

Preserving Maine's Cultural Heritage: A Statewide Initiative

The stewardship of Maine's rich cultural heritage is entrusted to many museums, libraries, archives, and historical agencies throughout the state. A great array of historical documents, artifacts, and objects define these collections, and although their holding institutions vary widely in resources and collections management expertise, they all share a common commitment to conserving and preserving our cultural heritage for future generations.

The 2005 Heritage Health index offered four recommendations for collection holding institutions: 1) they provide safe conditions for their collections; 2) they develop an emergency plan; 3) they assign responsibility for collections care, and; 4) they marshal public and private support for and raise public awareness about collections care.

The Maine State Museum (MSM) in partnership with the Maine State Archives (MSA), Maine Historical Society (MHS), Maine Humanities Council (MHC), Maine Archives and Museums (MAM), L.C. Bates Museum, Bangor Public Library, and University of Southern Maine (USM) proposes to create a statewide consortium to raise public awareness about collections care, and marshal public and private support for these collections.

The consortium will then work, over the two-year project time-line, to create a dynamic system to help achieve the remaining three goals of the Heritage Health Index, starting with helping institutions provide safe conditions for their collections.

The four 2007 Connecting to Collections conference participants from Maine have spearheaded the statewide planning initiative, and all four individuals will act as institutional representatives for the project to be known as Preserving Maine's Cultural Heritage, (PMCH).

Need and Rationale

Based on institutional needs and numerous on-going efforts by the MSM and its partners, a baseline fact is that numerous collections and collection holding institutions are in crisis in Maine.¹

As economic woes deepen, this situation will only worsen. Unfortunately, many of Maine's collection holding institutions are too small or too regionally restricted to attract adequate funding, or, even more unfortunate, too isolated to even be aware of the mechanisms for how to request training or aid.

As one of the poorest states, with a predominantly rural make-up, Maine has economic and sociological issues that directly affect its cultural holding institutions. For example, the bulk of Maine collection holding institutions are all volunteer, and staffed by individuals with limited professional development.

Maine is a geographically large state covering over 30,861 square miles, and is primarily rural with a few urban and populated coastal areas. Maine's population as of 2006 was 1,321,574, with an ethnic predominance of 96.7% Caucasian of non-Hispanic origin. Four of Maine's sixteen counties have greater than 30% of their population living below the poverty line, with 11.5% of Maine's overall population listed below this point.

Most of Maine's revenue streams are based on natural resources, health care services, and tourism, which are supported in part by the state's cultural attractions and their collections. Maine's population doubles during the summer tourist season.

This grant aims to investigate the appropriateness of Maine's existing institutions to act as a statewide consortium dedicated to meeting the goals of the Heritage Health Index. Maine has a vibrant cultural community with a variety of statewide consortiums already working with local communities. In particular this includes MAM, MHC, and the MHS's Maine Memory Network (MMN).

To assist the tourism and culturally-based economic segments, the MSM, MSA and MAM established a collaborative program called the Cultural Resources Information Center (CRIC) in 1992. CRIC provides technical assistance to Maine's collecting institutions - museums, historical societies, historic sites, libraries, and archives, and serves as a clearinghouse for information on available grant programs in Maine and nationally. In addition, the Maine legislature created a Cultural Affairs Council comprised of seven statewide cultural agencies. Five of these agencies are public: The Maine Arts Commission, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Maine State Archives, Maine State Library and the Maine State Museum. The other two are private 501 (c) (3) organizations: Maine Historical Society and Maine Humanities Council. The Council oversees the state's **New Century Community Program** of matching grants. Funded by the Legislature since 1999, the New Century program has delivered more than \$5.7 million dollars in matching

¹2008 Maine State Archives Access to Hidden Collections survey; MSM 2006 IMLS Museum for Americas survey grant of scientific collections throughout the state; IMLS funded Maine Memory Network –180 participating Cultural Organizations with outreach efforts; Additional surveys are listed in Appendix 1.

money for a wide range of cultural projects, from building restorations and library development, to family literacy programming.

Each of these collaborative efforts can clearly identify the needs of their constituent communities. To mobilize and harness these existing statewide resources, however, a more concrete structure is necessary to bring these disparate organizations together, and create a unified system of planning and response to identified needs.

