



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-255614-OMS-24
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Access
Project Type: Small Project (\$5,000-\$25,000)

Ava Gardner Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$24,936
Amount of cost share:	\$0

The Ava Gardner Museum will digitize and rehouse its collection of oversized paper-based materials including film posters, large-format photographs, and scrapbooks that document the iconic film legend. The museum identified this collection in need of improved preservation as part of a previous IMLS inventory and cataloging project. This digitization and rehousing project will support museum to manage and oversee this improvement and purchase camera equipment, a flat-file storage cabinet, and archival supplies. The project team will partner with the Johnston County Heritage Center to digitize a portion of the collection using their large-format scanner. The results of the project will be improved preservation and access to the collection through virtual exhibitions and an online catalog, benefiting researchers, film historians, and the public.

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 most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program to which you are applying.

Oversized Collections Preservation & Digitization Project

1. Project Justification

The Ava Gardner Museum (AGM) is requesting a \$24,936 IMLS grant for the purpose of instituting the Oversized Collections Preservation & Digitization Project, a project which meets objective 4 of Inspire! Grants for Small Museums, to support the management and care of collections in small museums, under the project category of Collections Stewardship and Access. The project will build on the work done under a previous IMLS grant to inventory and catalog the Museum's collection, through which the Museum noted items in need of further preservation, storage improvements, or potential conservation work. The Oversized Collections Preservation & Digitization Project will focus on the preservation of the Museum's oversized paper materials through improved storage and digitization.

The Ava Gardner Museum is located in the historic Downtown Smithfield District, seven miles from the town of Brogden, or "Grabtown", where Ava Gardner was born. The mission of the Museum is to educate the public on the life and career of screen legend Ava Gardner. The Museum's collection includes items and artifacts that represent both Ava Gardner's 50-year film career and her private life at home. The 6,400-square-foot facility has over 5,000 square feet of exhibit space.

For nearly half a century, Ava Gardner wowed audiences in over 60 film and television productions. While her natural beauty helped launch her career at the tender age of 18, it was her earthy, magnetic screen presence in films like *Mogambo*, *The Barefoot Contessa*, and *The Night of the Iguana* that ultimately made her an international star. During her considerable career, she received recognition and accolades from critics, fans, and film festivals the world over – earning Oscar, Golden Globe, and BAFTA acting nominations along the way. Following the release of her hit films *Show Boat* and *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, Ava was asked to leave her hand and footprints at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. In 1960, she was among the first phase of honorees to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. When the American Film Institute named the 50 greatest screen legends of the 20th Century, it was no surprise Ava Gardner was included on that exclusive list.

Ava Gardner was a woman who lived life her way and rewrote the rules as she went along. She was also known for her generosity. While Ava's star rose, she never forgot her humble beginnings in the rural, segregated communities of the Depression-era south, and she spent her life championing social and political causes near and dear to her heart. Throughout her film career, Ava used her influence to support racial equality, contributing her time, money, and celebrity status to stand up for friends and acquaintances in a multitude of ways. She openly campaigned for political candidates that embraced integration and gender parity at a time when those issues were polarizing the country. In the 1960s, she became a lifetime member of the NAACP, and she contributed to special events designed to benefit underserved communities of color. She also raised funds for philanthropic organizations like the March of Dimes, the American Cancer Society, and the American Red Cross. In her final years, she directed her estate's trust to commit all future funds earned to non-profits and charities which advance medical research and animal welfare.

Continued interest in Ava Gardner means a constant stream of new fans finding the Ava Gardner Museum. Our collection of artifacts related to Gardner's life and career provides a valuable opportunity to learn more about Gardner, classic Hollywood, and society during Gardner's career. The Museum's collection includes Ava Gardner's film costumes, personal clothing, household items, film advertisements and ephemera, Ava Gardner's personal record collection, photographs both from film promotion and personal candid shots, books from Ava Gardner's personal library, newspaper clippings about Ava's career, scripts, and much more.

The Oversized Collections Preservation & Digitization Project will focus on improving the storage and preservation of the Museum's oversized paper materials. The Museum has a collection of over 275 film posters of various sizes including lobby cards, inserts, one sheets (27x41 inches), and half sheets. These terms describe standard U.S. theatrical poster sizes used during Ava Gardner's career. Our oversized items also include dozens of large-format photographs, about 30 scrapbooks, several of which Ava Gardner created herself, documenting her early career through clippings and photos. We also have 31 albums that contain photos from Ava's films and 10 boxes of other oversized documents.

