



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-253260-OMS-23
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Access

Historic Saranac Lake

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$50,000
Amount of cost share:	\$12,120

Historic Saranac Lake will create catalog records for approximately 2,500 objects and archival materials to gain intellectual and physical control over its collection. Informed by a previous IMLS-funded pilot project to catalog records for approximately 2,000 photographs and postcards from the museum's collections, this project will also include photo documentation of objects and the creation of a plan for moving the collection to a new storage space. Project staff will work with a consultant to complete and evaluate the project. As a result of the project, the institution will produce a comprehensive moving plan for the collection, publish catalog records and images, and increase accessibility to the collection. The project will benefit students, researchers, and staff preparing for exhibits and programs.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Digital Product Plan

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

NARRATIVE

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Historic Saranac Lake (HSL) seeks a \$50,000 Inspire! Grant for Small Museums to prepare to relocate our collections to a newly renovated collections storage area. This project addresses Collections Stewardship and Access Goals, specifically objective 3.1. The proposed work will include the creation of basic catalog records and documentary photographs for accessioned objects, as well as the creation of a step-by-step relocation plan. Over the last three years, HSL staff have completed several projects to reconcile, accession, rehouse, and catalog huge numbers of items. In the past, most of the objects in our collections were solely documented with an overall inventory which allowed basic access but lacked provenance information, full descriptions, subject headings, complete object lists, and consistent use of naming nomenclature. These projects have set us up to continue this type of work, and make our collections available to the public online and in-house.

Since our founding in 1980, HSL has been accumulating collections of letters, manuscripts, photographs, and objects pertaining to the early scientific research of tuberculosis (TB) and care of TB patients in Saranac Lake, as well as items relating to the architecture and general history of the community. In 1998, HSL assumed ownership of Dr. E. L. Trudeau's Saranac Laboratory. The National Register-listed building was built in 1894, the first laboratory in the nation dedicated to the study of TB. HSL opened the building as a museum in 2007. HSL is now provisionally chartered as a museum. HSL's collection is primarily housed in the large attic of the Saranac Laboratory.

As the museum has become more well-known, donations to the collection have increased, and the care and organization of the growing collection is a higher priority. The collection currently includes more than 10,000 objects, some of which may not be appropriate to the scope of collections, or whose provenance is unknown or uncertain. These items include, but are not limited to, photographs, medical equipment, clothing, books, correspondence, postcards, medical records, blueprints, and scrapbooks. The collection primarily relates to the people, businesses, architecture, and organizations involved in the treatment of TB in Saranac Lake.

In 2018, HSL was awarded an IMLS Museums for America grant to fund the creation of a long-range Collections Preservation Plan, a significant need highlighted in the 2011 assessment. The Collections Preservation Plan [see Supportingdoc1] was completed by Project Director Chessie Monks-Kelly in September 2018. This extensive document outlines best practices, immediate next steps, and long-term steps/goals for preservation of our collections.

In 2019, HSL acquired Dr. Trudeau's former home and medical office at 118 Main Street, a 6,000 square-foot National Register-listed building located immediately adjacent to our current location. Work to restore the historic integrity of the building will begin in January of 2023. We will rehabilitate the historic building for museum exhibits, dedicated collections storage, and HSL office space. This new space represents a giant leap forward in our ability to store, care for, and share our collections.

HSL was awarded an IMLS Inspire! Grant in 2019 to catalog and rehouse approximately 2,000 images in our collection. The work was completed in August of 2022, and HSL staff and volunteers created more than 2,800 catalog records. This project was partnered with a digitization grant from the local library network, and staff are adding these images and records to our online collections database daily. HSL was also awarded an IMLS Rescue Act Grant in 2020 to rehire a Collections Assistant, a position that was eliminated during the pandemic. This new staff person has made huge strides in reconciling our collections and accessioning items for the first time, as well as digitizing large quantities of photographs to make available online. The Rescue Act funding for this position will be exhausted in the summer of 2023, but we hope to find funding to retain this staff member.

