

Save Iowa History!

Call on State Leaders to Hold the Department of Cultural Affairs Accountable to Iowans

Mission Statement of the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) Under Iowa Code

The State Historical Society of Iowa has a dual mission of preservation and education. As a trustee of Iowa's historical legacy, the SHSI identifies, records, collects, preserves, manages, and provides access to Iowa's historical resources. As an advocate of understanding Iowa's past, the SHSI educates Iowans of all ages, conducts and stimulates research, disseminates information, and encourages and supports historical preservation and education efforts of others throughout the State.

The Historical Division is required to do the following: oversee the State Historical Museum, State Archives and Records, State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Libraries, Iowa History Publications, Historic Resource Grants, Battle Flag Preservation Project, State Historic Sites, Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, Archiving Former Governor's Papers, and Records Center Rent.

All Iowans Deserve to Be Proud of Our State's History—and to Have Access to It

During the 19th and 20th centuries, state leaders created a nationally respected system of libraries, archives, museum, historic sites and an office of historic preservation to document and share Iowa's rich history. Under the umbrella of the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), state employees took on the responsibility of caring for thousands of one-of-a-kind artifacts, papers, stories, records, maps, books, pamphlets, diaries, photographs, oral histories, and newspapers. Over the decades, thousands of Iowa citizens, businesses, government agencies, and organizations donated valuable materials to SHSI with the understanding that they would be preserved and made accessible to current and future generations.

The two SHSI research centers in Des Moines and Iowa City are the central repositories of Iowa history. Scholars and students use the materials housed there to conduct vital academic research. Genealogists use them to research their Iowa ancestors. Property owners use them to trace the incarnations of their buildings and residences. City planners use them to understand the evolution of zoning and land developments. Attorneys use them to document legal cases. Archaeologists use them to reconstruct environmental and cultural landscapes. Documentary filmmakers use them to compile visual representations of Iowa heritage. Fiction writers use them to imagine settings, plots, and characters. Hobbyists use them for the sheer joy of exploring the past. Every Iowan – past, present, and future -- has a stake in the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Over the years, the foundation on which Iowans stake their history has been gradually undermined. In 1985, SHSI became part of Iowa's Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA). Since then, the two research centers in Des Moines and Iowa City have experienced steady declines in staff and funding. Most recently, dramatic changes undertaken by the DCA severely threaten SHSI's commitment to maintaining Iowa's proud tradition of preserving state history.

On behalf of all Iowans and others interested in the history of the greater Midwest, the Save Iowa History Alliance makes the following requests of the governor, legislature, and DCA:

1) PROVIDE sufficient and transparent funding to enable library and archive staff to conserve, process, and manage the SHSI's valuable collections and acquire new ones. Ensure that the research centers remain open to the public during regular business hours at least five days per week.

2) PROTECT the precious SHSI collections of Iowa history against degradation, dispersion, and de-accessioning. The DCA's plans to renovate and reduce the size of the Des Moines State Historical Building, and its woeful neglect of its Iowa City research center, present an immediate threat to the survival and accessibility of collections. Give top priority to safeguarding the contents of the state's history before allocating tax dollars that put them in jeopardy.

3) PRESERVE the institutional integrity of the SHSI by allowing the research centers, historic preservation office, museum, historic sites, and educational programs to interact together to serve Iowans.

Professional Historians, Librarians, and Archivists, along with Iowa Citizens, are united to Save Iowa History

Since the Save Iowa History campaign began in March 2015, 3,300 Iowans and friends of the State have signed the [Save Iowa History Petition](#) to restore funding for the State Historical Society of Iowa Libraries and Archives and keep the physical records of Iowa history accessible to all.

On March 31, 2015, the entire faculty in the Department of History at the University of Iowa sent a [letter](#) to the members of the Midwestern History Association and Society of American Archivists, expressing "fears for the future of SHSI's libraries and archives in Des Moines and Iowa City."

