

# A Community Treasure



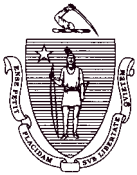
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL RECORDS

Summary Strategic Plan  
*Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board*  
*January, 1999*



*Published by*

William Francis Galvin  
Secretary of the Commonwealth



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This publication is sponsored by William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB), and the Massachusetts Archives. This summary plan is the result of a Strategic Planning Project supported by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). A comprehensive Strategic Plan is available upon request.

The Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board is a unit within the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin. The MHRAB is the central advisory board for historical records projects and planning in Massachusetts and the state level review body for grants submitted to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

*Cover photo: In each town and city in Massachusetts, as across the country, parades and community events are held to celebrate and commemorate the culture of our present and our past. Images of such events are community treasures. Boston Police in Parade. Courtesy of the Boston Police Department Records Center and Archives.*



*The Boston Massacre. The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street, Boston on March 5th, 1770 by a party of the 29th REG. Engraving by Paul Revere. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.*

# Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB)

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*As a part of the MHRAB's ongoing responsibility to review grants for the NHPRC they created "Priorities and Preferred Approaches" as guidelines. These and other supplementary documents are available upon request.*

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## ***Mission Statement:***

The MHRAB serves the public as the central advisory board for historical records projects and plans. It provides leadership and guidance to help ensure the identification, preservation, and use of the state's historical resources (public and private) for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection. It is the state-level review body for grants submitted to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). The MHRAB encourages and supports communication and coordination among the historical records community, information agencies, and the public.

## **Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board**

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To the Citizens of Massachusetts;

“A Community Treasure: Massachusetts Historical Records” is the result of an intensive strategic planning project carried out by the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB). I would like to thank the MHRAB and the librarians, educators, archivists, historians, genealogists, researchers, local government officials, and literally hundreds of Bay Staters, like you and me, who participated in making the Strategic Planning of the MHRAB a success. This document is a result of that hard work. It defines the priorities, goals, and strategies of the MHRAB and the historical records community and asks you, the citizen, to help preserve the past for the future.

Aptly titled, this plan addresses the most important aspect in the lives of the people of Massachusetts – the Community. By emphasizing the wealth of history found in each Massachusetts community, this plan illustrates the important role that historical records play in our daily lives. By addressing issues relevant to the care of records at local historical societies, public libraries, town clerk’s offices, schools, hospitals, and businesses, this plan affects each one of us. We must continue to work together to preserve the records we hold. We must share information about our records and how researchers can use them. We must develop cooperative strategies to collect modern records. And we must continue to build on the work that the Strategic Planning project started in 1997.

I commend the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board for the work it has done on this document and its success with the Strategic Planning project. I endorse the plan that the MHRAB has proposed and encourage you to take part in activities to improve the condition of historical records in Massachusetts. The people of Massachusetts should be proud of our history, our community treasure.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Francis Galvin".

William Francis Galvin  
Secretary of the Commonwealth



*The Sacred Cod hangs in the House of Representatives as a symbol of the importance of the fishing industry to Massachusetts.  
Photograph by T.C. Fitzgerald.*

**History is the witness that  
testifies to the passing of time;  
it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory,  
provides guidance in daily life, and  
brings us tidings of antiquity.**

**– Cicero**



# Table of Contents

What Would You Do? .....	8
What Are Historical Records?.....	10
The Urgent Need.....	12
Planning For Progress.....	14
Priority 1: Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection. ....	16
Priority 2: Work collaboratively to promote common goals.....	18
Priority 3: Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.....	20
Priority 4: Plan for the adequate documentation of Massachusetts history. ....	22
Priority 5: Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records. ....	24
What You Can Do .....	27
Performance Measures.....	28
Action Agenda.....	30
Acknowledgments .....	34



*Photograph of the shoreline, Provincetown, Massachusetts, c. 1895. Courtesy of the Collection of the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association.*

## What Would You Do?



*The Harvard Medical School, 1883-1906. This site is now home to the new wing of the Boston Public Library. In 1906, the school moved from Boylston Street to its present location on Longwood Avenue.*

*Courtesy of the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine.*

A homeowner wonders about a marshy area in back of her property. It might have been a wetland at some point, but appears to have been filled in. When was this done? Was clean fill used? Did the town sanction it? She doesn't know where to begin looking for records or whether, if any exist, she would be permitted to see them.

The public library has a unique collection of eighteenth-century maps showing the wetland area. The purchase of the land and construction of the house are well documented in a collection of family papers at the local historical society. At the town hall, selectmen minutes from the turn of the century reveal that the wetland was used as a dumping ground for a tannery. All these records are public and accessible— but unknown to the homeowner.

The quality of a critical component of the nuclear power plant is in question. The original computer-aided designs have been revised and overwritten; no original designs for the plant equipment can be found. How can the manufacturer and the plant owner make informed decisions about the safety of the equipment?

Without the information policies and retention schedules in place to ensure the creation, management, and preservation of permanent records, businesses cannot fulfill their legal obligations; this could put the worker and public health at risk.



*Photograph of Railroad Wharf, Provincetown, Massachusetts, c. 1930. Courtesy of the Collection of the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association.*



The man was adopted. He never really wondered about his biological parents until now. Getting on in years, he has developed severe heart problems. How much of this condition is related to his genetic background? How will this affect his children and grandchildren? Are they at higher risk? Should they take precautions?

A case file containing his mother's medical history was destroyed when the adoption agency went out of business. Records stayed in a basement for a number of years until they were damaged by a flood, became moldy, and were discarded as useless. The man will never find the information he seeks.

A researcher is trying to discover the history of a nineteenth-century African American community in a Massachusetts city. She searches the holdings of local libraries, historical societies, and other repositories, but can find no trace of the people who lived in the neighborhood for nearly one hundred years.

Twenty percent of the Massachusetts population are minority groups, yet only a tiny fraction of repositories actively collect records relating to minority communities and culture. An even smaller fraction report significant holdings in these areas. Because no mechanisms exist to identify gaps in the documentary record, it is difficult for repositories to establish collaborative strategies for collecting records. Some creators who hold important records would be interested in depositing records— if repositories approached them.



