

**National Historical Publications and Records Commission**  
**Executive Summary Minutes**  
**May 18, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by the chairman, Davis S. Ferriero, at 9:00 am via web conference.

*Commission Members Present:*

David S. Ferriero, chair

Glen Asner

Jonathan Bronitsky

W. Eric Emerson

Robyn Enginbous, representing Senator Dan Sullivan

Beth English

Adam Howard

Christine Lamberson

Nicole Saylor

C. James Taylor

Will Thomas

Kathleen Williams

Tanya Zanish-Belcher

*NHPRC staff present:*

Christopher Eck, Executive Director

Jeff de la Concepcion

Keith Donohue

Darrell Meadows

Nancy Melley

Daniel Stokes

*Guests:*

Mary Jo Binker, Association for Documentary Editing

## **I. Welcome Announcements**

Mr. Ferriero administered the Oath of Office to Presidential appointee Jonathan Bronitsky and welcomed him to the Commission, and then he introduced four additional new Members: Beth English, Jim Taylor, Kathleen Williams, and Tanya Zanish-Belcher.

## **II. Minutes of the November 2020 Meeting and Agenda**

*Mr. Ferriero called for approval of the Minutes and Adoption of the Agenda, which was approved by unanimous consent.*

## **III. Executive Director's Report**

Mr. Eck reported that for the May meeting, NHPRC received 48 requests totaling \$5.5 million and that staff recommended 33 proposals for \$3.9 million. Despite the impact of COVID, this represents an overall increase from May 2020.

Using the Strategic Plan as a guideline, Mr. Eck touched upon some highlights to meet its goals. He noted that the Early Legal Records emphasis in the Access to Historical Records resulted in 4 grants for that topic. He also reported on the successful award by the Mellon Foundation for a multi-year program to fund publishing projects related to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

The Commission then discussed the Financial Summary and the three-year table on funding by category. Mr. Stokes explained the various funding categories and the budgetary implications, including carry-over funds.

The following Resolutions were presented and approved by the Commission:

*Naomi Nelson joined the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 2014 as an appointee of President Barack Obama. She is Associate University Librarian and Director of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University. Her research interests include providing access to born-digital materials and exploring the new avenues for humanities research. Dr. Nelson served as chair of the Executive Committee, and her colleagues and the staff greatly appreciated her leadership. She was often a voice of reason, advocating for greater inclusion and always mindful of the latest advancements and innovation in archives and digital history. Her insight and dedication has improved our work and, in turn, helped provide*

*greater access for the American people to the records of their government and to those historical records held in archives across the nation. Naomi is very much missed, and the Commission thanks her for her dedicated service and contributions to its programs with our sincere respect and affection.*

*George Miles joined the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 2013 as representative of the Organization of American Historians. A graduate of Yale University, he has been the Coe Curator of the Yale Collection of Western Americana at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. He has taught classes at Yale on the history of the American West, the history of Native Americans, and the history of photography. He has also taught American historical bibliography at Columbia and the University of Virginia. In 2008, he received the Western History Association Life Membership Award for meritorious service. Ever curious and engaged, Mr. Miles often spoke forthrightly during our policy discussions. Over eight years, he added wisdom and insight to our work. On the Executive Committee and through strategic planning, he always added a fresh perspective that went directly to the heart of the matter. George is very much missed, and the Commission thanks him for his dedicated service and contributions to its programs with our sincere respect and affection.*

*Dennis Meissner joined the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 2016 as representative of the Society of American Archivists. The retired Deputy Director for Programs at the Minnesota Historical Society, he is a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists, a past president, and member of the board of directors. His archival career has focused on the arrangement, description, and the larger management of archival materials, including their discovery and use in networked environments. He co-authored a seminal article in *The American Archivist*, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing" that led to new processing approaches in archives. Mr. Meissner added his unique and valued perspective to our policy and grant deliberations, often challenging long-held assumptions and introducing new thinking to archival processes. His insights on our strategic planning were eye opening and instructive. Dennis is very much missed, and the Commission thanks him for his dedicated service and contributions to its programs with our sincere respect and affection.*

#### **IV. Executive Committee's Report**

Ms. Saylor, chair of the Executive Committee, reported on their meeting of May 17. She asked Mr. Thomas to present the 2021 Strategic Plan, which had been approved at the Executive Committee and laid before the Commission as a whole.

