

A Plan to Ensure the Preservation and Availability
of the Palmetto State's Historical Records
2021 - 2026



The Strategic Plan of the South Carolina State Historical Advisory Board
December 2020

South Carolina's State Historical Records Advisory Board

Mission

The South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board (SC SHRAB) serves the public by advising and supporting efforts to identify, preserve, and provide access to South Carolina's Historical Records.

Vision

The SC SHRAB is an active and effective agent for the preservation of a wider public access to South Carolina's historical records and serves as a model for the nation's other SHRABs. It fosters and supports communication and collaboration, as well as plays the roles of educator, advocate, promoter, planner, and coordinator.

Authorization

Governor James B. Edwards created the SC SHRAB by Executive Order on November 17, 1975 to "...serve as the central advisory board for historical records planning and for projects developed and carried out under the program in the State." The SC SHRAB is required by federal regulation (36 Code of Federal Regulations 1206) for South Carolina to participate in the grants program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) of the National Archives and Records Administration. The Governor appoints members of the Board.

Staffing and other resources for the SC SHRAB provided by the South Carolina Department of Archives & History

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PUBLICATIONS
& RECORDS COMMISSION

Introduction

The South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board (SC SHRAB) endeavors to protect the Palmetto State's documentary heritage by advising, supporting, and working directly with the historical records repositories of South Carolina. Over the course of 2020, with the generous support of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the SC SHRAB examined the current status of historical records repositories across South Carolina. This study included a statewide survey, focus groups, and countless conversations with passionate members of the archival, library, and museum community in South Carolina.

Identification of Key Issues

The SC SHRAB identified four key issues common to South Carolina's historical records repositories. These issues need to be addressed in the coming years to ensure the preservation of and public access to the historically valuable records in the Palmetto State.

1. [Access to and Preservation of Electronic Records](#)
2. [Emergency Preparedness](#)
3. [Partnerships and Cooperation Between Archival Repositories](#)
4. [Advocacy and Outreach](#)



South Carolina State Seal



Source: Carolina Lords Proprietors. Articles of Agreement between the Lords Proprietors. 1674. South Carolina Department of Archives & History. Columbia, SC.

Call to Action

For each of these issues affecting the future of South Carolina's historical records, the SC SHRAB developed overarching goals and specific strategies. The strategies are for all those interested in the future of our historical records, not just for the SC SHRAB, though the Board will play an active and supporting role wherever possible. Please join the SC SHRAB in addressing these issues. There is no better time for action than now.

Key Issue #1- Access to and Preservation of Electronic Records

Explanation: *In today's fast-paced world, researchers expect records to be available online. If their only recourse is to visit in person, they may get discouraged. In addition, some researchers do not have the ability or means to travel to where historical records are located. A lack of information online means responding to all research requests personally, which requires valuable staff time and resources. The COVID-19 highlighted the need to make records available electronically.*

Further, we are losing valuable information because it is born digital and most repositories do not have the resources or expertise to collect and preserve born digital records. CDs and external media can at least be stored for some amount of time but that is not an ideal solution. Further, many born digital records are never stored on removable media.

Goal #1- Embrace technology- increase the digitization of permanently valuable historical records

Develop and support educational opportunities for repository staff and volunteers to increase their expertise

Encourage the development and implementation of best practices for managing digital collections

Assist institutional efforts to seek grant funding for the digitization of collections (See Goal #3)

Goal #2- Encourage repositories to accept born digital materials, even if they cannot yet make them publically available

Help repository staff understand the importance accepting of born digital records

Provide training on the handling and accessioning of born digital materials

With the assistance of the South Carolina Department of Archives & History, to encourage the inclusion of electronic records management

into local and state government records management practices

Goal #3- Meet the users where they are- expand the availability of electronic records

Encourage smaller repositories to work with the South Carolina Digital Library, the Low Country Digital Library, the University of South Carolina, and other similar organizations to offer parts of their collections available online

Raise awareness of, and promote applications to, grant opportunities with a focus on electronic records at the national, state, and local levels

So you thought you knew electronic records,

That it's not enough to just have backups?

