

Creating a Collections Care Plan for New Mexico

1. Need And Rationale

The Museum of New Mexico Foundation, on behalf of the New Mexico Association of Museums (NMAM) and Department of Cultural Affairs Museum Resources Conservation Department (MRCD) will submit this planning grant to initiate a survey of institutions with collections holdings, compile and report on collections care statewide for libraries, archives and museums and hold one-day collection care workshops at six museum locations throughout the state.

New Mexico is the fifth largest state in the union. It has a small but diverse population, much of it rural. Of the over 250 museums, most are small and scattered throughout the state with several medium-sized museums within larger metropolitan areas. Many museums within the state are staffed by volunteers or a small number of paid staff. Over 125 public and academic libraries exist within the state and tend to be better staffed and funded than museums. Most libraries include archival holdings and a small number of museums include libraries and archives.

The cultural depth of New Mexico is rich and very lengthy compared to most states. Consequently the collections include a diverse range of prehistoric as well as historic material. The health of these collections is influenced greatly by the state's environment, which is extremely diverse ranging from dry, frigid high altitude through lower, desert settings.

There is no coherent statewide needs assessment for the care of collections in museum, library or archival institutions that has been done by any organization, public or private, within the state. Capturing this information through a comprehensive survey is essential for producing a baseline, statewide needs-assessment report based on the following HHI (Heritage Health Index) recommendations: providing safe conditions for collections, assigning responsibility for collections care and marshaling public and private support for and raising public awareness about collections care. These are the three HHI recommendations that will be implemented in this grant application.

Complementing these three HHI needs for the state is an IMLS funded ongoing project to bring CoSTEP (Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness Plan) to New Mexico. This CoSTEP initiative is in the developmental stage but will be implemented in phases throughout New Mexico to include all institutions holding cultural assets or related information

It is important to note that the information to be captured in the state wide health of collections project will be invaluable in developing the CoSTEP plan and in turn, having a successful CoSTEP plan will maximize and ensure the protection of these cultural assets.

A needs assessment for New Mexico is an important first step to create a baseline upon which to build future collaborative collections-focused programs. These types of programs are needed in a state in which little government funding is available to the majority of our institutions. New Mexico has a high poverty rate and due to the rural nature of the state, there is little funding at local levels to support institutions with collections beyond keeping the doors open. And rarely are individual institutions successful at garnering public funds for collections care at the state level. Unfortunately, the majority of our institutions in the state do not have staff expertise or the necessary technology to write successful federally-funded grants. This leaves most of our institutions, especially museums, without sources to fund collections care.

2. The Planning Process

NMAM and MRCD will serve as project co-directors. These entities will work with a diverse group of partner organizations to initiate a survey of institutions with collections holdings, compile and report on collections care statewide and hold one-day collection care workshops at six museum locations throughout the state.

NMAM will serve as the liaison for the partnerships included with this application: New Mexico State Library (NMSL), State Records Center and Archives (SRCA) and partner museums: City of Las Vegas Museum, New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum, Roswell Museum & Art Center, Silver City Museum, Albuquerque Museum of Art and History and Farmington Museum. The NMAM board will work with the partners identified in this grant application to marshal public and private support for collections care by raising public awareness through NMAM's website, museum list serve, newsletter, legislative contacts and press releases to newspapers statewide.

NMAM, MRCD, NMSL and SRCA will work together to identify existing documents or information that relates to collections care and mailing lists that could be used for this project. These partners will work with the six partner museums, which will serve as hosts for a one-day workshop in each region of the state, and contract conservators to plan and carry out the workshops. Together this group will create a survey instrument about institutional collections care and raise public awareness about the challenges of collections care in New Mexico through their respective websites, list serves, legislative contacts and press releases.

In addition to the partners identified above, other entities such as Rural Economic Development through Tourism (REDTT), Museum Development Associates (MDA), New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, New Mexico Tourism Department and New Mexico Economic Development Department will be contacted about existing surveys, reports or contact information.

At this time, there is no comprehensive listing of museums within the state, although there are several websites <http://www.nmculturaltreasures.org/>, <http://www-psych.nmsu.edu/~linda/museums.htm>, <http://www.nmsu.edu/~redtt/Resources/html/Museums.html> and a 2001 listing by

NMAM <http://www.nmmuseums.org/>. There is a comprehensive listing of public and academic libraries, although not all archival holdings in the state are identified at this time. NMAM will hire a contractor to create a comprehensive listing of all museums, libraries and archives with collection holdings as a benchmark for working with institutions throughout the state to capture baseline information about type and current conditions of collections, who is responsible for collections care and whether the institution has marshaled public and private support for raising public awareness about collections care.

MRDC will contract with three conservators. One conservator will oversee the workshop development process and its successful deployment as well as participate in the development of the survey and its implementation with the 2D (archival) and 3D conservators who will actually deliver the workshop and surveys. This conservator will also work with the NMAM contractor to ensure seamless integration of the project components. The 2D and 3D conservators will collaborate to ensure that a holistic approach is applied and that all cultural asset information is obtained running the gamut from museum artifacts through library and archive holdings. This will be done under the direct oversight of MRDC and in collaboration with NMAM, the partner museums and the two conservators tasked with final implementation of the workshops and field surveys.