Mr. Thomas thanked the members of the Strategic Plan Committee and those who had agreed to review the draft at a special meeting on March 8, 2021: Mr. Howard, Mr. Miles, Ms. Minchew, Ms. Nelson, Ms. Saylor, Mr. Shepard, Mr. Bronitsky, Ms. Williams, and Ms. Zanish-Belcher. He thanked as well the staff for providing background materials and noted Mr. Donohue's role in the effort. After months of work, the new plan is realistic, exciting, and of fit purpose for the Commission, and the Task Force was cognizant of the role and size of staff and the need to scale the plan to those restrictions.

The Committee created a plan that built upon and expanded the previous version, emphasizing four major goals:

- Expand public discovery and use of the nation's historical records.
- Foster a greater diversity of voices in telling the American story through historical records collections.
- Connect the National Archives with the nation's archives.
- Engage the American people in preserving and publishing historical records collections that tell the American story.

The Committee recommended sharing the plan broadly with our audience, including applicants, scholars, Congress, the Executive Branch, and other stakeholders. Mr. Thomas described the significant changes from the 2016 plan:

1. It recognizes and makes visible the changing field of archives and digital editions and acknowledges the need to expand in scope and form who is part of the American story.
2. It places an emphasis on collaboration and the need for the Commission to support efforts to share and broaden its programs.
3. It focuses on capacity-building and the need for the Commission to be active agents in assisting organizations to build capacity.

Mr. Thomas also shared his enthusiasm for the welcoming tone of the plan, and how it allows NHPRC to be less concerned with gate-keeping.

Mr. Asner asked what was dropped from the previous plan. Mr. Eck said that the plan tweaked some of the language in order to lower barriers to potential applicants, citing the change in the cost-share match. Mr. Asner then asked how the Commission will check in on progress, and Mr. Eck said that such measures will be included in his Executive Director's semi-annual report and also pointed to a recommendation from the Executive Committee to form a group to review NHPRC processes and recruit new applicants.

Ms. Williams expressed her enthusiasm for the revised plan and noted that it continues to emphasize the NHPRC's role as a catalyst, which will be important in attracting a more diverse applicant pool, observing that new applicants will also increase the risk of failure, which we should willingly accept. Staff will need to keep a finger on the pulse of applicant performance and final results, and she expressed the need to maximize the staff. NAGARA, CoSA, and SAA will continue to pursue opportunities to connect the nation's archives with the National Archives. Mr. Taylor added the need to continue professional development opportunities, particularly for new projects.

*The Commission adopted the 2021 Strategic Plan by unanimous consent.*

Ms. Saylor then took up the issue of forming a Committee to examine NHPRC application and review processes and to recruit new applicants. She asked for volunteers, and Ms. Williams, Mr. Emerson, and Ms. Zanish-Belcher expressed their interest in assisting in this effort.

Mr. Meadows provided an update on the new NHPRC-Mellon Start-up Grants for Collaborative Digital Editions in African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Native American History program. He reported that some two dozen organizations have contacted him for planning discussions and that he has received 10 draft applications for the program, noting that most do not think of themselves as traditional documentary editors. In light of this response, he pointed to the need to recalibrate the Institutes for Historical Editing program to better meet the needs of the new applicants and accommodate the energy and urgency in these fields of study.

Because of COVID restrictions, the current Institute has not been able to complete all of its planned activities, and has approximately \$100,000 in unexpended funds. Working with the Institute's project lead, Meadows has awarded a full year no-cost extension for the purpose of engaging in planning for the strategic redirecting of these funds to meeting the goals of the new Strategic Plan. Mr. Meadows and the project director have already begun a listening tour to learn more about the changing nature of the field, and how other entities are engaging BIPOC scholars and communities in similar professional

development, with a first stop at the University of Nebraska's Digital Ethnic Studies Summer Institute. Ms. Williams asked if NEH had been consulted, and Mr. Meadows said that over the previous year he had created an online convening with them on the questions of what was then called Next Generation editions, and that he is in constant conversation with them. The ultimate question is how can the Institute be more collaborative and how can it be a more intentional and active participant in a changing field. The staff will now pull the current announcement for the Institutes and present a thorough revision to the Commission at its November 2021 meeting.

Ms. Melley outlined the changes in the two new Grant Announcements, emphasizing the proposed change to the Public Engagement program in dropping the cost share requirement to 25 percent.

