Louisiana
Connecting to Collections
Final Project Report

Submitted by Tom Clareson

September 30, 2011

LYRASIS
1438 West Peachtree Street NW
Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30309
800.999.8558
www.lyrasis.org
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary................................................................................................................................. 1
Introduction ............................................................................................................................................. 2
Statewide Survey Results......................................................................................................................... 2
Key Discussion Points from Workshop Series......................................................................................... 3
Advisory Council Discussion .................................................................................................................. 4
A Statewide Preservation Planning Framework for Louisiana................................................................. 6
Executive Summary

The Louisiana Connecting to Collections Initiative, which began in 2010-11, is part of the national Connecting to Collections program, funded by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The program was designed to help every state and territory determine the preservation needs of their cultural heritage institutions, and develop plans to address the identified needs.

The successful Louisiana Connecting to Collections Statewide Preservation Planning Program included a web-based preservation needs assessment survey, a series of workshops and discussion sessions for cultural heritage staff held throughout the state, and several planning meetings with an Advisory Group composed of preservation and archival professionals from leading cultural heritage institutions in Louisiana.

Among the primary findings of the survey portion of the Louisiana Connecting to Collections project are the need to pursue funding to support collections inventories, establish institutional preservation programs, provide preservation training, create disaster and continuity of operations plans, support digital preservation planning, and evaluate the needs of historic buildings.

During Advisory Group meetings held in the initial 2010-11 grant period, large programmatic ideas such as a statewide preservation education workshop series, assistance for development of preservation policies (including disaster plans), and continuing the culture of collaboration among institutions on preservation projects were central to the group’s discussion. The 2011 workshop series, which included a presentation by project consultant Tom Clareson, Senior Consultant for Digital & Preservation Services at LYRASIS, on environmental controls for keeping cultural collections safe (a main need identified in the survey results) also featured a facilitated discussion session conducted by Clareson to determine further preservation needs of the institutions attending. The needs expressed in the discussion sessions were quite specific: disaster planning activities including development of individual institutional disaster plans and collaborative mutual aid agreements; presentation of model preservation policy documents from Louisiana institutions on a statewide project website, and workshops or conferences on topics such as audiovisual preservation and space planning.

The result of these project activities is a statewide preservation planning framework which addresses important issues for the continued and improved preservation of Louisiana’s rich cultural heritage collections. The plan addresses topics including:

- Building on existing preservation activities in the state
- Strengthening ties with existing cultural heritage organizations in Louisiana
- Inventorying collection materials
- Establishing institutional preservation budgets and funding streams
- Preservation education and information programs
- More widely-available institutional preservation needs assessment surveys
- Multiple disaster planning and response activities
- Addressing collection storage issues
- Additional work on environmental controls for cultural heritage repositories
- Developing plans to address digital preservation issues
- Specifically-focused programs on the preservation of historic structures and donated collections within the state.
Introduction

The Louisiana Connecting to Collections Statewide Preservation Planning project is part of the national Connecting to Collections Initiative, sponsored by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services. The national program is an effort to have each U.S. State and Territory learn about their preservation needs and develop plans to address them, with a special focus on disaster planning, appropriate storage, staff responsibility for preservation, and public and private support for preservation activities. Activities within each Connecting to Collections state program are to include the spectrum of cultural heritage organizations, such as libraries, museums, historical societies, and archives.

Louisiana’s project in 2010-11 has been, by design, very outwardly-focused. Project activities allowed cultural organizations many opportunities to gain information on preservation needs. Components of the Louisiana initiative included a statewide web-based survey project; a workshop series with time allowed for focused discussion on preservation planning; and several lengthy, input-oriented meetings of the project’s Task Force/Advisory Group.

This report and plan covers the information gained through all of the project phases, and suggests a Statewide Plan framework to move preservation activity forward in the future.

Statewide Survey Results

The Louisiana Connecting to Collections Project Task Force, composed of professionals from across the cultural heritage spectrum, set the cornerstone for the statewide project by first working to identify as many cultural institutions across the state as possible, and then recruiting those institutions to take part in the project. From the Task Force’s efforts, 348 institutions were identified, and 83 responded to the survey, for a response rate of nearly 24%. A positive note is that eighteen institution types responded to the survey (the largest number of types in the project consultant’s experience with statewide surveys), with academic libraries, history museums, public libraries, and government archives as the largest respondent groups, but organizations such as archaeological repositories, a community newspaper, and a public television station also responding.