On April 14, 2015, the Chairs of History Departments at the three Iowa Regents Universities and eight other Chairs of History Departments and Directors of History Centers across the state [wrote](#) to Governor Terry Branstad and DCA leaders about their "deep concern" over the "uncertain future of the State Historical Society of Iowa" and called on them to "insure that the collections are maintained according to the standards established by such organizations as the Society of American Archivists, the International Council of Archives, and UNESCO."

On June 16, 2015, the executive leadership of the American Historical Association (AHA), the world's largest professional organization of historians, [wrote](#) to Governor Terry Branstad and DCA leaders to

voice their “grave concern about reductions in resources for the research collections at the State Historical Society of Iowa.”

On October 15, 2015, the Iowa Library Association Membership approved a “[Resolution](#) in Support of the Two Historical Libraries of the State Historical Society” advocating for “adequate resources for the historical libraries so that they can conserve, process, and manage their current collections and acquire new materials while using up-to-date technologies and guaranteeing ready access to the public.”

The Iowa DCA has yet to address the concerns issued by these citizens, professionals, and organizations. Many Iowans believe that DCA’s actions and plans threaten SHSI’s longstanding mission “as a trustee of Iowa’s historical legacy.”

Headlines: How Are State Leaders Putting Iowa’s History at Risk?

- Under the current DCA Director Mary Cownie, a political appointee, professional staff have been fired, laid off, or gone un-replaced after retirement, while funds traditionally used for libraries and archives have been shifted into the DCA general budget. The DCA has diverted limited money away from hiring professional archival and library staff in favor of administrative and public relations employees.
- The current DCA administration has never been transparent with regard to planning, decision-making, staffing, or expenditures. Citizens are entitled to an accounting of exactly how public and privately raised funds are being spent to safeguard Iowa’s historical resources, or how and why they are being channeled to other purposes. What has happened to the money previously used to pay professional staff? Are user fees collected by the research centers being spent on collections as they are supposed to be? How is the money raised from the DCA’s annual “Celebrate Iowa Gala” being spent? Are private donations earmarked for collections actually going to collections? The Office of the Auditor of State should undertake a special review of the DCA.
- Appropriations from the State of Iowa General Fund for the “Historical Society” under the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) declined by 27 percent from 2009 to 2013, \$3,796,919 to \$2,767,701, compromising the mission of the institution. During FY 2014, 2015, and 2016, the appropriation increased slightly to \$3,167,701 for each year, yet the staffing of library and archival professionals in SHSI continued to shrink.
- Overall staffing of SHSI libraries has decreased by more than 33 percent since 2009. SHSI’s Iowa City library now operates with a skeletal staff of three FTE (full-time equivalent) workers (compared to 20 in 2000). Besides the loss of two Reference Librarians, the library now lacks critical staff like catalogers, a paper conservator, acquisitions librarian, and library director. All served both libraries in the past even if activities were located in Iowa City.
- Professional staffing for the library and archives in Des Moines included 13.5 FTE in 2009 and was reduced to 7.5 FTE by 2016. Previously, two Librarian I’s and one Library Associate

covered reference duties, but now remaining staff members work in rotating shifts on Saturdays and other times, which take them away from other work. The position of State Archivist was vacant from January 2008 until July 2014.

