

Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC)

2003 Annual Meeting

Friday, July 11, 2003

Incubator Session Report

Raising Public Awareness: Archives Week and Other Outreach Efforts

Moderators: Wendy Bredehoft (WY) and Jim Henderson (ME)

Description in printed program: The strategic plan recently developed by COSHRC's board focuses on the need to raise public awareness about the importance of the American Historical Record. State Historical Records Advisory Boards can play an important role in this effort. What outreach techniques have been most effective for your SHRAB? What tools has it developed that could be adopted in other states? Should COSHRC work with other archival associations toward making Archives Week a nationwide observance?

Purpose of Archives Week

Make connection with public, raise awareness that someone is keeping this stuff

Motivation was to generate enough activity to attract media attention

Pick an issue, national story that would play at local level

Potential models

National Library Week, American Library Association

Consistent, persistent

Legislative Day every year, identify issues, go to Hill

Weekly/daily emails on IMLS/LSTA funding

National Trust's endangered buildings list

Audiences

Constituents

People who use collections

People who don't use collections but should

We know we have things that people need/want/could use
but they don't know about us

Congress, state legislatures

Traditional resource allocators

Business/corporate community

Foundations

Under-documented communities

Youth

Educational community, including students

Media: reciprocity

Feed them stories

We need publicity for issues, events, causes

People are looking for answers

Outreach/awareness for what? Why?

Need to be part of public consciousness so people know where they get information

Gaining support for programs

To get new users/broaden constituency

Let people know who we are and what we do

Grassroots support for more money

Make a difference in society

Evidence to influence individual behavior, social policy, political action

Improve practices of professional archivists (and other practitioners)

Influence decisions of policy makers

Ensure that records are preserved and set to appropriate repositories by conveying importance of record (beyond immediate value)

Convey long-term importance, anticipate needs

Facilitate documentation of many groups now not represented in collections

Education students about access/use of primary sources

concept of libraries is introduced early

Recruit volunteers to help in our work

Get legislative action

Techniques/strategies

Press packets - include both story and visuals

Anniversaries (AZ, Salt River Project anniversary funded galleries, exhibit)

Statehood day / History on the Mall (living history, visuals, bring in museums from local communities, covered in local press)

Awards

Hall of Fame (WV) - wait until retired, legislature adjourned to attend ceremony

History News Service

Bring national story home (WI, David Brinkley papers; Boston desegregation papers project connecting with Brown v. Board of Education anniversary, school records management)

Magazine (NY). NY History, for lay audience. Based on archival collections in a NY repository. Comes as benefit of membership in Trust. Also send to legislature. Has won design awards.

Local History Journal (CT). Photo essay based on collection

Association publications

Columns in newspapers. (NV – Guy does mystery buster)

Speeches – taped inside of state archives

Story telling, methodology of discovery

Cable access TV (NJ, Albuquerque)

Shoe box archives – what do you have in your home?

Join with other cultural organizations (libraries, museums) and approach legislature collectively

History Day – reach younger people, teachers, parents; participants go back into communities to show projects

Identify History Day alumni now in legislatures, Congress

Participate in Career Days – potential archivists need early exposure: Am I your first Archivist?

Input to media on issues, government

Get to media through celebrity, another organization with influence, e.g., bar association, secretary of state, chief justice, large genealogical society, first lady

Work through organizations with experience gaining action, e.g., League of Cities

In-state listservs, use to announce grant projects, other local initiatives

Friends groups

Anniversary celebrations

Speakers with high profiles who can speak about archives

Attend, speak at organizations – state museum association, local government association, and do it on an annual/ongoing basis. Ask what we can help them with?

Ohio Historical Society's website used pop-up windows – this will disappear unless you contact your legislator or make a contribution to the state archives

WY/MT Heritage Projects – community-based, also educate students about primary sources generally

Teachers (social studies) listserv

Teacher institutes – work on performance standards

Text books (aka “instructional materials”) – now using quantities of documentary materials, increasing use by students

Public service announcements (PSAs, used in Missouri for relatively low cost)

Packaging properly
Timed properly (e.g., tie to renovations)
C-Span
Tie to current events, crises
Small exhibits

What should COSHRC/SHRABs do?

Get help from professionals in media relations, advocacy, lobbying
Look at moving Archives Week to a national level
Branding – develop common set of materials with unified logo/visuals/basic message that all groups could use/borrow/adapt for use locally
Sharing and adapting materials developed by SHRABs and other associations
Use COSHRC website to post best of the best
PDFs, menu of choices to select from
Model: LSTA success stories on ASCLA website
COSHRC award for best state-level efforts
to publicize archives
best archival activity
look for models
Make the national focus on Archives Month to accommodate variations in local dates?
History Fair
Regular newsletter