Idaho

Connecting to Collections

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The Idaho Connecting to Collections statewide preservation planning project, which included an online survey and thirteen site visits, took place between late August and November, 2010. The web survey had a 23% response rate, with 101 of Idaho’s 441 identified cultural heritage organizations responding to the survey. Responses were particularly strong from the public library and historical museum communities.

The survey identified a wide variety of materials types held by Idaho institutions, and this will allow future statewide preservation programming to concentrate on dealing with materials held by a “critical mass” of institutions as an initial priority.

Further development of environmental monitoring programs at cultural institutions, which monitor forces such as temperature, humidity, light, and air quality and their effects on collections, must be planned. Additional development of fire safety and security programs, policies, and equipment should also be a high priority in future planning.

Idaho compared well to many other states surveyed in the nationwide Connecting to Collections program as many institutions thought the storage space in their facilities was of the size and condition to safely store their collections – a positive result in an area where many states had extremely negative findings.

An area for improvement, however, (and this is a concern nationwide) is development of preservation plans and policies for collecting institutions. Overall preservation plans for the institutions, preservation needs assessment site surveys, disaster plans, and even plans to develop or share staff for preservation activities are a key priority for Idaho to address in the future. Workshops and other educational offerings to write and practice disaster plans were a top need cited by the survey respondents.

Idaho institutions have done very well in securing state grants for preservation activities. Through grantwriting/fundraising/advocacy workshops and information, it is hoped that the state can also take full advantage of national funding programs for preservation as well. In fact, workshops and grants were the two top-requested services from the survey respondents.

To assist Idaho cultural heritage institutions in learning first how to digitize their collections, and then preserve the digital items, a program of education and information must be developed. This initiative could be central in other future grant initiatives.

The survey also asked about the historical buildings which cultural heritage organizations must preserve and maintain. About one-third of the survey respondents were responsible for these types of buildings; a focused program to help these institutions also needs to be developed.

From the site visits, the need for education and further preservation-focused staffing was observed. The visits also helped the project consultants identify two “model” institutions with excellent preservation policies and practices, which could be utilized as training sites, and whose staff should be invited to present on their preservation programs whenever possible. Finally, a one-day workshop on November 19, 2010 covered key findings from the online survey, site survey, and generated discussion on preservation management policies and best practices. A brief recap of the workshop is included in this report. The final section of the report is a proposed “Statewide Action Plan for Preservation in Idaho,” suggesting a path forward after consideration of all of the data gathered during the project.
Background

The Idaho Connecting to Collections statewide preservation planning project, funded by a grant from the national Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) surveyed the preservation condition of the state’s cultural heritage collections through an online survey instrument and a series of brief onsite preservation needs assessment survey visits.

Launched in late August, 2010, the online survey was available for two months, and received 101 responses from a possible respondent “universe” of 441 organizations, for a 23% response rate. Responses were received from all but seven of Idaho’s 44 counties, meaning the geographic distribution of the survey was quite widespread.

A variety of institution types participated in the survey, as well. Public libraries (48 responses) were the leading type by far, but history museums (18), municipal public records repositories (9), academic libraries (6) and special libraries (5) also had multiple responses when “other” responses were analyzed. In addition, archives (4), county public records repositories (4), historical societies, historic houses/sites, natural history museums, and nature centers/arboretum/botanical gardens (1 response each) also participated in the survey. The responding organizations also had the opportunity to indicate what additional functions or services they provide; the most popular secondary activities were archives (30 institutions) and history museums (15).

Most of the institutions had year-around public hours, but 18 reported summer hours only. When the institutions’ governance structure was requested, there was an interesting split between municipal (27), non-profit/non-governmental organizations (27), county-based organizations (16), and taxing districts (9) as the leading types.

The responding organizations held membership in a variety of associations and organization. On a statewide basis, 34 respondents were members of the Idaho Library Association, and 24 participate in the Idaho Association of Museums. Nationally, 20 were American Library Association members, and eight are part of AASLH, the American Association for State and Local History. The most popular regional group among respondents was the Pacific Northwest Library Association. In looking at potential future sponsors for workshops and presentations on preservation-related topics, these organizations will be primary groups to target.

