

Narrative

The Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project

1. Needs and Rationale

The publication of the *Heritage Health Index Report* in 2005 quantified the urgency for immediate steps to be taken in addressing the collections held by Arkansas museums, archives, libraries and historic societies. Recognizing the critical need to organize groups and individuals interested in preserving these state treasures, the Arkansas History Commission (State Archives), Arkansas State Library, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, and Amigos Library Services requests \$40,000 for a statewide planning grant as part of the Institute of Museum and Library Services' Connecting to Collections program. This proposal flows directly from the commitment of all these organizations to the preservation and conservation of Arkansas's heritage.

Cultural heritage institutions in Arkansas have embraced the Health Heritage Index's planning efforts and have been proactive in activities to raise the importance of preservation. In 2006, the state reactivated the Arkansas Historical Records Advisory Board (AHRAB) and held the first Archives Week, "Documenting Arkansas" where all Arkansas archives, libraries, historical societies and museums were encouraged to host events. In June of 2006, the Historical Records Needs Assessment Questionnaire (See supporting documents) was distributed to Arkansas archives, libraries, historical societies, and museums. The questionnaire had three basic goals:

- To compile a list of Arkansas historical records repositories
- To identify the historical records needs of Arkansas historical records repositories
- To determine the content of a workshop for questionnaire respondents based on these needs to be held during Arkansas's first Archives Week.

The Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project plans to build on the finding of this initial questionnaire by providing site surveys to a select number of cultural institutions throughout the state to provide a baseline of physical conditions of collections. In addition to these surveys, a day of free preservation training will be provided in each of the five regions of the state. While there are several large cultural institutions in Arkansas, the majority of sites are small in nature and are locally maintained. Dedicated, but frequently untrained, volunteers operate these sites and attempt to manage their significant collections. This need is mirrored by findings of the *Heritage Health Index Report*. The HHI found that 71% of institutions need additional training and expertise for staff caring for their collections and 80% do not have paid staff dedicated to collections care, stressing the importance of training for volunteers. The majority of Arkansas's cultural institutions fall into the "unpaid staff who need training" category. The Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project aims to begin meeting this need with free regional preservation training while at the same time beginning the process of physically evaluating the many cultural collections throughout the state.

2. The Planning Process

The Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project will provide the opportunity for the Arkansas State Library, Arkansas History Commission, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, and Amigos Library Services, Inc. to work together in a collaborative effort to reach all cultural

institutions in Arkansas. As part of the IMLS planning grant, a project Advisory Board will select an initial 25 institutions to receive one day site surveys to assess the conditions of artifacts and historical records statewide. In this grant, the consultant will assess site and collections conditions in Arkansas's museums, historical societies and archives, under the direction of the collaborating partners. Five regional sites will then be selected for basic preservation training. These workshops will be free to any person who works in or with a cultural institution in Arkansas. All information gathered through site surveys and from workshop evaluations will be included in a final report. This report will provide guidance for both the state and individual institutions surveyed to seek future funding.

The majority of Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project consortium members work in close proximity and can easily communicate via email, telephone and in person meetings. The decisions will be made as a collaborative effort, each member having input into the decisions.

Phase 1

- Meet with an Advisory Board consisting of representatives from each Arkansas partner organization to identify the 25 Arkansas organizations to receive a one-day site survey.

Phase 2:

- Amigos will work with Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project Advisory Board to schedule site survey visits to approximately 25 cultural heritage institutions in the State of Arkansas to determine building and collection conditions; the existence of preservation policies, including disaster plans; and the need for preservation training and education at each institution.
- Amigos will work with Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project Advisory Board members to identify and schedule five regional preservation workshops. Regional workshops and site surveys will be grouped appropriately to maximize travel dollars.
- Results of this survey will inform the Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project of the status of members' building and collection condition, preservation and disaster planning, and their training and education needs to implement future collections care projects at their institutions.

Phase 3:

- Amigos Library Services, Inc. will analyze the site surveys from Arkansas cultural heritage institutions and provide the Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project Advisory Board with an analysis of survey results, along with a suggested action plan for future statewide preservation projects based on the survey results.