This project will continue work to make our collections available to a wide audience for the first time, by making it easier to identify, share, display, and locate objects in our collections. Previous projects have focused on our image collections; this project will focus on archival material and objects. This project will help HSL staff answer reference requests from students, researchers, genealogists, and publishers in a comprehensive way. HSL will benefit from increased and more efficient access to our collections. The project will strengthen our ability to create engaging exhibits and educational programs and increase visibility for the collections. This project will allow HSL to prioritize collections care needs as identified in the Collections Preservation Plan.

Gaining physical and intellectual control over the collections is essential to HSL's mission, "to preserve and present area history and architecture to build a stronger community." To ensure achievement of our objective to operate a well-crafted museum, proper collections care is necessary.

HSL's strategic plan includes four strategic priorities. This project directly supports and advances two of the goals:

- First, the proposed cataloging project directly addresses our strategic priority: to "be a model of preservation, represented in Historic Saranac Lake's buildings, collections, and interpretive information," by ensuring improved access and preservation for materials in our collection.
- Second, the cataloging of our collection advances our work as a museum by addressing our strategic goal: to "provide excellent exhibits and experiences, both at its two museum buildings and in its community programming." By improving the organization of the collection, HSL can create more interesting and informative exhibits. This project will also make our collection more easily accessible by the public.
- Third, this project will improve our ability to "be a go-to resource for history about Saranac Lake, and a strong partner to all other organizations that tell Saranac Lake's story." With improved collections access, we will be a better resource, and reduce redundancy with other local organizations.

This project meets the priorities of the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums because it strengthens HSL's ability to serve the public in many ways. Most importantly, it will make the items in our collection more widely available to our constituency. This project strengthens HSL's ability to move forward with safely relocating our collections to new storage and exhibit spaces in the 118 Main Street building. This project will allow HSL staff to focus on caring for the collections, which has been difficult due to the small size

of the staff. This project also presents an opportunity to share the outcome of a major cataloging effort with other organizations of similar size and capacity.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

Project Director Chessie Monks-Kelly will work 16 hours a week over the course of 24 months to perform the following activities:

1. Review accessioned items and prioritize cataloging needs.
2. Acquire archival supplies as needed.
3. Use accession records (created in 2019-2023) and inventory (updated in 2022) to create catalog records for approximately 2,500 objects.
4. Take basic documentary photographs of cataloged items.
5. Create a step-by-step plan for moving collections to new storage in the 118 Main Street building.
6. Identify personnel, supplies, equipment, and funds needed to move collections.
7. Publish catalog records and images online as appropriate.
8. Update 2018 Preservation Plan to reflect upcoming expansion and transition to new spaces.

The catalog records are the main outcome of the project. We plan to create catalog records for approximately 2,500 items. Executive Director, Amy Catania will provide ongoing oversight of the project to track and evaluate progress. Using the developed schedule and list of specific activities, the Executive Director will monitor performance. The consultant, Eileen Corcoran, will also evaluate progress and provide feedback for issues that arise. As recommended in the Collections Preservation Plan, HSL staff developed policies and procedures for registering, cataloging, and storing the collections in 2018-2020. We will continue to use these procedures and amend as needed for cataloging objects and archival material.

HSL is implementing next steps as outlined in the Collections Preservation Plan which has been evaluated and approved by a consultant, Collections Committee, staff, and the Board of Directors. While we are confident in the success of the project, there is some uncertainty involved in estimating the number of records created as the output of this project. We do not know the exact number of objects in the collection, nor do we know exactly how long it will take to catalog each item. To mitigate this risk, we have discussed workflows, time required to catalog an item, and other project outcomes with consultant Eileen Corcoran. Corcoran requested responses from registrars at similar institutions to give an approximate amount of time required for cataloging activities. We also ran a test batch cataloging ten random items. On average, it took 20 minutes to catalog one item. Given the other tasks proposed in this project, we believe 2,500 items is a reasonable goal. The rate of cataloging is also made possible by the Project Director's local history subject expertise. We foresee requiring some research on certain items, but as an 8-year employee of the Museum, member of the community, and local resident, she is capable of quickly and accurately identifying many of the items.

One possible but unlikely risk is staff turnover. This grant will fund a .4 FTE Project Director who will work 2 days a week exclusively on this project. To ensure project continuity and mitigate the risk of staff turnover prior to the completion of this project, we will allocate 40% of a current staff person to manage

this project. The current staff person has been with HSL for eight years and is committed to the organization.