Collections Inventory

A set of “Collections Inventory” questions asked respondents to indicate the material types which are a permanent part of their holdings, and for which they had preservation responsibility. While preservation of all unique and permanent collections materials at Idaho cultural heritage institutions is an important goal, findings from the question indicate formats where Idaho organizations hold a “critical mass” of materials, and where preservation information, education, and assistance might best be targeted. Indicated below are the materials types held by the most institutions, and number of responding organizations holding these collections.

- Books/monographs: 74 institutions
- Bound manuscript material (ledger books, minute books, scrapbooks): 60
- Maps: 47
- Archival records and manuscripts: 39
Groups of fewer than 20 organizations, the majority of them museums, also listed holdings in formats such as transportation vehicles, ethnographic objects, archaeological collections, and natural science specimens. Digital photo prints were also mentioned as a new holdings category at multiple institutions.

**Collections Storage Conditions**

A large majority of respondents said their collections were stored in buildings or spaces owned by their institutions (86 or 90%). Thirteen indicated collections were stored at buildings/spaces that were rented or leased by their institutions, and ten had collections stored outdoors.

Inside their facilities, temperature was the environmental factor most often controlled in some, but not all areas (46 respondents or 50%) or in all areas (37 or 40%). This was especially true in public libraries. Light levels were controlled in some areas by 45, or 52% of those polled, and in all areas by 28 organizations or 32% who answered this question. Humidity levels were controlled in no areas at 31 or 37% of respondents, and air quality was not controlled by 37 or 44%. Public libraries showed little control of the latter two environmental forces.

However, a positive sign was that a majority of the responding institutions (38 or 39%) felt that 76-100% of their collection is stored in areas they consider to be adequate (excluding any environmental concerns), with safe access to collections, on appropriate storage furniture, and in a large enough space to accommodate current collections. In opposition, only 9 organizations (mostly public libraries and municipal records organizations) felt that none of their collections were stored well, and 12 thought only 1-25% were stored safely.
Storage was again the focus when organizations were asked how much additional space they would need, at their present rate of growth, over the next ten years to adequately store their collections. Thirty-one organizations said 25% more space was needed; 23 said 50% more space was needed, and, surprisingly, 16 institutions said no additional space was needed. These figures compare favorably to many other states, where storage space shortages and storage conditions were found to be dire.

In monitoring the environmental conditions inside their institutions, 38 organizations are using thermometers or temperature gauges, 23 are using pest traps (history museums were the leaders in both of these categories), and, alarmingly, 45 institutions were not utilizing any types of environmental monitoring equipment. Because of the important, large-scale positive effect a good, stable environment can provide for collections, environmental monitoring information and education should be made widely available in Idaho to help improve conditions and monitoring practices.

Security practices and systems in greatest use include staff observation (in 68 institutions), secure doors and locks in 65 organizations, and control of access to collections in 51. Again, history museums were the leading implementers of these systems and practices. Fire safety systems in greatest use were fire extinguishers (in 87 institutions, and about 2/3 of the respondents indicated that staff had been trained in their use), smoke detectors (67), and fire alarms (57). Fire detection was better implemented than suppression, as, in addition to the basic safety afforded by extinguishers, 22 institutions were utilizing wet-pipe systems, and only five organizations each have dry-pipe sprinklers or non-aqueous fire suppression systems such as Halon or FM-200. Archives, as an institution type, seemed to have the most fire safety practices and systems in place.

**Collection Management Policies and Practices**

The development of policies specifically addressing, or including preservation as well as preservation staff levels, showed a range of positive and negative findings. At 51 organizations, the institutional mission statement supported the preservation of collections (35 did not have preservation in their mission statement and 11 didn’t know).

In a finding of more concern, 57 organizations did not have a written, long-range preservation plan for the maintenance, care, repair, and protection of their collections. Nine had such a plan, eleven are developing long-range preservation plans, and ten said preservation is addressed in the institution’s overall long-range plan.