*Welcoming home World War I veterans in Provincetown. Photograph of the Sunshine Club, September, 19, 1919. Courtesy of the Collection of the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association.*



*Massachusetts Women's Defense Corps. This photograph is part of a series taken of the Massachusetts Women's Defense Corps by Ansel Adams in 1942.*

*Courtesy of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College.*

## What Are Historical Records?

Historical records are the letters, diaries, photographs, minutes, reports, petitions, maps, licenses, architectural plans, birth certificates, ledgers, business correspondence, and other records that document the events, people, and places of our world.

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*Records - recorded information in all formats created and received by organizations and individuals for the purposes of executing their business and documenting the conduct of their lives.*

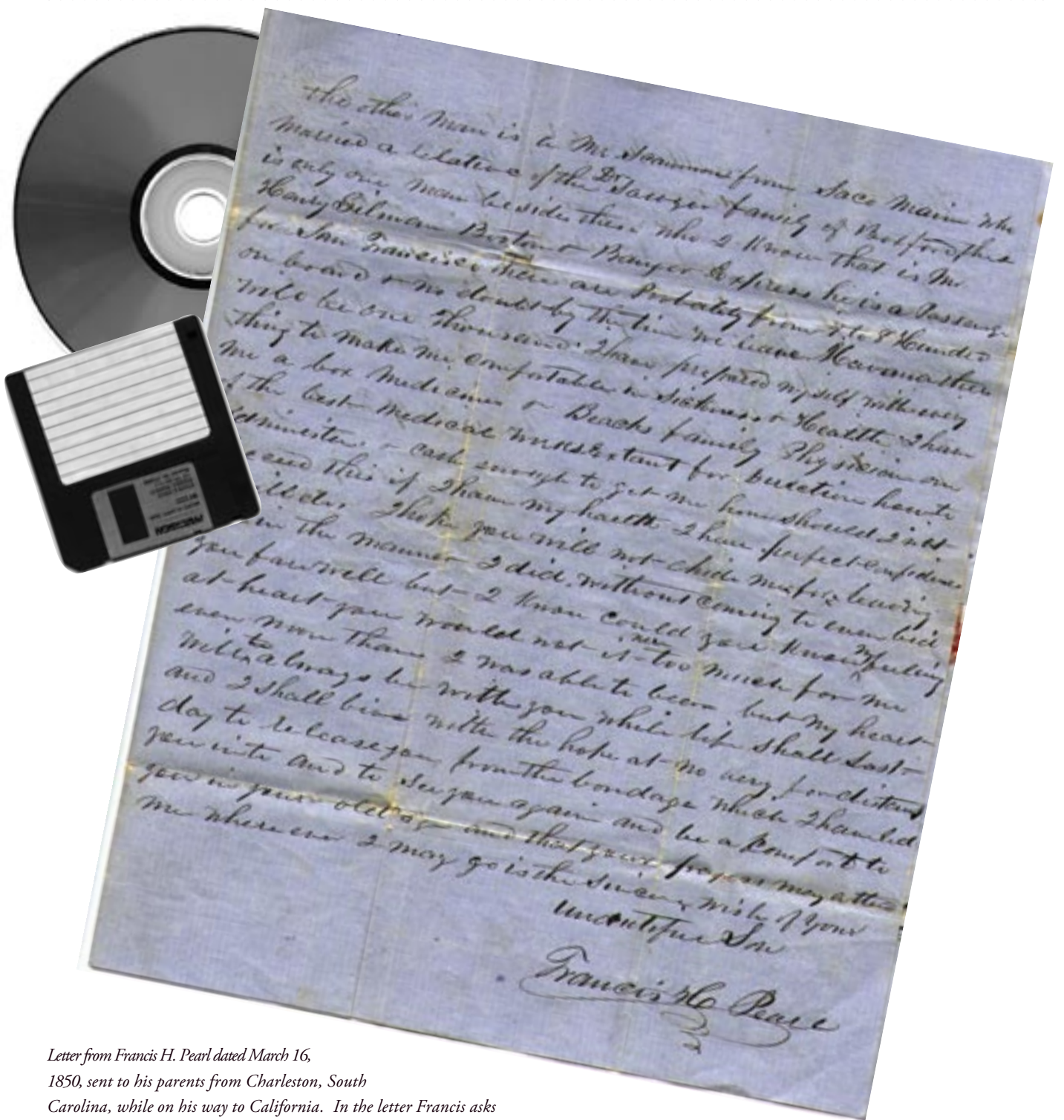
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Records protect the individual rights of Massachusetts residents. They promote the accountability of government, business, and other institutions. They support self-understanding. They are a source of our cultural memory and historical reflection. Through records we learn about our society, our future, and ourselves.

These records document the lives of our ancestors, and our heritage. They link us directly with the people who came before us. The **real tragedy** is when we lose the artifact: the paper covered with brown, spidery handwriting and those animated faces that look out at us from faded sepia photographs. When historical records are lost, we lose the potential that information offers us for self-understanding.



*Construction of the Shadowbrook Estate, photograph #65B. Courtesy of the Lenox Library Association Historic Photograph Collection.*



Letter from Francis H. Pearl dated March 16, 1850, sent to his parents from Charleston, South Carolina, while on his way to California. In the letter Francis asks forgiveness for running away from home, and expresses confidence in his future, having brought along money, medicine, and Beach's Family Physician. Ironically, Pearl died of typhoid fever shortly after reaching San Francisco.

Courtesy of the Boxford Historic Document Center.



## The Urgent Need

Historical records in your community and across the state are at risk. The historical records community needs your support to improve the condition of Massachusetts historical records.

In Massachusetts, there are over 1200 archives, historical societies, museums, libraries, and other repositories. Thousands more organizations care for their own historical records, including government offices, churches, cultural and social organizations, and businesses.

