

Connecting to Collections

... A Call to Action ...

A national initiative of the
Institute of Museum and Library Services



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Top: Senior conservator Soyeon Choi mends papyrus fragments.

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Center: An American flag made in 1865, showing new repairs, is rolled for storage by Mary Williamson at the American Textile History Museum.

Bottom: Staff at the Walter J. Brown Media Archives & Peabody Awards Collections opened the cans containing the Kaliska-Greenblatt Home Movie Collection to reveal deteriorated films that were curled and shrunken. Photo by Jeffrey J. Martin.

Dear Friend

Each year, millions of Americans experience the cherished collections of maps, quilts, recordings, paintings, and countless other treasures held in our libraries, museums, archives, historic houses, and gardens. These priceless pieces of our past serve to enlighten, inform, and inspire all of us, from the schoolchild to the scholar. They help to give our communities a sense of place and identity.

Seeing firsthand the Ellis Island record books signed by immigrants like my own Italian grandparents brings into sharp focus the challenges they faced so that their children and grandchildren could grow up as Americans. There is something so powerful about seeing a signature, another chapter etched into our great national story.

But just as these chapters bear testimony to our rich past, so too are they being erased from our memory.

In communities around the country, museums and libraries face losing their collections for good because of neglect and everyday threats like exposure to light, humidity, high or fluctuating temperatures, and pest infestation. A 2005 study created by Heritage Preservation, and supported by IMLS, called *A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections*, found that nearly 190 million objects in U.S. collections are in immediate danger and need our help. Sadly, once we lose these collections, we cannot get them back—a possibility with profound impact for future generations of learners.

With this in mind, the Institute has launched *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action*, a national initiative to raise public awareness of the importance of caring for our treasures, and to underscore the fact that these collections are essential to the American story.

From special conservation grants to national forums serving local museums and libraries, each component of the initiative connects to recommendations made within the Heritage Health Index report. In short, *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action* is not just about saving objects, but about the legacy we leave to our own children and grandchildren.

In 1823, Thomas Jefferson wrote that it was “the duty of every good citizen to use all the opportunities which occur to him... or her, for preserving documents relating to the history of our country.” This is what we hope to help communities do.

In our nation's collections we find a window to our past and a looking glass to the future. By conserving them and making them accessible to our communities, these objects become storytellers whose memory never fades. I invite you to answer this call to action and learn more about this pressing issue and this exciting initiative.

Sincerely,



Dr. Anne-Imelda M. Radice
Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services



A Public Trust at Risk: The Reason for Connecting to Collections

A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collections (HHI), a project cosponsored by IMLS and Heritage Preservation, revealed that our nation's collections of objects, documents, and digital materials, though essential to America's cultural health, are imperiled by improper care and in need of protective action.

The study's findings are sobering. HHI concluded that:

- **190 million objects** held by archives, historical societies, libraries, museums, and scientific organizations in the United States are in need of conservation treatment.
- 65 percent of collecting institutions have **experienced damage** to collections due to improper storage.
- 80 percent of collecting institutions **do not have an emergency plan** that includes collections, with staff trained to carry it out.
- 40 percent of institutions have **no funds allocated** in their annual budgets for preservation or conservation.

In response to these findings, HHI made four recommendations to help institutions avoid serious conservation problems and the possible loss of the nation's most valued treasures. They are:

1. Institutions must give priority to providing safe conditions for the collections they hold in trust.
2. Every collecting institution must develop an emergency plan to protect its collections.
3. Every institution must assign responsibility for caring for its collection to members of its staff.
4. Individuals in both the public and private sectors must assume responsibility for providing support.

If institutions and the public follow these proposed procedures, then collections in jeopardy will surely receive the care and attention they need.

For more information about this study, please visit the HHI Web site at www.heritagepreservation.org/HHI.

In addition to support from IMLS, the study was also made possible by the Getty Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Bay and Paul Foundations, and the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation.



National Conservation Summit

The IMLS Call to Action began with a national Summit held in Washington, DC, which convened representatives from small and medium-sized museums and libraries from every state—as well as Washington, DC and Puerto Rico—on June 27–28, 2007. Attendees met with national leaders and explored strategies for preserving endangered collections, harnessing new technologies, engaging the public in conservation efforts, and identifying funding resources.

Video highlights from the Summit are available in a two-disc DVD package, along with the full text of the conference keynotes. E-mail imlsinfo@imls.gov to request a copy.

The Summit was made possible through a cooperative agreement with Heritage Preservation.



Immediately After the Summit

- 24% of attendees “began development of an emergency plan that includes collections;”
- 64% of attendees plan to “ensure that my institution has an up-to-date emergency plan for collections;”
- 91% of attendees “informally shared information with a colleague;” and
- 58% have already “shared information with my board or governing authority.”

