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
1. 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*