Most of the film posters are kept in flat file storage; however, the Museum's current flat file storage has reached capacity, and the Museum needs more such storage to best protect its oversized materials. In order to best preserve these items, the Museum also would like to properly digitize these items using an overhead scanner or overhead digital camera set up as needed based on the size of the items. In the process of cataloging these items, the museum has taken reference photos; however, the Museum lacks a scanner large enough to accommodate the items. The Museum will partner with its neighbor, the Johnston County Heritage Center (JCHC), which has a Zeutschel OS 12002 Advanced Book / Large Format Scanner, to facilitate the scanning of much of the oversized collection; however, their scanner will not be able to scan the largest poster sizes in our collection. Roughly half of the posters in the AGM collection are too large for the Zeutschel scanner. To scan the largest items, the AGM will purchase both a Canon EOS Rebel SL3 digital camera fitted with a wide-angle lens and an overhead camera mount. This equipment will also be useful to the Museum for future projects by improving our ability to take quality photographs of other artifacts in our collection including dishes, jewelry, purses, and clothing and accessories. In addition to the need for this equipment, this project will also require valuable staff time from both partner institutions. Dividing the digitization between the Zeutschel at the JCHC and the overhead digital camera at the AGM will allow the project to proceed more quickly as well. The Zeutschel scanner is also particularly well-suited to the scanning needs for the scrapbooks and albums to be digitized as well since it is set up to scan books. The AGM is requesting IMLS support to fund project staff time to scan these items as well as to fund a new flat file storage cabinet, the digital camera and overhead camera mount, larger format archival enclosures to interleave items in the flat files, and archival quality materials to rehome some of the scrapbooks whose enclosures are hazardous or damaged after they have been digitized and preserved in their original form. Once digitized, the Museum could use the images to create virtual exhibits to share the collection far and wide. Many of the items could also be added to the Johnston County Heritage Center's online catalog to be useful to researchers interested in film history, advertising media, and Ava Gardner's films.

Identification of Project Need:

The AGM is requesting funding to support the digitization and improved storage of our oversized documents collection. A lack of staffing and equipment has made this project untenable for the Museum in the past. However, with grant funding aiding in covering staff time, and through partnering with the Johnston County Heritage Center to utilize their overhead scanner, the Museum could digitize its collection of oversized materials including film posters, scrapbooks, and large format images. Procuring a digital camera and overhead mount will also allow the Museum to carry out future digitization projects including photographing 3-D artifacts. Digitization provides a form of preservation. The AGM is also requesting funding to purchase additional flat file storage cabinet space which will enable the Museum to properly store more of its oversized collection materials. Some of the Museum's oversized materials are stored on open shelving as of now, most notably several scrapbooks, while other materials are stored in vertical shelving (framed items). Some oversized items are rolled and still others are currently stored in boxes; however, flat file storage is the most efficient way to store the collection of oversized items in one place and with adequate space for all pieces to lay flat. Increased flat file storage and digitization offer two ways to preserve the collection of oversized items for future research and exhibition.

Benefits: The Project will benefit the collection of the AGM by preserving the oversized document collection through improved storage and digital preservation. Digitization of the oversized documents will also improve public access to these materials, making them easier to make available through virtual exhibits, online cataloging, and/or social media. The AGM currently has, on average, up to 10,000 visitors per year, as well as over 198,000 followers online. As we learned through the pandemic, there are many fans and followers who will never have the ability to visit the museum in person. The digitization of our collection allows us to offer virtual exhibits to these people, as well as providing a different way for us to educate and inform people about the life and career of Ava Gardner. Ava was a trailblazer and her life was remarkable and unique. With the added benefit of virtual programs, we have been able to share her story with people around the world. We have had approximately 3,000 views of our various virtual exhibits and informational 'Ava Chats' and we expect that number to increase as we add to our programming through the digitization of more artifacts.

Ava Gardner was born in 1922, just two years after women officially gained the right to vote. While she never had to fight for women's suffrage, Ava made use of this hard won right throughout her life and encouraged others to do so by using her own voice in the political arena. Her strong-willed film characters and her personal sense of fortitude have made Ava Gardner a modern touchstone for women everywhere. The individual choices she made and the way she independently lived her life were extremely ahead of her time. With recent high-profile restorations of her classic films like *The Killers* and *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman*, interest in and recognition of her lasting legacy has never been higher. Even today, over 30 years since her passing, her life and cultural impact continue to be the subject of countless feature articles, podcasts, websites, and books. At the Ava Gardner Museum, we honor Ava's legacy, not only as an actress, but as a trailblazing woman who stood up for what she believed in, said what she thought, and served as an example of a politically active independent woman at a time when women were not expected to do so. This project increases the materials available for digital use in virtual exhibits, social media, blog posts, and more and

thus increases our ability to share Ava Gardner's life and its continued relevance today. In particular, the film posters to be digitized offer opportunities for studying the ways in which films were marketed, how female stars were represented, and how posters varied by market. Ava's scrapbooks offer personal insight into the touchstones of her career and which she felt were important. Other oversized items in our collection document Gardner's films, publicity, and more.