*A motion was raised to approve the announcements for Access to Historical Records: Archival Projects and Public Engagement with Historical Records programs, and the Commission adopted it by unanimous consent.*

## **V. Proposal Review**

During the discussion of proposals, Mr. Meadows responded to a question about the \$160,000 cap on Publishing projects, and he explained the cap is based on analysis of current and projected funding presented over the past two years, and again at the November 2020 meeting, and is part of his efforts to ensure more equitable funding across similar projects.. He asked the Executive Director to include that report in the materials sent following the meeting. Similarly, the ten-year restriction was put in place to allow NHPRC to fund new projects, and in future staff reports, we will track how many years of funding with each application. Ms. Lamberson volunteered to share names of historians that may be helpful to the Taney project. Ms. Williams pointed out that the Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery project seems to be an archival project with transcriptions, and Mr. Meadows offered his enthusiasm for this sort of hybrid project, adding that most of the new projects likely to be funded through the Mellon Initiative will be hybrid projects experimenting with new ways to think about edition-making. During the discussion, Mr. Taylor commented on the staff reports and could not figure out how the peer panel review scores were determined, and Ms. Melly answered that the scores are based on averages from the combined scores of each panelist, rating each of the performance criteria.

The following individuals recused themselves from voting on the noted applications:

*Eric Emerson -- PE103181, University of South Carolina*

The following proposals were recommended for funding:

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## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Tennessee State Library and Archives

Nashville, TN

\$150,000 to support Creating Classroom Engagement with Tennessee's Historical Records, a project designed to facilitate opportunities for teachers and students in Tennessee to engage with historical records drawn from the collections of the Tennessee State Library and Archives through series of teacher workshops and webinars, and through expansion of the DocsBox program, which provides hands-on original and reproduction materials and historical primary sources to support Tennessee social studies curriculum standards. (DP-103182-21)

University of New Orleans

New Orleans, LA

\$149,700 to support Freedom on the Move in New Orleans: Teaching and Learning the Hard History of Slavery in K-12. This project will create a curriculum to help students engage with the historical records in a database of advertisements seeking escaped people. Following instruction in the classroom, students will explore New Orleans and the region to visualize the social, spatial, and cultural histories of enslaved people. Students will then develop public-facing projects, including maps, visual art, and spoken word, and digital and video pieces. (DP103190-21)

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## **PUBLISHING HISTORICAL RECORDS**

Ramapo College of New Jersey

Mahwah, NJ

\$160,000 to support the Jane Addams Papers, American settlement activist, reformer, social worker, sociologist, public administrator, and author. Project staff will advance work on the digital edition, digitizing, transcribing and proofreading documents for the years 1925-1927. Project staff will also continue annotation work and drafting for Volume 4 (1901-1913) of the print edition. (PE-103145-21)

University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, TN

\$160,000 to support the Papers of Andrew Jackson, the seventh president of the United States. Project staff will complete final proofing and indexing of Volume 12 (1834) and advance editorial work on Volume 13 (1835). (PE-103146-21)

Cumberland University  
Lebanon, TN

\$149,968 to support the Papers of Martin Van Buren, eighth president of the United States. Project staff will publish all Series 4 documents to the website, advance editorial work on Series 6 and Series 12 documents, and complete 50 percent of annotation for Volume 2 of the print edition. (PE-103147-21)

University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, VA

\$160,000 to support the Papers of George Washington, first president of the United States. Project staff will publish Volumes 29 and 30 of the Revolutionary War Series; advance editorial work on volumes 31-34, and add all content from Volumes 28 and 29 (along with 40 newly-found documents) to its University of Virginia Press/Rotunda online edition and to Founders Online. (PE-103157-21)

University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, VA

\$160,000 to support the Papers of James Madison, fourth president of the United States. Project staff will publish Volume 12 and advance editorial work on Volumes 13 and 14 of the Secretary of State Series. Editors also will complete the manuscript for Volume 4 and continue editorial work on Volume 5 of the Retirement Series. (PE-103159-21)

University of Maryland  
College Park, MD

\$160,000 to support the Freedmen and Southern Society Project on the history of emancipation. Project staff will advance final pre-publication work for Volume 7 (Law and Justice), advance editorial work for Volume 8 (Family and Kinship), commence work on the final Volume 9 (School, Church, and Community) and add a selection of annotated documents to its website. (PE-103162-21)

Princeton University  
Princeton, NJ



\$129,391 to support the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States. Project staff will submit Volume 45 for inclusion in the Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition and in Founders Online, publish print Volume 46, complete and submit the manuscript for Volume 47, advance editorial work on three additional volumes (48-50), add additional materials and visualization elements to its freely-accessible online edition of Jefferson's Meteorological Records, and plan for the development of a unified Early American Weather Records resource. (PE-103163-21)

University of Southern Mississippi  
Hattiesburg, MS

\$108,925 to support the Civil War & Reconstruction Governors of Mississippi Digital Documentary Edition. This edition will ultimately contain nearly 20,000 documents sent and received by the Mississippi governors from late 1859 to early 1882. Project staff will complete all editorial work on an additional 1,700 documents. (PE-103167-21)

