

**Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
IMLS Connecting to Collections Planning Grant Proposal**

**Developing and Expanded and Enhanced Statewide Preservation Program for
Massachusetts' Cultural Heritage Collections**

1. Need and Rationale

The documentary and material heritage of Massachusetts is essentially intact from its founding. Throughout the Commonwealth, repositories and museums house irreplaceable collections of monographs, pamphlets, manuscript material, records, ephemera, statuary, paintings, and three-dimensional objects of all types, which serve as rich resources for researchers. Librarians, archivists, curators, and other staff have long collected materials that document their immediate and adjoining locales, as well as focusing on specific collecting areas. Many of these people need training in preservation activities, and many collections are in need of conservation work to prolong their lives and to enable them to be consulted.

Institutions in Massachusetts have a long history of working for the preservation of cultural resources. The New England Museum Association (NEMA) was founded in 1919 to provide support and assistance to museums. In 1973, the Northeast Document Conservation Center, Andover, MA (NEDCC) was founded "in response to growing alarm about the monumental scope of the paper deterioration problem facing collection-holding institutions in New England." Also in 1973, legislation was enacted (Acts, 1973, c. 711, s. 1) providing that the Archivist of the Commonwealth shall prepare and administer a "comprehensive statewide documentary preservation plan." The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) became involved in the preservation of library and archival materials in 1988.

The MBLC is the state library development agency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As such it supports, improves, and promotes library services throughout the Commonwealth. The MBLC was established in 1890 under Chapter 78 of the Massachusetts General Laws; the first such agency in the United States. The MBLC administers a number of major programs and services that impact libraries and library collections throughout the Commonwealth. The following are applicable to this grant proposal: Preservation, Emergency Assistance, and the administration of the federal Library Services and Technology Act (L.S.T.A.) program.

NEMA is the only museum service organization in Massachusetts. NEMA sponsors Professional Affinity Groups (PAG) for Conservators, Curators, Registrars and those who work in Historic Sites and Libraries and Archives. The PAG meetings and ongoing program evaluation have further informed the profession of the challenges facing collections. PAG Chairs and NEMA staff also monitor and respond to the questions and concerns presented on NEMA's Collections and Administration discussions lists. NEMA has held an annual conference for more than seventy-five years, where museum professionals and volunteers receive training in collections care and conservation. In

response to NEMA's evaluation that the training needs of small and all-volunteer museums and historical societies were not being met, it partnered with Massachusetts Humanities to present a highly successful pair of introductory-level workshops that include the basics of collections care and management.

Efforts to gauge the extent of preservation knowledge and needs of cultural heritage institutions have been undertaken on several occasions. The results of these surveys have helped focus the efforts of several organizations in addressing these needs during the past thirty years.

- *Salary and Benefits Survey*, New England Museum Association (NEMA), since the 1970's. This provides data on the education, tenure, salaries and benefits of museum curators, conservators and registrars at various stages of their careers.
- *Historical Records in Massachusetts: Prospects, Programs, & Plans*, Massachusetts Archives, 1983. Funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), this survey assessed the preservation and storage conditions of records in Massachusetts.
- *Preservation Needs Assessment Survey*, MBLC, 1989. A survey of some 1,100 libraries, archives, historical societies, and town halls (958 responded (87%) to assess the preservation needs and disaster preparedness of Massachusetts institutions. Subsequently, the MBLC received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Statewide Preservation Planning Grant in 1990, resulting in the publication of *Preserved to Serve: The Massachusetts Preservation Agenda* that has served as the basis for Massachusetts' preservation efforts for the past twenty years.
- *Heritage Health Index (HHI)*, Heritage Preservation, 2005. Approximately 130 institutions responded to this survey yielding a comprehensive collection of preservation data about institutions in Massachusetts. This data will serve as one of the sources in developing a baseline for the proposed data gathering efforts.
- *Assessment of Emergency Preparedness for State Archives and Records Management Programs*, Council of State Archivists (CoSA), 2006. A statewide self-assessment tool that focused on the state of emergency preparedness for records in all fifty state archives and records management programs.

The results of the Massachusetts surveys consistently indicate a need for help with preservation and emergency preparedness. In addition, because of the rapid proliferation of digitization programs and electronic data systems, none of the surveys provides information on digitized collections or "born digital" materials. The MBLC survey touched only briefly on audio-visual materials. Fortunately, the HHI survey was distributed to a wider variety of cultural institutions than the MBLC survey. By necessity, the HHI survey looked at cultural repositories in a broad way. As a consequence, it does not provide the necessary detail needed to develop, enhance, or expand a statewide preservation program. Therefore, to expand and enlarge the current program, it is necessary to collect current data on institutions and their collections in Massachusetts at a more detailed level and across a broader spectrum of institutions than was accomplished in either the MBLC survey or the HHI.

During the past twenty years, working in consort with a number of other state agencies and non-governmental organizations, the MBLC has developed an active, multi-faceted statewide program to address the preservation needs of the Commonwealth's cultural heritage. The MBLC's program includes:

- Providing information and referral on preservation and disaster-related inquiries to all types of institutions;
- A Continuing Education Program that provides workshops on a wide variety of preservation topics;
- An Environmental Monitoring Program that lends dataloggers to libraries, archives, historical societies, town halls, and museums for periods of five months at a time and produces substantial reports for the institutions based on the data collected;
- An Emergency Assistance Program that provides training, recovery supplies at sixteen locations, technical assistance, support for packing, freezing and drying of library and archival materials, and an email weather alert for inclement and threatening weather;
- A close alliance with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency starting in 1996 as a member of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Team, the Inter-Agency Hazard Mitigation Committee, and the Massachusetts Recovery Alliance to ensure that cultural heritage collections are considered and provided with appropriate prioritization for their protection and recovery during and after a disaster; and
- A grant program using L.S.T.A. funds for Preservation Surveys, the Preservation of Library and Archival Materials, the Digitizing of Historical Resources (for access), and Manuscript Arrangement and Description.

