

**MINUTES**  
TEXAS HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD  
June 2, 2021

The Texas Historical Records Advisory Board (THRAB) meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. on June 2, 2021. Due to Governor Greg Abbott's March 13, 2020, proclamation of a state of disaster affecting all counties in Texas due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Governor's March 16, 2020, suspension of certain provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, the meeting was held by video webinar, as authorized under Texas Government Code §551.127. Members of the public had access and a means to participate in this meeting, by two-way communication and could register for the webinar by visiting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89028605305>.

**Members Present:** Jelain Chubb, coordinator; Linda Barrett, Phyllis Earles, Tara Turk-Zaafraan, Carla Alvarez, Melissa Gonzales, Leslie Stapleton

**Members Absent:** Malinda Cowen, Kristy Sorensen

**Also Present:** Mark Smith, Director and Librarian, Gloria Meraz, Assistant State Librarian, Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Dan Stokes, Director for State Programs, National Historical Publications and Records Commission

**Staff Support:** Peggy Price, principal assistant

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Jelain Chubb welcomed board members and reviewed procedures specific to videoconferencing for open meetings. Board members welcomed new members and introduced themselves to each other.

**2. Roll call for members and establishment of quorum**

Chubb called roll and established a quorum with Carla Alvarez, Linda Barrett, Leslie Stapleton, Melissa Gonzales, Phyllis Earles, and Tara Turk-Zaafraan present. Malinda Cowen and Kristy Sorensen were absent.

**3. Approve minutes of the February 25, 2021 meeting**

Melissa Gonzales moved to approve the minutes and Linda Barrett seconded. The board approved minutes for the February 25, 2021, meeting with a minor correction.

**4. Public comment. Members of the public should state their full name and organization affiliation, if any, before speaking.**

No public comment. Chubb invited NHPRC Director for State Programs, Dan Stokes to speak about NHPRC activities during this time. Stokes reported that the President's budget came out and major initiatives have been included for both the National Archives and the NHPRC. Congress must pass the programs as part of their appropriations bills for them to be enacted. The archives has been proposed to receive \$20 million for an Equitable Access to History project, which would allow the archives to hire 144 additional employees to digitize and make available online the records of underrepresented communities. The idea is to digitize 90 million pages a year. They are going to start with Native American records and then meet with community groups to decide what other records to put online. Another addition in the budget for the NHPRC is an additional \$3 million that would go to help preserve and

provide access to the records of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Stokes mentioned that one area that state boards might assist with is outreach for the programs and assisting with diverse applications. The National Archives has been operating with a maximum of twenty-five percent staffing on site. Phyllis Earles thanked Stokes for the information and requested to speak with him further off-line about the program for HBCUs.

#### **5. Consideration of resolutions and certificates of appreciation**

Chubb proposed and the board unanimously approved that the board present to former board member Teri Flack a certificate of appreciation for her service on THRAB from 2015 – 2021. Chubb then presented to retiring TSLAC director and librarian Mark Smith a certificate of appreciation from the board. Members of the board voted unanimously to approve the certificate and thanked Smith for his nearly eight years of service, advocacy, and communication with THRAB.

#### **6. Update on the Texas State Library and Archives Commission's activities**

Smith provided the board with an update on the TSLAC budget and the legislative session. Smith reported to the board that the budget had a surprisingly positive outcome as the situation throughout 2020-2021 appeared dire. TSLAC had requested four items under a banner called Texans Need Strong Libraries, which included an archival component of additional staff to work through the backlog in order to add more items to the Texas Digital Archive. Smith added that the agency did not obtain funding for the architectural planning for the new state records center facility, but that Gloria Meraz had identified a budget rider with the Texas Facilities Commission that may assist with this project. Meraz added that Chubb will serve on a committee established to commemorate the bicentennial and that she will also be working with sister agencies on analyzing possibilities for shared storage among state agencies with collections.

#### **7. Discussion of impact of COVID-19 on archives in Texas**

Chubb opened a discussion on how Texas archives are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. TSLAC has continued to offer public services by appointment but with a closed lobby. In July, TSLAC will open the lobby doors to visitors and offer an exhibit, Cabinet of Curiosities, showcasing artifacts from the State Archives. The plan is to extend operations and open the library reading room after Labor Day. TSLAC will bring back more staff to the building after Labor Day as well and will also continue to allow staff to telework. Telework options will be based on the job duties and requirements for each position. Chubb opened the floor for others to share reopening and other COVID-19-related plans.

Earles of Prairie View A&M Libraries shared that their campus was notified that they would be returning to face-to-face learning as of June 1. Prior to that, they were open with limited access. Most of her inquiries came through email and phone. Employees have had the telework option, but she prefers to work in the office. With the return to campus, they are not able to mandate masks but may recommend them along with social distancing.