The proposed PMCH project fits neatly into the ongoing mission of the collaboratively sponsored CRIC office, and the positive statewide reputation of CRIC ensures the trust needed for success. Even so, to enhance the objectivity of the project, MSM in consultation with the PMCH partners proposes to contract with a qualified unaffiliated Individual to coordinate the projects statewide planning efforts, and help carry out the actual work. The project will be housed In the CRIC office but will be a separate program within it.

The Planning Process

Thoughtful planning will maximize the value of collaborations and project activities that begin new and systemic changes in the way Maine addresses collections care and assessment. The PMCH collaboration will oversee project staff, planning, and workshops to help guide and grow collections care efforts.

This project is designed to include evaluation and monitoring elements that will document the results of this collaborative project, and support the long term planning process. As a result of this project, cultural organizations will strengthen ties and work together to raise access to collections care information and funds, as well as develop a model for assessing and ranking the many values of collections. Project workshops will explore how to create and implement value assessments (historical, educational, aesthetic, monetary, scientific etc.) that provide the participants with a greater knowledge base for communicating quantifiable collection values and collection care needs to their target audiences. The outcome evaluation of these workshops will provide PMCH with the tools to determine the effectiveness of the newly proposed consortium's ability to disseminate critical collections care information to the state's widespread, often rural audiences.

The resulting project will be closely in support of the Heritage Health Index goals and will contain a portfolio outlining the steps taken to successfully implement and evaluate this statewide planning process. This portfolio will act as a model for other states or regions. On a personal level, the length of the project activities will mean participating organizations' staff will come to know each other and develop ongoing professional relationships. These face-to-face interactions will help strengthen statewide relationships that support future communication and collaborations for new collections care initiatives.

The scope of this project will encompass six major activities:

- 1) Creation of the working group dedicated to Preserving Maine's Cultural Heritage (PMCH) which will help oversee this project.
- 2) Compilation, organization, and analysis of existing collections based information related to all collections held within the state and creation of associated databases (e.g. document, object, specimen etc.).
- 3) Assessment of the appropriateness of existing venues to help coordinate statewide stewardship efforts.
- 4) Creation of a values assessment ranking system, which will include a self study component, as well as a mechanism for comparison within and between institutional holdings for the purpose of ranking assistance efforts.
- 5) Dissemination of information related to these efforts, which will include training of value based assessment skills through regional workshops, public media such as local cable TV access, websites, and associated statewide newsletter articles.
- 6) Project portfolio and evaluation materials made available for broader dissemination. Please note the website access noted in item 5 will be designed to meet the needs of a broader national audience and will include the project portfolio and evaluation materials.

To ensure the completion of the six proposed activities in a timely fashion the following actions will be taken.

1. Creation of the PMCH working group. A representative from each of the partner organizations will serve on the working group that will help direct the overall project. The formation of PMCH will provide the initiative and human resources to address the scope of the project. The strengths of the PMCH are the diverse skills and training of the individuals and the decades of experience dealing with collections care and outreach in a financially challenged state. The group will regularly exchange information through emails

and teleconferences but will also participate in 3 yearly PMCH core-group planning meetings.

Expected Results: The PMCH working group will help ensure a broad array of constituents are involved in the planning process, and will provide access to relevant communities, available expertise and constituent resources.

Product: PMCH membership list. Venue for moving the process forward.

2. Hiring a qualified individual who will work with the sponsoring partners to coordinate these statewide planning efforts. The MSM in consultation with the PMCH partners, will advertise for and hire a PMCH project coordinator. The coordinator will work out of the CRIC office and will report directly to the MSM. This person will be charged with assisting with the six activities noted above.

Expected Results: The project coordinator will be focused entirely on implementing the planning process, and will ensure that actions described in the proposal are completed during the two-year grant period.

Products: Job recruitment description and job contract.

3. Data compilation and analysis. The PMCH working group and project coordinator will compile the available information on the State of Maine's collections, analyze this data, and create associated databases related to collection information (e.g. document, object, specimen etc.) etc.

Expected Results: Compilation and assessment of existing collections information (see footnotes page 1, and Appendix 1)

Products: Related database(s)

4. Assessment survey. The PMCH working group and project coordinator will produce an assessment tool for determining the effectiveness of existing organizations and programs such as CRIC to coordinate long-term statewide stewardship efforts.

