

Newsletter
of the
Illinois
State
Archives
&
The Illinois
State Historical
Records
Advisory Board

Jesse White
Secretary of State
&
State Archivist

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ISHRAB receives CoSA-NHPRC Award of Merit

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) have presented the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board (ISHRAB) with the 2020 SHRAB Award of Merit. The award was given to the ISHRAB in recognition of the 10th anniversary of its successful historical records grant program.

"The CoSA-NHPRC SHRAB Award of Merit is given to a State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) program that strengthens the condition or access of documents and records within its state," said Secretary of State and State Archivist Jesse White. "The Illinois SHRAB received the award in recognition of its historical records

grant program, which uses NHPRC funding to provide grants of up to \$5,000 to small Illinois archival institutions to fund projects that preserve their records or provide enhanced online access to their collections."

Over the past 10 years, the ISHRAB has awarded 86 grants totaling \$260,510 to institutions in 30 Illinois counties. Projects have included creating online finding aids, purchasing collection management systems, and digitizing and placing online collections that include documents, photographs, maps and oral histories.

"It has been extremely fulfilling to see the board award money to a wide variety of institutions from all

around the state," wrote ISHRAB chair Johanna Russ about the program. "The impact our work has had on our colleagues around the state is something of which I am immensely proud."

The Illinois State Archives serves as the coordinating agency for the 14-member ISHRAB. Membership consists of archivists, librarians and related professionals from across Illinois.

"A lot of the work in state government is done by volunteer boards and commissions like the ISHRAB," said White. "I am happy to see the ISHRAB receive this deserving honor for creating and maintaining this great program."



The Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board conducted its February meeting in the Appellate Court chamber of the Illinois Supreme Court building in Springfield. Pictured from left to right are: David Joens, Andrew Bullen, Jerice Barrios, Peggy Glowacki, Cathy Popovitch, Tina Beard, Laura Alagna, Julie Wroblewski, Aaron Lisec, Cecilia Salvatore, Johanna Russ, Lee Fosburgh and Ian Hunt. Not pictured: Skyla Hearn.

Professional Development Scholarships available beginning July 1

Beginning July 1, the Illinois Historical Records Advisory Board (ISHRAB) will be offering professional development scholarships to Illinois archivists and archival volunteers to attend an archival workshop/seminar of their choice in Illinois (or an online professional archival development course). Awards are available for up to \$200 per applicant and may be used toward the cost of registration, housing, and/or travel to the event. It is a reimbursable award. Scholarships will be awarded on a first-come basis until the funding is exhausted. Complete information and an application form can be found at www.cyberdriveillinois.com (click on Departments, Illinois State Archives, Illinois Historical Records Advisory Board).

If you have any questions, please contact:

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This archival educational opportunity is funded by a State Board Programming grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Illinois State Archives

Margaret Cross Norton Building
Capitol Complex
Springfield, IL 62756
217-782-4682
217-524-3930 (Fax)

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Closed all state holidays.

The State Archives and COVID-19



The Margaret Cross Norton Building closed to the public March 17 due to COVID-19. The building is located on the Capitol Complex in Springfield, which also closed to the public.

On March 16, the Illinois Secretary of State's office announced it was implementing a no public access plan for its facilities due to COVID-19. The Illinois State Archives, an agency under the Secretary of State's office, closed the next day to the public. It also sent most of its employees home to protect them and their families and to help stop the spread of the virus. The Archives and Secretary of State's office fully reopened to the public on June 1.

The State Archives continued to operate during this closure but at a minimum level. Some work was done from home, including the indexing of previously scanned records, cleanup of the Archives' descriptive inventory, and creation of a workflow for ingesting electronic reports. The State Records Center, which houses long-term state agency records, is considered an essential service due to the need of these agencies to access their records. It remained open part-time and with a single employee operating it. The Illinois Regional Archives Depositories, conservation lab, reference room and micrographics section were closed during the shutdown.

The Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board was accepting applications for scholarships and for its grant program when the crisis hit. State Archives staff ensured that these federally funded programs continued. Email and mail requests for records were processed, although with expected delays. Freedom of Information requests were handled promptly.

Similarly, most records management staff did not go into work, but state records disposal requests were monitored and local records disposal certificates were processed.

The Archives implemented its emergency plan, of which the most vital part for this emergency was utilizing the phone tree for the exchange of information.

NHPRC Awards State Archives Grant for Doc Helm Collection

In May, Secretary of State and State Archivist Jesse White announced that the Illinois State Archives was awarded a \$60,178 federal grant to preserve, digitize and provide online access to 21,000 photographs taken by long-time state photographer Eddie Winfred “Doc” Helm.

“Doc Helm served as the official state photographer for half a century, from the 1940s to 1992,” said White. “During this time he took pictures of presidents, governors, celebrities, citizens, notable events and the ordinary day-to-day operations of state government. He left behind a vast historical record, and this grant will allow the public to view and enjoy his work.”

According to White, Helm’s photographs were only stored as negatives, so they are not well known to researchers. Despite this, they have been used in books, newspapers, magazine articles and, most recently, the Hulu television show “Mrs. America.”