2. Project Resources: Budget and Personnel

The Museum of New Mexico Foundation will serve as the umbrella organization for NMAM and MRDC. The New Mexico Association of Museums President, Louise Stiver, and the Museum Resources Chief Conservator, Mark MacKenzie, will serve as project co-directors.

The New Mexico Association of Museums was established in 1969 as a nonprofit corporation chartered in the State of New Mexico on September 26, 1976. The Association consists of an all-volunteer board that promotes cooperation and communication among all museums, museum workers and related organizations and serves as an advocate for New Mexico museums at the local, state, national and international levels. It strives to improve professional standards within the museum field through activities, events, educational programs and fellowship, including an annual museum conference. NMAM's membership includes museum professionals, museum-related businesses and cultural institutions throughout the state.

NMAM partnered with the Office of Cultural Affairs (now the Department of Cultural Affairs) on a IMLS-funded museum initiative in 2001 to provide collections care instruction to six small rural museums statewide. This grant application will build upon the work completed from the previous grant award.

NMAM President Stiver will oversee a project contractor, work with our identified partners in all facets of this grant and solicit information and support from fellow NMAM

board members. NMAM's contribution to this project will be done on a volunteer basis. Ms. Stiver has over 30 years of museum experience with considerable training and experience in collections care.

To assist with this project, NMAM will hire a project contractor to 1) locate and capture any useful pre-existing collection care information; 2) compile contact information for all museums, libraries and archives that can then be made available to partner organizations and used to develop the needs-assessment survey forms and gather the resulting survey data for MRCD use and reporting; 3) coordinate scheduling and marketing 6 workshops with partners; and 4) send press releases through appropriate list serves, websites and press throughout the state. The estimated cost for a project contractor is \$5,000.

The Conservation Department for the State of New Mexico began in 1953 with the creation of a laboratory work space and a fumigation chamber in MOIFA (the Museum of International Folk Art). Per Gulbeck was its first conservator (from 1953 – 1978) However, groundbreaking conservation analysis work (pigment and media identification of New Mexican religious polychrome) was begun as early as 1951 by the pre-eminent conservation scientist Rutherford Gettens in 1951. Other eminent conservators connected with the Conservation Laboratory during this time include Nathan Stolow and Perry Huston.

Following the hiring of Claire Munzenrider (1979) in 1982 the existing laboratory was renovated and expanded. The conservation laboratory role increased from servicing MOIFA solely to include the New Mexico Museum of Art, the Palace of the Governors, the Museum of Indian Art & Culture and the five monuments of New Mexico.

In January of 2007 Mark MacKenzie became Director of Conservation/Chief Conservator for the State of New Mexico. Since then the Conservation Department's clients have expanded to include two new monuments, the Space History Museum, the Museum of Natural History and Science, the National Museum of Hispanic Culture, and the Farm and Ranch Living History Museum. New roles have been added to the department's mandate which now encompasses "Energy Management" within the DCA (Department of Cultural Affairs) and is now acting as the DCA team lead in the New Mexico CoSTEP project.

The MRDC has provided the conservation guidance and support for many grant funded projects often at the same time throughout the state. Currently we have a multi-year SAT grant funding the conservation needs of building and outfitting the new New Mexico History Museum. Two NEH and one Luce Foundation grant funded projects are being carried out. The schedule of these grants and their attendant projects can easily accommodate the current IMLS grant request should it be accepted and funded.

The MRDC staff numbers seven with several interns and work study students. Additionally, there is a small volunteer group aiding our efforts. A second laboratory

facility is being built at this time and will be finished in 2009. Upon furnishing this facility we will have doubled our conservation treatment space.

During this time a rich outreach program seeking to help New Mexican cultural asset holding institutions has been developed. Clients range from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, through Native American, state and local cultural institutions.

Director of Conservation (MRDC), Mark MacKenzie will oversee the project conservators, work with our identified partners in all facets of this grant, help develop the necessary surveys and workshops and facilitate their delivery. MRDC will contribute an appropriate amount of time and effort to ensure the successful delivery of the workshops and the collection of the needed survey information. Mark MacKenzie has over 30 years experience as an anthropologist and art conservator working with federal, provincial/state, Native Americans and local cultural institutions to preserve cultural objects and facilitate their appropriate use.

The NMAM contractor position is estimated to require \$5,000. It is estimated that approximately \$7200 will be needed for the MRDC contracted coordinator position (256 hours @ \$28.00/hr). The workshops will be offered for free with the attendees covering their own travel costs. The workshop will run from 10 am. through 4 pm to facilitate same day travel. A working lunch will be provided and this is estimated to cost \$1600 (200 workshop lunches @ \$8.00 each). Once the identified costs have been subtracted from the project total there is approximately \$4,000 to \$4,300 per workshop (6 x \$4,000 = \$24,000 in total) to cover final development of the workshop, the survey, its implementation, site visits, gathering the survey information, organizing it and generating reports. Travel costs of the conservators giving the workshops are expected to come out of this sum as well.

MRDC Chief Conservator Mark MacKenzie will volunteer general oversight and quality control assurance and overall project management time. Additional departmental resources will be provided as necessary to facilitate the success of this project.