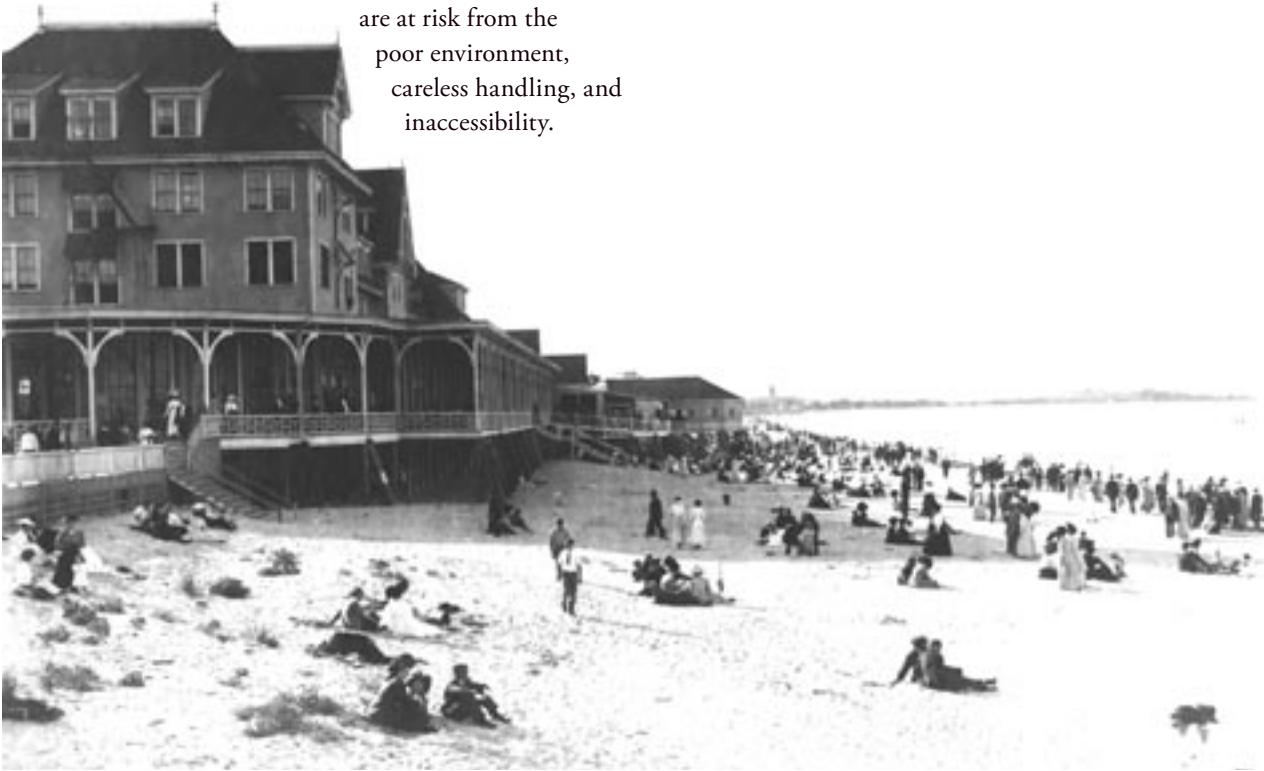
There are more historical records, and more historical records repositories, in Massachusetts than in most other parts of the country. In this state we are fortunate to be surrounded by historic landscapes, structures, and artifacts, which we interpret, understand, and make more meaningful through historical records. Historical records reveal the past and help us chart the future for our organizations and communities.

We have taken this rich documentary legacy for granted. In every city and town, correspondence, diaries, photographs, minutes, petitions, maps and plans, ledgers, electronic designs and programs, and other records

are at risk from the poor environment, careless handling, and inaccessibility.

A survey of historical records repositories, conducted in 1996, revealed that while the enthusiasm of volunteer and professional archivists is high, the conditions of many Massachusetts records and repositories are dismal. For example:

- Only fifteen percent of repositories reported having a current disaster recovery plan;
- Thirty percent have a written acquisitions policy;
- Most repositories spend less than \$ 1,000.00 annually to care for historical records;
- Virtually every responding repository reported inadequate storage as a hazard to the preservation of records;
- Thirty percent of repositories operate entirely with volunteer labor; these numbers are dramatically higher for historical societies.<sup>1</sup>



*Nantasket Beach, 1909. EN 4.40 1326 Box 15, P34, Environmental Affairs, Parks Contract Photographs. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives.*

<sup>1</sup>*Data from the Historical Records Repository Survey carried out in Massachusetts in 1997.*



Charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company, granted by King Charles I in 1629. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives.

held by local governments and community repositories which have few sources of funding for historical records projects. Unlike many other states, Massachusetts has no state funding to improve the preservation and accessibility of historical records held by local government, historical societies, museums, and schools. Many other records in Massachusetts are also at great risk of loss. For example, modern businesses increasingly depend on electronic media, which has a short life span, to save records.

The historical records community in Massachusetts cares deeply about the history of the Bay State. The community and the public worked closely with the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board to articulate the need for statewide action to preserve and make accessible our historical records. We are stronger if we work together. Your public library, your historical society, your town clerk, your community businesses, your local clubs and organizations, and you can help. This document represents the collaboration and ideas of a great number of persons in its priorities, goals, and actions.

Historical records repositories in Massachusetts are understaffed, under-funded, and overlooked. Most historical records repositories have multiple roles and care for records as only one of their missions. Most rely on volunteers to ensure the preservation and accessibility of historical records. Most need more opportunities for collaboration, professional development, and funding.

