The Hoosier Heritage Alliance project, a collaboration between nine museums and historic institutions from throughout Indiana, was completed according to schedule with minimal changes to the original proposal as well as several enhancements. All of the original partners, the Indiana Historical Society (IHS), and the Hoosier Heritage Alliance (HHA) partners (Association of Indiana Museums (AIM), Conner Prairie Interactive History Park, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority, Indiana State Library, Indiana State Museum, Indianapolis Museum of Art, and Minnetrista), remain active in the program with the exception of one, the Lincoln Museum which closed June 30, 2008. At that same time the Indiana State Library joined as a project partner.

**Project Activities**

The purpose of the HHA project was to create a comprehensive statewide assessment of collections conservation needs and develop collections management strategies to address these needs. The project brought together, for the first time, major Indiana institutions with diverse expertise and experience in collecting cultural artifacts to ensure the safeguarding and preservation of all Indiana’s heritage collections.

Online glossary of collections care terminology launched in August, 2008.

1,006 surveys were delivered (1,028 were mailed; 22 were returned undeliverable)

272 surveys were completed (240 reported data; 32 replied that they hold no collections)

Final Project Meeting with HHA partners to finalize recommendations on July 27, 2009.

The survey results and a complete data report were posted on the IHS’s website.

The HHA report has been distributed to all survey respondents and HHA partners. It will also be provided to funding organizations and other collections stewardship resource providers as a guide to understanding of the training and funding requirements of collection stewardship by request.

The HHA report was mailed to all State Representatives and Senators with a cover letter from IHS president and CEO, John Herbst.

**Project Audience**

Indiana heritage collections are held in trust for current and future generations in order to investigate the past and use that understanding to prepare for the future. The following is the breakdown by function of the 240* HHA survey respondents:

- 72 - Archives/Library
- 14 - Genealogy group
50 - Historical society
97 - Museum
17 - Preservation society
* Ten organizations indicated they had more than one primary function.

Achievements

Organizations were asked to describe their collections stewardship (management and care) practices. Analysis of the responses strongly suggests that high priority areas for collections care are increasing awareness, training, and funding. The same issues for Indiana’s heritage collections had been identified in a survey (of museums only) of status and needs conducted in the fall of 1991 by AIM. Similar nationwide issues were found in the collections conservation and preservation survey carried out by the Heritage Health Index (HHI) in 2005.

Eighty-three percent of Indiana’s heritage collecting organizations do not know the condition of items in their care (a higher percentage than the 70 percent reported nationally by HHI).

Nearly half of the responding organizations do not have a complete listing of items in their collection. Of those responding, the majority have no policies for storage, preservation, pest management, condition documentation, disaster planning, or the security of the collection.

The HHA survey indicates that currently more than 80 percent of Indiana’s heritage collecting organizations do not have a conservation plan. Whereas in 1991 AIM reported that 60 percent of Indiana’s museums did not have a conservation plan.

Fifty-nine percent of organizations in Indiana self identified staff training as a need in all areas of collections stewardship. This is in agreement with the HHI’s indication that for 70 percent of organizations nationwide the most common need is staff training. A majority of Indiana organizations utilize volunteer staff for conservation and preservation needs rather than an external provider, paid conservator, or collections staff.

Many organizations lack funding for staff training in collections stewardship; especially training in the proper conservation, preservation, and management of their collections. Funding was also a key issue identified in both the AIM and HHI surveys. Only 12 percent of HHA respondents have funds budgeted specifically for the conservation/preservation of their collection. Overall, slightly more than one-third of organizations have some type of funding available for collection stewardship. Lack of funding for staff training and conservation/preservation of collections poses a considerable risk to the stability of Indiana’s heritage collections.

Lesson Learned - Recommendations

Awareness: Increase awareness among custodians of Indiana heritage collections as to their responsibilities to their collections and promote the importance of heritage preservation to the general public, including potential funders.
Specific Awareness Recommendations:
The IHS Local History Services department, AIM, Indiana Genealogical Society, and Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana should make increasing awareness of collections stewardship a part of their day-to-day contact with their clients around the state. The Indiana State Library, Indiana Library Federation, and INCOLSA should also continue to make their clients aware of their responsibilities.

