

CONNECTING TO COLLECTIONS / MINNESOTA!

Summary of Focus Group Findings

The following needs and delivery methods were identified through four focus group meetings held at different locations around Minnesota. Participants represented a variety of cultural institutions, including libraries, archives, museums, historical societies, colleges and universities, and other collecting organizations. These ranged in size from large, complex institutions to small, volunteer-operated organizations. The priorities the groups identified are indicated by an asterisk. While all the ideas are needed and useful, not all are immediately practical or cost-effective; the participants determined which would provide the best foundation for a successful state wide preservation program in Minnesota.

NEEDS

Planning Information and Assistance, including Emergency Planning

- Templates/boilerplates for basic planning documents **
- Models of basic planning documents for different types of institutions**
- Explanation of what planning is and the types of planning documents needed
- Guidance in scalable planning
- Information on what a plan should include
- Information on how to prioritize
- Success and failure stories/case studies
- Information on outcome-based evaluation and performance measurement

New Media Information and Assistance (Audio-visual and Digital)

- Information and help for institutions at all levels**
- Standards for migration of content from analog to digital
- Standards for preservation of born-digital materials
- Ways of grappling with the enormous costs of ongoing digital preservation and access
- Guidelines of appropriate practices/“do no harm”
- Conservation services buying guide/product advice
- Vendor assistance: list of vendors who convert information from one media to another/guidelines for choosing and using vendors
- Help understanding issues specific to new media (obsolescence, inherent vice, privacy, security, rights, emerging software, tags, and metadata)
- Collaboration

- Models for digitization and migration

Collaboration and Networking

- Online and in-person support**
- Shared staff and volunteers*
- Group purchasing
- Statewide preservation summit
- Online forum for discussion
- Regional advisors

Resources

- Adequate funding**
- Trained staff assigned to care for collections
- Appropriate technology
- Safe conditions for collections

Basic Preservation Information

- Chart of basic preservation criteria to aid in determining the preservation status and next steps for each organization**
- Information sheets for basic care of different types of specific materials*
- “Do no harm” practices
- Guidelines for storage
- Conservation materials buying guide/product advice

Training

- Low cost conservation solutions/how to work with less money and staff *
- Planning
- Business plan/grant writing
- Health and safety
- Storage and handling/appropriate practices
- Standards for the minimal level of care for each kind of collection
- Preservation of specific materials (e.g., leather books, photographs, brittle paper, composite objects, automotive items, audio-visual materials, digital media)

DELIVERY METHODS

1. A state conservation clearinghouse** in a centralized location with dedicated staff support to:
 - facilitate networking and share resources
 - provide grant information and other information
 - support initiatives to purchase preservation-quality storage materials and share services at a discounted group rate

- distribute a local DVD or video on conservation
2. Shared technology services
 - A shared digital repository**
 - Develop a common application for digitization and access
 - Evaluation of other models for state-wide digital partnership
 - Collaboration with existing programs such as the U of M or Minnesota Digital Library
 3. Needs Assessment Surveys with Site Visits
 - Localized versions of MAP and CAP surveys with site visits**
 - Assistance in developing collections profiles and functional inventories *
 - Tutorial on how to do your own needs assessment survey
 4. Web Tools and Online Resources
 - Website with statewide conservation blog and message board *
 - Media kit for conservation *
 - Templates for planning, outreach and grant documents
 - Webinars
 - Video demonstrations (on YouTube?) that describe how to do a process, breaking down a 30-minute video into 3 to 4-minute segments, including costs and sources of materials; set up similar to a cooking show
 - A checklist of do's and don'ts for grant writing
 - Material Safety Data Sheets for conservation materials
 - 1-page fact sheets
 - Electronic newsletters
 - RSS feeds
 5. Promotion and Outreach Activities
 - Conservation literacy activities and events/raising awareness**
 - Template for producing individualized media kits for institutions*
 - Public workshops such as “how to care for your family treasures”
 - Adopt-an-artifact campaigns
 - Newsletters/exhibits/podcasts telling the story of an object's conservation
 - Formula for calculating costs of accessioning an item to provide that information to donors
 - Local newspaper articles on conservation
 - Behind-the-scenes tours
 6. Training and Education Methods
 - Collaborative workshops/hands-on planning education (especially at organizational annual meetings)**
 - Step-by-step personal instruction*

- Public presentations
- Staff training tools
- Hands-on experience
- One-day internships for people managing collections
- A structured curriculum with certification and awards
- Development of regional networks
- A “Teach the Teachers” or “Train the Trainers” program to share knowledge regionally and encourage a local expert model
- “Angels” program to train participants by doing hands-on work for repositories that need help.

7. Support

- A variety of resources that are immediately applicable and available (e.g., a call-in service/help-line or online reference service about basic preservation and other topics)**
- Promote institutional awareness and use of current tools and resources (i.e. dPlan: the Free Online Disaster Planning Tool from NEDCC or MHS’s Local History blog by David Grabitske)
- Mutual help – traveling to other institutions locally to help each other on a regular basis, sharing volunteers – to accomplish something as well as to collaborate with colleagues
- Help connecting to appropriate mentors
- Personalization/like-to-like facilitation
- Continuing self-education – where to get your questions answered, which tools to use (RSS feeds, forums, webinars, etc.)

8. Labor

- Statewide program of shared services to deal with backlogs (a group of professionals who could be farmed out to different institutions on a one-year basis) to lower barriers and overhead costs **
- Structured internships
- Stipends for volunteers
- Statewide training program for volunteers
- Institutional sharing of well-trained volunteers

9. Statewide collections care summit to raise awareness and provide networking opportunities*