



## **Preserve America Summit Implementation** **Progress Report**

***Conserve cultural collections by pursuing cost-effective collaboration between the historic preservation community and the broader cultural heritage community, including support for the Institute of Museum and Library Services' "Connecting to Collections" initiative.***

**Lead Agency/Agencies:** Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), with support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).

**Summit Recommendation Progress:** Since the launch of the *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action* in November 2006, IMLS can report significant progress in all areas of the initiative. The goal of this national initiative is to raise public awareness of the importance of caring for the collections held by the nation's small and medium-sized museums and libraries, and to provide resources to these institutions so they may better care for their collections. The initiative stems from the findings and recommendations of the IMLS-funded report, the *Heritage Health Index* (HHI), published in December 2005. This comprehensive survey of the condition and preservation needs of American collections ended with the recommendation for a public/private partnership to provide immediate attention to caring for the public trust contained in the collections of American museums, libraries, and archives.

### **Connecting to Collections National Meetings**

The kickoff event was the **National Conservation Summit** held June 27-28, 2007 in Washington, DC. Approximately 300 representatives of small and medium-sized museums, libraries, and archives; foundations and funding agencies; and civic and other public officials attended the Summit. Every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were represented by two museums and two libraries (or archives), with these participants receiving travel stipends. The Summit explored strategies for preserving endangered collections, harnessing new technologies, engaging the public in conservation efforts, and identifying funding resources. Funding for the Summit was provided by the NEA, the NEH, the PCAH, the Henry Luce Foundation, and Metal Edge, Inc. Heritage Preservation served as the cooperating partner.

IMLS has convened two of four **National Tour** forums that explore specialized collections care issues: Atlanta (January 2008 – *Preserving America's Diverse Collections*) and Denver (June 2008 – *Collaboration in the Digital Age*). A significant percentage of attendees were provided with travel stipends. Planning is underway for the final two forums in San Diego (February 2009 – *It's Alive! From Petals to Primates: Preservation Challenges of Living Collections*) and Buffalo (June 2009 – *Training in Collections Care*). Support for the forums has been provided by the NEA, the NEH, the PCAH, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, UPS, the Berger Educational Trust, the Chanticleer Foundation, the Legler Benbough Foundation, and the Walt Disney Company Foundation. The following institutions have generously donated their facilities as hosting venues: the High Museum of Art, the Denver Art Museum, the Denver Public Library, the Colorado Historical Society, the San Diego Zoological Society, the University of San Diego, the Buffalo State College Art Conservation Department, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo.

Forum evaluations thus far indicate that 95% of the attendees felt the forum met or exceeded their expectations. After the initiative's conclusion, representatives from more than 1,200 small and mid-sized museums, libraries, and archives will have engaged in discussions with professionals in the field via the initiative's five national meetings (the Summit and the National Tour) and received both practical and inspirational information regarding the care of their collections. The agency feels these professionals will become ambassadors for collections care in their communities, helping to raise the overall "conservation IQ" of our nation's collecting institutions.

The *Connecting to Collections* initiative will bring its message of collections care and conservation awareness to a global audience in fall 2009 through a partnership with the **Salzburg Global Seminar** to host *Connecting to the World's Collections: Making the Case for the Conservation and Preservation of Our Cultural Heritage* (working title) in Salzburg, Austria. This seminar will convene an international group of leaders in conservation and preservation who work with museums and libraries, representatives of conservation training institutions and associations, as well as cultural policy makers, to engage in an open exchange of views on optimizing conservation and collections care.

### **Connecting to Collections Resources and Grant Opportunities**

IMLS and its cooperating partner AASLH have awarded two of three rounds of the *Connecting to Collections Bookshelf*, a compendium of conservation and collections care books, DVDs, and other resources intended for use by small and medium-sized museums, archives, and libraries with special collections. To date, 1,841 of a total of 3,000 Bookshelves have been awarded to institutions in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with 405 of the 435 Congressional districts reached. IMLS has received hundreds of handwritten letters and email messages from grateful recipients, who are often featured in their local press because of the award. The Bookshelf has been generously supported by the Henry Luce Foundation, the Getty Foundation, and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. The third and final application period opened on January 5, 2009, and will close on March 9, 2009; for this round, state libraries and state museum associations are eligible to apply in addition to individual cultural heritage institutions. In January 2009, the first recipients of the Bookshelf will complete an evaluation regarding the use and effectiveness of the resources.

In 2007, IMLS awarded 19 *Connecting to Collections Statewide Planning Grants*, which enable a state, commonwealth, or territory to advance their collective conservation goals guided by the recommendations of the *Heritage Health Index* report. A second deadline was held in October 2008 and award announcements will be in February 2009. The agency plans to fund a limited number of implementation grants in FY2010.

Another grant opportunity of the initiative is the **American Heritage Preservation Grants**, a special initiative of the IMLS Conservation Project Support Program in partnership with the Bank of America Foundation. Small museums, libraries, and archives are eligible to apply for funding to help preserve specific items, including works of art, artifacts, and historical documents that have special resonance in their communities. The first of three annual deadlines was held on September 15, 2008, with awards announced in late January 2009.

In order to broaden the reach of the interagency collaboration of this effort, presentations have been made at national meetings, including the Federal Historic Preservation Officers (FHPO) meeting, and the annual meetings of the American Library Association (ALA), American Association of Museums (AAM), National Trust for Historic Preservation, Heritage Preservation, American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, and the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH).

**Next Actions:** Planning is nearly complete for the February 2009 National Tour forum in San Diego, CA, and planning is underway for the June 2009 forum in Buffalo, NY and the Salzburg Global Seminar in October. The final round of Bookshelf awards will be announced in June 2009. The next American Heritage Preservation Grants deadline will be in September 2009. *Connecting to Collections* continues to grow and build on the core work of the agency, but has presented an opportunity to focus specifically on providing resources to build capacity at smaller institutions for collections care. In the near future, the agency will commence an initiative-wide evaluation to capture the overall impacts and outcomes of the various programs.

**Important Links/Initiative Online Resources:**

The comprehensive *Connecting to Collections* website is available at: [www.ims.gov/collections](http://www.ims.gov/collections), and hosts an overview of the entire initiative, as well as the following free resources: webcast proceedings of each National Tour forum, a film on the primary messages of the initiative, the *Guide to Online Resources*, the *Bookshelf User's Guide*, and contact information to request the DVD of Summit highlights and printed copies of keynotes.

**Comments or Questions?** Please send comments or questions to [preserveamerica@achp.gov](mailto:preserveamerica@achp.gov)

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