Institutions were asked about collection material formats in Louisiana. Many of the responding institutions did not know the specific quantities of some formats of materials they held, which spotlights the need for further processing, inventory, and assessment work in the state.

Institutions participating in the survey exhibited wide variance in their overall annual operating budget levels. The survey also looked at the sources of preservation/conservation funding at responding organizations. Money from institutions’ own budgets was far and away the leading preservation funding source. Other preservation financial resources included donor funding, foundation or corporate grants, state and federal grants and institutional use or license fees. Nine institutions indicated no source of preservation/conservation funding. A large number of organizations had applied for grants; this shows a much higher willingness among Louisiana institutions than those in many other states to apply for supplemental preservation funding.

A variety of scenarios are being used to accomplish preservation work in Louisiana institutions. In most organizations, various staff members are assigned conservation/preservation duties as needed. However, a large group said no staff person has preservation and conservation responsibilities.

Participants were asked to rate the usefulness of several methods for obtaining preservation information for staff. Only one category, “short-term training workshops (one or two-day sessions)” was rated by a majority of
respondents as being very useful. In planning for future training, several topics received a large number of “urgent need” votes, including collections conservation, preservation advocacy, digitization/imaging, and preservation of born digital files.

Although many institutions stated that they had completed a variety of preservation actions to prolong the life of their collections, a majority of organizations have not developed long-range preservation plans, and have not completed preservation surveys of their collections.

Many institutions had control of potentially-damaging environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and light, and most organizations felt their storage spaces were adequate as well. Information from the survey respondents showed that fire protection, security systems, and disaster planning practices were implemented in many institutions, which is good because of the high number of recent hurricane, water, and other types of disasters which have struck Louisiana cultural heritage institutions.

Organizations showed a good deal of interest and experience in digitization, but there is a great need for more digital preservation policy development and practice at institutions within the state. Finally, Louisiana institutions are already quite active in collaborative preservation activities, but survey results and comments indicated an even greater interest in further cooperative preservation initiatives.

The primary recommendations from the survey portion of the Louisiana Connecting to Collections project are that there is strong need to pursue funding to support collections inventories, establish institutional preservation programs, provide preservation training, create disaster and continuity of operations plans, support digital preservation planning, and evaluate the needs of historic buildings.

**Key Discussion Points from Workshop Series**

The second part of Louisiana’s Connecting to Collections program was a series of workshops, held in May 2011, to help cultural heritage institutions learn how to survey their buildings and collections, evaluate existing preservation policies in order to be able to determine areas for action, and identify possible sources of funding for conservation/preservation work.

To reach the greatest number of Louisiana cultural heritage institutions, the Connecting to Collections Statewide Advisory Group arranged for four regional workshops on “Improving Your Environment and Your Preservation Program,” to be held during the week of May 23-27, 2011. More than 70 individuals representing a wide variety of collecting organizations attended the regional Connecting to Collections Statewide workshop sessions; some of these participants had not responded to the Statewide survey, so an even wider knowledge of the state’s preservation needs was gained through interaction at the classes.

Advisory Group representatives welcomed the attendees to each session. Tom Clareson, project consultant from LYRASIS, provided an introduction to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Connecting to Collections statewide planning initiative, then gave a summary of the current environment of collection care and needs among collecting organizations based on the Louisiana Connecting to Collections Statewide Preservation Planning Survey.

A presentation by Clareson on environmental controls for keeping cultural collections safe (a main need identified in the survey results) included a facilitated discussion session conducted by Clareson to determine further preservation needs of the institutions attending.

Each session presented a unique set of comments and views reflective of that community. Hearing all of these unique comments reinforced the importance of thinking globally and acting locally. There are a number of trends that were identified through the regional workshops which can be incorporated into the statewide program.
• Promotion of disaster planning-related activities such as Fire Marshall visits, checking roof condition, practice of existing disaster plans, and development of plans for institutions without them should be key topics in future preservation activities within the state.
• Using the project website to mount model preservation policy and practice documents, which other institutions could use as templates for their own policies, was also strongly suggested.
• In most of the workshop locations, one or more institutions owned the IMLS Connecting to Collections Bookshelf. Sharing of these resource materials in regions throughout the state was a concept of interest to many organizations.
• Mutual aid agreements for disaster planning, mitigation, and recovery were mentioned throughout the workshop series. Collaborative disaster planning ideas, including a potential statewide disaster vendor contract, should also be explored.
• Future workshops in which there was strong interest include Audiovisual Material Preservation and Space Planning; regional or statewide offerings on these topics should be included in any statewide preservation curriculum which is developed.