Expected Results: Assess the effectiveness of existing organizations to coordinate long-term statewide stewardship efforts.

Products: Survey form, assessment results.

5. Creation of a values assessment ranking system

The PMCH working group and project coordinator along with an independent consultant will develop a methodology for assessing the many values of our state's collections (historical, educational, aesthetic, monetary, scientific etc.) and create a system to assign a response ranking by category to a particular institution and its holdings. Please note: A mechanism will be created to insure different categories are judged independently of each other to ensure all levels of significance are considered (e.g. a collections which has great local significance will not be judged against a collection known to be nationally significant).

Expected Results: A ranking system that will allow the state to help target its limited resources to its most locally, regionally, nationally and internationally significant collections holdings.

Products: An assessment tool, which includes a self-study component, that allows users to articulate the different values of their collections and helps demonstrate their significance to the local, regional, national or international cultural community. Regional collections value assessment training workshops.

6. Information dissemination.

Dissemination of information related to these efforts will include, presentation to the State Legislature, regional workshops, public media such as local cable TV access, websites, and associated statewide newsletter articles.

Expected Results: Creation of statewide preservation outreach initiatives.

Products: Workshops, Production media for web and T.V., website, associated articles, informational handouts, brochures etc.

7. Project Portfolio and Evaluation material. The PMCH working group and project coordinator will develop a project portfolio and evaluation materials that will include a final survey of the participants and a final report.

Expected Results: Creation of project portfolio, evaluation materials, and final report.

Products: Website and hardcopy dissemination of materials and final report.

In addition each of the PMCH partners is responsible for communicating with their members and constituent groups and for insuring that the interests of their participating institutions are represented in the planning process. Our PMCH partners also provide access to membership rosters, outreach venues such as

newsletters, websites and other media, provide access to ongoing data gathering efforts, and create a membership pool to participate in training opportunities and overall project evaluation.

Budget and Personnel

The allocation of the \$39,485 grant award will be as follows:

Grant funded expenses: Approximately \$30,000 of the budget will be used for contractual fees necessary to secure the services of a qualified PMCH project coordinator who will work part-time with our sponsoring partners to coordinate statewide planning efforts. In addition Ron Harvey from Tuckerbrook Conservation will be contracted for 3 days to assist with creation of the assessment values tool and workshop programming (This allocation is determined upon consultant rates estimated at \$700 per day for \$2100). Honorariums and travel costs of \$3600, that includes funding for travel for the PMCH project coordinator. Final project portfolio costs of \$1,200.00. Workshop promotion and mailing costs \$600. Database creation \$1000 and \$985 in indirect costs.

Match funded expenses: A total of \$35102 in matching funds will be allocated as follows:

Donated salaries and wages for the PMCH participants (\$26702); workshop presenters (\$1600); travel (\$300); hardcopy production of the project materials, specifically the Values Assessment training manual (\$2000); local Cable TV programming (\$800); database construction and upkeep (\$1500); workshop space and refreshments (\$800); meeting space for the 6 meetings of PCMH (\$900) with multi-media capability; and use of ATM facilities (\$500).

Maine State Museum Director, Joseph R. Phillips

Working in conjunction with Maine State Archives Director David Cheever, Joseph Phillips oversees the Cultural Resources Information Center as part of Maine's New Century Community Program, a multi-disciplinary initiative that provides grants to cultural organizations throughout the state to assist in the furtherance of their missions.

Maine State Museum Assistant Director, Sheila McDonald

Financial oversight will be undertaken by Sheila McDonald, who will assure sound and necessary financial management of the grant funds, and that the funds are held in a separate audited account. With over 25 years of experience managing numerous federal and state grants, as well as fiscal management of the State Museum, she is well qualified for this role. Sheila McDonald will be responsible for approving expenditures. Sheila will provide project management and assign CRIC and the coordinator various project activities. She will assist Phillips and Cheever in evaluating staff and volunteer performance, and oversee project outcomes.

Maine State Museum Co-registrar and Curator of Zoology, Paula T. Work

As a normal part of her workload at the state museum, Paula Work spends about 10% of her time on community based professional museum collections projects and programming. Paula will devote this segment of her time to the PMCH project over the two-year grant period. As a member of the steering committee she will document and oversee with PMCH all phases of the project including project staff, PR of project activities, evaluation surveys and reports. In addition she will work closely with the consultant to create the value-based assessment ranking system and follow-up training materials, and act to disseminate these value based assessment techniques.