- At the start of 2015, the DCA cut state library public service hours by 40 percent in both Des Moines and Iowa City and closed the Special Collections reading room in Iowa City. Hours were reduced to 22.5 hours/week after being open for 37.5 hours/week for decades, leaving the research centers open on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. Archival materials in both locations are now available only upon request during limited hours on those days. The public is being denied access to the Iowa City Special Collections card catalog, as it is located in the now-closed Reading Room.
- SHSI's funding and support for libraries and archives have plummeted in relation to peer organizations. According to a research [report](#) by Lord Cultural Resources, a Toronto-based consultant hired by the DCA, Iowa now ranks 45th in the country for ratio of full-time staff to cubic feet of archival holdings, and 47th in the country for expenditures on archives and records management.
- Neither the Des Moines nor the Iowa City library has the capability or resources to purchase new materials—either print or equipment. DCA management has imposed a resource ban for both libraries, turning them into stagnant, out-of-date research centers. In addition to the reduced public service hours, this neglect has led to a decline in foot traffic. People prefer to visit a library with modern, updated technology, current publications, and adequate staffing to facilitate historical research.
- At the same time DCA was diminishing state libraries and archives of resources, it commissioned nearly \$1 million in [reports](#) from Lord Cultural Resources to assess SHSI's historical collections. Lord's 37-member team does not include even a single person with archival experience. These reports include recommendations to reduce collections storage, and which describe libraries and archives as "ancillary" to the SHSI. The Lord recommendations seriously threaten SHSI's ability to collect, process, and preserve Iowa history.
- DCA is seeking a \$65 million allocation from Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Funds (RIIF) from the 2016 legislature (combined with \$14 million to be raised privately) to renovate the State Historical Building in Des Moines. A 2015 "Predesign Report" from Neumann Monson Architects and Ryan Companies Construction, following upon the Lord recommendations, plans to reduce the building's size from 234,000 to 150,000 square feet and demolish the east wing, where libraries and archives as well as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) currently reside. A key objective is "to create a new outdoor public space and allow for sightlines with spectacular views of the state Capitol." In addition to the dramatic reduction in space for collections, there is also no space for SHPO in the building renovation plan.
- There is nothing in the Predesign Report budget allocated for the key functions of managing and providing access to collections: reference, acquisitions, cataloging, and conservation. All the money for "collections" is dedicated to moving, storing, digitizing, or de-accessioning them.

Furthermore, the DCA's "collection assessment," whose completion was announced in August 2015, is far from complete. How can the DCA in good conscience prepare to box up materials for moving and storage if they cannot identify what those materials are?

- During the renovation, treasured collections and artifacts would be moved to an undetermined location and unavailable for at least three years (2017-2020). Many of the materials are fragile or uncataloged; archivists are reasonably concerned that the offsite storage may not have proper temperature and humidity controls and that once these uniquely valuable items are out of sight they may be allowed to further degrade or never be seen again.
- The Iowa Department of Administrative Services (DAS) estimates that essential repairs to the State Historical Building – replacing the roof, installing a new heating and cooling system, repairing the exterior walls, and improving drainage – would cost \$12.2 million. Any money appropriated for such repairs should go through the DAS, not the DCA. No additional money should be appropriated to the DCA unless expressly dedicated to preserving collections and hiring professional staff.
- The Cownie administration is forcing a new identity on SHSI. The DCA refers to all collections as part of the museum when, in fact, the needs and uses of these materials are not limited to museum exhibits. Consulting and planning documents refer to "DCA Collections" rather than the State Historical Society of Iowa Libraries and Archives Collections. Under the renovation plans, the State Historical Building will be renamed the "Iowa Cultural Center."
- DCA leaders are intent on having a new building that will include a visitor center, retail space, and an admission charge to a new "kid-friendly" museum. Instead of protecting the institutional integrity of SHSI, with the research centers, historic preservation office, museum, historic sites, and educational programs interacting together to serve Iowans, the DCA is fixated on repurposing the State Historical Building as a glorified welcome center. The very existence of SHSI is at risk.

Why Should Iowans Entrust Our State's History to DCA Leaders Who Lack Necessary Training or Expertise?

Through most of its 159-year history, SHSI Directors have been professional historians with a deep knowledge of Iowa history that reflected a commitment to the institution's founding mission. Dr. Tom Morain, administrator of the SHSI from 1995 to 2001, was the last to hold a Ph.D., the last to have any expertise in Iowa history, and the last to understand the founding mission of the institution.

DCA Director Mary Cownie (formerly an Iowa Republican Party communications staffer and community relations specialist for Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino), appointed in 2011 by Governor Terry Branstad, has no background or experience in history, archives, or library science. She is married to Republican State Representative Peter Cownie. She is also the daughter-in-law of Des Moines cable television and real estate multimillionaire, Jim Cownie, one of the largest Republican political donors in the state and the co-chair of Governor Branstad's 2014 inauguration committee.

In 2013, a change in the Iowa administrative code turned state employees who act as bureau chiefs or program managers into “at will” employees who can be dismissed for any reason and without warning. As a consequence, all decision-making authority has been concentrated in the office of the DCA director.

