



OHIO

Connecting to Collections

A Statewide Preservation Initiative

In October 2008, the State Library of Ohio and the Ohio Historical Society submitted a Connecting to Collections Planning Grant application to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



The grant was awarded in February 2009. Representatives of LYRASIS, the Intermuseum Conservation Association, the Ohio Museums Association, and the Ohio Local History Alliance later joined this statewide partnership. Together, these institutions worked for two years to assess current preservation conditions in the state and craft the *Preservation of Ohio's Heritage: A Strategic Initiative*, a statement of findings and a call for future action.

Assessment activities included an on-line survey, targeted telephone interviews, a statewide Summit and five regional meetings held around Ohio in mid-2010. All of the state's 88 counties responded to either the electronic or telephone surveys, resulting in one of the highest response rates in the entire national Connecting to Collections effort.

We can and must take action to preserve our common cultural heritage. Ohio's citizens must have a sense of their past in order to build a stronger future.

70% of survey respondents feel that half or less of their collections are stored adequately.

About 30% of all respondents have had some type of emergency or disaster in their facilities.

Almost half of respondents do not have a disaster plan in place.

Fewer than one third of respondents have submitted a grant application to support collections care activities within the past five years.

About 80% of institutions who have anyone responsible for preservation on staff say that individual has no formal training in the subject.

Ohio's history is at risk right now.



Photos show the results of restoration on Portrait of Miss Mansell. Courtesy of Kent Museum of Art.

The findings of the various surveys and meetings held around the state demonstrate clear areas of common concern, including:

- Lack of proper storage facilities
- Lack of long-term preservation plans or policies
- Environmental issues including temperature & relative humidity fluctuations, lack of monitoring and control equipment, and inappropriate lighting
- Lack of funds for preservation supplies, staff, and activities
- Lack of staff or staff time for preservation activities
- Need for digitization of collection items

Participating institutions included public libraries, academic libraries (college and university), archives, museums, historical societies, historic houses and sites, and local government entities.

The scope of Ohio's need can only be estimated, but is certainly enormous.

Survey estimates indicate that Ohio's responding collecting institutions hold 26 million books/bound volumes, 11 million photographs, 5 million digital items in on-line collections, 3 million archaeological items, 2 million moving image items, and 1.2 million recorded sound items. The volume of materials becomes even more staggering when one takes into account that these numbers represent the holdings of only approximately 40% of Ohio's total number of collecting institutions.

There are challenges ahead, but Ohio's common cultural heritage can be preserved.

The infrastructure for cooperation and partnership between Ohio's preservation organizations and collecting institutions is in place. Ohio can collaboratively develop a programmatic approach to help all types and sizes of cultural heritage institutions deal with their preservation concerns. The large and rich cultural collections of the state deserve nothing less.

In the months and years ahead, the project partners propose to offer an array of support services, including:

- A searchable directory of Ohio's collecting institutions free of charge online
- Model policies and procedures free of charge online
- Grant identification and preparation assistance
- Disaster preparedness assistance
- On-site general and collection-specific surveys
- Workshops and training opportunities across the state
- Model preservation policies and procedures free of charge online



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