

SHRAB Meeting

July 18, 2023

(Virtual)

The meeting was called to order at 10:10.

Welcome and Introductions

Change of Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator

Greg Crawford, State Archivist, will be taking over as Coordinator. Chad Owen is stepping down into the role of Deputy Coordinator formerly held by Emeline Alexander.

Preservation survey – review and discussion

Heather:

Surprised that almost half the responses said they had no usage tracking.

Environmental concerns – things could be an issue, as simple as getting hygrometers from Amazon would be a helpful step forward

Pleasant surprise that pest control was not an apparent issue

Needs seem to be conservation/preservation focused with grants for conservation being a consistent ask

Lori Ann:

Inability to track usage is impacting the funding that repositories can apply for

Grants for training and education were a frequent ask, particularly hands-on training workshops for volunteer staff

Training workshops on all things grant related – researching opportunities, writing applications, demonstrating impact, helping target donor interest

Zach:

Also concerned with lack of usage statistics – unsure if it's lack of technology or some other causation. Concerned that there are archival practitioners that we are not connecting with.

Environmental needs were more than expected.

General sense of security around records, which was a positive.

Sara:

Staffing concerns ranked a close second behind just basic funding. One of the barriers was heavy reliance upon volunteers rather than professional, full time staff.

The little amount of time spent on preservation/conservation by the few extant staff present was a concern.

Steve:

Not sure how many replies were from clerks' offices, but he hears similar complaints frequently. Lack of usage tracking is a common feature of clerks' offices, as is a lack of active work going on with preservation. SHRAB could help in these areas but can't do everything, so key will be prioritizing our efforts at solutions and support.

Greg:

Conservation vendor question seemed to indicate a heavy representation of circuit court clerks in the survey respondents. Good to have CC participation, but they have access to CCRP funds that other repositories did not.

Higher than expected percentage of digital materials in the collections: 73.53%

Also concerned with usage tracking

Q7 on environmental controls was notably concerning. Also frequently seen in circuit courts – localities seem to want to have HVAC systems turned off on weekends.

Next Steps:

Greg noted that there is no money for SHRAB. We can apply for a programming grant in the coming year, but the money would not be available until the following year. Are there other options for funding that we can pursue? Lori Ann noted that we had the ability to put together workshops as volunteers to help reach the needs presented in the survey. Bern emphasized that it would be important to give an executive summary of the survey and what steps we were taking to move forward to address the needs illustrated by the survey.

Greg proposed a virtual Town Hall in October for Archives Month to present the findings as per Bern's recommendation. Zach heartily endorsed this proposal and underscored the possibility as per Lori Ann of trying to connect repositories with the expertise we have available to address things like usage statistics, volunteer training, and the like. It may be that providing grants for consultants to back up their requests for HVAC improvements and the like. Heather suggested that we offer tools: an Excel spreadsheet for usage tracking, sources for archival supplies, etc. in order to hand our repositories real and immediate help.

Regarding workshops – Greg asked if the general sense was that the expectation was for virtual presentations, in-person presentations, or a hybrid thereof. Zach said he felt that virtual was the way to go for large statewide initiatives like the Town Hall, but there is also a need for some regional in-person networking opportunities and/or hands-on training. Greg expressed enthusiasm for regional, live training, and proposed adding requests for funding for such things as part of the possible SHRAB Programming Grant. Steve and Lori Ann also shared enthusiasm for this possibility, with Lori Ann also suggesting recording the regional workshops for broader access.

Greg asked about the need for grant writing workshops as Lori Ann indicated earlier. Lori Ann suggested possibly exploring short YouTube or similar videos on grant writing as a way to reach

audiences in digestible segments, possibly as part of a SHRAB channel. Greg named both YouTube and SkillShare as possible platforms for this effort. Zach said that there was a possibility to partner with MARAC for part of this effort as well, to try to get MARAC members to share their expertise through Lunch-and-Learn presentations.

Bern asked if there was a social media presence for SHRAB to help keep people in touch with each other, create a sense of community, or just provide resources. Greg noted that there was no SHRAB social media presence at this time; Zach noted that MARAC mostly communicated via email. Lori Ann noted the opportunity for SHRAB to “be a coalition builder by creating Communities of Practice,” by which she explained she meant that these would be informal networks or chatrooms (perhaps moderated) with the opportunity to ask questions and exchange ideas.

Zach shared the existence of a [Facebook group called “Archivists Think Tank”](#) which anyone could ask questions (even anonymously) and participants worldwide could contribute. Greg said he hoped [the SHRAB web site](#) could move from being a static list of names and minutes to more of a landing page for resources and connections, notices of upcoming workshops, or the like.

Zach suggested making the Virtual Town Hall into a “State of Archives in Virginia” town hall, which suggestion was enthusiastically accepted. Greg pointed out that LVA has a new digital studio opening shortly that we could leverage for this effort.

SHRAB Programming Grant for upcoming year:

Greg suggested that among the things we request funding for would be support for Archives Month, which was something that the Virginia SHRAB used to fund. Zach pointed out that the only expenditures we’ve had recently was the expense for the poster, but we could expand that to regional workshops or training if we had funding. Zach said that formerly we’d had “Archives Fairs” across a few regions that was partially an opportunity for the community to learn what we do but also partially a networking opportunity for colleagues. Greg noted his intention to apply for funding to support such Archives Fairs or other regional workshops as part of the grant. In addition, he intends to apply for funding to support Board member travel for at least one in-person meeting per year.

Greg noted that he and Chad would put together a summary of the meeting and follow up with sharing the survey results and getting post-survey feedback with our constituents. Greg proposed a meeting in November following the Town Hall to focus on working on the programming grant. Once the feedback from the survey is distributed we will assess the need for a possible meeting in September ahead of the Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24.