

Shorter Features

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The Shorter Features department serves as a forum for sharply focused archival topics which may not require a full-length article. Members of the Society and others knowledgeable in areas of archival interest are encouraged to submit papers for consideration. Shorter Features should range from 500 to 1,000 words in length and contain no annotation. Papers should be sent to: Michael J. Sullivan, Department Editor, the *American Archivist*, National Archives Building, Washington, DC 20408.

The Minnesota Basic Workshops Project

JAMES E. FOGERTY

THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY has had for many years an active program of cooperation with local historical societies. Its staff includes two people who work solely with that constituency, and the society has developed the Minnesota Regional Research Centers network—eight manuscript collection and research facilities located across the state. In 1974, the network undertook a pilot inventory of manuscript materials in local historical society collections in selected areas of the state. The purpose was to become more fully acquainted with the content and condition of those holdings, and eventually led to a full statewide inventory of manuscript materials held in more than 300 county, local, and special purpose historical organiza-

tions. At the same time, the Social Welfare History Archives of the University of Minnesota conducted a survey of records in public and private agencies throughout Minnesota. Both inventories uncovered valuable materials, most of them unorganized, stored in unsatisfactory conditions, and generally unavailable for research. Without exception, those in charge of the materials had not even rudimentary information on preservation or arrangement, and had no basic knowledge whatever of archival practice.

Preliminary conversations with representatives of local historical societies indicated strong interest in a workshop series concerned with paper preservation and archival arrangement of manuscript materials. The society and the university responded by submitting a successful grant

request to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

The workshop organizers were assisted by an advisory board with members representing key points of view from among the target audience. Twenty-two local historical societies were visited to explain the workshops and to solicit input on content and format. The visits defined certain areas to which greater attention was given, and served as excellent public relations for the project.

Three instructors participated in the workshop series. The conservation component was taught by an experienced archivist who worked closely with staff of the Minnesota Historical Society's conservation laboratory. Several conservators reviewed his presentation. Arrangement and description were taught by another archivist with considerable experience in those areas, and his presentation was reviewed by a number of colleagues throughout the country. The oral history component was handled by the director of several oral history projects of the society and its regional network. A leading oral historian reviewed his material.

All the workshops were taught by the same instructors. The opportunity for ongoing, mutual and self-evaluation contributed significantly to development of the final workshop format and content.

Each workshop was held on a Friday-Saturday schedule, ensuring maximum participation. Ten workshops were held, two in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and eight in various locations throughout the state. Institutional placement of the workshops was as important as their geographical placement. The workshop curriculum was designed to instruct the participants without talking down to them, and the sessions were planned for settings in which those attending would feel at ease. Five of the workshop sessions were held in county historical societies, and three in regional centers. The Twin Cities workshops were held at the society's headquarters building and the Social Welfare History Archives Center.

Publicity assumed special importance, since it was intended to serve a variety of purposes. Pre-workshop publicity in-

formed potential participants of the time, location, and content of the workshops. Post-workshop publicity emphasized both the event and the participants. Workshop directors brought cameras to each session and photographed the participants engaged in mending documents or experimenting with the techniques being taught. Within a few days after each workshop, news releases were sent to local papers, accompanied by a picture of participants from the local historical society. Every release distributed was printed, and the resulting publicity benefited both the local organization and the project.

Preparation included writing a workshop manual, with sections covering arrangement and description, paper preservation, security, and oral history. Instructors revised the manual between the fourth and fifth workshops, during a period built into the schedule to allow an opportunity to make necessary changes in both materials and formats.

The manual served a number of purposes. It provided a handy text, and because it followed the workshop format, precluded the necessity for extended note-taking. It spelled out the names of products and incorporated a companion piece on supplies and suppliers. All participants will receive a copy of the final manual which is now being readied for publication.

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission provided a grant of \$17,000 in support of the workshops. This supported a full-time coordinator/instructor and travel expenses for all three instructors. The grant also covered the cost of printing a workshop manual, purchase of an extensive inventory of supplies for use during the conservation session, and development of a slide presentation on conservation problems. In addition, grant funds provided luncheon for all participants, and lodging expenses for those who traveled more than fifty miles to the workshop site.

Workshop costs thus included development of all workshop materials and the employment of a project administrator—costs that would not recur using the materials developed. Funds for luncheon and the workshop supplies and materials could

in the future be covered by a registration fee, while lodging could be left to the decision of each participant.

A particular strength of the Minnesota workshops lay in their size. With only fifteen to twenty participants at each, they were informal events at which the participants were encouraged to ask questions whenever they wished, and to interject their own experiences and observations at appropriate times. Small size also ensured that each participant would receive individual attention from the instructors. Successful informality demands tight organization, and the workshop format was constructed to allow maximum interaction while accomplishing all of the major objectives.

