

## South Dakota Connects to Collections Project

A statewide needs assessment survey of collecting institutions is about to begin. This is a crucial first step to seek funding to provide preservation and conservation assistance to the museums, libraries, archives, and historical societies across South Dakota. Partnering in this project are the Association of South Dakota Museums, South Dakota State Library and the museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society. They will work collaboratively to ensure the anticipated outcomes are achieved.

Planning-grant funds are provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), matched with non-federal funds. The results of the *South Dakota Connects to Collections Project* will show you your preservation needs in the context of those of your peers in a form that can be used as a tool for raising institutional awareness and promoting long-range planning for the care of collections, and fundraising.

### **Background**

IMLS Connecting to Collections: Statewide Planning Grants are used to create conservation plans for collections held in libraries, museums, and archives. The statewide planning grants are an important component of the IMLS initiative, *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action*, a multi-year, multi-faceted national plan to raise public awareness and inspire action on collections care.

This is the second year IMLS has awarded statewide planning grants. IMLS launched the national initiative in response to the 2005 Heritage Health Index report on the dire state of the nation's collections. According to the report by Heritage Preservation, approximately 190 million objects could be lost in just a few short years without immediate attention. The report also found that 65 percent of collecting institutions report damage to collections due to improper storage and 80 percent did not have an emergency plan for their collections or trained staff to carry it out.

The statewide planning grants aim to foster partnerships among organizations in a state, commonwealth, or territory to implement recommendations of the Heritage Health Index. According to the recommendations, organizations that hold collections in the public trust must:

- Provide safe conditions for their collections;
- Develop an emergency plan;
- Assign responsibility for collections care; and
- Marshal public and private support for and raise public awareness about collections care

Over a period of three years, IMLS intends to award a grant to each eligible state, commonwealth, or territory to advance their collective conservation goals guided by the Heritage Health Index recommendations.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).

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In 2009, 23 states will receive \$908,206, matched with \$621,073 of non-federal funds to foster partnerships among organizations in a state, commonwealth, or territory to provide safe conditions for its collections, develop emergency plans, assign responsibility for collections care, and marshal public and private support for collections care. Grantees included eight museums and museum associations, five state libraries, two historical societies, five state agencies that oversee museums and libraries, and three universities and service organizations.

### **South Dakota Connects to Collections Project**

South Dakota has over 130 local historical societies/museums and 123 public libraries. They all hold collections important to the state and its history. These small institutions are eager for information and assistance on how to best care for their objects and documents. The *South Dakota Connects to Collections Project* is the first step in providing this help. The project will develop an overall picture of the state's collections, set up a method for sharing expertise and resources to care for them, and plan for emergency and disaster training. Collections data from on-site and electronic surveys would be compiled into a useable database for future reference, planning, and fundraising.

The first step in achieving these goals is to get a unified, inclusive assessment of the collections throughout the state. The grant funds would be used to conduct a statewide needs assessment survey of collecting institutions and compile the data into a useable database. Electronic surveys will be used in the project, but a grant-funded employee doing on-site interviews and collection assessment will do the bulk of the work. The on-site visits are crucial because many of the state's collecting institutions lack the electronic links and the technical assessment skills to provide meaningful answers to an electronic survey.

Once the surveys are completed, the information will be compiled into a database and a final report outlining significant findings and appropriate steps for future action will be generated. The report will be disseminated through the communications systems of the Association of South Dakota Museums and the South Dakota Library Association as well as being sent directly to all participating institutions. A series of meetings will present the final report to the public and answer questions. A public brochure highlighting the salient facts from the final report will be distributed.

The project will give surveyed institutions better knowledge of their holdings and how their objects and documents fit into the overall collections picture within the state. Members of the planning group intend to develop and offer training in collections care and preservation as dictated by the needs revealed through the surveys.

One of the most important outcomes for the project will be to increase awareness of the citizens of South Dakota about the historical treasures held by their local institutions and inspire them to offer increased financial support for their care. The history of the state evident in its material objects and archival documents cannot be replaced. The *South Dakota Connects to Collections Project* will ensure the opportunity that those objects and documents are preserved for future generations.

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### **Expectations you can use:**

- The survey results will be used extensively in the years ahead as administrators, policy makers, government agencies, and private funding sources make decisions that affect the preservation of collections.
- The *South Dakota Connects to Collections Project* will assess collections in all media, in all formats, in all types of institutions. We need your help to ensure that institutions of your type are accurately represented in the final results.
- The questionnaire is intended to be a thorough self-assessment, helping you gather information that will be useful for long-range planning and funding requests.

The data you provide will communicate the scope and nature of the preservation needs of collections statewide and will guide the efforts of decision-makers and funders to address those needs. The results of the *South Dakota Connects to Collections Project* will show you your preservation needs in the context of those of your peers in a form that can be used as a tool for raising institutional awareness and promoting long-range planning for the care of collections, and fundraising.

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