In addition, the MBLC has partnered with the NEDCC on two occasions. In 2001, the NEDCC received an IMLS National Leadership Grant to create an online disaster planning tool. The NEDCC and the MBLC created *dPlan: The Online Disaster Planning Tool*, which is now being used by over 1,900 institutions across the country. In 2006, the NEDCC received another IMLS National Leadership Grant to develop a framework by which states could create a statewide disaster plan for cultural resources. The MBLC and the Massachusetts Archives are currently spearheading a pilot project to test the *Comprehensive Statewide Emergency Preparedness* framework (COSTEP).

While the MBLC's preservation program has had success in addressing many of the preservation needs in libraries, archives, historical societies, and to some extent town halls, a major gap has been the lack of contact with museums and the lack of focus on the preservation of three-dimensional objects. It is for this reason that it is important that this grant provides the information necessary to expand the statewide preservation program to include those media and collections that have been addressed only by NEMA in the past. Moreover, there are other gaps that need to be identified and addressed such as the preservation of audio-visual media and the need to move ahead with preserving digital and born-digital collections.

2. The Planning Process

Interested parties met initially on August 15, 2008 to identify potential partners and to discuss ideas for the focus of the proposal. This group included the Massachusetts Archives, the MBLC, NEMA, and the Sturgis Library, a participant in the initial *Connecting to Collections* Conference in Washington, D.C. It was decided that a comprehensive survey of the cultural heritage community was necessary for a number of reasons. NEMA has the data from its triennial salary surveys and program evaluations. The MBLC has the data from the 1989 survey of libraries, archives, historical societies, and town halls. The HHI (2003) identified a number of problems in similar areas, but the majority of Massachusetts' respondents to the HHI were museums. In addition, since the MBLC's preservation program has been well-established for two decades, it is important to measure the progress that has been made in as many areas as possible as well as identifying areas and institutional types that have not been addressed or included in this program such as museums. The survey will be based on those components of the HHI that need resurveying and that also mirror the questions used in the 1989 survey. In addition, audio-video and museum collections were not included in the original survey and others such as digitized collections and "born-digital" materials, whose preservation will become more and more pressing in the years to come, have become more prevalent and will need to be addressed.

Survey. The plan is to develop and distribute a comprehensive web survey to obtain information and investigate the range, volume, and needs of Massachusetts collections; including threats, resources, staff to manage them, and challenges facing cultural heritage institutions. In addition, the survey will measure progress that has been achieved in addressing the preservation needs identified in the original MBLC survey in 1989. In both the MBLC's 1989 survey and the HHI, disaster preparedness and education were identified as pressing needs. The analysis of the data gathered in this survey will result in a new statewide preservation action agenda with measurable outcomes to refocus, expand, and enhance statewide preservation efforts, including the museum community and formats that were not included in previous planning efforts or were not heavily in use at that point.

With our consultant(s), the MBLC and its partners will analyze the survey data, produce a report documenting the conditions and preservation needs of cultural heritage collections in Massachusetts repositories, and develop recommendations for action with timeframe, institutional responsibilities, outcomes and outputs, and budget identified to address the identified preservation needs of these collections throughout the state.

3. Project Resources: Budget and Personnel

MBLC staff: The MBLC will coordinate and manage the project. The project director will be Gregor Trinkaus-Randall, Preservation Specialist. Michael Comeau, Assistant Archivist at the Massachusetts Archives will serve as the liaison to the archival community, and Katheryn Viens, Executive Director of NEMA will serve as the liaison to the museum community. These three individuals will have responsibility for working

with the consultant(s), survey development and data analysis, developing the preservation plan based on the survey results, and reporting to IMLS and Massachusetts institutions. The MBLC fiscal staff will assist with the budgeting and accounting issues.

Consultants: We plan to engage the services of experienced consultants to work with the project staff, create the survey content, draft the survey instrument (to be vetted by the Advisory Committee), administer the survey, provide an analysis of the results, and prepare a report including recommendations based on the survey results. In addition, an intern will be hired to assist in data entry when necessary and in the administration of the survey including developing final contact lists, answering questions from survey recipients, encouraging recipients to complete the surveys, and other clerical issues.

Partners: To develop as broad a preservation program as possible a number of institutions and organizations have agreed to serve as partners for this grant. They will participate in vetting the survey instrument, planning its delivery, serve on the Advisory Committee, promote the survey among their constituents, and assist the consultants in drafting a statewide preservation plan.

Partners		
Massachusetts Archives	Museum of Fine Arts	Boston Public Library
Northeast Document Conservation Center	New England Museum Association	Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System
Massachusetts Conference of Chief Librarians of Public Higher Educational Institution		

Advisory Committee: Project staff will appoint an Advisory Committee to provide advice on the development of the survey's content and assist in developing the mailing lists to reach as many institutions as possible with the survey, promoting the survey to their constituencies, reviewing the final survey results, helping develop recommendations for future activities, reviewing reports, and approving the final written report and recommendations.

Results: The project's final product will be a report documenting the conditions and preservation needs of cultural heritage collections in Massachusetts repositories. It will also identify priorities and provide recommendations for future statewide preservation activities. The report will serve as a basis for implementing these recommendations and developing an enhanced, expanded, and sustainable statewide preservation program for all types of cultural resources in Massachusetts.