Among the state's most vulnerable records are those

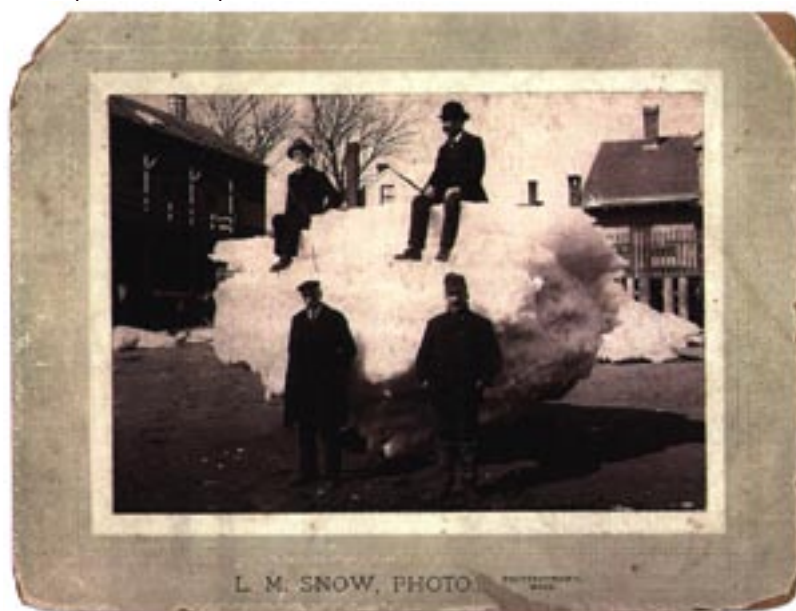
**“Historical records repositories in Massachusetts are under-staffed, under-funded, and overlooked.”**

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*Historical Records Community - the totality of individuals and organizations who are concerned with the creation, accessibility, preservation, and use of historical records, including property owners, attorneys, genealogists, architects, curators, historians, scientists, scholars, archeologists, students, business persons, archivists, government officials, developers, and librarians.*

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*Below: Ice on Provincetown Beach, L. M. Snow. Courtesy of the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum.*



# Planning For Progress

*Strategic Planning - A disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide an organization by defining what it is, what it does, and why it does it.*

The Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB) participated in an eighteen-month strategic planning project to assess and improve the conditions of historical records in Massachusetts. Supported by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the board met with citizens, government officials, business people, librarians, archivists, researchers and others to gather information about their concerns and generate solutions. Together they identified five priorities to improve the current condition of historical records in Massachusetts. They are:

1. Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.
2. Work collaboratively to promote common goals.
3. Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.
4. Plan for the adequate documentation of Massachusetts history.
5. Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.

Participants developed goals and objectives for each priority area. Every Massachusetts resident can become an advocate for historical records and help achieve these objectives.



*Megan Sniffin Marinoff and William Fowler, Jr., MHRAB members, addressing the audience at the First Annual Community Forum on Historical Records, 1998. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives.*



*Ten public meetings were held in the early stages of the planning project. These meetings generated ideas and comments from the people of Massachusetts regarding the current conditions of historical records and the needs of the historical records community. Emily Williston Library and Museum, Easthampton. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives.*





*A well organized and preserved historical records collection. Stacks like these are a goal for Massachusetts repositories. Courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Library.*

## Priority 1

### *Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.*

Many of us do not stop to think that the creation of historical records goes on every day in the homes, businesses, schools, organizations, and government offices of Massachusetts. People may be unaware of how historical records can be used to improve their daily lives. When the value of current and historical records is not recognized, these records are under-utilization and at risk of loss.

The historical records community and the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board must design effective outreach programs to educate the public and organizations that create records. The outreach programs are essential to help them understand the value of their records and how to care for them. We also must demonstrate the benefits of using and preserving historical records to potential users. The MHRAB will produce promotional literature and provide guidelines and models to facilitate this work.



*Boston Normal School. Courtesy of the Archives Department, Healey Library, University of Massachusetts Boston.*

## Goal

### *Improve public awareness of the value and use of historical records.*

#### *Objective 1*

Design and execute or support effective public outreach programs.

#### Activities

- Facilitate development of partnerships among librarians, local government officials, and other collaborators to promote awareness of the value of archival records.
- Sponsor annual forums open to the public to discuss relevant issues.

The plan includes five priorities that are organized by goal, objective, and activity.

- Develop a useful web-site that contains information for the historical records community and also educates the public. Resources on the site should include information on funding sources, preservation basics, organizations, current events and programs, and researcher web-sites.
- Develop and distribute flyers tailored to the needs of individuals in the historical records community and useful to the public. Flyers should include the information available on the web-site, including preservation basics, funding sources, and training opportunities.

### **Objective 2**

Develop and publicize an awards program, recognizing efforts to improve the state of historical records in Massachusetts.

#### **Activities**

- Recognize individuals or organizations in Massachusetts at the Annual Community Forum on Historical Records for their efforts in building a stronger historical records community, for improving the state of historical records in Massachusetts, or for using historical records for the betterment of the lives of the citizens of Massachusetts.

### **Objective 3**

Support the use of historical records in schools.

#### **Activities**

- Facilitate work with K-12 educators to encourage use of primary materials, including access to selected documents via the Internet, to meet Massachusetts curriculum requirements.

#### **Accomplishments:**

- ◆ More than twenty organizations cosponsored the First Annual Community Forum on Historical Records, held in May, 1998. The forum, "Advocating Massachusetts History," was attended by more than 350 individuals concerned about historical records in Massachusetts.
- ◆ In cities and towns, in government offices, museums, elementary schools, hospitals, libraries, and universities, people who care about historical records have formed MASSLegacy, a grass-roots coalition to advocate for historical records.
- ◆ Volunteers and MHRAB staff assembled an information center and clearinghouse on the MHRAB web-site to provide information about the management and use of archival records.



*Elizabeth Freeman painted by Susan Sedgwick, 1811. Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman was the first slave freed in Massachusetts as a result of the Bill of Rights of the 1780 State Constitution. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.*

## Priority 2

### *Work collaboratively to promote common goals.*

Massachusetts records managers, curators, archivists, librarians, historians, and other researchers have formed strong independent groups to serve their specific needs. These organizations share common concerns about historical records and could form a powerful force for advocacy and change. However, no effective mechanism exists to bring these professionals together to advocate for the management of historical records.

