage and evaluate proposals originating in Minnesota and recommend action to NHPRC. All grant proposals that fit the NHPRC criteria will be considered by the Board.

PRIORITIES FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

In general, grant proposals falling within one or more of the following priority areas stand the best chance of recommendation for funding, but strong and innovative proposals of any kind—so long as they fall within the NHPRC's funding parameters—are encouraged. It is also important to note that these priority areas are intertwined, and projects that address more than one priority will be especially strong. The priorities are listed here without ranking; all are important.

Economic and Demographic Change

Shifts in economics, technology, and demographics are changing both urban and rural Minnesota. The Board supports projects that document the role individuals, institutions, and communities play in changing economics, lifestyles, and the fabric of urban and rural life.

Immigration and Diversity

The Board has a strong interest in projects that address records documenting the contributions of those groups, defining themselves as communities in Minnesota, that continue to be under-represented in traditional documentary sources and repositories.

American Indian History and Life

The history and continued development of Minnesota's native peoples is of great and continuing importance to the Board. The Board strongly supports projects that build upon tribal archival work already done, and that promote opportunities to create wider understanding of Minnesota's American Indian history.

Civic Life

Volunteer efforts and organizations—from well-organized groups such as religious, fraternal, and service organizations to smaller groups that include neighborhood, advocacy, self-help, and social change organizations—have been identified as central to American life. Yet documentation of these groups is often fragmentary. The Board seeks to encourage better record keeping by volunteer organizations, greater awareness of the value of their records, and stronger acquisition efforts by repositories.

Government

The role of government in U.S. society grew enormously in the past century. This growth has generated an ever-increasing quantity of government data, both in traditional formats and in new and evolving media. The Board supports innovative solutions that preserve and make this information accessible.

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD AND ITS WORK

The role of the Board is to act as a catalyst for and to facilitate the work of the repositories caring for historical records in the state. The Board seeks to create opportunities for repositories and records creators to succeed in their varied missions to advance the preservation and use of historical records.

Within that framework and given its limited resources, the Board can be most effective if it fosters the development of sustainable infrastructure that ensures the preservation and use of historical records in the state. In this context infrastructure includes:

Promotion

Enhancing the profile of historical records repositories and their activities.

Collaboration

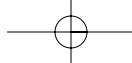
Addressing the challenge of limited resources by broadly sharing information, knowledge, services, and responsibilities.

Education

Developing communities of cooperation so that SHRAB constituents benefit from shared experience and resources.

Preservation and Access

Using technology to enhance the utility of collections while ensuring their preservation for the long term.



The Board proposes to build infrastructure by accomplishing these tasks:

- ▶ Cultivating and supporting collaborative projects.
- ▶ Encouraging the use of historical records by teachers and students by working with established outreach programs and networks of History Day teachers, public librarians, and local historical society staff to develop model projects based upon cooperative use of resources.
- ▶ Supporting the Minnesota Digital Library Project, and encouraging participation in and familiarity with its standards and practices.
- ▶ Promoting new and existing American Indian archives and cooperative projects that encourage the preservation and use of historical records relating to Minnesota's American Indian history.
- ▶ Pursuing regrant funds that give priority to support for the tasks noted above.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In addition to encouraging and evaluating specific grant proposals to the NHPRC, the Board will encourage and assist organizations requesting support for records projects from other federal agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, and from funding sources within the state, including private foundations and the Minnesota Historical Society's Grants-in-Aid Program.

The importance of historical records, and the case for their preservation, must be publicized widely. The Board encourages its members to speak to other organizations on its behalf, distributes information on its role and that of the NHPRC, encourages cooperative development and use of resources and the exchange of information among institutions holding historical records, and supports increased funding for the NHPRC and other records preservation programs. Finally, the Board monitors and comments on legislation, regulations, rulings, and procedures affecting Minnesota's historical records.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Institutions that are interested in developing grant proposals or that have general questions about the Board or the NHPRC are encouraged to write or call.

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**MINNESOTA
STATE
HISTORICAL
RECORDS
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BOARD**

Statement of Priorities