3. Project Resources: Budget and Personnel

The Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project personnel are as follows:

Consultant: Rebecca Elder, Adjunct Preservation Field Service Officer, Amigos Library Services, Inc. Rebecca Elder has served as the Adjunct Preservation Field Services Officer for Amigos Library Services Imaging & Preservation Service since 2004. She received her MLS and a Certificate of Advanced Studies for Conservation Studies from the University of Texas at

Austin. Rebecca has a significant amount of experience in preservation and conservation through her previous work at Harvard, the Harry Ransom Center, the Center for American History in Austin, and the Smithsonian Institution. Currently she teaches preservation and emergency preparedness workshops and conducts site surveys in her role with Amigos. She is also the owner of Austin BookWorks, a private conservation practice. Rebecca is a member of ALA and the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC).

Gina L. B. Minks, Imaging & Preservation Service Manager, Amigos Library Services, Inc. will serve as Project Director. Gina Minks is the Imaging and Preservation Services Manager for Amigos Library Services where she directs the preservation and digital imaging training, consulting, and disaster assistance programs offered to libraries, museums, and cultural heritage institutions by Amigos. Prior to accepting the IPS position, Minks served as Web and Digitization Librarian and Special Collections Librarian at the University of Tulsa's McFarlin Library, Tulsa, OK. She has also served on the Amigos IPS Advisory Council for several years. As the recipient of two Amigos Fellowships, Minks served as co-principle investigator for the *Oklahoma Statewide Feasibility Study of Available Resources* and principle investigator for the *University of Tulsa Digitization Initiative: A Blueprint of EAD Implementation for the Small Academic Library*. She is an active member of the American Library Association, Society of Southwest Archivists, and Society of American Archivists. Minks holds a Master of Library Science degree from Emporia State University, Emporia, KS. The Imaging and Preservation Service is funded in part by a grant from Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Minks serves as the current project director for this initiative.

Dr. Wendy Richter, State Historian and Director of the Arkansas History Commission, will serve as Project Partner. Wendy Richter became the State Historian and Director of the Arkansas History Commission in 2005. She has a B.A. in Liberal Arts and M.A. in Public History from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and M.A. and Ph.D. in Heritage Studies from Arkansas State University. A certified archivist, she previously served as Associate Professor and Archivist at Ouachita Baptist University, teaching archival administration and Arkansas history. Richter has authored, compiled, and edited numerous books and articles on state and local history. Dr. Richter also serves as the state records coordinator and is chairman of the Arkansas Historical Records Advisory Board (AHRAB).

The plan proposes 30 consulting days (6 weeks) to cover the full project plan. Consulting days (survey days and training days) are priced at \$1000.00 per day with an estimate of \$10,000.00 for travel during the project for a total cost of \$40,000. Site surveys and workshops will be combined into five weeks consisting of four days of site surveys and one day of regional training and one week of five days of site surveys.

Our grant request presents a sound, immediately achievable plan of action for Arkansas supported by a collaboration of partners committed to addressing the issues and needs identified in this grant. The \$40,000 grant money will allow us to begin addressing the needs of Arkansas's collections to ensure their survival beyond the 21st century and their ability to document and enrich our lives and those of future generations.

The Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project will allow Arkansas to be more prepared to effectively handle any situation in the event of an individual site or statewide emergency as recommended by the HHI. As project follow-up, the collaborative partners will explore additional funding that will allow surveys for the remainder of Arkansas institutions to have site surveys. Additional funding will also be explored to schedule statewide training workshops that cover issues and needs identified by the assessment completed through this grant. This training will improve Arkansas's institutions' abilities to effectively handle any situation, an individual site, or statewide emergency. The collaborative partners of the Preserve Arkansas Heritage Project will continue to find and develop opportunities to help meet Arkansas's present and future needs. Benefits will extend beyond the initial project through continued networking and communication opportunities for all participants.