The historical records community and the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board need to explore the potential for cooperation and collaboration and exploit those areas of common concern. To meet these needs the MHRAB will collect and distribute information about professional organizations; identify, develop, and distribute information about cooperation and collaboration; and work with organizations on projects of common interests.



*Primary campaign victory celebration dinner, PC – 368.*

*Courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Library*

## Goal

***Foster cooperation, collaboration, and information sharing within the historical records community.***

### ***Objective***

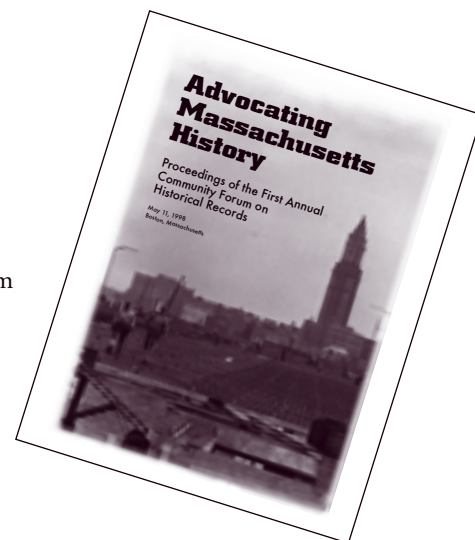
Promote collaboration among professionals and organizations across the historical records community.

### ***Activities***

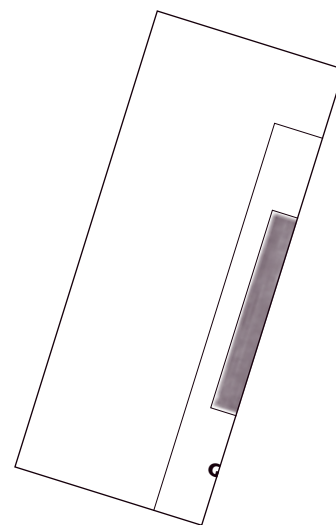
- Facilitate broad co-sponsorship and participation in the Annual Community Forum on Historical Records each spring.
- Require that applicants, as a condition of grant approval for NHPRC projects, consider collaborative approaches.
- Provide access to a list of professional organizations on the MHRAB's web site.
- Create and maintain a listserv for the discussion of historical records in Massachusetts and the activities of the MHRAB.
- Support the efforts of an advocacy group to attract and speak in a unified voice for the diverse historical records community in Massachusetts.
- Seek opportunities to facilitate collaborative projects that achieve the common goals of the historical records community.

### ***Accomplishments:***

- The MHRAB worked with volunteers to establish a listserv (MAHistory) to facilitate the exchange of information among people who care about Massachusetts historical records.
- The MHRAB hosted a working group of organizational representatives to determine the educational needs of the historical records community. A collaborative of organizations obtained funding to develop a three-day curriculum on archival program management for local repositories to be offered through the regional library systems. The project, Preserving our Community Heritage, was developed by the MHRAB and funded by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, Massachusetts Historical Commission, and a grant from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities.
- More than twenty organizations cosponsored the First Annual Community Forum on Historical Records, held in May, 1998. The forum, "Advocating Massachusetts History" was attended by more than 350 individuals concerned about historical records.



*Advocating Massachusetts History publication made available to cosponsors and participants.*



*Your Local Government Record Program brochure developed by the MHRAB with input from individual government officials and the New England City and Town Clerks Association.*



## Priority 3

### *Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.*



*Preserving our Community Heritage workshops are offered through the Massachusetts Library Regions. The workshops provide participants with information on archival programs and principles, community documentation, and strategic planning.*

A lack of public awareness has contributed to the traditional underfunding of archives and records programs. Even programs managing nationally significant records have difficulty obtaining sufficient space, staff, and resources. The conditions in community repositories are desperate. Few repositories have access to safe records storage or staff with the necessary expertise to make records available to schools, researchers, and genealogists. The budgets of existing federal grant programs are not adequate to meet the needs of records holders.

The historical records community needs to pool information about successful fundraising strategies and existing funding sources. Since commonly known funding sources are inadequate, we must also investigate alternatives and lobby for new sources of public and private funds. To help meet these needs, the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board will support efforts to obtain new funding sources and develop web-based and printed guides to funding sources.

## GOAL

*Assist organizations to obtain resources to manage historical records.*

### **Objective 1**

Advocate for greater participation of Massachusetts historical records community members in the NHPRC.

#### Activities

- Make a link from the MHRAB homepage to grant guidelines on the NHPRC homepage.
- Develop and distribute MHRAB priorities and preferred approaches for potential applications.

### **Objective 2**

Identify and make known existing funding sources.

#### Activities

- Identify and distribute a list of granting sources.
- Identify and distribute information recommendations for successful grant applications.



**Objective 3**

Develop financial resources to enable the MHRAB to become a granting agency.

## Activities

- Submit a re-grant application to the NHPRC.
- Provide the legislature with information about the state of historical records and MHRAB activities via an annual report.
- Support advocacy efforts to obtain state legislation to develop a grants program for the preservation of historical records in Massachusetts. This grants program will be administered by the MHRAB.

**Objective 4**

Obtain additional financial resources for repositories.

## Activity

- Support advocacy efforts to educate private and corporate foundations on the role of historical records projects.

## Accomplishments:

- ◆ A technical leaflet “How to Find Funding in Massachusetts” was created and distributed on the web and at meetings.
- ◆ In cities and towns, in government offices, museums, elementary schools, hospitals, libraries, and universities, people who care about historical records formed MASSLegacy, a coalition to advocate for historical records.
- ◆ The MHRAB has been awarded a re-grant to enable it to administer a grants program for historical records projects over the next two years.