All participants completed a four-page questionnaire, giving information about their backgrounds, experiences, and the facilities and manuscript holdings in their institutions. At the end of the project this information provided a profile of those attending the entire series, and of the institutions they represented. The profile revealed that the workshops reached a wider segment of the population than one might have expected. A remarkable number of the participants were also librarians, church historians, or involved with various civic organizations. The workshop training will benefit their work with manuscripts in those organizations as well.

In keeping with the goals of the project, the workshop curriculum and format were relatively simple. Basic archival principles and terminology were introduced the first day, followed by a session on simple collection, arrangement, and findings aids, and the first half of a session on conservation. The conservation instruction included comments on the composition of various papers and inks, as well as demonstrations of methods for determining and controlling dry and humid conditions, and for cleaning and deacidifying paper. Several experiments, including demonstration of a homemade humidifier for the preservation of stiff and fragile paper, were left overnight for testing the following day. The next morning the conservation session concluded with the participants mending documents, encapsulating them in mylar,

and examining the results of the experiments performed the preceding day. The conservation session was popular because it allowed participants to apply the techniques being taught, to try out different cleaning agents on old paper, and to perform an encapsulation. The exercises made simple conservation techniques seem much less daunting, and those at the workshops gained confidence that they could use them successfully.

A session on security concentrated on control of the public use of manuscript materials in small institutions. The final session covered the operation of oral history programs, including project construction, tape preservation, and donor relations. Before leaving, each participant completed an evaluation form, providing comments on each segment of the workshop, the relevance of the program to the needs of the various institutions represented, suggestions for future workshops, and overall impressions of the entire experience.

The advantage of having a series of workshops, of course, is that one is able to revise, fine-tune, and experiment. The ten workshops of the Minnesota series provided an excellent opportunity for experimentation, and several of the sessions underwent substantial revision during the project. The instructors attended sessions other than their own to note questions for discussion with one another. Attempts were made to incorporate within the next workshop presentation answers to the most frequently asked questions. This procedure proved only modestly effective, and when all questions were correlated at the end, no definite pattern was found.

The workshops were successful, and their effect can be noted and measured. Many more of the local historical societies now use acid-free folders and boxes, mylar, proper mending tape, and other archival supplies. The Minnesota Historical Society also noted an encouraging increase in the number of requests for information and assistance in archival matters. The requests show a new awareness of specific problems; there are many more calls for assistance and advice on encapsulation, deacidification, and collection arrangement—all pro-

cedures that many of the requesters were not familiar with before attending one of the workshops. A tangible measure of the success of the project is that a basic level of

knowledge has been absorbed, and it can be built upon with further training and experience.

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The Distribution and Pattern of NHPRC Records Program Funding in the States, 1976–1980

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THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDS COMMISSION (NHPRC) recently marked the fifth anniversary of its records program by compiling a statistical abstract of past program-funding patterns. Specifically, the commission wanted to know how many proposals had been received from each state and region, what percentage of these proposals had been funded, and how much funding each area had requested and received between 1976 and 1980. In addition, the commission was interested in studying the interrelationship among these and other variables such as the population and the number of repositories in each state. Was there a funding bias in favor of one region over the others? Was there a strong correlation between the level of archival activity in individual states and the amount of NHPRC funds received by those states? The commission was interested in learning more about the distribution and pattern of its grant funding in the states.

From October 1976 to October 1980, the commission received 713 proposals requesting over 21 million dollars. Of these, the commission funded all or part of 328 proposals, 46 percent of the total; and distributed nearly \$6.7 million, 31.7 percent of the requested funds.

Most of the funded proposals (85.7 percent) and funds (85.8 percent) were for state projects. State projects are those implemented by an agency, institution, or organization based in and operating within one state. Regional projects are active in more than one state of a region; and national projects operate beyond state or regional boundaries. Of the grant requests received by the NHPRC records program in 1976–80, 87.4 percent were for state projects, 4.5 percent for regional projects, and 8.1 percent for national projects.

Table I shows the averages for funds requested and received by the states over the past five years. Such averages do not, of course, reflect the diversity of the submissions and funding among the individual states. Eighteen of the states, for example, submitted five or fewer proposals; and an average of only 1.6 proposals from each of these low-activity states were recommended for funding. At the other end of the scale, fifteen states submitted 15 or more proposals, and the commission recommended funding for an average of 12.2 projects in these high-activity states.