Reporting on staffing levels for preservation was another cause for some concern. When asked, in FTEs (Full-time equivalents, where one FTE equals 40 hours of work per week for one year) how much staff time is spent by paid staff on collections care activities such as repairs, rebinding, or reformatting of collections, 42 organizations said 0 FTE, and 37 said only up to 1 FTE. In comparison, much smaller numbers had staff levels above this: 11 said 1-2 FTE, 3 had 2-5 FTE, and only 1 had more than 5 FTE. Findings were quite similar with unpaid/volunteer staff, where 64 had 0 FTE and 21 organizations had up to 1 FTE involved in preservation activities (six had 1-2 FTE volunteer; two had 2-5 FTE; and two others had more than five FTE unpaid or volunteer staff). The higher numbers of preservation-related staff were in archives and history museums.

An area of preservation policy or activity which can be improved by utilization of grants and consulting assistance is the number of organizations where a formal preservation survey on the condition of collections had been done. Three-quarters of the respondents (75 or 78% answering this question) had not received such a survey; only five had done a survey, and eight did not know.
Preservation needs assessment surveys can be very beneficial in improving building condition, collection condition, and preservation policy development, so Idaho’s Connecting to Collections Task Force should strongly consider developing a program to make more of these surveys available.

**Disaster Planning**

Another area of policy development needed in Idaho cultural heritage institutions is the establishment of disaster plans. At 42 institutions, there is not a written emergency or disaster plan that includes collection materials. Fourteen institutions did not know if they had such a plan. Thirteen institutions did not have a plan, but were developing one.

Eleven organizations did have a disaster plan (the majority of them public libraries), and nine had a plan which was not up-to-date. A good finding was that 17 of the institutions which had a plan had staff trained to carry it out.

Those organizations which did not have a plan asked why one had not been created. A troubling finding was that 24 (36% of those answering the question, including 10 public libraries) said it was not an institutional priority. The other reasons may be more easily overcome with education and assistance: 21 said they did not have the expertise to write a disaster plan; 18 didn’t have the time to write a plan; and 14 were unaware of the need for a plan.

In another question related to disaster precautions, 25 organizations had offsite storage for copies of important records related to their institution (including their catalog, insurance policies, and other vital documents). At 35 institutions, some, but not all important records copies were stored offsite. Leading formats for this offsite storage (with institutions able to select all formats that apply) included paper or hard copies (34 respondents), CDs/DVDs/portable hard drives (27), and remote servers (24). In opposition, 32 organizations did not have copies of their vitally important institutional records offsite.

When asked if their collections had experienced damage or loss due to specific causes of damage after it was acquired by their institution, 49 organizations reported some damage due to physical or chemical deterioration (brittle paper, cracked leather, flaking paint, and electronic media degradation, for example), 43 had light damage including fading or discoloration, 40 due to handling (by staff, users, and in shipment), 36 due to moisture (damaged included stains, warping, or mold), 34 due to theft (which seems to be quite a high number), and 33 due to poor storage enclosures. Water had caused the most cases of significant damage or loss, with five reported cases (there were also four significant damage or loss cases caused by theft).

**Preservation and Conservation Activities**

There were a wide variety of preservation and conservation activities being done (mostly by paid staff) at the responding institutions. Activities reported were:

- Preventive preservation (environmental monitoring, housekeeping): 48 organizations
- Preventive preservation management (assessment, planning, and administration): 44
- Re-housing (re-folding, re-boxing): 41
- Preservation reformatting (preservation reformatting, microfilming, digitization): 38
• Preservation of digitized materials and software (including migration of data): 38
• Conservation treatment: 36
• Preservation of audiovisual materials (including playback equipment): 34

**Preservation Funding**

The preservation activities listed above were done even though nearly three-quarters (74) of the responding organizations stated that their annual budget did not have funds specifically allocated for preservation and conservation activities. History museums were a positive area, where a number of institutions did have funds budgeted for preservation.

When asked about sources of preservation funding, while 47 institutions had not applied, 13 said applying for preservation funds was not applicable, and 9 did not know, a positive finding was that 14 said they had applied to individual donors. Very few had received funding from national preservation funding sources. Only two institutions had received funding from IMLS, and only one each from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), or the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Idaho’s Connecting to Collections Task Force can improve the preservation funding outlook for cultural heritage organizations within the state by providing further information and education about these grant opportunities.