**Advisory Council Discussion**

The Louisiana Connecting to Collections Project Task Force/Advisory Group held a number of telephone conference calls during the life of the project. One of the most important meetings of this group, however, took place on June 23, 2011, when advisory group members met in-person in New Orleans in conjunction with the American Library Association Annual Conference to hear a detailed report on the results of the survey, review key points from the discussions held during the workshop series, and to discuss potential next steps for the Louisiana Connecting to Collections initiative.

In addition to discussing a variety of funding sources to help support future statewide preservation program implementation activities, the group focused on detailed discussion of those potential activities.

• A statewide preservation workshop series, held in various regions of the state, could include classes on:
  - Preservation Management Policies
  - Disaster Preparedness
  - Disaster Recovery
  - Care and Handling of Collection Materials
  - Reformatting, including digitization, microfilm care, and preservation photocopying
  - Other top classes identified in the survey could be added to this list

An important point from the survey and anecdotal evidence from the Advisory Group is that live training is preferred over distance education by a majority of staff and volunteers at Louisiana cultural heritage organizations. However, because distance education could allow users to save travel costs and time, it was suggested that some courses be offered online to determine demand/uptake. In addition to web-based training, other suggestions were to mount learning modules on YouTube, and to work with Louisiana Public Broadcasting, an organization which has displayed interest in preservation issues, to provide awareness-raising and educational information on preservation and conservation topics.

• Some educational topics might not draw large crowds in every region, but when offered once as a statewide preservation conference, could reach a large audience of cultural heritage staff focused on a specific concern. Topics suggested to be presented in this manner include:
  - Audiovisual Preservation and Reformatting
  - Digital Preservation
  - Environmental Monitoring
  - Dealing with Space Shortages and Storage Concerns
An important observation which makes this type of program possible is that there are existing “travelling programs” or model presentations which national organizations and associations have developed and could be brought to Louisiana, so that preservation planners in the state would not have to develop programs on these relatively complex problems from scratch.

In addition to offering educational information on digital preservation, the Advisory Group asked for assistance in helping cultural institutions in the state develop an actual statewide digital preservation project for institutions to use in the storage, maintenance, and long-term access to their digital collections.

- A Preservation Policy Development Initiative within Louisiana could include a variety of phases:
  - A program of Preservation Needs Assessment Site Surveys available to individual institutions on an application basis.
  - Disaster Plan development and review assistance through plan-writing workshops, coaching and mentoring by institutions which already have established/tested plans.
  - Information, education, and development/review assistance on institutional long-range preservation plans.
  - Highlighting model preservation-related policies (ranging from Collection Development Policies and Disaster Plans to Exhibit Policies and digitization-related workflows and documents) from Louisiana-based institutions on a project website.
  - Making the project website a location with information on State, Foundation, and National/Federal grants, including deadlines, how to apply, successful Louisiana applications, and other helpful information.

- Disaster Planning assistance, including:
  - Helping those institutions without plans to develop them, using available tools such as the Council of State Archivists’ PREP plan, the Minnesota Historical Society Disaster Plan, and other resources.
  - Targeted workshops on preparation for specific types of disasters which occur with regularity in Louisiana, including hurricanes, floods, mold, and pests.
  - Hands-on workshop series on recovery methods, including sessions focused on materials by type. Classes could include a wet-book packout exercise; burned material recovery, and recovery of material by formats (e.g. audiovisual materials, photographs, or archival records).
  - Lists of disaster recovery vendors, disaster recovery supply organizations, and Louisiana cultural heritage staff with disaster response experience were all suggested. Building from that basic set of information, the development of a shared cache of disaster recovery supplies for the state, or a number of sub-state regions, was also suggested.