Strategic Plan: The Project will address the first two goals laid out in our five-year Collection Strategic Plan: To improve the physical storage of the Museum's oversized items collection including posters, scrapbooks, and large documents and to use digitization as another method of preservation for the oversized items collection. This project gives the Museum the opportunity to use digital images to increase access to the collection through digital exhibits and possibly a future online catalog for researchers. The Project will allow us to begin moving through our goals for the collection for the next five years and will improve long-term storage, preservation, and access to the Museum's oversized documents collection.

Goals: The project addresses the goals of the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums program because it will strengthen the AGM's ability to serve its public to present the story of Ava Gardner's life and career. It provides for improved storage and access to the Museum's oversized collection, aiding in preservation of those materials as well. The project is aligned with the goals of the Collections Stewardship category as an investment in collections care, and digitization, and because its successful completion will lead to long-term preservation of collections and improved access to collection materials.

The investment in improved flat file storage will better preserve the Museum's oversized collection, and digitization of those materials will aid in both preservation and access.

2. Project Work Plan

The AGM Oversized Collections Preservation & Digitization Project is a 1-year project, starting September 1, 2024 and concluding August 31, 2025. The Executive Director has met with the Ava Gardner Museum Board of Directors, the current Collections Manager, and our project partners at the Johnston County Heritage Center to plan the best way to proceed with the Project Work Plan to ensure success in each phase. The Ava Gardner Museum will partner with the Johnston County Heritage Center to use its overhead scanner to digitize much of the AGM's oversized collection. This process will begin with developing a workflow for the digitization and training of project staff in how to use the overhead scanner at JCHC. While JCHC staff will scan items that will fit on the overhead scanner at their location, the AGM's collections contractor will photograph those oversized items that cannot be scanned at JCHC using an overhead camera mount and digital camera to be purchased by the AGM. AGM staff will also use Photoshop to edit images as needed to improve lighting, remove glare or shadows, crop, straighten, etc. This project will involve staff time of both institutions. The AGM will purchase new flat file storage and oversized archival enclosures at the beginning of the grant period in order to have them ready so that once items have been digitized, they can be placed into storage properly for the least amount of handling possible.

The Museum will use grant funding to support the work of a Collections Manager/Project Director to oversee the digitization and rehousing of the oversized materials collection. The

Collections Manager will create a workflow for taking items to be digitized at the Johnston County Heritage Center, as well as a workflow for photographing items using the overhead camera mount at the AGM, and then rehome those in need of improved storage in the new flat file cabinet or other specialized storage (like that for rehousing scrapbook contents) and update location information in PastPerfect. The digital files generated will include both preservation files (high resolution TIFFs) and access files (web-quality resolution JPGs). All files will be transferred to the Ava Gardner Museum's digital archives which is housed on a computer at the Museum. This computer is backed up to a cloud-based storage system every night as set up by IT professionals. The time involved in carrying out the phases of the Project is conservatively estimated at 8-9 hours per week for the Collections Manager/Project Director and 2 hours per week for the archivist at the Johnston County Heritage Center. In addition, the Grant Administrator is expected to spend 1 hour per week in administrative tasks, such as keeping track of the hours for this project and compiling the data for the Interim and Final Reports. This will include all phases of the Project as outlined above. Our progress will be tracked by the means of regular team meetings and updates, with the number of items that have been digitized being one barometer of the project's progress. The results of the Project, along with the updates given during team meetings, will be reported to and overseen by the AGM Board of Directors.

3. Project Results

The goal of the Oversized Collections Preservation & Digitization Project is to fulfill our stated mission to "To preserve and restore the collection for future generations" and "To display the existing collection in an entertaining and educational manner for the edification of the general public." The intended results include:

- Improve storage of the Museum's oversized document collection.
- Purchase more flat file storage.
- Purchase a digital camera and overhead mount to photograph oversized artifacts
- Purchase archival materials to better preserve scrapbooks.
- Digitize oversized documents to make them more easily accessible.

Once the project is complete, Museum staff will be able to more easily find and use images of its oversized documents in virtual exhibits, our digital kiosk on site, social media, blog posts, and more. The images can also be made available through the local county's online library catalog, providing images of film posters to those researching the history of film or film advertising.

The availability of high-quality digital images of this collection will limit the need to remove items from storage for viewing, photographing, or study in the future, thus better preserving these items. Some of the oversized documents in our collection were laminated prior to becoming part of the Museum collection. Digitizing these items will preserve them into the future even if they begin to suffer deterioration owing to their lamination.