In one of the best findings in a number of Connecting to Collections surveys nationwide, Idaho institutions have done an excellent job in applying for and receiving grants for preservation purposes from state-based funding sources. History museums seemed to have done particularly well in this area. Among the most popular funding sources were:

- Idaho Historical Society Community Grants Program: 13 recipients
- Idaho Humanities Council: 11 recipients
- Idaho Community Foundation: 11
- Idaho Heritage Trust: 11
- Idaho State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) SNAP Grants: 4

When asked why their institution did not seek funding specifically for preservation/conservation activities, the top reasons included lack of project planning/preparation necessary before requesting grant funds (26 respondents); lack of staff time to complete the application (25); and not aware of funding sources (20). Workshops and assistance on identifying preservation funders and developing successful grant proposals could assist in allaying these concerns.

Responses varied widely to the last question in the survey dealing with preservation funding. Institutions were asked to make three choices for expenditures if they were able to gain new funding specifically for preservation or conservation over the next three years. Top choices, with similar levels of interest across all institution types, included:

- Digitization (40 respondents)
- Storage supplies and materials (29)
- Cataloging/inventory of collections (27)
- Staff training (27)
- Professional conservation treatment of collection materials (23)
**Preservation Training**

In the past three years, Idaho institutions have participated in a variety of training programs and services related to preservation. Thirty-nine attended workshops; 35 utilized peer advice; and 30 attended conferences or meetings on preservation topics.

When asked about which topics related to preservation/conservation they would like to receive training on, top answers were:

- Emergency/Disaster Planning and Recovery: 61 institutions
- Collections Management (planning/policies/procedures): 53
- Book and Paper Repair: 47
- Collections Storage/Housekeeping: 46
- Digitization of Materials: 44

A very interesting corollary was that the areas where most respondents expressed an urgent need for training were somewhat different. The top urgent choices were grantwriting/fundraising/advocacy (17 responses), digitization (16), building design/construction/renovation (11), care and handling of collections (10), book and paper repair (10), and collections management (9). To address these needs and urgent needs, a combination of live and online workshops should be offered to reach groups in the varied geographic areas of the state.

When such a preservation training curriculum is developed, however, several barriers must be considered. Travel costs were considered a problem by 74 respondents, registration costs by 69, training unavailable in the respondent’s area by 44, and inability to spare staff time by 40 institutions. These responses were evenly split across all institution types. This leads to consideration of a geographically-dispersed, low-or-no-cost set of preservation training opportunities delivered in relatively short classes.

Several questions asked about institutions’ interest in various types of preservation assistance. Organizations expressed an urgent need for emergency preparedness/disaster planning (13 institutions); collection policy and procedure creation or updating (12 institutions); and condition assessments/surveys of collections (11 responses, particularly among public libraries and history museums). General need was expressed for staff training in preservation at 54 institutions; disaster planning (48); conservation treatment (44); and collection policy/procedure creation/updating (41).

Organizations were asked to select their top three shared preservation resource services they would like to see in the state. Top responses included:

- State-sponsored preservation workshops: 53 institutions
- Ongoing state support for preservation grants to individual institutions: 52
- Assistance with disaster planning and recovery: 39
- Place to contact for preservation information: 39
- Onsite visits by a preservation professional: 39

Top preservation services for which institutions would like to collectively contract (if negotiated centrally on a statewide or regional basis) include: preservation or disaster supplies (36 votes); disaster recovery services (vacuum freeze-drying and onsite cleanup at 27 respondents); and collection storage (also 27 respondents). Electronic data storage offsite through a system such as
the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) Digital Archive or a LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe) distributed digital preservation system and outsourced digitization of collections also received multiple responses.

**Collection Cataloging**

Idaho institutions were asked a brief series of questions related to the inventory and cataloging of their collections which relates to collections maintenance and preservation issues. When queried about how much of their collection is cataloged or indexed in either paper form or in a computer-based system, the results reflected the high number of libraries answering the survey. Forty-two respondents said that 76-99% was indexed/cataloged and 17 said 100% was complete. On the other end of the spectrum, 9 organizations said none of their collection was cataloged/indexed, (including several public libraries and municipal public records repositories) eight said only 1-25%, and seven said 26-50%.

