

To: NRHS Board of Directors
From: Jeff Smith, Bulletin Editor

I wanted to provide you an update on the *Bulletin* Preservation work that we have been engaged in for the past 2 years. The information in this report will be published as an article in the *NRHS News* later this year as an update to the membership.

Background

When all the *Bulletins* were moved from NLR about two years ago to a storage locker near my home, two facts were readily apparent. First, there were many more back issues in storage than we could ever sell. Second, storing 20,000+ magazines in a non-climate-controlled locker was going to destroy all them in a relatively short period of time.

In a typical year we sell 250-350 back issues. 98% of those sales are non-members purchasing a current year publication. Another 50 magazines are distributed as replacements for magazines damaged in the mail and we ship on average 500 magazine (current issues) in bulk for Chapter PR per year. Our inventory way exceeds what we need to sustain this operation.

Bout 2 years ago, we began working on a project to accomplish several things:

1. Reduce the inventory of post-2004 *Bulletin* issues by distributing them to the Chapters for use in PR. We have reduced all post-2004 issues down to an inventory of 25 or less (aside from those published in the past year). Since we print extras of every issue, this will be an ongoing effort.
2. Organize and inventory the rarest issues (pre-1950) for archival preservation. At this time, these 200 copies of the *Bulletin* have been separated from the rest of the collection, are temporarily stored in my house which has better climate control.
3. Create a complete set of magazines for the scanning project. This was done, the scanning has been completed and this complete set of physical magazines is in our possession (this set has had the staples/binding removed for scanning).
4. Create 2 additional complete sets of *Bulletins* for archival preservation. This has been completed (although there are a handful of issues that we don't have multiple copies of).

Over the past year we have been working with the archivists at the Center for Railroad Photography & Art about how we should approach the archival preservation of a few sets of printed *Bulletins*. Their suggestion was to do the following:

1. Store each individual magazine in a polyethylene bag
2. Insert archival tissue between the pages of early issues that have deteriorated to prevent further damage from paper containing acid
3. Store the bagged magazines flat in acid free archival boxes, these are boxes that pass PAT (Photographic Activity Test) ISO IT 18916 (formerly ISO 14523 ANSI IT9.16)
4. Move the collection to a temperature and humidity-controlled environment.

As of the writing of this article - October 2019 - the first three steps have been completed for three complete sets of *Bulletins* as well as the limited number of pre-1950 back issues that we have. Our focus now is to reduce the inventory of issues retained for back issue sales and finally to place the archival sets and reduced inventory into a climate controlled storage facility.

NRHS will retain a maximum of 3 copies of each issue for the extremely limited back issue sales requests that we get. For pre-2005 issues, extras will be recycled. For post-2004 issues, they will be boxed and offered to Chapters for PR as we have been doing for the past several years. We will retain a higher quantity of issues published in the past 4-5 years for back issue sales as the overwhelming majority of our requests are for issues published in the last few years.

NRHS is also looking to produce a digital archive product that will allow members to purchase access to digital copies of the *Bulletin*. This may take the form of a subscription service or the ability to purchase individual issues. We are working with White River Productions, an existing *Bulletin* supplier, to determine if a product they are creating will align with our needs. We anticipate having something to share with the Board and membership some in 2020.