Another possible risk is adherence to the schedule. Executive Director Amy Catania will mitigate this risk by providing ongoing supervision and tracking progress according to the monthly schedule.

Finally, the plan to rehabilitate the new building and move our collections could represent a major risk. Construction delays are likely in the current environment. HSL will mitigate this risk by ensuring that all of the next steps taken in the planning are reasonable and achievable, while also being written generally enough to allow for delays. This project also helps protect the collections from the risks of the expansion by providing protection against loss and helping with storage planning before the move.

Project Director Chessie Monks-Kelly will work 20 hours a week over the course of two years to plan, implement, and manage the project. A trained archivist, Chessie has the experience and skills necessary to complete the project successfully. Chessie was hired as Public Programs Coordinator in 2015. As our staff has grown, we have reassigned her to the position of Archivist/Curator. Chessie's work experience includes working for History Associates, Inc. on archives projects for the National Parks Service. She has a Master's degree in Library and Information Science with an Archives Concentration from Simmons College and a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Northeastern University

Project Director Chessie Monks-Kelly will dedicate 0.4 FTE to this project. The salary calculation is: \$53,500 base salary x .4 = \$21,378 / year. Executive Director Amy Catania will dedicate 3 hours a week to overseeing and directing the project. The salary calculation is \$33 hr. x 3 hrs./week x 52 weeks = \$5,148 / year.

Collections Consultant Eileen Corcoran will provide 2 days of consultation at \$425/day. Her consultation will primarily be conducted remotely via email or phone, and include assistance with research, advice, and assessment of policies, procedures, and progress on the project.

Historic Saranac Lake declares we are eligible for the 10% indirect cost rate. HSL chooses a rate of 6.3% of modified total direct costs. (.063 x \$47,026 = \$1,487 / year).

Based on the estimate of 2,500 items cataloged, we will measure our progress based on the number of catalog records finalized per month. Based on 24 months of cataloging, we should complete an average of 104 catalog records per month. We will also track outcomes based upon the other activities outlined above and the schedule of completion.

We will share the results of this project with our staff, Board members, and volunteers. We will share the results with the general public through a press release and update on our collections website. We will announce the progress and completion of the project on social media including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and in our print and email newsletters. We will share updates with other local institutions with whom HSL staff connected during the creation of the 2018 Collections Preservation Plan.

PROJECT RESULTS

Success for this project is defined as the creation of catalog records (approximately 2,500 records) and a step-by-step relocation plan for the collection. The relocation plan will be for internal use only. The catalog records will allow the public to access and utilize the collection in ways previously not possible, including facilitating the process of answering remote reference requests from the public on a daily basis. Our local history wiki site experiences a high volume of traffic, and we receive more than 100 requests a year for information on TB patients who came to Saranac Lake. Once our research room is open to the public in the 118 Main Street building, these records will make it possible to retrieve objects and records for researchers, students, and genealogists online and in person. This project sets up a model for adding records for existing holdings and future additions to the collection.

With rehabilitation work at the 118 Main Street building beginning in early 2023, this project will prepare us to move the collection when work is completed. It will help HSL ensure the safe relocation of objects in the collection, and prepare the collection for use by the public. It will reduce the likelihood that staff will use valuable resources and time housing, moving, and storing items not appropriate for the scope of our collections. This project will eliminate loss in the move by creating an accurate inventory of the collections. It will also help us identify objects to use in the new exhibits designed for both buildings.

The results of this project are sustainable. The project will continue to test policies and procedures for the creation of basic or extended catalog records and documentation and provides examples of catalog records for training purposes. We will use the records created in this project to track the objects in the collection, making it easier to share and retrieve information. This will free up staff time currently spent searching for objects in the collection and facilitate planning exhibits and public programs using the collection.

We launched a public, searchable online database of catalog records in November of 2021, and the new research room will provide a comfortable, secure space for researchers. By thoughtfully planning the collections relocation project, we will ensure that the collections are moved safely and efficiently, and that items are not lost or damaged in the process. This project sets up a model for future initiatives, which include detailed photography of collections objects and investigation of items for which provenance is uncertain. This project will encourage increased use of the collections and raise awareness of our collections. It will publicize our need for donations of objects and funds to further our mission as a museum.