The most popular formats for maintaining the catalog/index were in an online system (an Integrated Library System/ILS such as SirsiDynix, Endeavor, Follet, Koha, or Evergreen) with 47 responses; paper/hard copy (42); cataloging software specific to museums and archives such as PastPerfect, Willoughby, and Re:discovery/Proficio (20); or of-the-shelf software such as Access or Excel (13).

Finally, the split between libraries and other respondent types was show again as a large number of organizations said 100% (14 respondents) or 76-99% (22 organizations) of their catalog was accessible online, but an even larger group (42 respondents, including many history museums and public libraries) said none was available online and 13 said only 1-25% was available.

**Digitization Practices**

Responding institutions were almost evenly split between those that had digital collections (47) and those that did not (50). Access was provided to digitized materials at 19 institutions; through online exhibits at 9 organizations; through interactive resources at 5 sites.

Top born-digital formats (those materials created and stored digitally) which institutions were collecting included photographs (27 respondents), documents, (21), sound recordings (21), and video/audio (19). Top formats of materials digitized (converted to digital format) were historic photographs (24 institutions) documents (18), sound recordings (16) and video/audio.

Organizations were asked if they had a plan in place to preserve their digital materials, and 39 organizations (67% of those answering the question) did not; only 15 organizations had such a plan. This was in direct opposition to the fact that 40 institutions (71%) planned to retain their digital collections for more than ten years. Twelve organizations did not know their institutional answer to this question. Overall, these findings point to the fact that this issue deserves further exploration.

A good finding in this area was that 59% (or 32 organizations) reported that staff responsible for the preservation of physical items also had responsibility for digital preservation. This can be helpful to the institution, because preservation staff is often familiar with media life expectancy issues, and policy/procedure development.

The range of answers when collecting organization were asked how often backup files of their digital collections were created for preservation purposes was also an area showing need for further education and information. Fifteen organizations create backup files daily, but ten do this less than once a month, eight never do, and eleven don’t know the frequency. Backup files are stored offsite by 19 organizations, at multiple locations including offsite by 14, and onsite by 10.
Historic Building Information

Almost one-third of the survey respondents (30 institutions, including a large number of history museums) reported that their institution has historically-significant buildings that are under their responsibility and are used to house their library, archive, museum, or historical society, and to store collection materials, and/or are part of the institutional collections. Sixteen of the reporting organizations had buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. While most of the organizations only had one building to care for, others mentioned 16, 22, and 200 buildings on their “campuses.”

The biggest threats to the buildings were deterioration (17 respondents), fire (12) and pests (10). In a majority of cases, the condition of building features such as roof, exterior wall, foundation, and window material, as well as plumbing, electrical, and fire detection systems were deemed to be good. However, 15 institutions said their fire detection and suppression systems were in poor condition and six said window materials were poor. The vast majority answering building-related questions said there had not been (39 or 18%) and did not need to be a historic structures analysis or preservation survey on their building. However, two cited an urgent need (in the next year); six cited a need in the next 2-3 years; and two in the next 4-6 years.

Comments from the Survey

Two portions of the survey elicited comments from the respondents. First, there was a comment section at the end of the questionnaire for general comments about institutional preservation needs. There were also a number of instructive comments made about why organizations did not have disaster plans.

From the final comments section of the survey, there are a number of comments which can help the Idaho Connecting to Collections Project Planners to develop future preservation activities in the state. These comments are included below, with commentary on potential ways to address the concerns reflected by the respondents.

- “As a public library, with a rapidly-changing collection, we do not prioritize preservation or conservation highly, except in a case-by-case basis.” While public libraries were a large respondent group, then, they may not have as high a level of interest in some of the preservation services mentioned, if preservation is not a key part of their mission.
- “We would like to preserve the historical photos of our county and digitize them.”
- “We are in urgent need of long term planning expertise for our buildings including space allocations.” Even though only a third of survey respondents responded that they had buildings which they needed to preserve, some of these buildings require urgent special attention, which may need to be addressed on an individual-institution basis.
- “Recently our neighbors at the Washington State University Libraries initiated efforts to organize a regional disaster response team made up of library and historical society staff. This makes sense in a rural region such as ours....” Collaborative disaster planning may be a good approach for many institutions in specific areas of the state.
- “Thank you for your efforts. We need better state-wide support and coordination.”
Additionally, the question regarding why a disaster plan had not been created at specific institutions drew some other comments which need to be addressed in Idaho’s overall statewide program.