- Some additional areas of interest and need which were discovered in the survey results and comments and discussed in further detail among the Advisory Group include:
  - Having a place to contact for preservation information. The group discussed whether this needed to be a person or a multi-person organization, and whether the resource had to be Louisiana-based or could be from a regional service provider.
  - Adding to Louisiana’s good record of collaborative grant projects on preservation, conservation, and digitization. Collaborative exhibitions and audiovisual preservation projects were also of high interest.
  - Development of substate/regional networks for mutual disaster response assistance.
  - A statewide pre-contract with a disaster vendor company, such as Georgia currently has.
  - A project to assist institutions in inventorying their collections. Institutions could either volunteer to work on this type of project under the guidance of a mentor or consultant, or be selected via an application process.
  - Selection and utilization of digital preservation policies and storage solutions, beginning by making awareness-raising workshops and resource documents available.
Assistance in development of institutional preservation program budgets, and raising awareness of preservation funding sources through activities such as workshops, newsletter articles, web postings, and e-mails.

A strong interest in methods to address condition and maintenance of historic buildings was expressed by about 1/3 of the survey respondents.

Two important members of the Advisory Group were not able to attend the June 23 meeting. In follow-up meetings and correspondence with these key contributors, additional information to consider for any future implementation activities was suggested:

- Increasing contact with the smaller cultural heritage institutions in the state, and making sure programmatic offerings are of benefit to these smaller-staffed, smaller-budget, and often rural organizations is an important aspect of any future preservation activity within the state.
- Reaching out especially to Clerk of Courts offices was a strong suggestion from many on the Advisory Group. These organizations have a wealth of historical information under their care, and have historically expressed a need for help with preservation of their materials. Working closely with the statewide clerk’s association on program planning and delivery must be a hallmark of future activity, as well.

A Statewide Preservation Planning Framework for Louisiana

The outward focus and excellent input gained through the Louisiana Connecting to Collections Statewide Preservation Planning Project led to the development of a framework for future preservation activity within the state. The recommended program components below are drawn from the survey results, as well as the workshop and Advisory Group discussions.

- **Build on Existing Preservation Activities:** The Archival Training Collaborative project, an archival education initiative between Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi, has been a success in providing information about a variety of archival and preservation issues to cultural heritage organizations. One of the best components of this program is the training of trainers, who then offer educational opportunities regionally. Continuing with this model of train-the-trainer, and even incorporating some Connecting to Collections-identified workshop topics into the continuing ATC project can help strengthen both initiatives. Additionally, utilizing projects such as the LYRASIS Regional Emergency Response Network effort, a program to increase preservation knowledge and skills while creating local and regional preservation and emergency networks, will help to build the capacity of cultural heritage organizations to respond to future natural and man-made disasters. RERN Program Planning for Louisiana began in August, 2011, with implementation of the workshop series to commence in the first quarter of 2012.

- **Strengthen Ties with Existing Organizations:** The Connecting to Collections Planning Grant program was executed by a strong group of preservation leaders from a wide variety of cultural heritage institution types across the State. Developing stronger ties with the Louisiana State Library, Louisiana State Archives, and associations/organizations such as LOUIS (The Louisiana Library Network, providing automation services and electronic resources to libraries, museums, and archives), and LAMA (the Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts Association), who can help to disseminate information to an even wider spectrum of organizations, will aid in any future implementation efforts.

- **Inventory Collection Materials:** A collection inventory is needed as a foundation on which other preservation practices can be built. It has been said many times that an organization cannot plan for the preservation of its collection if it doesn’t know what it has, and this is true for Louisiana institutions. Implementing some basic and inexpensive inventorying methods, as has been done in other states such as Delaware as part of their Connecting to Collections project, could be very helpful to Louisiana institutions. The sharing of information between institutions on methods to complete inventories is also suggested.

- **Preservation budgeting and funding:** Another basic activity in establishing institutional preservation programs is to build preservation budgets. While some organizations in the state had a reasonable level of funding directed toward preservation activities, there is a need for many institutions to further
build these budgets. It is good to see the pursuit of preservation grants in Louisiana at a level higher than in many other states, but additional work in this area can be accomplished through offering workshops and assistance in writing preservation grants, developing preservation budgets, and considering long-term sustainability issues for preservation programs. The need for continued and expanded preservation funding in the state looms large. Making institutions more aware of local (through foundations, corporations, etc.), state, regional, and national preservation funding resources, and working with institutions to write fundable grants can help organizations address many of the basic preservation needs expressed throughout this report.

