



CONNECTING TO COLLECTIONS / MINNESOTA!

Advisory Board Meeting
February 2, 2009
Minnesota Historical Society
St. Paul, MN

Background

This was the second meeting of the Connecting to Collections Advisory Board. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the Advisory Board of progress to date, present the findings of the survey and focus group meetings and discuss the draft of the statewide preservation planning document.

Participants

<i>Goldstein Museum of Design</i>	Lin Nelson-Mayson
<i>Midwest Art Conservation Center (MACC)</i>	Colin Turner
<i>Minitex</i>	Bill DeJohn
<i>Minnesota Historical Society (MHS)</i>	Bob Horton, Shereilyn Ogden, Brian Szott, Caitlin Cook-Isaacson
<i>Science Museum of Minnesota</i>	Tilly Laskey
<i>University of Minnesota Libraries</i>	Charles Spetland

Introductions

Board members and project staff introduced themselves. Bob Horton went over the meeting's agenda.

Project Update

Bob explained the progress of the project to date. The online survey of collecting institutions in Minnesota is complete for our purposes, but still available online for reference and to collect further information (e.g., regional data for MACC). The findings of the survey show that collecting institutions in Minnesota share common concerns and needs with institutions across the nation as established in the Heritage Health Index.

The four focus group meetings held throughout the state were well attended by representatives from a variety of institutions. One of the points stressed at these meetings was that any sustainable statewide program depends heavily on a commitment from each institution of their own time and resources. These meetings were structured around three

areas of need: New Media, Education and Planning. The participants again expressed similarity in their needs and concerns, but brainstormed a variety of solutions.

Transportation and technological barriers were an issue for smaller institutions and those further outstate. One way to make collections programming more accessible for these institutions would be to tack on workshops and events at professional and organizational meetings where people are already planning to be in attendance.

There was a question about the scope and focus of the Connecting to Collections MN project (as well as the nationwide initiative). One conclusion was that any program we propose must address the stabilization of collections statewide but should also establish a framework for long-term conservation.

Another board member asked if there was a sense of crisis amongst the collecting institutions in Minnesota? Shereilyn responded that most people indicated that they needed strong guidance and appreciated any approach that minimized a sense of crisis to make the process seem more approachable. Colin Turner added that it is best to have someone follow up with institutions to ensure they are accountable for the work getting done.

A positive outcome of the focus group meetings was that they strengthened regional networks and encouraged participants to use each other as resources (even across institutional lines). Minitex has a cooperative purchasing program already so there may be a possibility for collaboration there. It is important to fit into existing infrastructures. Representatives from the College of St. Catherine indicated that they were interested in working on an adult education curriculum that could reach libraries and others who need increased training in preservation and conservation.

Discussion of Statewide Preservation Planning Program

Bob clarified the “shared technology services” goal laid out in the program. Because every institution cannot afford to migrate and store all of their collections digitally, it is essential to collaborate. Collaboration avoids redundancy and duplication of effort as well as increases the potential use value of the collections. Currently, there are a few different examples of statewide digital collaborations in the United States (state repositories, collections, etc.).

Another component of the plan that was discussed was emergency planning. Emergency planning training is already being done through MACC and MHS so how would this statewide program do something different? To start, a statewide office could collect and store model emergency plans (these would be edited to remove confidential information) and provide them to other institutions. A collection of planning documents would be helpful in the case of a disaster but also to understand the scope of the collections statewide. Much emphasis was also placed on incentivized planning: making grant money contingent upon the development of an emergency plan, a ladder of opportunities that increase as you meet planning requirements, and ways of holding institutions

accountable for completing plans. Continuing education certification would be another way to promote planning as an essential beginning step.

The intention of each component of the program is to multiply opportunities for institutions in the state, giving them more options than they had before.

Bob explained several funding possibilities:

- 1) IMLS Connecting to Collections implementation grant: only about five grants of approximately \$600,000 will be awarded nationwide, but perhaps not until 2011. We could apply for this regionally to increase our chances of receiving a grant. This could serve as a catalyst grant for a larger project or a 2-3 year project with an achievable end goal;
- 2) IMLS and NEH grants: again about 2-3 years of funding, offering about \$200,000-300,000;
- 3) Local Grants: Bremer, Blandin, or other foundations serving targeted populations;
- 4) MHS Grants-In-Aid: the number available depends on the year, these are small amounts of money awarded often to municipalities or local historical societies;
- 5) National Historic Publications and Records Commission: opportunities for re-grant projects, State Historic Advisory Boards award money of varying amounts;
- 6) Constitutional Amendment: there is little known at this time about the Cultural Heritage component, but legislators would like to fund projects that go beyond routine and emphasize legacy.

Ideally, a small, local grant could serve as a match for a larger federal grant. We should stress potential collaborations and partnerships when applying for grants (particularly federal grants) and emphasize that this will be helpful in disseminating our information (e.g., at conferences or board meetings, in newsletters, etc.). The partnerships will need to expand, perhaps into different states, different cultural groups and agencies, and hopefully including the University of Minnesota as a main partner.

A list of potential connections includes:

Regional professional associations

Regional library networks - MELSA and others out-state

Multi-type Library Systems - those that include public, academic, special, private, church, organizational and other libraries

Minnesota Association of Museums (MAM)

Association of Midwest Museums (AAM) - 8 member states

Minnesota State and Local History Museums

A kickoff conservation summit is a good idea that will work to bring people together and begin this process, perhaps as an adjunct to the conference of the Minnesota Digital Library. Lin Nelson-Mayson will get the contact information for an upcoming professional meeting where we may be able to present a workshop. Tilly Laskey suggested regional collections social hours.

There are other ways to divide this statewide program, perhaps by audience, not by focus or theme (e.g., outstate or rural programs, native collections, etc.) to better appeal to granting institutions. How best to make sense of these results from the perspective of an institution? There are two components (curricula and resources) that we can set up, with different access points.

Wrap-Up

The plan looks good. Meeting minutes will be sent out and posted to the website. We hope board members will continue to think about the proposed plan and share it and discuss it with colleagues. Please give us more input. We will let board members know as new items come up for review and approval. We will seek more funding options and look for future links. Lin Nelson-Mayson will present some of this information to the state representatives for the Twin Cities at a non-profit advocacy day at the Capitol (through MNCN). Tilly Laskey has met with the Indian Advisory Committee for the Science Museum and discussed the project as well.