Linda Barrett of Forth Worth Public Library said that as of June 1 they had resumed pre-pandemic hours and had stopped screening patrons and quarantining materials. The archive staff was not dealing with the public as much as some of the other areas of the library and the screening really was not a big benefit. Barrett said that they had a mask requirement and social distancing. The day that the executive order was issued regarding mask requirements the director had announced that they would continue requiring masks for people who were not yet vaccinated. It was just on the honor system, but two hours later, that all changed and there was no more mask requirement. The lower level of the central library

has been closed to the public throughout the entire pandemic and will remain closed, she said, and they are looking at options for innovative use of that space. The Genealogy, Local History, and Archives unit is moving to a separate building with its own parking lot in probably late fall or sometime in the winter. One issue she said that was ongoing was they were still not permitted to hire volunteers. They have a lot of students, especially looking to do practicums because they haven't had that opportunity for a year. There is also a hiring freeze. Barrett reported that it looks like their budget will be flat, which is good, because they were expecting it to take a nosedive.

Tara Turk-Zaafraan, who teaches at a private school, reported on the impact of COVID-19 in the educational arena. Turk-Zaafraan's school had gone virtual, then hybrid, then back to virtual when cases spiked in the Houston area. She reported that as a teacher, this was the most challenging year of her career. It appears that, according to Governor Abbott, classrooms will return to normal in the fall without any mask mandates or anything like that. She is also a student and found it very difficult to access the information she needed. She said that COVID taught us that students need a way to access the information they need and there should be more digital resources available.

Melissa Gonzales, a records manager for the Houston Community College system spoke from a non-public services perspective. Gonzales reported that they were using Laserfiche and the Enterprise system to manage records virtually. They have been able to streamline internal records requests, consolidate student records across campuses, and implement tools they have been paying for and not using fully. For example, they saved financial aid about \$15,000 by using the forms tool in Laserfiche. The administration has seen how having the records digitized has really paid off. Because of that, their office of general counsel is looking at some other vendors, in addition to Laserfiche for their contract management system. In addition, the office of institutional equity is also looking for Laserfiche to use for their case management system because they've seen how it works so seamlessly. Gonzales reported that she believes everybody is finally understanding how helpful it is and even though it seems pricey, it's extremely helpful and worthwhile to invest that money into a system that allows everybody access without having to hire additional staff or place more burdens on existing staff. She also said that they now have metrics and reviews to demonstrate how useful their systems are and how working from home can be productive.

Chubb added that we may use these examples of why digital access to primary source material and original records is important in so many different ways, but also the need for education on how to produce quality digital images and make them accessible. She said that it's not just scanning and putting up images. There should be good metadata that enables searching, and you need finding aids, and items in a catalog so that people can find them.

Leslie Stapleton from Texas A&M University at San Antonio Libraries' Special Collections also provided an update. She said that her archives are open from 9:00am to 4:00pm now and things are starting to feel more normal. Stapleton added that the librarians have shown that they are able to be accessible to students and productive working from home and that there may be more flexibility with working from home in the future.

Chubb mentioned that she would be interested in getting some feedback from archives on if they will continue employing protective measures like the flexi barriers, wiping down surfaces, and face coverings. She said her staff have asked about it and such measures can protect against the flu and other help with other health issues. Gonzales added that she will be conducting an online forum about reopening archives safely the next day at 3:00pm.

#### **8. Discussion of current State Board Programming Grant activities**

Chubb asked Peggy Price to provide an update on grant activities. Price thanked the subcommittee of Stapleton, Gonzales and Earles for recommending the recipients of THRAB's National/Texas History Day special awards. The projects were so impressive that THRAB honored two recipients in the junior category. [The special award recipients were: Lily Coffman from Waco High School in the individual documentary, senior division for her project, "Hidden on the 'B' Side: Black Gospel Music of the Civil Rights Movement;" Colton Payne from Sante Fe High School for individual documentary, junior division for "Resolved: African Americans Found their Voice Through Debate;" and David Bode of Waco's Atlas Academy for his individual website, junior division, "Waco's Greatest Photographer: Fred Gildersleeve." ] Price reported that the board offered Society of American Archivists (SAA) virtual workshops. One on XML for thirty registrants and another on metadata for ten participants. [The workshops were Introduction to XML Analysis and Manipulation and Metadata Overview for Archivists.] Price added that she would be soliciting archival award nominations soon and also images for the archives month poster on disability history. Price also mentioned that THRAB will have a new table drape, a new banner, and THRAB-branded measuring tapes for event exhibit booths.

Chubb said that THRAB had accomplished almost all of its goals for the current programming grant with the exception of supporting TARO training workshops. TARO was not able to hold in-person workshops due to COVID. Chubb worked with Dan Stokes and the University of Texas Libraries to instead implement a project to hire a student to encode finding aids and upload them to TARO. Chubb reported that they were on track to encode well over 200 finding aids by the end of the month.