Also, while only 2% of attendees wrote that “connecting with local leaders and state officials” was a “conservation challenge” for them prior to the Summit, immediately afterward, 39% had “begun exploring possible public outreach regarding conservation” and 52% planned to “feature preservation activities in an exhibit, Web site, newsletter, or other public forum” as a result of the Summit.

A Summit Success Story

Robbin Zella, Director of the Housatonic Museum of Art, credits her participation in the Summit with contributing to the success of her partnership with the Housatonic Community College Foundation’s first major gift campaign. Through a gift from the Werth Family Foundation to the campaign, Ms. Zella now has \$60,000 to care for the Museum’s artwork. Her participation in the Summit and tour of the Lunder Conservation Center provided her with the needed background to effectively use this major gift to conservation. She will be retrofitting the Housatonic Museum of Art’s storage area with a new HVAC system for environmental control and will be creating new conservation/preservation didactics in an exhibition space.

First Lady Laura Bush delivers a recorded message of welcome to Summit attendees.



Heard Around the Summit

“Knowing that the concerns about collection care exist at the highest levels is helpful to me in making my case for local support.”

—Robyn G. Peterson, Executive Director, Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, MT.

“This is an important moment for our field, and I was very honored to participate.”

—Debra Hess Norris, Chairperson of the Art Conservation Department, University of Delaware, Newark, DE.

“I would definitely recommend that prospective attendees [attend future summits] for their collaborative aspects alone.”

—Dwight McInvaill, Director, Georgetown County Library, Georgetown, SC.

“I left the meetings feeling inspired and motivated to renew our efforts.”

—Deb Slaney, Curator of History, The Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, Albuquerque, NM.

“I hope I will be able to inspire our citizens to become more active in preservation.”

—Joan K. Weaver, Director, Kinsley Public Library, Kinsley, KS.

On the Road with The National Tour

The National Tour takes the Call to Action on the road. The goal of each meeting is to reach a broad audience, to examine different collections care issues, and inspire participants to share lessons learned and make collections care a top priority. Three hundred museum, library, and archive professionals from 41 states and the District of Columbia gathered in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 31 and February 1, 2008, for the forum, “Preserving America’s Diverse Heritage,” at the High Museum of Art and the Woodruff Arts Center. Additional forums include:

Denver, Colorado

Denver Public Library, Colorado Historical Society, and Denver Art Museum
June 24 and 25, 2008
Theme: “Collaboration in the Digital Age”

San Diego, California*

Zoological Society of San Diego
February 2009
Theme: “Care for Living Collections”

Buffalo, New York*

Art Conservation Department, Buffalo State College
June 2009
Theme: “Training in Collections Care”

*Forum dates and places are subject to change.

Web casts of all of the forums will be posted on the Web site at www.ims.gov/collections, along with updated information as planning progresses.

The National Tour is made possible through a cooperative agreement with Heritage Preservation.



The following is an excerpt from the Atlanta keynote address given by Lonnie Bunch, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture:

“We are all made better by embracing the lessons and the challenges of a diverse American culture. We are all made better when we dip into that reservoir that comes only when you remember. So, in essence, we struggle to preserve. Not just to preserve for preservation’s sake, but we struggle to preserve to help us remember.

“And I would argue to you that there are few things as powerful as a people, as a nation, steeped in its history. And there are fewer things more noble than honoring all our ancestors by remembering.”

The Connecting to Collections Video

The *Connecting to Collections Video* was created by IMLS, in conjunction with Heritage Preservation, to inspire the public to take part in the national initiative by supporting their local communities' museums, libraries, and archives.

This four-minute video addresses four important themes: (1) America's collections are for everyone; (2) museums, libraries, archives, and other such institutions connect us both to the past and to the future; (3) the treasures that these institutions hold are not indestructible, and once lost, can never be regained; and (4) anyone can help their local institution preserve its collections and make a difference. The video demonstrates that each institution is a vital part of this nationwide effort to save our heritage for future generations.

Here are some suggestions for how any institution can use this video:

- Show it at community meetings.
- Play it on a continuous loop in your institution's lobby.
- Play the video next to an object in your collection that is in need of conservation.
- Display a sign soliciting donations of funds or other support to help your institution care for its collection.
- Show it at your next board or friends group meeting.
- Share it with your local public officials.
- Show it to potential donors, foundations, and corporations.

If you would like a free DVD copy of the *Connecting to Collections Video*, please e-mail a request for the video to imlsinfo@imls.gov. You can also watch the video online at www.imls.gov/collections.

The *Connecting to Collections Video* was created by IMLS, in conjunction with Heritage Preservation. It was produced by Watertown Productions, Inc.



