

# **Rhode Island Historical Records Advisory Board**

**Minutes of Meeting – November 7, 2012**

**Rhode Island State Archives**

**337 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903**

**Attending: Jane Civins, Allison Cywin, Donna DiMichele, Russell Franks, Michael Hebert, Jonathan Galli, Stephen Grimes, Marlene Lopes, Marilyn Massaro, and Gwenn Stearn, Chair.**

**Not attending: Mark Brown, Peggy Long, and David Maslyn.**

**Also attending: Timothy Wade and Chelsea Gunn of the RHODI project, Sarah Hudson of the Protecting the Past – RI project.**

**Meeting called to order: 10:10 a.m.**

**I Minutes of meeting – March 7, 2012**

**Motion by Massaro to approve the minutes, seconded by Civins.  
Approved unanimously.**

**II Presentation on the Rhode Island History Online Directory  
Initiative (RHODI)**

**- Timothy Wade, Project Coordinator & Chelsea Gunn**

Timothy Wade provided background on the project, the purpose of which includes making connections and helping people to find information on organizations and institutions that will be surveyed, and later listed in an online directory. The sixteen month project has been made possible by a \$160,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation. There is an Advisory Committee of fifteen, selected for a broad input and for their contacts within the communities of interest. 475 organizations had originally been identified, however, 250 will be surveyed. Criteria included that the organization was open to the public and that they offered educational programming. The survey aims to provide a cultural data snapshot and collect information about the organizations, what they have, their strengths and weaknesses. Field surveyors will visit the organizations and hold “a conversation” during which data will be collected and entered into a laptop computer. The later RHODI directory will facilitate online searching, provide links, and have an online “giving” feature. Not all information collected in the survey will be accessible online. Organizations will be able to log-in and update their information. There will also be a ‘White Paper’ issued on the history and heritage community. Connections with the Protecting the Past – RI project have been established, and other collaborations will be sought. Thought has been given to seeking another grant in five years in order to perform a resurvey.

Chelsea Gunn provided further information about the survey approach and how, at this early stage, they are refining their

procedures. It will take approximately 45 minutes to conduct an interview. One surveyor will conduct the “conversation” and ask the questions, while a second will perform the data entry. They have discovered that difficult questions include the square footage of the facility, storage space, and exhibit space. Also, there are some questions responders appear reluctant to answer. Not all organizations will get the field survey, e.g. the larger ones, but they can request it.

Members discussed the importance of collaboration, avoiding “reinventing the wheel”, as well as sharing resource lists, taking advantage of the experience and expertise of others, and the importance of not leaving out repositories.

Stearn mentioned the Basics of Archives (BACE) to Wade and Gunn, and asked whether the project would be interested in distributing the disk to organizations if appropriate?

Wade told members that the project is funded for 2013-2014 and the Rhode Island Historical Society is committed to providing funding for 5 or 10 years to maintain the directory thereafter. Members agreed that an upfront commitment is necessary and endorsed keeping the information up-to-date and relevant past the immediate grant project.

Wade also informed members that the project’s website will launch this week <http://rhodiproject.wordpress.com/>. He said the project welcomed feedback on the survey form, and that project staff would like to offer updates to the Board at a later meeting.

**III Report on Protecting the Past – RI project**

**- Donna DiMichele**

**DiMichele informed members that project assistant Sarah Hudson is working with cultural heritage organizations to gather information for WEB EOC (a database used to support state and local emergency management response). The 15 question survey will provide meaningful information, helpful to emergency responders in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.**

**Members discussed the difficulty of sustainability after grant projects end and information gathered from surveys becomes out-of-date.**

**DiMichele further reported that Protecting the Past – RI had held three COSTEP sessions for cultural heritage communities to meet local first responders and state emergency managers. The meetings took place in Narragansett (May 15), Providence (October 10) and Bristol (October 22). She also reported that workshops were held for creating a disaster plan using dPlan-RI and a Disaster Response and the Triage of Wet Materials workshop. A tabletop exercise is scheduled for December 13. DiMichele also discussed the reluctance of some organizations to create a dPlan. She mentioned the possibility of hiring a field person to assist small repositories with drafting a dPlan. Also, NEDCC is currently looking for future funding sources for dPlan, however, RI remains committed to its continuation.**

#### **IV Board appointments and meeting dates 2013**

**Stearn reported that five members' terms will expire in January but all**

had agreed to serve another term. She will write to Governor Chafee regarding re-appointments. Stearn also proposed, and members agreed to 2013 meeting dates of January 9, March 6, May 8, June 5 (if needed), September 4, and November 6. An email to this effect will be send to all Board members.

## **V News and announcements**

DiMichele reported that Rhode Island Hospital had hired an archivist. DiMichele also informed members that she had provided a packet and notebook about RIHRAB for an informational table at the New England Archivists fall meeting. She remarked that “Protecting the Past” will present a session at the NEA spring meeting.

Galli mentioned that the New England Regional Genealogy Consortium will have its 2013 Conference April 17 – 21 in Manchester, NH.

Cywin informed members that she had attended the Visual Resources Association spring meeting in New Mexico. A “fair use doctrine” had been drafted and adopted on behalf of students and scholars. The Association’s next conference will be in April of 2013 and held in Providence.

Stearn asked members if they had heard of any local impacts from Tropical Storm/Hurricane Sandy. None had heard of any issues or

**problems arising from the storm.**

**Stearn reported that the New England Town and City Clerks Association annual meeting would take place November 14 – 16 at the Biltmore in Providence. At the request of the RI Clerks, she had arranged for the State Archivists of the New England states to present a session.**

**Massaro informed members about a book sale on Saturday at the Museum of Natural History, Roger Williams Park. New exhibits had also opened at the museum:**

**Lasse Antonsen: Wind-up Butterflies, Dead Leaf Insects, and Other Metaphors**

**Trekking Across Mars with Curiosity**

**Galli also mentioned a book sale at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library on Saturday, as well as a Genealogy Saturday, which runs from 10-5.**

**VI Adjournment**

**Galli moved to adjourn. Cywin seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned at 11:49 am.**

**Approved November 6, 2013**