Shortly after the change in the administrative code, DCA Director Cownie fired Carol Kirsch, director of the SHSI libraries and archives in Des Moines and Iowa City. Kirsch had extensive background and training in archives management and was a strong advocate for collections. Many other competent and experienced professionals have been dismissed or pressured to leave.

Cownie went on to appoint managers with no experience or credentials in the fields of history, archives, or library science. How can the DCA be “an advocate of understanding Iowa’s past,” as stated in the SHSI mission, if its leaders have no training or expertise in studying or preserving the past?

Factsheet: Will We Allow Iowans to be Deprived of Their History, County-By-County, Community-By-Community, Page-By-Page?

Collections

Budget and Strategies Relating to DCA Priorities

- The [State Historical Building of Iowa Renovation Predesign Report](#), prepared by Neumann Monson Architects and Ryan Companies, allocates \$22.391 million out of a total project cost of \$79.602 million for “collections.” But this is grossly misleading. An estimated \$6.846 million will be applied to moving and digitizing materials, with little foresight or explanation of the process, and to developing an internal collections management system, which is a seriously misguided idea (see below under Cataloging). “Exhibits,” which is not the same as “collections,” will receive \$6.72 million out of the \$22.391 million. The report lists \$3.825 million for “Archive Storage,” probably referring to compact shelving. A separate item for “Collections Storage,” listed at \$3 million, may refer to object storage. Another \$1 million each is budgeted for “Visible Storage” and “Office Systems.”
- There is nothing in the Predesign Report budgeted for the key functions of managing and providing access to collections: reference, acquisitions, cataloging, and conservation. All the money for collections is for moving, storing, de-accessioning, or digitizing them. The millions of taxpayer dollars for the State Historical Building renovation are not dedicated to improving the “environment” for collections.
- DCA leaders’ public references to “de-accessioning” collection items, especially those that ostensibly have ["nothing to do with Iowa history,"](#) are alarming. First, people who have no

training or expertise in history should not be making decisions about what does or does not have to do with Iowa history. Second, Iowa history is not neatly contained within the hard political boundaries of the state. The histories of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Missouri, for example, all shaped the history of Iowa and vice versa. Third, there are many books, journals, photographs, oral histories and other sources of information in the libraries and archives that may not appear to be directly about “Iowa history,” but which nevertheless are vital aids to people who are doing research on Iowa and greater Midwest history. Books on New England local history, for example, often contain a wealth of information on individuals and their descendants who migrated to or through Iowa. Removing such items from the collection would greatly hamper the work of genealogists and defy the SHSI mission to “conduct and stimulate research.”

- The DCA has repeatedly [justified](#) the reductions in public service hours for the libraries and archives as necessary to allow staff time to assess or grade collections based on their perceived value or potential uses. The State Archivist announced last August that the “all-encompassing collection assessment” had been completed. If so, why have full public service hours not been restored? Why has the State Archivist not shared the findings of the assessment or explained how they will inform decision-making about the collections? The DCA and State Archivist did not allow enough time for staff to perform a comprehensive assessment. Complete identification would require decades of cataloging. How can the DCA in good conscience prepare to box up materials for moving and storage if they cannot identify what those materials are?

Reference

- In recent years, the SHSI reference staff has been decimated. In addition to laying off permanent employees, the DCA has failed to replace retiring employees or has hired temporary, part time replacements. The Iowa City branch, in particular, has continually lost positions due to attrition and unfilled vacancies from retirements. The bureau chief was moved to Des Moines before his position was eliminated. In the place of these lost professional library and archives positions, the DCA has been hiring for positions such as “PR & Marketing Manager,” “Digital Marketing Coordinator,” “Program Planner,” and “Administrative Assistant.”
- Each library once had one full-time professional librarian in charge of reference. The Iowa City library currently has one part-time temporary (780 hours) librarian who will leave at the end of May. A part-time permanent paraprofessional position, Library Resource Technician, will be hired to work Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturday. There has been no explanation as to why the position was downgraded when the duties remain the same.
- The DCA’s idea of reference in the future is remote access to digitized collections available on one’s computer or phone, not through the traditional library reading room with original source materials, as one expects from most library and archives. The Lord Research Report suggests that little professional staff is needed for reference.