Bookshelf Expert Panelists

Non-living collections:

Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa, Director,
William and Margaret Kilgarlin Center
for Preservation of the Cultural Record,
University of Texas at Austin

Jeanne Drewes, Chief of Binding and
Collections Care, Library of Congress

Cathy Hawks, private conservator
specializing in object conservation

Melissa Heaver, Registrar, Fire
Museum of Maryland, Lutherville, MD

Wendy Jessup, private conservator
specializing in preventive conservation

Debra Hess Norris, Chairperson of
the Art Conservation Department,
University of Delaware

Living collections:

Sylvan Kaufman, Conservation Curator,
Adkins Arboretum, Ridgely, MD

Bill Langbauer, Director of Science
and Conservation, Pittsburgh Zoo

Brandie Smith, Interim Director
of Conservation and Science,
Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Dan Stark, Executive Director,
American Public Gardens Association

The Bookshelf

To help raise the conservation IQ of museums, libraries, and archives, IMLS, in cooperation with the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH), is offering 2,000 free copies of the *IMLS Connecting to Collections Bookshelf*, a core set of books, DVDs, online resources, and an annotated bibliography that are essential for the care of collections.

The Bookshelf is composed of informative, practical resources to help our museums and libraries sustain our nation's heritage, and focuses on collections typically found in museums and in libraries' special collections, with an added selection of texts for zoos, aquaria, public gardens, and nature centers. It addresses such topics as the philosophy and ethics of collecting, collections management and planning, emergency preparedness, and culturally specific conservation issues.

Two panels of experts, convened by Heritage Preservation, made recommendations to IMLS on the contents of the bookshelf. Among the publications selected were *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping* (published by the British National Trust in 2005), the *Field Guide to Emergency Response* (published by Heritage Preservation in 2006), and *Essentials of Conservation Biology* (published by Primack in 2006).

Recipients of the Bookshelf also receive a 44-page User's Guide. Developed by IMLS, in consultation with Heritage Preservation, the Getty Foundation, and AASLH, the guide contains an individual sheet on each text (containing bibliographical and other information), and frequently asked questions. The User's Guide is available in PDF format at www.ims.gov/collections, or you can request a print copy by e-mailing imlsinfo@imls.gov.

IMLS would like to thank the Getty Foundation and the Henry Luce Foundation for their support of the Bookshelf.



The Bookshelf on the Web: A Resource for Everyone

The Guide to Online Resources, developed by Heritage Preservation, is a companion to the *IMLS Connecting to Collections Bookshelf*. The Guide contains links to the most trusted collections care resources on the Web, and can be used to find answers to common conservation and collections management questions. Visit www.ims.gov/collections to access the Guide to Online Resources.

Although the Guide to Online Resources is not intended to be an exhaustive compilation of all Web resources, you are welcome to recommend a link to us at webmaster@imls.gov for possible inclusion.

The Guide to Online Resources is divided into six sections:

- Manage a Collection
- Manage the Collections Environment
- Care for Collections
- Prepare for and Respond to Emergencies
- Increase Support for Collections Care
- Learn More About Collections Care

Public Response to the Bookshelf

"Thank you so much! We just found out yesterday that we have received a grant for new collections management software and two summer interns to start cataloging our collections, so the Bookshelf will help us immensely with that process. We look forward to getting started."

—Katarina M. Spears, Executive Director, Edgar Allan Poe Museum, Richmond, VA.

"Again, thank you so much. For the last year or so, we have been building our collection with a few volunteer workers and board members. This Collection Bookshelf assistance will come in handy to help us maintain our collection with better care and permanence."

—Guy Ball, Treasurer, Santa Ana Historical Preservation Society, Santa Ana, CA.

"We are very delighted that we have been awarded these books. As I write this note, I am awaiting the arrival of a conservator to conduct an assessment of our collection, made possible by an NEH Preservation grant. So many good things are happening for the benefit of our too-long-neglected collection! The Bookshelf will be a valuable asset to our site. Thank you again. We look forward to their receipt."

—Susan J. McCabe, Curator, Henry Ford Estate, Dearborn, MI.

"Today I had a great day – I was finally able to go through the collection of books that we received as the Connecting to Collections Bookshelf – Wow! I was so excited on seeing the selection that I hugged everybody who came near me at the Foundation offices. These books will prove to be invaluable to the Gage Foundation as we move forward in our development as a museum."

—Donna Nortman, Museum Committee Chair, Board of Directors,
The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, Fayetteville, NY.

IMLS Director Anne-Imelda Radice poses with the Bookshelf and its recipients at the Kansas City Public Library. Pictured (left to right): Dr. Radice; Mary Beveridge, Manager, Missouri Valley Special Collections; and R. Crosby Kemper, III, Director, Kansas City Public Library. Photo by John Gladman.



Selected Conservation Grant Opportunities from IMLS

Statewide Planning Grants (Deadline: October 16, 2008)

Statewide Planning Grants, an important component of the *Connecting to Collections* initiative, foster partnerships among organizations in a state, commonwealth, or territory to implement recommendations of the *Heritage Health Index* (see page 2).