Helm photographed at least three presidents, several presidential candidates and politicians, and celebrities such as Nat King Cole, Bob Hope and Sammy Davis Jr. The collection includes such diverse images as the governor addressing a joint session of the state legislature during World War II, the first group photo of the newly created Black Legislative Caucus in 1967, and photos of capitol tour guides in the 1970s dressed in uniforms not unlike those worn by airline attendants at the time.

Along with serving as the state photographer, Doc Helm was also considered a leading

photographer in central Illinois and arguably the most important African American photographer in the state during the mid-20th century.

His private sector work focused largely on Springfield’s African American community and has been featured in exhibits at the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, the Illinois State Museum, Bicentennial Plaza in Springfield, and in the pages of *Illinois Heritage* magazine.

The grant to the Illinois State Archives was part of almost \$2.9 million in grants that Archivist of the United States David Ferriero recently awarded to projects in 17 states. The grants are carried out with the advice and recommendations of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

The grant for the Doc Helm collection will be used to purchase a scanner to professionally scan, index and place online the photographic negatives. The funds will also be used to purchase archival quality envelopes to better preserve the negatives and to hire two University of Illinois at Springfield history students to assist in scanning and cataloguing the negatives. The projected completion of the project is set for Oct. 1, 2021.

“The efforts of the National Archives and the NHPRC to provide funding for projects at the state and local levels are very important and necessary,” said White. “Those efforts are making a huge difference in preserving history across the country.”



LEFT: Secretary of State Photographer Doc Helm. RIGHT: President Eisenhower visits the Illinois State Fair, 1954. Photograph taken by Doc Helm.



Archival Workers Emergency Fund

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) Foundation is accepting donations to support the Archival Workers Emergency Fund (AWEF), established to provide financial assistance for archival workers who have experienced acute, unanticipated financial hardship due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Grants of up to \$1,000 will be awarded to financially vulnerable and at-risk workers. All U.S.-based archival workers affected by the COVID-19 crisis are eligible to apply to the fund. Applications for funding opened April 15 and will be considered on a rolling basis until Dec. 31, 2020.

For information on how to contribute to the fund or apply for financial assistance, please visit the SAA Foundation website at <https://www2.archivists.org/foundation>.

The Society of American Archivists empowers archivists to achieve professional excellence and foster innovation to ensure the identification, preservation, understanding, and use of records of enduring value.

Illinois State Archives Centennial (1921-2021) — Microfilm Unit serves state

In June 2021, the Illinois State Archives will celebrate 100 years as an Illinois government agency. In anticipation of the centennial celebration, *For the Record* will feature past and current photographs of the various departments of the Archives.

The Illinois State Archives began microfilming in 1939, when it acquired a camera to microfilm county records. Prior to the 1957 State Records Act, many state agencies operated their own microfilming programs, meeting with mixed success and utilizing mixed standards.

The 1957 State Records Act gave the State Archives the authority to establish centralized microfilming services for agencies. The Central Microfilming Unit (CMU) opened in 1958 and was placed under the Records Management Section of the State Archives. The department eventually moved to the Secretary of State's Data Processing Division, but in 1993, it returned to the Archives.

The CMU consolidated microfilming for the state to save money and ensure proper standards were met. The department began with a staff of three: a photographer trained in microfilm techniques and two camera operators. The unit provided microfilming services, reproductions from microfilm and technical advice to agencies. Both user and backup microfilm copies were made and both longterm and permanent records were filmed.

By the 1970s, the staff of the microfilm unit expanded to more than 30 people. The role expanded too, as it began placing records from computer cartridges to microfiche, in a process known as computer output to microfiche, or COM. Each microfiche could hold the equivalent of 325 letter-sized pages.



LEFT: Illinois State Archives Micrographics Lab circa 1950s. RIGHT: Richard Bumgarner and Lana Basden work in the Illinois State Archives Micrographics Camera Room on June 17, 2020.

Changes in technology led the department to begin burning the information to compact discs rather than microfiche in 1999. In 1989, the department set up a lab to protect the film it created using a chemical toning process. The unit also began filming local records for use at the Illinois Regional Archives Depositories (IRADs).

Technology and needs continued to change. In 2008, the department started using Archive Writers, which receives digital data and creates microfilm for permanent records. The department no longer uses COM and is phasing out the use of compact discs as a storage and transfer media. The unit operates two large planetary cameras that microfilm paper records, ledger books, maps and blueprints, and operates one overhead scanner for paper documents, ledger books and printed material. It also operates three microfilm/microfiche scanners to allow

records kept on microfilm to be made available electronically to users. Finally, the department is replacing rotary cameras, which rapidly film paper records, with high speed scanners.

James Wassell, who worked for the section from 1978 until his retirement as supervisor in 1995, provided two highlights for the section. He founded the Midwest State Micrographics Conference in 1986 and, before coming to work at the Archives, he won an Oscar in 1963 for his work with film and film processing.

The microfilm section now consists of 12 employees. Although technology has changed, the unit continues to provide state agencies with a way to reduce their paper load while ensuring that records with a historic value are permanently stored in a professional standard.

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