The five-year study makes clear that the number of proposals submitted and recommended, and the amount of funds requested and received, varied greatly from state to state. Tables II and III, however, which give figures by region, demonstrate that the ratios between requests and funding are virtually constant from region to region. The commission consistently recommended some funds for about 45 percent of the state project proposals submitted, and granted about 32 percent of the requested funds, regardless of region.

The commission was also interested in other patterns and correlations in NHPRC records program funding. Was there a tie between the population of a state and the number of grants awarded to that state? Was there a relationship between the number of archival repositories in a state and the number of grant requests received from that state? To obtain answers to these and other questions, the staff conducted an evaluation of the patterns of records program funding by using a standard Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. Correlation coefficients were computed for the various combinations of the following variables: (1) the number of repositories in each state as listed in the 1978 NHPRC directory; (2) the state population; (3) the total number of grant requests from each state; (4) the total amount of funds requested by each state; (5) the total number of grants awarded to each state; and (6) the total amount of funds awarded to each state.

All of the variables for each state were paired with one another, revealing degrees of correlation from 35 to 91 percent. A perfect *positive* correlation would be 1.0; no correlation would be 0.0. The highest correlation (.91) was between the number of grant requests from a state and the number of grant requests recommended for that state. There was also a very high correlation (.82) between the number of repositories in a state and the number of grant requests from that state. A slightly less significant but still very high correlation (.76) existed between the number of repositories in a state and the number of grants awarded to that state. Lower correlations were found between state population and the number of grants recommended (.44), and state population and the amount of grant funds received (.35).

Conclusion

The commission, which had not previously compiled grant figures by region or consciously sought regional balance in funding, was pleased to note the apparent consistency from region to region in the ratio between requests and grants. In addition to suggesting that no one region stands out in archival expertise (to the extent that it is indicated by successful proposals) or archival needs, the figures reassure the commission that there is no regional bias in its granting procedures. The commission plans to conduct more refined and detailed studies of proposals, grants, and project results in the future. NHPRC looks forward to sharing the results of these studies with the interested public.

Table I

*Records Program: State Averages**

Average number of records grant proposals submitted per state:	11.8
Average number of records grant proposals per state for which the commission recommended some funding:	5.3
Average amount of records program funding requested per state:	\$336,851
Average amount of records program funding recommended per state:	\$108,414
Average amount of state project grant requests:	\$28,657
Average amount of state project grant:	\$20,448

* Includes the fifty states; Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico; and the Virgin Islands.

Percent of Grant Proposals Recommended by the Commission
(State Category Proposals, by Region*)

Table II

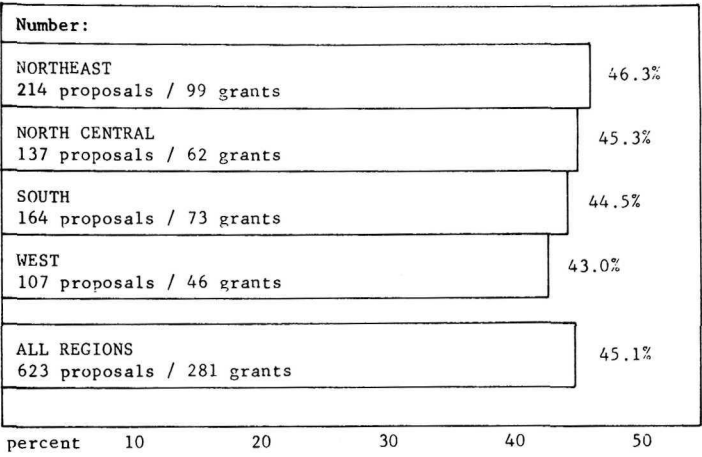
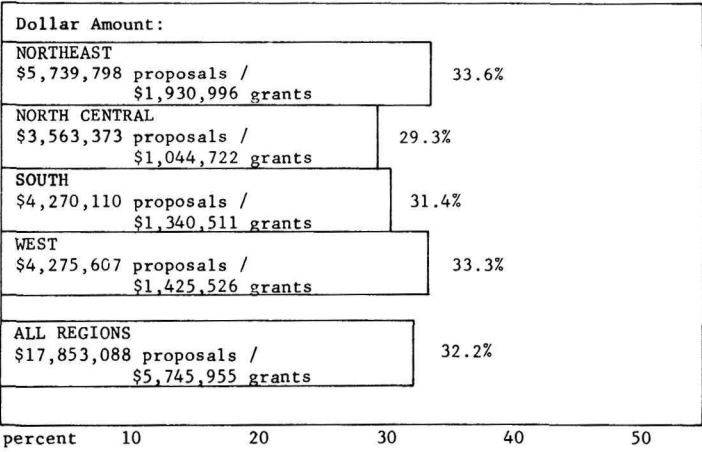


Table III



* "Regions" as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau

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