While having good backups is important to short-term continuity or recovery, they do not replace digital preservation. Digital preservation provides long-term stability, accessibility, and integrity and is vital for permanent government records of historical importance, but what is it?

- the production of reliable master files and associated metadata
- the use of file verification methods and routine audits
- attention to security and network infrastructure requirements
- plans for file refreshing, migration, transformation, and emulation

That not all storage products are created equally?

Storage mediums are built for the purpose of keeping data intact and readable. But what are their lifespans?

- Hard disks...3 to 6 years
- Magnetic tape...10 to 20 years
- Magnetic disks...1 to 5 years
- Optical disks (CD-R)...5 to 10 years
- Optical disks (DVD-R)...10 to 100 years
- Static Memory (USB, etc.)...50 to 100 years

But did you know...

That redacting digital files requires more than a black box?

When records of permanent historical value are made available to the public, those records are reviewed for personally identifiable information and other sensitive data. Such information is then redacted. But how?

- **NOT** by changing the font color in a word document to all white
- **NOT** by inserting a black rectangle over text in a pdf

These methods fail because they allow later viewers to undo the redaction or get around it. Correct redaction methods take into account not only the visible information but also buried metadata on past document versions and revisions.

That files can become corrupt for any number of reasons?

Files don't just become unusable because of a virus. In fact, in one analysis only 5-10% of file failures resulted from bugs. Files may degrade because...

- Storage media has been exposed to inappropriate conditions
- The disk system had an unreliable power connection
- The system responded poorly to external vibrations
- Data corruption may even occur because of cosmic radiation.

South Carolina E-Records Day 2020

Source: Archives Month Poster. South Carolina Department of Archives & History. October 2020.

Develop and manage a lexicon with terminology seen in digitization and electronic records grants,

to aid grant writers applying for grants outside of their everyday experience

Key Issue #2- Emergency Preparedness

Explanation: *Charleston is one of the most historic cities in the country and it contains more archival repositories than any other city in the state. Every Charleston institution mentioned fears of climate change, increased flooding, and/or hurricanes as something with which their repositories must contend. Additionally, in the last 5 years, South Carolina has experienced increased flooding and erratic weather statewide. However, many institutions do not have comprehensive disaster plans or training in emergency response. For those that do have plans, many existing emergency plans do not include provisions for electronic records*

Goal #1- Effectively communicate the need for every institution to have a written disaster plan and help institutions develop guidelines for emergency response

Provide training on basic emergency response for historical records

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS:
Paper, Photographs, & Electronic Records

Why PREPARE?

South Carolina faces a variety of natural disasters that could affect your records including hurricanes, floods, tornados, and even ice storms. You may also experience non-natural disasters that affect your holdings such as fire or burst pipes. The loss or damage of records that these events can cause may leave you unable to resume business, to provide services to citizens, to prove ownership of assets, or to cause your user base to lose faith in your ability to do your job.

Use this information to create a formal disaster plan now so that you are prepared!

Reduce RISK TO MATERIALS

- Identify areas of risk: are parts of your building prone to flood? Are you near chemical industries or construction zones that could affect you in a disaster?
- Do not house materials or computer stations near leaky windows or ceilings or under pipes.
- Are your collections insured? Do so if applicable
- Elevate computer towers and record boxes from the floor by at least 2 inches.
- Back up electronic data and store a back up off site.

Preparing FOR DISASTERS

- Create a salvage priority list.
- List areas within your institution or off-site that could be used as command centers or salvage areas.
- Meet your first responders. Have them tour the building with you to identify risk areas and brief you on their procedures. Brief them on your priorities in case of disaster.
- Maintain an (off-site) inventory of computer towers that includes serial numbers and staff assignments.
- Designate responsible staff to emergency tasks and have a phone tree so that essential staff can be contacted.
- Locate turn offs (water, gas, etc.) and fire extinguishers

EMERGENCY WEATHER

In case of imminent advanced warning, consider removing the materials to another county for the duration of the disaster.