*Simmons College alumnae unload merchandise to be sold to raise funds for the first Endowment Campaign. The Simmons Salvage Shop was located on Newbury Street, Boston, 1921. Simmons celebrates its centennial year in 1999. Many organizations and institutions use major anniversaries like a centennial to highlight their historical records collections. Courtesy of the Simmons College Archives, Boston, Massachusetts.*

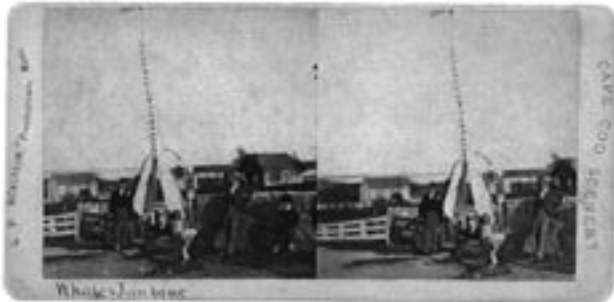
## Priority 4

### *Plan for the adequate documentation of Massachusetts history.*

Documentation - 1. In archival usage, the creation or acquisition of documents to provide evidence of the creator, an event, or an activity.

2. In electronic records, an organized series of descriptive documents explaining the operating system and software necessary to use and maintain a file (3) and the arrangement, content, and coding of the data which it contains. (ICA)

*Stereoscope images of Provincetown, c. 1895-1908. Courtesy of the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum.*



A central task of archivists and other records holders is to acquire records. This work is guided by a knowledge of what records are necessary to document a given community's life and history. No generally accepted "vision", or set of documentation goals, has been established for Massachusetts life and history. We need dialogue among scholars, archivists, and citizens to establish a sense of what the most inclusive and representative record of the state should be. Similar discussions at the local level would ensure the identification and preservation of our communities' unique heritage. Documentation goals can be prioritized and better met when they understand what areas have been collected and what areas have been neglected. At the moment, this is difficult to do in Massachusetts. While most larger repositories share information about their holdings, many smaller and community repositories do not have the resources to describe their holdings. As a result, the level of knowledge about records in Massachusetts is uneven; no comprehensive, coherent catalog is available. In the absence of a statewide inventory, it is difficult to identify aspects of Massachusetts culture and peoples that are sufficiently documented; however, it is clear that many areas are under-represented.

Together we need to establish documentation goals that will lead to the preservation of a representative record. We need to share information about holdings, acquisitions policies, and documentation efforts. We must develop strategies for collaborative documentary efforts and work together to identify and categorize areas that are not adequately documented. To address this priority, the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board will identify, develop, and distribute web-based and print models and frameworks for documentation. It will study previous efforts at documenting communities and topics to identify existing tools that support documentation planning. The MHRAB will also support the analysis of available inventories and survey data to identify and prioritize areas of Massachusetts life that are not adequately documented.

## GOAL

*Improve documentation of Massachusetts.*

### **Objective**

Support the development and ongoing revision of tools that enhance the documentation of Massachusetts.

#### Activities

- Develop, revise, and distribute a framework of documentary goals that will result in a more adequate record of Massachusetts' history.
- Facilitate the development or adaptation of other models, tools, and training programs that help communities and organizations document themselves.
- Facilitate the development, use, testing, and revision of documentation tools, including methods to identify under-documented areas.



Civil War era broadsides recruiting Irish and African American men into the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> regiments. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

#### Accomplishments:

- ◆ The MHRAB created a draft guide and bibliography on documentation to help communities document themselves.
- ◆ The MHRAB conducted a research project to establish a method to identify areas of Massachusetts history that need to be collected by historical records repositories; Massachusetts industries and small businesses were selected as significantly under-documented areas. Additional exploratory work was done to establish a documentation typology for Massachusetts and to develop methods to set documentation goals.
- ◆ Preserving Our Community Heritage, a three day workshop series being held in each of the Massachusetts Library Regions, includes one full day of instruction on community collaboration and documentation.

## Priority 5

### *Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.*

Despite their best efforts, many repositories are not able to accomplish their missions to collect, preserve, and provide access to their holdings. Curators often need assistance to evaluate and implement all their archival responsibilities. Even those aware of their programs' shortcomings may not have the resources or expertise necessary to improve the management and accessibility of records. Significant records lie untouched and unknown in bundles, trunks, and boxes in repositories of every size and type. Many records creators are not aware of the preservation and processing issues inherent in the media of records (audio-visual, electronic, oversized materials, plans, etc.)



*Modern Science and technology have changed the way our culture conducts and documents its experiments, transactions, and communications. Although archives contain images such as this, more and more records deserve attention, collection, and description that are in impermanent and volatile media, such as analog and digital formats.*

*Simmons College students conducting an experiment in the Chemistry lab, ca. 1920. Courtesy of the Simmons College Archives, Boston, Massachusetts.*

We need to expand the use of self-assessment tools to help repositories evaluate the condition of records and programs. We need to share information about management and use of records in all media; increase training opportunities for holders, creators, and users; and work together to improve the conditions of historical records in Massachusetts. To address this priority the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board will encourage records caretakers to attend Preserving our Community Heritage workshops and to assess the needs of their archival programs and records in all media. The MHRAB will also identify, develop, and distribute web-based and print guidelines, standards, and best practices; support training and mentoring programs; and promote and establish working groups to develop collaborative solutions.

## GOAL 1

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*Improve the condition and accessibility of historical records in Massachusetts.*

### **Objective**

Support continuing education and other activities that enable repositories to strengthen archival programs.

#### Activities

- Develop, implement, and update an archival curriculum for local repositories, which can be offered in conjunction with collaborators within target audiences.
- Extend the curriculum to address the needs of records creators.
- Serve as an information resource on management and preservation of historical records in all formats.
- Require that grant applicants use existing archival standards and best practices in all formats, including those relating to appraisal, processing, preservation, management, use of information technology, and reporting of holdings to national bibliographic databases (National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, etc.).
- Work with collaborators to support the development of local networks for mentoring, assistance, and collaboration.

## GOAL 2

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*Support the efforts of records holders to provide access to records in local repositories.*

### **Objective**

Support education of records holders.