Cataloging

- Creating online bibliographic records that are searchable worldwide 24/7 has been the goal of the libraries as they strive to meet the highest professional standards. SHSI's OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) catalog subscription, accessible through the University of Iowa's InfoHawk portal and used by every reputable library and archive in the world, provides the most complete access to collections with over 155,000 hits per month by users.
- The DCA and its Historical Division are developing their own internal collections management system (CMS). This may result in removing the SHSI libraries from the OCLC and the University of Iowa's InfoHawk system. If this happens, it will harm SHSI's professional reputation as a serious research library and archives.
- The DCA's plan is to implement a digitization program with little foresight and an unexplained process for selecting from 209 million pieces for scanning. Little consideration has been given to the care of the original, the creation of metadata or cataloging, or the technological needs for a task that will likely be carried out by 780-hour hires or outsourced in order to expedite the process. Storage space for authentic pieces will be limited to a few select items. The costs of delivery, storage, and maintenance do not appear to have been fully explored.
- There once were three or four full-time professional librarians (Masters in Library and Information Science) in Iowa City engaged in cataloging books and special collections materials. Staff cutbacks reduced that to one person who retired in July 2015. A part-time cataloger has been hired, but this is hardly sufficient given the volume of materials that need to be professionally cataloged. The majority of the collections are described in a catalog, inventory, or database, but not all of these bibliographic records are available to the public online (through InfoHawk).

Conservation

- A fully equipped paper conservation lab sits empty and unused in Iowa City, for the most part, since the retirement of the conservator in 2008. Materials need to be treated, repaired, cleaned, stabilized, de-acidified, encapsulated, or otherwise cared for to ensure their longevity and enhance access. Items from the collection are not adequately protected without a trained conservator on staff. Outsourcing this work is not cost effective and endangers the security of documents.

Preservation/Reformatting/Microfilming/Digitizing

- Library collections like those under the care of SHSI need the attention of a preservation librarian who can plan for improved access through reformatting while still preserving the original source materials. Microfilming remains the standard among peer institutions, but if digitization became a priority, it would require significant amounts of funding and time to complete, so it likely would be outsourced. Quality control and the security of documents would be major issues.

Binding

- The estimated need for binding fragile items is estimated to be \$5,000 per year. No library materials have been sent to a commercial bindery in five years. One recent request for \$1,000 to bind academic journals, including SHSI publications, was not authorized so the backlog continues to grow. The Minnesota Historical Society, by comparison, spends \$8,000 per year on binding. A January 2016 request for funding to bind volumes at the Des Moines library was turned down.

Acquisitions

Newspapers

- In 2009, the DCA discontinued the 50-year practice of preserving local Iowa newspapers on microfilm, endangering their future preservation. The DCA then rebuffed a 2014 proposed legislative appropriation of \$250,000 for easing the backlog, stating a preference for focusing on collections assessment. The DCA also suspended newspaper and periodical subscriptions for the Iowa City library and postponed all microfilming projects indefinitely.
- More than 250 newspapers from communities throughout Iowa continue to be sent to Des Moines with the expectation that the SHSI will care for the newspapers as they have done for 50 years. These newspapers are carefully wrapped in brown paper in an effort to preserve them for future processing. More than 1,300 bundles of newspapers are piling up in the basement of the State Historical Building in Des Moines.
- The acquisition and preservation of local newspapers are essential to the work of genealogists and historians. The DCA's suspension of SHSI's microfilming program directly threatens research into the history of Iowans.

Books About Iowa and the Midwest

- The DCA has eliminated \$8,000 per year in acquisition budget for SHSI libraries, even though they are the only permanent collection in the state for publications created by and for Iowans. An Association of Research Libraries survey conducted in 2002 with similar institutions indicated that the budgets for materials (books and periodicals) for the Minnesota Historical Society were \$85,000/year and the Kansas Historical Society were \$41,500/year.