- Power down computer equipment and disconnect it from the electrical supply - power surges and short-circuits can destroy hard drives!
- Move hardware away from windows and cover with plastic trash bags or taped down plastic sheeting. Consider moving hardware to an upper floor or higher elevation if your facility is prone to flooding.

For further tips, tricks, & useful information, check out the Northeast Document Conservation Center at www.nedcc.org. The Center can direct you to other resources and teams for individualized disaster preparation help.

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Source: Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Leaflet, page 1 of 5. South Carolina Department of Archives & History.

Encourage existing emergency preparedness plans to be amended to include strategies for electronic records

In partnership with the South Carolina Department of Archives & History, raise awareness of SCDAH's resources on disaster planning and response

Key Issue #3- Partnerships and Cooperation between Historical Repositories

Explanation: *Too often, historical repositories feel isolated and separated from other institutions. There are statewide associations in South Carolina that encourage and sponsor professional exchanges, but SC SHRAB can play an important role in encouraging and supporting partnerships and active collaborations between historical repositories, especially in times of crisis. Staff members should be encouraged to ask the larger community when problems arise and know where to go for assistance.*

Many museums maintain archival collections, just as many archives/libraries have some historical artifacts. Many museums need expanded training for collections processing and handling.

Goal #1- Assuage the feelings of helplessness and panic that often arise when problems occur

Distribute and maintain the South Carolina Historical Repository Directory in order to facilitate communication between institutions

Collate and manage a list of local and regional professionals in various areas related to archival management. (For example: disaster response, digitization, collections management, etc.)

Facilitate and sponsor virtual networking events between institutions to foster professional relationships and an open exchange of ideas between staff members

Goal #2- Expand knowledge of collections handling and processing

Encourage repository staff and volunteers to broaden their scopes of knowledge

Provide resources and training in collections handling and overlapping/related areas

Goal #3- Increase access to grants by encouraging partnerships, both with the SC SHRAB and between the institutions themselves

Increase the awareness of grants available to South Carolina repositories, specifically NHPRC grants (See Issue #4, Goal #4)

Connect repositories with overlapping collections to each other and encourage collaborative projects

Provide grant writing assistance in the form of training and proof-reading support

Key Issue #4- Advocacy and Outreach

Explanation: *Many smaller institutions, and sometimes the larger institutions, struggle with people not knowing they exist. Much less where they are located and what information their collections have to offer. Many repositories struggle with outreach and are unable to advocate for themselves.*

Goal #1- Increase citizen engagement with historical records

Encourage repositories to reach out to local schools to arrange tours, virtual field trips, and other opportunities to engage children with historical records

Help repositories develop virtual programming, or to continue virtual programming developed during the pandemic, to engage their constituencies

Develop and distribute strategies on creative uses for using social media to promote archival records

Use the SC SHRAB's website and social media presence to publicize the work and collections of South Carolina's historical records repositories (See Goal # 3)

Goal #2- Increase diversity in collections

Actively partner with the African American Heritage Commission to address the needs of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and other predominantly African American repositories, in South Carolina

Increase awareness of South Carolina's Native American heritage and cultural institutions

Provide training directed towards the needs of traditionally under-served institutions in the archival community

Work with institutions that have existing collections related to African American and Native American communities to identify and fill in the gaps in the historical records related to these communities

Goal #3- Re-launch SC SHRAB's website and design it to be a resource for South Carolina's historical records repositories

Include links to archival management resources and training opportunities

Provide links to information related to federal and state archival institutions and associations, including but not limited to NARA, CoSA, SAA, and CLIR.

Host webinars developed by the SC SHRAB to address training needs of South Carolina's historical repositories

Goal #4- Partner with other South Carolina groups, such as the South Carolina Archival Association (SCAA), the South Carolina Library Association (SCLA), and the South

*Carolina Federation of Museums (SCFM) to
synchronize advocacy and training efforts*

Seek grant funding to support the activities of
South Carolina's historical repositories

Work together to produce and circulate
promotional literature publicizing the work of
South Carolina's historical repositories