#### Activities

- Participate in the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) Archives Roundtable.
- Work with the MLA, MBLC, and other collaborators to identify, develop, and distribute information and tools to meet the needs of holders.
- Facilitate public programs sponsored by the Public Records Division of Massachusetts on public access to government records.

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*Nautical and building architecture have changed dramatically from the drafted sail plans found in the Haffenreffer-Herreshoff Collection at MIT. Original architectural plans are highly useful and must be preserved to document our built environment, on land and sea. Modern architectural records are primarily created, though not entirely retained, in electronic formats using design databases with multiple graphics capabilities.*

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*Sail plan for the Bar Harbor 30- Class, September 14, 1922.*

*Haffenreffer-Herreshoff Collection, HMC #592, plan #96-142, Series V,*

*The Hart Nautical Collections.*

*Courtesy of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Museum.*



This sonogram from a personal collection is a good example of a current electronic record, that relies on volatile hardware, software, and equipment for future access.

Courtesy of a private collection.

## GOAL 3

*Facilitate cooperative solutions to the challenges of new technology*

### **Objective**

Increase the awareness of records creators, holders, and users of the problems associated with new technologies.

### Activities

- Keep constituents aware of projects that:
  - ⇒ Promote the formation of electronic records teams consisting of legal, policy, and technical experts, representing creators, and archivists within target organizations.
  - ⇒ Emphasize that early intervention in the life-cycle of records requires participation by archivists at the design phase of system development.
  - ⇒ Encourage the development of record keeping systems for new technologies.
- Support an interdisciplinary working group to investigate methods to improve creation and management of preservable electronic records.



*Graphics staff, 1998.*

*Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives.*

### Accomplishments:

- ◆ The “Preserving our Community Heritage” workshops will be held twice in each of the library regions. The curriculum was created to help managers of historical records in community repositories learn how to plan an archival program.
- ◆ The MHRAB and volunteers developed a technical leaflet on preservation that discussed diverse media preservation issues and warned of multimedia volatility.
- ◆ Volunteers organized a working group comprised of technologists, auditors, attorneys, and archivists to develop a checklist to help business and program managers determine what records they should create and retain to prevent risks from litigation, audit, and other actions.



## What You Can Do

All of the projects described in this document depend on the involvement of a diverse group of individuals. Your participation in the projects is supported, welcomed, and encouraged. You can be an active member of a working group, you can work within your community or your region, or you can join MASSlegacy, the Coalition that advocates for historical records. There are other actions that you can take as an individual that will also support the efforts of the historical records community. Each of the actions listed below helps in the movement to improve the preservation and accessibility of historical records.

Be an advocate:

- ✓ Contact your public library, historical society, town clerk's office and other local historical records repositories to find out how to help. Volunteer your time, money, and skills to help them preserve your community heritage.
- ✓ Contact business and community leaders and let them know that historical records contain the community's heritage and identity. Let them know that the value, use, and preservation of this important resource is worthy of their attention.
- ✓ Contact government leaders and let them know that you support funding for historical records.
- ✓ Join MASSlegacy and work within your region to advocate for historical records projects.
- ✓ Support funding for historical records and encourage funding sources to include moneys for historical records projects.
- ✓ Take advantage of information and opportunities available through the MHRAB. For more information visit the MHRAB web-site or contact staff by phone.
- ✓ Participate in plan activities and efforts to collaborate to achieve common goals.
- ✓ Fund historical records projects that ensure the accessibility of this vital resource for use today and in the future.
- ✓ Support efforts by your colleagues to identify and preserve important business and community records.

*Mary Tomacchio, 15 years old, worked at the Ayer Mill in the early 1900s, ca. 1918, slide #24/53. Courtesy of the Immigrant City Archives, Lawrence, MA.*



## Performance Measures

The following performance measures must be completed by the MHRAB and historical records community over the next two years (1999-2001) for project success.

***Priority 1: Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.***

During the period 1999-2001 public librarians, government officials, and educators have an improved awareness of the value of historical records.

- One article appears annually in professional newsletters relating to historical records issues.
- Two collaborative projects involving one of these audiences have been undertaken to increase the appreciation or use of historical records annually.

***Priority 2: Work collaboratively to promote common goals.***

Collaboration is an accepted approach to achieve the goals of the historical records community.

- The Annual Community Forum on historical records is carried out annually for the next three years co-sponsored by at least ten historical records organizations.
- The community takes leadership in sponsoring two new collaborative activities.
- The MHRAB receives at least three regrant or grant proposals for collaborative projects.
- MASSlegacy is formally organized and carries out regular activities.
- The MAHistory listserv attracts 300 members and logs 200 messages in its first year.

***Priority 3: Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.***

The historical records community has improved access to information about funding.

- The MHRAB distributes 500 brochures on funding for historical records projects in Massachusetts annually.
- There are 300 queries annually on the MHRAB funding web page

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Performance measures provide the MHRAB with a checklist by which they and the public can judge the success of the plan.

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The historical records community better utilizes existing sources of funding.

- Four Massachusetts grant proposals are submitted annually to the NHPRC and more grants are submitted to other funding sources such as NEH, NSF, and MFH.
- New sources of funding are available for historical records projects.
- The MHRAB reports annually to the General Court on the condition of the state's historical records.
- One new funding source has been identified for historical records projects.

***Priority 4: Plan for the adequate documentation of Massachusetts history.***

Communities and repositories in Massachusetts are better able to set documentary goals.

- In the next two years, two communities (geographic or otherwise) have completed a collaborative documentation activity that helps them and others better understand what has been or what should be documented.
- Every two years the MHRAB has completed a thorough review and revision of the "Massachusetts Documentation Goals, Annotated List."

***Priority 5: Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.***

Archival programs in Massachusetts are better able to ensure the preservation and accessibility of archival records in all media.

- *Preserving Our Community Heritage* workshops is offered twelve times and is attended by 200 persons, during 1999-2001.
- A training curriculum for nonprofit organizations is completed and piloted.
- A full-time field archivist is on the staff of the Massachusetts Archives to support referral and information activities.
- A Massachusetts interdisciplinary collaborative submits a proposal for funding to increase the ability of records creators, holders, and users to manage electronic records.