Publications

- In 2014, DCA eliminated the SHSI magazine *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* (formerly known as *The Palimpsest*), which had been continuously published since 1920. No notice of this elimination was provided to the public or SHSI members, although subscriptions to the publication were traditionally promised as a benefit of membership. Current leadership believes, erroneously,

that the private sector offers a similar product to consumers. More than \$130,000 dedicated to this publication was reallocated to another purpose.

- Mention of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* and *The Palimpsest* has completely disappeared from the SHSI [website](#). It is as if this publication, which ran for 94 years, never existed. This is a telling example of the disregard that the current DCA has for history and a discredit to the decades of research that went into the magazine and the thousands of readers it has informed. It also is an abdication of SHSI's responsibility to "disseminate information" as stated in its mission under Iowa Code.
- A private consultant hired by DCA issued a favorable report on the quality of both *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* and *The Annals of Iowa*. Previously, SHSI ceased publication of its award-winning children's magazine, *The Goldfinch*, 1975-2000. This publication is available online due only to the support of the University of Iowa.
- SHSI's academic journal, *The Annals of Iowa*, 1863-present, promotes and preserves new scholarly information about Iowa and the Midwest, and it is now available online due only to the support of the University of Iowa. The public has downloaded over 150,000 articles in the past year, free of charge.
- SHSI maintains an exchange program that brings in free copies of academic journals as a trade for *The Annals of Iowa* or *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*. With the suspension of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, SHSI lost access to several titles.

Historic Preservation

- Through the National Historic Preservation Act and various federally mandated regulatory programs, the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) oversees the State's efforts to recognize and preserve Iowa's architectural and archaeological heritage. SHPO also administers both the federal and state historic preservation tax credit programs, which offer financial incentives to adapt otherwise unwanted and abandoned historic buildings for new uses. SHPO funding and staffing reductions have resulted in a serious decrease in services to Iowans interested in preservation, both the owners of historic properties and those generally concerned with preserving the state's rich physical heritage.
- In 2011, DCA Director Cownie allowed rural electric utility lobbyists to write agency administrative rules. She proceeded with this action, despite warnings from federal agencies and her own staff that the rules could conflict with federal preservation requirements, thus jeopardizing Iowa's historic preservation program, which is largely federally funded.
- Prior to 2008 staff could and did significantly assist private property owners in their efforts to nominate their buildings to the National Register of Historic Places. Now, limited staff time means building owners either need to hire an experienced professional to pursue the

nomination or wade through the many layers of requirements and reviews themselves. The growing popularity of tax credit projects adds to the workload. While the application of state tax credit review fees were intended to increase SHPO staff to handle the additional load, the current DCA administration was slow to allow the use of collected fees. The SHPO office is staffed with dedicated and trained history, architectural, and archaeological professionals, but they labor to accomplish more with less.

- The 2016 legislative session's House File (HF) 2412, presumably with the blessing of Director Cownie, transfers oversight of SHPO's state historic preservation tax credit program to the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IDEA). Tax credit rehabilitation projects are growing in popularity, but the removal of part of their administration from the history professionals at SHPO will further complicate the process. According to federal regulations, administration of the federal tax credit program must remain with SHPO, which would have to maintain the professional staff that the regulations require, despite the fact that there is no space for historic preservation functions in the building renovation plan. This means that federal applications dealing with the same building would have to be coordinated with yet another agency besides SHPO, the Iowa Department of Revenue, and the National Park Service.

Museum

- Previously, the museum designed and fabricated exhibits in-house using existing staff instead of outsourcing jobs to more expensive private firms, as is the practice now. Curators developed content, conducted research, and wrote exhibit scripts and captions. Although materials were sometimes borrowed, the focus of the exhibits derived from the collections held by the State Historical Society of Iowa.
- The Museum under the Cownie Administration is widely regarded as an embarrassment, not because of the poor state of the building, but because of the lack of vision, dedication, and professionalism in exhibiting the state's history. "Cardboard cut outs of Native Americans and farm animals for displays and tiny dark galleries," writes one patron. "The real stuff must be hidden away and rotting in some corner." Large, empty space in the atrium lobby is rented out for wedding receptions and corporate dinners. The museum should be dedicated to history, not parties.
- The future of the museum, as portrayed in the planning documents, seems to bring more technology to the forefront. However, who will develop content? Who are the expert historians who will interpret the story presented? Will kiosks be kid-friendly? Are touch-screens substitutes for the "real stuff?" It is well established by museum specialists that patrons come to museums to see the actual artifact or document, not a facsimile.