Villanova University  
Villanova, PA

\$87,500 to support Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery, a collection of "Information Wanted" advertisements taken out by former slaves in African American newspapers from the early years after emancipation in 1865 through the early 20th century to assist with their ongoing search for lost family members. Project staff will identify, image, assign metadata for, transcribe, verify, and publish to the project's website an additional 1,050 new advertisements. The project will complete all remaining work for its website redesign and expand its education resources. (PE-103168-21)

University of Iowa  
Iowa City, IA

\$119,439 to support "Fame and Infamy: Walt Whitman's Correspondence, 1888-1892," bringing together for the first time all incoming and outgoing correspondence from the poet. Project staff will transcribe, annotate, and publish to the Walt Whitman Archive a final set of 450 letters, concluding the project's work on Whitman's incoming and outgoing correspondence for the final years of his life. (PE-103178-21)

Indiana University  
Indianapolis, IN

\$123,127 to edit the Frederick Douglass Papers, a national leader of the abolitionist movement. Project staff will complete final production steps for Volume 3 of the Correspondence Series and advance editorial work on Volumes 4 and 5 of that same series, as well as Volume 2 of the Journalism and Other

Writings Series; and complete Phase Three of the ongoing digital edition migration to a new web platform, including an additional 500 documents. (PE-103180-21)

University of South Carolina

Columbia, SC

\$110,000 to edit and publish the Pinckney Statesmen of South Carolina digital edition. The completed four-volume “born-digital” edition will include an estimated 3,000 fully transcribed and annotated documents (selected from a universe of 10,000 documents) related to the brothers Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Thomas Pinckney, and their cousin, Charles Pinckney, for the period 1769-1828. Project staff will complete all remaining editorial work and publish the final Volume 4 (1812-1828) of the digital edition and complete all remaining acquisitions and editorial work proposed for addenda and calendared documents related to both the Pinckney-Horry digital edition (originally published in 2012) and the Pinckney Statesmen. (PE-103181-21)

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Piscataway, NJ

\$160,000 to support the Thomas A. Edison Papers, noted American inventor and entrepreneur. Project staff will continue its editorial work on the Edison General File for the years 1926-1929; complete the processing and uploading of 119,000 images for the image edition; enhance usability of Edison’s notebooks; and implement plans for crowdsourced transcription. For the book edition, project staff will continue to edit documents for Volume 10 (Jan. 1890 – Jun. 1892), and continue selection of documents and rough transcriptions for Volume 11 (Jul. 1892 – Dec. 1898). (PE-103185-21)

Stanford University

Stanford, CA

\$160,000 to support the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers, a national leader in civil rights. Project staff will advance editorial work on Volume 8 (Sept. 1962 – Dec. 1963), continue Volume 9 (1964) accessioning work, and continue research in the digital collections of the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. (PE-103187-21)

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation

Springfield, IL

\$94,775 to support the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, sixteenth president of the United States. Project staff will complete all editorial work on and publish an additional 450 documents in the Campaign Digital Edition of The Papers of Abraham Lincoln Digital Library. (PE-103192-21)

University of West Florida  
Pensacola, FL

\$87,500 to support the Papers of Roger Taney: A Digital Documentary Edition. Project editors are developing a free, publicly accessible, annotated, 9-volume digital edition of the personal and professional papers of jurist and Fifth Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. During the proposed grant year, project staff will advance editorial work on Volume 1: The Bank War; accession 750 documents; and transcribe 1,000 manuscript pages. (PE103196-21)

University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, VA

\$103,575 to support the John Dickinson Writings Project, which is editing and publishing The Complete Writings and Selected Correspondence of John Dickinson, the “Penman of the American Revolution.” Project editors will complete all remaining pre-publication work for Volume 3 (1764-1766) and bring the manuscript for Volume 4 (1767-1769) to near completion. (PE103197-21)

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## **ACCESS TO HISTORICAL RECORDS: ARCHIVAL PROJECTS**

Delaware Public Archives  
Dover, DE

\$22,865 to support a project to digitize approximately 36 cubic feet of its Early Legislative Papers Collection dating from 1731 to 1860. The bulk of the collection covers the period from 1776 to 1792. (RH-103151-21)

Science History Institute  
Philadelphia, PA

\$132,875 to support a project to increase access to 350 hours of oral histories with 70 scientists who immigrated to the United States. Using the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer tool, the Institute will add these interviews to its online digital collections. (RH-103153-21)