AGM Oversized Collections Preservation & Digitization Project

Sept 2024-Nov 2024

Dec 2024-Feb 2025

Mar 2025-May 2025

Jun 2025-Aug 2025

Prior to Grant Period

Collections Manager to ensure all oversized material records are up to date in PastPerfect

Collections Manager to reorganize for placement of new flat file storage cabinet

Throughout Grant Period

Project Staff active throughout grant period

Set up method for tracking tasks and progress

Regular meetings and progress updates begin between Project Director and Executive Director

Year 1

Museum to order new flat file storage cabinet and other archival supplies for improved oversized collection storage

Museum to purchase digital camera, wide-angle lens, and overhead mount for photography portion of the project

Project Director directs project kick-off meeting for Project Staff

Project Director meet with partner staff at Johnston County Heritage Center to develop digitization workflow, filenaming conventions, and digital storage protocols

Johnston County Heritage Center staff (Bennett Chapman) produces digitized scans of oversized items.

AGM Project Staff photographs the larger items that cannot be placed on the scanner.

Install new flat file storage cabinet

Return digitized items to storage, rehome items as necessary to improve storage conditions

Upload digital images to PastPerfect; store preservation masters on hard drive with backup to the cloud

Update location information in PastPerfect as oversized items are rehoused or returned to storage

Gather final evaluation data, write final report with the cooperation of Project Director and Project Staff

	Sept 2024-Nov 2024			Dec 2024-Feb 2025			Mar 2025-May 2025			Jun 2025-Aug 2025		
Collections Manager to ensure all oversized material records are up to date in PastPerfect												
Collections Manager to reorganize for placement of new flat file storage cabinet												
Project Staff active throughout grant period	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Set up method for tracking tasks and progress	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Regular meetings and progress updates begin between Project Director and Executive Director	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Museum to order new flat file storage cabinet and other archival supplies for improved oversized collection storage	Blue	Blue	Blue									
Museum to purchase digital camera, wide-angle lens, and overhead mount for photography portion of the project	Blue	Blue	Blue									
Project Director directs project kick-off meeting for Project Staff	Blue	Blue	Blue									
Project Director meet with partner staff at Johnston County Heritage Center to develop digitization workflow, filenaming conventions, and digital storage protocols	Blue	Blue	Blue									
Johnston County Heritage Center staff (Bennett Chapman) produces digitized scans of oversized items.	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
AGM Project Staff photographs the larger items that cannot be placed on the scanner.	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Install new flat file storage cabinet	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue									
Return digitized items to storage, rehome items as necessary to improve storage conditions	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple
Upload digital images to PastPerfect; store preservation masters on hard drive with backup to the cloud	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Update location information in PastPerfect as oversized items are rehoused or returned to storage	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Gather final evaluation data, write final report with the cooperation of Project Director and Project Staff										Yellow	Yellow	Yellow

Digital Products Plan

Type

The Collections Preservation Assessment Project will create digital products through the process of digitizing the Museum's oversized items collection.

Using a Zeutschel OS 12002 Advanced Book / Large Format Scanner owned by our partner organization, the Johnston County Heritage Center, and a Canon EOS Rebel SL3 digital camera fitted with a wide-angle lens digital camera to be purchased by the Ava Gardner Museum, we will create high-resolution images of each oversized item. These images will follow our existing file naming convention, using the item's accession and catalog number to name the files. These scans will be saved as both TIFF files for best digital preservation, and as JPG files for ease of use. Scanned items may be made available for public viewing through the Museum's social media, blog, website, or virtual exhibits outside of the grant project's planned activities. The digitized items may also later become part of a county-wide online archives catalog. The digitization project will create over 5,000 digital files including scans of over 275 film posters of various sizes including lobby cards, inserts, one sheets (27x41 inches), and half sheets, dozens of large-format photographs, the pages of 31 photo albums, 30 scrapbooks, and 10 boxes of oversized materials. The digital preservation masters (TIFF files) and the access files (JPG files) will both be stored on the Museum's hard drive and backed up in cloud storage. Access files will also be added to the corresponding object catalog records in PastPerfect.

The project will also result in updated catalog records in the software application PastPerfect.

Availability

The digital scans created of the oversized collection will be used in Museum social media, blogs, website, and virtual exhibits as needed. They can also be added to the Museum's existing digital kiosk that is available for museum visitors to browse. The completion of this project will make these items more easily accessible and open up future sharing opportunities through online exhibits or an online catalog; however, those endeavors will not be pursued under this grant project.

Access

The digitized scans of items in the oversized collection will be accessible to the public via sharing through the in-person digital kiosk, social media, blog, website, or virtual exhibits for educational purposes. However, many of the items may have existing copyright restrictions, such as film posters that are still owned by the producing studio, etc. Items will not be available for use by the public other than for viewing and educational purposes.

Sustainability

The Museum aims to utilize best practices for digital preservation in the selection of file types, scanning resolutions, and digital security. By using TIFF files for the preservation masters and saving and backing up in multiple locations, the Museum is planning for long-term digital storage and preservation. The Museum is invested in preserving these files and will utilize and maintain our existing cloud-based backup system to ensure the safety and security of the scanned files.