Marketing

Public Relations

- Despite shortages in professional library and archives staff, the newest positions advertised for the DCA are: PR & Marketing Manager at pay grade 35 (\$26.34-\$46.91/hour) and a Digital Marketing Coordinator at pay grade 21 (\$16.92-\$24.90/hour). This is in addition to existing full-time permanent staff: a Graphic Designer & Web Coordinator and a Public Information Office. Public relations and marketing efforts only report on the DCA director's priorities, and very little attention is given to other valid activities.
- The DCA's "Community Conversations" initiative, launched in 2014 ostensibly "to give wider voice to local history groups," was actually intended to publicize the DCA and its plan to "revitalize the State Historical Building" into a "cultural hub" for Iowa. At breakout group meetings in various communities DCA facilitators tightly scripted the "conversations" and quashed any effort to discuss the lack of funding for SHSI.

Membership

- For whatever reason, there appears to be little effort expended to solicit new members for SHSI. In the past five years, SHSI membership has declined from over 1,000 to less than 500. The membership page at the new [SHSI website](#) is buried and difficult to find. The cancellation of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, previously offered as a benefit to membership, is a further disincentive to join.
- Patrons even report that the Museum has been actively discouraging people from joining. "While visiting the museum my husband and I asked how to become members of the State Historical Society," recalled one patron. "We were told there was no benefit in becoming members. We were stunned. I had my checkbook out ready to cut a check. How many people were turned away like we were?" Yet another person commented: "I was told the money is better spent at Preservation Iowa."

Libraries and Archives/Research Centers Buildings

Renovation of the State Historical Building

- When DCA Director Cownie's tenure began in 2011, she obtained \$3.65 million for "initial planning" and "immediate infrastructure repairs," which has now stretched into four years of misdirected energy. These funds paid for the Lord Consulting reports such as a needs assessment, master plan, community conversations, etc., as well as the engineering report by Shive Hattery, the pre-design report by Neumann Monson/Ryan, and other consulting reports. To address "immediate infrastructure repairs," the DCA tore down the Museum gift shop, painted some walls, purchased new furniture and computers for administrative offices, and did a few other minor things.

- The “right-sizing” of the building will impact the collections and suspend services starting July 1, 2017, when the exhibition galleries and research center closes, and last until at least 2020. With the decline in space for libraries and archives, weeding and de-accessioning will go on regardless of whether funding or plans exists for digitization. Demolishing the east wing is short-sighted at best, and a waste of taxpayer money, since no viable alternative is being offered as to collections storage or other services. There simply is not enough room in the re-modeled building for all of the collections currently owned by the State Historical Society of Iowa, nor is there room for growth in the future.

SAVE IOWA HISTORY ALLIANCE

Tyler Priest, Associate Professor of History, University of Iowa

Timothy Walch, Historian, Member of the Iowa State Historical Records Advisory Board, and Former Trustee of the State Historical Society of Iowa

Joni Hindman, Vice President, Iowa City Genealogical Society and SHSI Research Center Volunteer

Bill Sherman, Country School Preservationist and Former State Historical Society of Iowa Board of Trustees Elected Member

Jan Olive Full, Historian, Founding Board Member & Former Executive Director, Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance (Preservation Iowa)

John Liepa, Emeritus Professor of History at Des Moines Area Community College and Former Five-term Board Member of the State Historical Society of Iowa

Jamie Beranek, SHSI Research Center Volunteer

Contact: Tyler Priest, typriest@gmail.com

Facebook: [Save Iowa History](#)

Twitter: [@saveiowahistory](#), [#saveiowahistory](#), [#iowahistory](#)

Change.org: [Save Iowa History Petition](#)