ACTIVITY	September 2023	October	November	December	January 2024	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
Review items accessioned thus far and prioritize cataloging	X	X										
Acquire supplies.	X	X										
Create basic documentation/catalog records for objects	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Take documentary photographs of objects	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continue planning for new collections storage and research room space	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Write step-by-step plan for move into new collections storage												
Identify and acquire supplies, personnel, equipment, and funds needed for move												
Publish basic catalog records online as appropriate	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Update preservation plan to reflect coming years	x	x	x	x	x							

DIGITAL PRODUCTS PLAN: Historic Saranac Lake

TYPE

While the primary goal of this project is not to create digital products, there will be some created in the course of this project. The primary digital products that may be created are catalog records, digital copies/representations of collections objects, and additions to our local history Wiki site. Any records and files created will be backed up via a cloud-based backup system, as well as an external hard drive located in our collections offices. Our PastPerfect software database is backed up locally every day, and once a month to a drive that is stored offsite. All scans are done at a minimum of 600 DPI, saved as .TIFF files, and labeled with unique object identifiers. Catalog records are created using Library of Congress Subject Authorities Records for names, subjects, and titles, the Thesaurus for Graphic Materials, and Nomenclature 4.0 for Museum Cataloging. Our catalog records are also created using internal standards for object numbering, date formatting, and locally significant individuals and subjects.

The full catalog records and high-quality digital representations created in this project will be for internal or exhibit use only. This project may also involve the creation/update of Word Documents/PDFs outlining procedures for cataloging. These will also be for internal use, and will be backed up as part of our regular cloud-based backups and stored on our organizational Google Drive. Portions of these records are available on our PastPerfect Online Collections website, with certain information omitted for web view and lower-quality images attached.

AVAILABILITY

Historic Saranac Lake launched our PastPerfect Online collections database in November of 2021, as part of an ongoing grant-funded tuberculosis patient record access project. This catalog is free and available to the public online. HSL are the sole owners and users of complete catalog records created in this project. These records may contain sensitive information, such as donor names and contact information, family history, and object storage information and history. For this reason, HSL staff chooses which portions of catalog records appear online. The object records created in this project will be made available on our online catalog (unless specified by donor or other guidelines), but the primary focus of the records in this project will be administrative, such as temporary custody and accession records.

ACCESS

As many of the records frequently requested by researchers and genealogists pertain (directly and indirectly) to the medical history of tuberculosis patients, our organization is sensitive to privacy concerns. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 governs access to medical records, including those created before the act went into effect. In April 2003, the Privacy Rule [45 CFR 160; 140] of HIPAA went into effect; this mandates that all records containing Personal Health Information (PHI) be restricted until 50 years after the death of the individual. While Historic Saranac Lake is not a covered entity under HIPAA and therefore not subject to its regulations, we recognize that many of our records about tuberculosis patients in Saranac Lake may contain sensitive medical information. We do not share medical documents containing PHI online unless the date of the individual's death is known, and even in those cases we may redact some information as deemed necessary by staff. Family members of patients may have access to records remotely and in person upon request. We reserve the right to restrict access to documents with PHI for requests made by non-family members or for persons for whom the date of death is not known. These requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Any scans of images or digital representations of collections objects made available online will be lower-resolution JPEG access copies. High-resolution versions may be made available on request. Historic Saranac Lake makes no copyright claims for objects in its collection, and will apply Creative Commons licenses or non-commercial usage rights statements as applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY

The majority of the digital products created in the course of this project will likely be catalog records. The sustainability of these records is somewhat dependent upon the sustainability of the PastPerfect museum software. We make sure that our local instance of PastPerfect remains operational by installing new updates, backing up our records locally and remotely, and maintaining our computer systems.

We do not currently have a standard in place for migration, but rely on multiple backup copies to help maintain files in the short-term. Our Archivist / Curator is currently involved in planning for digital sustainability measures for the organization as outlined in our 2018 IMLS-funded Collections Preservation Plan. She is undertaking this planning process with the assistance of a volunteer who is trained as a Digital Archivist.