- **Preservation Education:** While there has been a good record of preservation training in Louisiana, institutions responding to this survey showed a strong interest in even more preservation training opportunities. Training in preservation management and other areas could help to eradicate the lack of comprehensive preservation plans in Louisiana’s cultural heritage institutions. Survey respondents indicated that they would like the Louisiana State Library to be funded at an adequate level which would allow them to resume staff training such as book repair workshops. While survey results indicated that live training was favored by most institutions, introducing some preservation topics via distance education (web-based, on YouTube, or even with the assistance of Louisiana Public Broadcasting) is suggested. A variety of preservation training topics to be delivered in workshop or conference format have been identified throughout this report.

- **Preservation Information:** Providing a web portal for preservation information in Louisiana was seen as an important step in further development of a statewide preservation program. Utilizing the website of an existing organization such as LAMA could speed the process of making this information available. Workshop participants and Advisory Group members especially liked the idea of providing model preservation policies from Louisiana cultural heritage institutions on the website to allow other organizations to utilize excellent local policy examples in the development of their own policies.

- **Preservation Needs Assessment Surveys:** An important method to assist in development of long-range preservation plans is to make preservation surveys more widely available. These reviews of building condition, collection condition, and preservation policies can be the foundation of an institution’s long-range preservation program. Securing funding to offer these surveys to institutions who can express need through an application or request process is an important component of improving preservation conditions statewide.

- **Disaster Planning and Response:** There is a proven need for disaster planning in the state of Louisiana due to the recent high level of collection-damaging disasters. Many organizations have these plans, but others are still in need of basic disaster preparedness and recovery policies. While there were many disaster planning workshops held in the state after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and sample disaster plans were posted online, survey results and discussions with workshop attendees and Advisory Group members show that it may be time to schedule additional workshops and update posted planning documents. A basis for this plan is the excellent level of implementation of fire safety equipment and training, and the good existing relationships with emergency first responders. Further development of Continuity of Operations Plans among cultural heritage institutions can help organizations regain the ability to serve their diverse audiences more quickly after a disaster occurs. Survey respondents specifically remarked that they would like to have a statewide policy or plan of action for pre-contracting with disaster relief companies. Building a program of education, plan/policy development, information on suppliers and responders, shared disaster recovery supplies, and potentially mutual aid agreements should be pursued.

- **Collection Storage Issues:** While storage conditions for cultural heritage collections are ranked better by Louisiana institutions than those in many states, survey respondents overall considered this the “biggest preservation concern” for their institutions when asked to name their top three preservation problems. A way to “blanket” the state with helpful information on adequate preservation storage is to hold regional or statewide presentations or workshops at organizations which have good storage conditions, so others can see storage best practices in action.

- **Additional Work on Environmental Control:** While the workshop series offered during the Louisiana Connecting to Collections Planning Grant phase focused on environmental issues, attendees and Advisory Group members expressed a need for “focused” workshops on specific environmental issues such as pest and mold control. The concept of developing and loaning a kit of environmental monitoring equipment to institutions, so they could learn how to monitor and begin tracking conditions in their institutions, also held high appeal; basing such a program on the successful Texas Association
of Museums or Delaware Collections Stewardship Project equipment loan program could allow for a relatively quick implementation for this initiative.

- **Digital Preservation Issues and Plans:** The “storage” and maintenance of digital collections once they are acquired or created is a cause for concern as well in Louisiana. The level of digital collection creation in the state is relatively high, but there needs to be more of a concentration on regular backups of digital collections, and going beyond backups to establishment of actual digital preservation policies, procedures, and practices. Additionally, some survey respondents noted that they would like to see a statewide consortium/cooperative lab for digitizing video and possibly audio materials.

- **Preservation of Historic Structures:** An area of need not widely addressed in the survey results, but which still warrants attention, is the condition and maintenance of historic buildings within the state. The survey identified a large number of collecting repositories with responsibility for historic buildings; while not a specific focus of this survey, this is a potential topic for further research, follow up, and action.

- **Preservation of Donated Collections:** Addressing the need for knowledge on how to preserve currently-held and soon-to-be-donated collections is an important activity which can be addressed in part by making preservation surveys more widely available, and by sharing further information about preservation practices (such as Deeds of Gift; incoming collection isolation, and other procedures) among institutions.