Maine State Archives Director, David Cheever

As a member of the steering committee David Cheever is uniquely positioned to assist in the formulation and execution of this project. As Archivist, he works collaboratively with the other public cultural institutions who are project partners, and has already been instrumental in an undertaking that will help inform this one in recently conducting and compiling the statewide survey of hidden collections of historical societies and libraries. Working in conjunction with Maine State Museum Director Joseph R. Phillips, Cheever oversees the Cultural Resources Information Center as part of Maine's New Century Community Program.

Maine Historical Society, Director of Programs & Education, Steve Bromage,

Maine Memory Network, Steve Bromage,

MHS will actively participate in the PMCH planning group and work to implementation of all phases of the project. MHS has active partnerships with more than 180 collecting organizations through the Maine Memory Network (MMN), their nationally-recognized statewide digital museum. MMN provides people across Maine and beyond with unprecedented access to vital but often at risk collections. MHS will use these relationships to disseminate project information and resources. The proposed initiative dovetails with our efforts to provide broad support to historical organizations, and will ensure that the resources and efforts of the project partners are coordinated and effective.

Maine Humanities Council Director, Eric Jorgensen

Maine Humanities Council Assistant Director, Martina M. Duncan

Maine Humanities Council would help provide oversight of this project through service on its steering committee by either its executive director or assistant director, both of whom are former museum professionals, and both of whom have a broad knowledge of the state, its museums and historical societies, and their collections needs. As a cultural grantmaker for 32 years, the Council has supported exhibitions, programming, and cultural infrastructure projects.

Maine Archives and Museums, Bill Cook,

As President of Maine Archives and Museums, Bill Cook will serve as an active member of the steering committee providing a vital connection to the MAM constituents, members and resources.

Bangor Public Library, Bill Cook,

As a partner in the Connecting to Collections Statewide planning project Bangor Public Library will assist in outreach efforts, offer workshop and speaker space, newsletter and website access, provide a workshop presenter, and use of the ATM facilities. Bill Cook will act as co-representative of Bangor Public Library on the steering committee.

L.C. Bates Museum, Deborah Staber

Deborah Staber will serve on the steering committee, acting as a key representative for one of Maine's four poorest counties situated in a rural setting. In addition the L.C. Bates museum will be providing meeting space and outreach materials to the project.

University of Southern Maine Yolanda Theunissen

Yolanda Theunissen will serve on the steering committee as liaison to the seven campuses of the University of Maine system, as well as other academic communities throughout Maine in particular the special collections of the state's colleges and universities.

Contractual participants

PMCH project coordinator

We will hire a project coordinator with excellent written, organizational, and verbal communication skills, and expertise in collections care. This coordinator will implement the data collection and organization and support the dissemination of value based assessment training and materials. The coordinator's role is critical to the project's successful completion.

Tuckerbrook Conservation, Ron Harvey

Conservator Ron Harvey will be contracted to help develop the materials for the value based self-assessment of collections and to help train participants in the assessment process. Workshop materials will also include training others to train Maine cultural heritage staff in the self-assessment process. Having served as a conservator in Maine for over 15 years, Ron Harvey intuitively understands the collections care needs of this state.

Long term results and benefits

The long term results and benefits of this project are 1) The creation of a new PMCH consortium that allows a greater connectedness between partnering institutions and individuals, and increases access to relevant communities, available expertise and constituent resources; 2) Compilation and assessment of existing collections information throughout the state and creation of associated collections information database(s); 3) An understanding of the effectiveness of CRIC and a feasibility study to determine if CRIC is the correct venue to support the broadened PMCH consortium; 4) An assessment tool, which includes a self-study component, that allows users to articulate the different values of their collections, and helps provide participants with a greater knowledge base for communicating quantifiable collection values and collection care needs to their target audiences; 5) A values assessment and ranking tool that will allow the state a mechanism to better target its limited resources to its most locally, regionally, nationally and internationally significant collection holdings; 6) creation of a dissemination model to bring critical collections care information to the state's widespread, often rural audiences and 7) creation of a set of materials to use as a model for future collaboration and statewide training and outreach efforts.