University of Georgia Research Foundation  
Athens, GA

\$81,727 to support a project to digitize and enhance the descriptive information for the correspondence and speeches of novelist, writer, and civil rights activist Lillian Smith housed at both

the University of Georgia and the University of Florida. The collections total 37.5 linear feet and will be made available through the Digital Library of Georgia and the Digital Public Library of America. (RH-103156-21)

Seton Hall University

South Orange, NJ

\$35,342 to support a project to process collections of papers of five pathbreaking New Jersey politicians: Arthur A. Quinn (1856-1957), state legislator and labor leader, Bernard Michael Shanley (1903-1992) who served on the White House staff during the Eisenhower Administration, Richard Joseph Hughes (1909-1992), New Jersey's first Catholic governor (1962-1970), Brendan Byrne (1924-2018), governor of New Jersey from 1974 to 1982, and Donald Payne (1934-2012), first African American member of the U.S. House of Representatives from New Jersey (1989-2012).

(RH-103158-21)

University of North Texas

Denton, TX

\$126,989 to support a project to digitize 1,804 hours of audio-visual material from The Black Academy of Arts and Letters and transcribe 250 hours of speeches, lectures and literary readings drawn from African, African American and Caribbean arts and letters recorded between 1977 and 2013. (RH-103177-21)

Research Foundation of CUNY on behalf of Brooklyn College

New York, NY

\$150,000 to support a project to catalog and digitize 62 hours of film footage from A Life Apart, a documentary related to Hasidism in America, 1992-1996. The unused footage serves as audiovisual field notes on the religious practices, cultural mores, communal organization, family life, inter-communal relations, and the Americanization of a distinctive immigrant community from the end of WWII to the last decade of the 20th century. (RH-103183-21)

Indianapolis Museum of Art, Inc. (dba Newfields)

Indianapolis, IN

\$95,700 to process 482 cubic feet and create finding aids of the Indianapolis Museum of Art's administrative records from the director's office and other museum departments, 1883-2017.

(RH-103184-21)

Maryland State Archives

## Annapolis, MD

\$50,056 to support a project to digitize 18,000+ documents, dating from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century, that make up the alienated government records found in the Maryland State Papers collected by John Thomas Scharf (1843 -1898). As a member of the Maryland Historical Society, Scharf sought out and collected historical records from around the state, often rescuing them from certain loss and destruction. (RH-103188-21)

## City of Pittsburgh

## Pittsburgh, PA

\$133,934 to support a two-year project to enhance discoverability and access to City of Pittsburgh archival collections, including City Council records, Board of Viewers' case files, and City Planning Department records. The project will arrange, describe, and rehouse seven collections totaling approximately 750 cubic feet that document the period 1816 to 2006. (RH-103189-21)

## Union College

## Schenectady, NY

\$149,710 to support a project to enhance the current finding aid and online access for the John Bigelow Collection. Bigelow (1817-1911) had a distinguished career as an author, abolitionist, newspaper editor, diplomat, and influential public servant. He served as Consul General at Paris (1861-65) and Minister to France (1865), was co-owner and co-editor with William Cullen Bryant of the New York Evening Post, and was a founder and the first president of the New York Public Library. (RH-103198-21)

## University of Colorado, Boulder

## Boulder, CO

\$116,916 to support a project to digitize approximately 192,700 pages of 3,854 silent film scores from Grauman's Theatres. The collection includes complete sets of photoplay music and performance parts for full orchestra with performers' and theater managers' markings and indicia that provide information about the way this body of music was used to accompany silent movies, from 1912 to 1929. (RH-103202-21)

## Rhode Island Historical Society

## Providence, RI

\$41,939 to support Brave, Enterprising Spirits: Documenting Rhode Island Soldiers in the American Revolution, which will digitize and make available approximately 6,400 pages of Revolutionary War regimental and Providence Hospital records from 1775 to 1783. (RH-103203-21)

University of California, San Francisco  
San Francisco, CA

\$149,814 to support a project to digitize and provide access to approximately 68,000 pages from the papers of five women who were pioneers in behavioral developmental pediatrics: Dr. Hulda Thelander, Dr. Helen Gofman, Dr. Selma Fraiberg, Dr. Leona Mayer Bayer, and Ms. Carol Hardgrove.  
(RH-103206-21)

Musical Arts Association  
Cleveland, OH

\$62,250 to support a project to digitize approximately 192,000 pages of program books dating from 1918 to 2009 that document performances by the Cleveland Orchestra and provide online access to 6,400 program books on the orchestra's website. (RH-103208-21)

*The Commission went into Executive Session at 10:50 am.*