# Action Agenda

In order to meet the priorities, goals, and objectives listed in the plan, a series of activities must be completed. Each activity correlates to the success of the plan. The activities have been arranged according to the Board's plan priorities.

Priorities:

1. Educate the public to value records and archives for self-understanding, government accountability, sound institutional management, and historical reflection.
2. Work collaboratively to promote common goals.
3. Obtain the resources necessary to achieve the objectives of the historical records community.
4. Plan for the adequate documentation of Massachusetts history.
5. Improve the accessibility and preservation of historical records.

The activities have been listed in the following pages and given a time frame for completion.

“ \* ” = project started or carried out during the Strategic Planning Project as demonstration projects.

“ X ” = when project will be started or events held.

“ - ” = project that have ongoing or regularly implemented components.

*Recently inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame, Larry Bird is a recognizable figure in sports history.*

*Larry Bird photograph, Larence Rosenblatt, Clay Shaw Sports. Courtesy of the Boston Celtics.*



## Action Agenda

### Priority 1

Facilitate development of partnerships among librarians, local government officials, and other collaborators to promote awareness of the value of archival records.

Sponsor annual forums open to the public to discuss relevant issues.

Develop a useful web-site that contains information for the historical records community and also educates the public.

Develop and distribute flyers tailored to the needs of individuals in the historical records community and useful to the public.

Recognize individuals or organizations in Massachusetts at the Annual Community Forum on Historical Records for their efforts in building a stronger historical records community, for improving the state of historical records in Massachusetts, or for using historical records for the betterment of the lives of the citizens of Massachusetts.

Facilitate work with K-12 educators to encourage use of primary materials, including access to documents via the Internet, to meet Massachusetts curriculum requirements.

### Priority 2

Facilitate broad co-sponsorship and participation in the Annual Community Forum on Historical Records each spring.

Require that applicants, as a condition of grant approval for NHPRC projects, consider collaborative approaches.

Provide access to a list of professional organizations on the MHRAB's web site.

Create and maintain a listserv for the discussion of historical records in Massachusetts and the activities of the MHRAB.

Support the efforts of an advocacy group to attract and speak in a unified voice for the diverse historical records community in Massachusetts.

Seek opportunities to facilitate collaborative projects that achieve the common goals of the historical records community.

		Year and Month								
		1998		1999		2000		2001		
		12	6	12	6	12	6	12	6	12
	*	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	*	X			-			-		
	*	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	*	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			X		-			-		
				X	X					
	*	X			-			-		
		X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	*									
	*	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	*	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	*				X	-	-	-	-	-





**Action Agenda**

**Priority 5**

Develop, implement, and update an archival curriculum for local repositories which can be offered in conjunction with collaborators within target audiences.

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Extend the curriculum to address the needs of records creators.

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Serve as an information resource on management and preservation of historical records in all formats.

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Require that grant applicants use existing archival standards and best practices in all formats, including those relating to appraisal, processing, preservation, management, use of information technology, and reporting of holdings to national bibliographic databases (NUCMC, etc.).

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Work with collaborators to support the development of local networks for mentoring, assistance, and collaboration.

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Participate in the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) Archives Roundtable.

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Work with the MLA, MBLC, and other collaborators to identify, develop, and distribute information and tools to meet the needs of records holders.

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Facilitate public programs sponsored by the Public Records Division of Massachusetts on public access to government records.

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Keep constituents aware of projects that:

- Promote the formation of electronic records teams consisting of legal, policy, and technical experts representing creators and archivists within target organizations.
- Emphasize that early intervention in the life-cycle of records requires participation by archivists at the design phase of system development.
- Encourage the development of record keeping systems.

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Support an interdisciplinary working group to investigate methods to improve creation and management of preservable electronic records.

Year and Month							
1998	1999		2000		2001		
	12	6	12	6	12	6	12
	*	X		-		-	
						X	
	*	X	-	-	-	-	-
	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	*	X	-	-	-	-	-
	*	X	-	-	-	-	-
	X	X	-	-	-	-	-
							X
						X	

# Acknowledgments

Many individuals, institutions, and organizations have committed their time, support, and expertise to create this document. While we would like to recognize each person individually, the list would amount to thousands. Some of the organizations that participated in this planning process are listed below. If you have been one of the many participants, please accept our sincere thanks. And if you are just learning of this now, we look forward to working with you in the future.

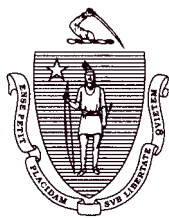
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Community - a group of individuals sharing a common geography, culture, politics, commitment to a common goal or task.

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Association of Records Managers and Administrators, Inc.  
 Association of College and Research Libraries, New England Chapter  
 Bay State Historical League  
 Boston Public Library  
 Bostonian Society  
 Cape and Islands Historical Association  
 Department of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
 Department of Environmental Management, Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
 Hampshire County Historical Records Preservation Advisory Board  
 Healy Library, University of Massachusetts Boston  
 Information Technology Division, Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
 John F. Kennedy Library  
 Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners  
 Massachusetts City Clerks Association  
 Massachusetts Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records  
 Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies  
 Massachusetts Cultural Council  
 Massachusetts Genealogical Council  
 Massachusetts Historical Society  
 Massachusetts Library Association  
 Massachusetts Municipal Association  
 Massachusetts State Library  
 Massachusetts Studies Project  
 Massachusetts Town Clerks Association  
 New England Heritage Center  
 New England History Association  
 New England Historic Genealogical Society  
 New England History Teachers Association  
 New England Archivists  
 New England Association of City and Town Clerks  
 New England Quarterly  
 North East Popular Culture Association  
 North East Massachusetts Region Library System  
 Northeastern University Archives  
 Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin  
 Massachusetts Archives  
 Massachusetts Historical Commission  
 Public Records Division  
 Simmons College, Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences  
 Tufts University Archives, Tisch Library  
 University Products, Inc.





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