Chubb went on to say that the next grant will be starting as soon as the current grant ends on June 30. The next grant will include the same kind of projects THRAB has engaged in in the past, with support for archives bazaars, a poster, judging a History Day special award, and the archival awards. THRAB will also offer disaster workshops presented by Rebecca Elder at locations around the state, SAA workshops and the TARO training that they were not able to conduct this year. She then invited questions and seeing none, asked Dan Stokes for any additional comments.

Stokes shared that he appreciates what Texas has been doing in that THRAB offers the basic workshops and then the higher level and more specialized trainings and is always moving forward, which is what they at the NHPRC are looking for. He said that THRAB is helping people build their careers and their institutions so that they can do better and not get left behind.

Chubb added that THRAB had offered for the first time the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) Basics of Archives online, five-week, continuing education workshops and received positive feedback. She said that THRAB had been trying to attract the county historical commissions and small county archives and that's something THRAB will continue to do.

## **9. Discussion of future grants and applications**

Chubb introduced the next topic and sought feedback from the board on future initiatives. She assumed and the board agreed that THRAB would continue the activities of the poster, awards, and other programs but wanted to know what other ideas board members may want to propose for the next grant. Board members suggested and discussed ideas surrounding the archives month poster, such as involving Texas History Day special award winners and emphasizing education and primary sources. Chubb mentioned the request from TARO for funding and invited new board member Carla Alvarez, who works with TARO, to weigh in. Alvarez shared that TARO had received an NEH grant to revamp the TARO website and that the soft launch with testing was underway. The new version will streamline a lot of the technical processes and create a more efficient system. Current and future TARO participants will need training. The new site is planned for a September 28 launch.

Chubb brought to the board the request for funding of travel for TARO trainings. TARO requested support for workshops in West Texas, South Texas and at the Society of Southwest Archivists (SSA) annual meeting to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Chubb questioned the \$2000 for an out-of-state workshop when a training in West Texas was already included in the proposal. Board members agreed that TARO should reconsider this location and either offer another site in Texas for the training or limit to two workshops. Gonzales brought up the need to offer training in Native American communities and rural areas. She also proposed offering a streaming version or live video where people in other states or those unable to travel could view the workshop.

Stokes remarked that it would be more typical to record the training and offer online for others to view on demand. But he said that the concept could be included in the grant proposal with language that the logistics were still being worked out. Stapleton added that the idea of offering a workshop in the format Gonzales suggested would be wonderful, but for the specific TARO training it was meant to be hands-on so probably would not work.

Chubb said that she will explore options for workshops that THRAB may want to develop and offer virtually. She mentioned recent queries from historical commissions regarding digitization. Linda Barrett agreed that there is a need to provide resources because there are certainly many more individuals out there who need assistance. Barrett also mentioned that those who would like to participate in the Portal to Texas History will need to understand what the standards are for their digitization projects. Chubb agreed and suggested reaching out to the Portal of Texas History and proposing a collaborative effort to add to the grant proposal. She summarized areas of focus for the next grant would be smaller institutions, public libraries, HBCUs and county historical commissions. Other areas would be advocacy, primary sources, and building skill sets.

Gonzales directed a question to Stokes regarding the term “Hispanic-serving institutions” and how they are defined. Stokes said they are hoping people who know these things will come forward and offer ideas for projects and that unfortunately these terms are not always clearly defined. Any assistance that can be provided by board members and others who may serve as a reference to for us. The commission is developing a committee that will work for over a year to figure out how to reach a more diverse body of applicants, because the same type of institutions are applying over and over and they want to get different types in different areas.

Chubb concluded with a summary of next steps. She will review the newly revised strategic plan for NHPRC, look at THRAB’s current strategic plan, and review everything that the board talked about today

to determine what to put into a grant application for up to \$40,000. She will send it out to a couple of board members and may talk to individually to get some additional clarification or ask someone to read over a section and make sure it makes sense in terms of what THRAB discussed. She will then send it out. It is due next week.

#### **10. Discussion of the next meeting date and location**

Chubb reminded the board that there had been plans to meet in Lavaca County in person for the October 2020 meeting that had to be cancelled. She hopes to convene in person for the October 2021 meeting in Hallettsville. She is hopeful that the other two meetings will be held in Austin if meeting in person is possible. She will ask TSLAC General Counsel Sarah Swanson review the Open Meetings Act for communication options after the governor lifts the disaster proclamation. If THRAB can meet via tele- or videoconference, then the board may alternate meeting remotely with in-person meetings and put the money saved into programming instead of into travel. Before adjourning the meeting, Chubb asked that board members review the roster's contact information and to send her any corrections. Chubb also reminded everyone to complete the cost-sharing form and submit to Price, as the financial information is necessary for grant reporting.

#### **10. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

*Approved, October 21, 2021*