- “(Our) Board needs to be addressed about this.” Board members should be invited to presentations and workshops on disaster planning and other preservation topics.
- “Major staff changes haven’t allowed time to update. New one in process.” Disaster plans need to be updated on a regular schedule to address issues such as staff changes, equipment changes, and other events which may happen on an annual, or more regular, basis.
- “It has not been an institutional priority, but awareness is growing.” Workshops and information on disaster planning can continue to grow this awareness statewide.

**Preservation Observations in the Field**

From August 30 to September 3, 2010, LYRASIS Consultants Tom Clareson and Leigh Grinstead conducted thirteen site surveys for the Idaho Connecting to Collections initiative. The sites were located throughout the state, and included four museums, four public libraries, two county historical societies, one archive with library materials and exhibits, a special library, and a city department of art and history. Four of these sites had multiple buildings that included historic houses/structures that were being used to house and interpret collections.

- Overall, the storage conditions observed were generally good. The spaces were well organized, for the most part fairly clean and collections were stored in archival boxes, on padded shelves or in closed containers. Storage areas were often full and there was little if any room for growth, but the consultants were impressed with the level of care seen at these sites.
- Many institutions that were surveyed had one particular material type that they struggled to care for. For example
  - Textiles
  - Photographs and negatives
  - Bloodied leather goods stored with feathers
  - Oversized maps or drawings
  - Clippings
- There was no environmental monitoring being done on a regular basis at a great majority of the sites. Conditions were within generally acceptable ranges but without consistent monitoring it is hard to know what is happening on a seasonal basis.
- Very few of the sites had a current/updated disaster plan or had done any kind of drills or practices.
- There were opportunities for a number of grants to help particular issues. These will be recommended to each institution as part of their site visit report.
- Almost every institution had digitization questions and concerns about the digital materials which already existed in some of their collections.
- Many of the institutions had PastPerfect Collection Management Software. Not every site had implemented it but almost all had a version of the software.

For the most part, staff was fairly well aware of the needs of their collections. But the single largest concern voiced at every site visited:
They need more staff to be able to implement what they knew they should be doing.
  o This may be a conversation with the Idaho Connecting to Collections Task Force to see if there is an opportunity for itinerant statewide collections care staff that could go in and re-house, inventory, process collections for deaccession, and help in other ways.

One of the best outcomes of the site survey process, however, was the discovery of the excellent preservation policies and practices at two of the sites which Clareson visited. The Idaho Museum of Natural History, Idaho State University, and the Idaho National Laboratory facility in Idaho Falls both have been doing “model” work in preservation at their facilities, and should be showcased as case studies in future preservation education and information initiatives in the state and region. Potential ways to utilize these “model sites” are as host institutions for workshops (where attendees could tour their facilities), and inviting staff from these institutions to participate as presenters or faculty at conference presentations, workshops, and other public programs on preservation.

**Idaho Connecting to Collections Workshop**

On November 19, 2010, the Idaho Connecting to Collections Preservation Management Workshop was held at the Boise Public Library. Twenty-five participants from libraries, museums, historical societies, archives, and municipal records offices attended the session, led by project consultant Tom Clareson.

The workshop began with a review of the Idaho Connecting to Collections online survey and onsite survey results. The rest of the session was developed to fulfill information needs about topics discovered from the survey. The workshop included nine modules covering topics such as preservation program basics; the nature of collections materials; collection storage; disaster preparedness and recovery; preservation treatment options; reformatting for preservation; preservation education and outreach; policies for your preservation program; and grant writing and fundraising for preservation.

There was a great deal of networking and discussion during the workshop. Questions centered on discovering best preservation practices for various types of cultural heritage collection materials. Idaho Connecting to Collections project steering committee members reported that may of the workshop participants had not taken part in previous preservation education offerings, and they were pleased to attract these “new” participants. Evaluative comments centered on continued interest in the availability of preservation workshops and information in Idaho.