The Institute plans to award one grant to each state, commonwealth, and territory. These grants are designed to encourage people and institutions in each state to cooperate on a plan that would benefit all. Project activities should accommodate needs of institutions in each state; they do not need to address all of the four recommendations. Each state should indicate its most pressing needs, report what has already been done, name the organizations and people to be involved in the planning process, and outline specific next steps.

Statewide Planning Grant Project Examples

Alaska Archives Rescue Project

Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums, Juneau, AK

Partners: Alaska Historical Collections, Alaska Historical Society, Alaska State Archives, Alaska State Museum, Hoonah Indian Association, Museums Alaska, Tuzzy Consortium Library, and University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Overview: Grant funds will be used to hire a planning coordinator to collect and database information on collections, collection managers, and available expertise in collections holding entities in Alaska. The coordinator will also develop a volunteer network called the Archives Rescue Corps, which will work toward protecting the state's treasured collections and will plan a series of collections care meetings/workshops.

Georgia's Heritage Health Index

Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA

Partners: Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Emergency Management Agency, Georgia Humanities Council, Georgia Public Library Service, Society of Georgia Archivists, and Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET).

Overview: The purpose of this project is to conduct a statewide survey of cultural institutions to measure the state of collections care and readiness for emergencies in Georgia. The survey and resulting database will address key recommendations of the *Heritage Health Index*. The goal of the planning project is to create the infrastructure for comprehensive identification and ongoing assessment of Georgia's cultural institutions.

The Bank of America/IMLS American Heritage Preservation Program (Deadline: September 15, 2008)

Program Overview: Bank of America is partnering with the Institute to provide grants to small museums, libraries, and archives. The grants will raise awareness and fund preservation of treasures held in small museums, libraries, and archives. Grants will help to preserve specific items, including works of art, artifacts, and historical documents that need conservation. Applicants will build on completed conservation assessments of their collections, to ensure that the Bank of America/IMLS grants are used in accordance with best practices in the field, and underscore the importance of assessment planning.

Grant programs that provide assistance with conservation planning and assessment include the Institute's Conservation Assessment Program and the National Endowment for the Humanities' Preservation Assistance Grants. Some states also offer assessment programs.

For more information on either grant program, visit www.imls.gov/collections/grants or contact Christine Henry, Senior Program Officer, at 202/653-4674 or chenry@imls.gov.

Ways to Answer the Call

Are you ready to answer the call to action? Follow these steps to raise your conservation IQ:

1. Visit www.ims.gov/collections. The Web site links to every component of the initiative and provides access to resources, tips, and news. There you can:
 - watch the *Connecting to Collections Video* online (or request a DVD copy by e-mailing imsinfo@ims.gov);
 - watch the Web casts of the Atlanta forum on “Preserving America’s Diverse Heritage” (all future forums will also be available as Web casts);
 - explore the Guide to Online Resources; and
 - read the User’s Guide to the *Connecting to Collections Bookshelf* in PDF format (you can also request a print copy by e-mailing imsinfo@ims.gov).
2. Request your copy of the **Summit Video Highlights**—available in a two-disc DVD package along with the full text of the conference keynotes—by e-mailing imsinfo@ims.gov.
3. Attend a **National Tour Forum** (see page 4).
4. Apply to any of these conservation grant opportunities:
 - **Statewide Planning Grants** (see page 8)
 - **The Bank of America/IMLS American Heritage Preservation Program** (see page 8)
 - **Conservation Assessment Program**, an IMLS program operated in conjunction with Heritage Preservation, that supports a two-day site visit to your institution by a conservation professional (visit www.heritagepreservation.org/CAP for more details)
 - **Conservation Project Support**, an IMLS program that awards grants to help museums develop and implement a logical, institution-wide approach to caring for their living and material collections (visit www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/conservProject.shtm for more information)
 - **Preservation Assistance Grants**, a program of the National Endowment for the Humanities that helps small and mid-sized institutions improve their ability to preserve and care for their humanities collections (visit www.neh.gov/grants for more information)

If you have any questions or comments about what you have read in this booklet, or about IMLS in general, please e-mail us at imsinfo@ims.gov.



Top: A page of a Dutch Colonial manuscript is conserved by Jennifer Sainato. Courtesy: New York State Archives. © Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts.

Center: The National Park Service’s Museum Emergency Response Team.

Bottom: David Marquis of the Upper Midwest Conservation Association performs conservation work on Guercino’s *Erminia and the Shepherds* for the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

The Institute would like to thank our partners and sponsors of the *Connecting to Collections* initiative:

Heritage Preservation
The National Institute for Conservation

 AASLH
American Association
for State and Local History



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Metal Edge, Inc. Archival Storage Materials