**A Statewide Action Plan for Preservation in Idaho**

The findings of the online Connecting to Collections survey and the thirteen preservation needs assessment survey visits in late August-early September 2010 point to the need to establish a continuing statewide program of preservation education, information, and activity in the state to help bolster the good work which many institutions are currently doing.

A number of aspects of the future statewide preservation program proposed here can take advantage of existing resources in the state, region, and nationally to speed the progress of preservation program development in the state. Listed below are the priority areas for preservation action to benefit the state’s cultural heritage institutions, their collections, and the people of the state of Idaho.
**Preservation Needs Assessment Surveys:** Even the brief surveys done by the consultants as part of the Connecting to Collections Planning Grant were perceived as very helpful by the institutions that were visited. Having an outside expert, whether of state, regional, or national stature, visit an institution and make suggestions on building condition, collection condition, and preservation policy development, can assist institutions in developing a long-range plan to improve preservation conditions and activities for their organization.

**Disaster Plan Development:** As discovered by the national Heritage Health Index survey, and many previous state Connecting Surveys across the U.S., there are a large number of institutions which do not have disaster plans that address collection, building, and personal safety issues. A variety of resources exist to help institutions develop these plans, but organizations often do not have the staff time to get these projects completed. Educational offerings with an “end-product” of a completed disaster plan are suggested for Idaho, and this type of training is highly sought after by institutions within the state.

**Preservation Grant Program Development:** Idaho institutions may be doing better than those in a majority of states in the U.S. in pursuing and receiving grants for preservation projects from sources based in the state. At presentations and workshops, discussion of these grant resources and how people are utilizing the funding they have received would be very instructive to other organizations who have yet to tap into these excellent resources. An area where institutions throughout the state can improve, however, is in approaching national funding sources such as IMLS, NEH, NEA, and NHPRC for funding to preserve the important historical resources of the state.

**Workshops Available Online and Onsite:** A mix of workshops which need to be provided hands-on (such as Book Repair, and Wet-Book Disaster Recovery classes, for instance), and those which can be provided via distance education (on preservation policy development and other topics) should be developed to reach as many Idaho institutions as possible and overcome the barriers of travel and registration costs. As previously mentioned, staff from “model” institutions should be utilized as faculty for workshops and presentations, and their facilities should be strongly considered as workshop sites.

**Digitization and Digital Preservation Planning:** As noted in the web survey and the onsite surveys, cultural heritage institutions in Idaho are either already doing, or very interested in digitizing their collections. Caution must be taken and programs put in place to also preserve the digital versions of the materials once they are created, and Idaho institutions can tap into national digital preservation educational initiatives.

**Environmental Monitoring Program:** Many organizations within Idaho are monitoring at least for temperature at this point. However, humidity, light, and air quality can also have a strong effect on the deterioration of collections. Developing a program to both educate Idaho repositories about environmental effects and environmental control, and to potentially make environmental monitoring equipment available to organizations that might not be able to afford it or fully implement it otherwise. Idaho may be able to follow the model of some other states, such as Texas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Delaware, which have developed statewide programs to share environmental monitoring kits between institutions.

**Circuit-riding Preservation Assistance:** Because of the staffing shortages for preservation discovered in both the web survey and in onsite visits with institutions, the concept of a “circuit-riding archivist” or cultural heritage professional who can visit institutions within the state and work with them on issues including preservation policy development, consulting on specific needs, one-on-one preservation education, and other issues should be strongly considered. This position would probably not need to be full-time, but finding resources who could fulfill this role is an important
planning activity for the statewide preservation Task Force, whether they work with professionals in Idaho, the region, or nationally.

**Historic Building Preservation Program:** About one-third of the organizations responding to the survey indicated that they needed to preserve and maintain historic buildings, either those that house their institution, or as part of their institutional “collections.” Many felt that these buildings were in relatively good shape, and only a small number cited specific concerns and the need for building surveys or other assistance. These concerns should be addressed, and may be able to be met via resources other than a full statewide program, including grants and consultants which are specifically aimed at historic building preservation.

Through development of a program which addresses these areas of institutional interest and need, the Idaho Connecting to Collections program can help the cultural heritage institutions in the state improve upon many of the good preservation practices they are already employing, and develop new plans, policies and procedures to ensure the survival of the state’s cultural treasures.