Training: Increase training in collections stewardship, concentrating on fundamental concerns like environmental control and policy development.

Specific Training Recommendations:

- Develop an integrated curriculum of basic collections management, building on programs already in place.
- Develop traveling exhibits that enable heritage organizations to educate themselves as well as their communities and potential funders regarding collection stewardship issues in Indiana.
- Develop posters highlighting collection stewardship issues in Indiana for long-term display in heritage organizations.
- Hire dynamic experts to speak on collection stewardship issues in Indiana to continually educate and reinvigorate custodians of Indiana heritage.
- Explore utilizing a variety of delivery methods, such as online educational content (e.g. Indianapolis Museum of Art’s Art Babble online videos or AIMS’ web site and social networking site) and in-person traditional workshops.
- Collect case studies of small Indiana organizations’ successes in improving collections stewardship and share via multiple-delivery methods.

Training should focus on:
- Organizational readiness for fund-raising.
- Policy development, collections planning, and good overall governance.
- Basic handling and physical storage techniques.
- Basic environmental concerns including building integrity, site, and maintenance.
- Assessing the collection, using condition surveys, and how to use the information obtained during those steps to develop and implement a conservation plan.
- Storage furniture and archival storage materials.
- Proper display conditions and techniques.
**Funding:** Increase funding for proper stewardship of Indiana heritage collections.

**Specific Funding Recommendations:**

Develop and maintain a list of potential funders for Indiana collections stewardship projects. (Note: This recommendation is currently being pursued by the IHS.)

Making funders (philanthropic or governmental) aware of the needs of Indiana heritage collections should become a part of the standard operation of every collecting organization.

The HHA partners should make increasing public awareness of collection management and the need for funding a part of their annual goals. Explore training heritage organizations to develop relationships with funders, and host networking events for funders and heritage organizations.

Copies of the survey report should be made available to potential funders to increase their awareness of the vast needs of Indiana's heritage collections.

**Lessons Learned**

As noted in the first interim report the actual survey printing costs were less than originally budgeted allowing the remaining savings to be allocated to the final publication of survey results allowing for the inclusion of more detailed information, copies of which have been included with the report.

As a part of the broader IHS story, the efforts of the Hoosier Heritage Alliance will be shared with the visiting public of the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center through a presentation broadcast on a newly-installed, four-panel video wall in its Welcome Center. The participants of the HHA will be illustrated on a map of the state of Indiana - highlighting the counties from which the needs assessments and responses were received.

Six regional meetings specifically to help staff complete the survey were hosted in the fall of 2008. These meetings were very poorly attended. The Local History Services staff had much more success answering questions and interacting with collecting organizations’ staff at the more informal “In Your Neighborhood” meetings where topics for discussion came from the hosting institutions. The survey and collections care issues were addressed in these meetings, but they were not the sole focus.
Next Step

In order to implement the recommendations of the Hoosier Heritage Alliance, the Indiana Historical Society will be submitting an IMLS Connecting to Collections Implementation Grant application in December of 2009. While continuing to work with the HHA partners and adding new regional partners, the IHS will increase awareness of the importance of collections care, improve training opportunities in collections care, and increase the capacity of organizations to fundraise for collections care in the following ways:

Site-specific collections care training for paid and unpaid staff at their organizations, including a starter set of archival materials. This program will reach approximately 100 collecting organizations with in-depth, personalized help, including how to ask for funding.

Regional conferences taught by collections care experts (including one session on funding) and a networking luncheon with regional funders invited to meet groups in their area. The conferences will be targeted at groups with no paid staff – the people most in need of training.

Online training and networking pilot – the HHA Partners will pilot test different forms of online interaction and sharing of case studies to determine which is best for our audience and does not duplicate material already available.

A traveling exhibit for display in local historical organization will make the case for collections care to the general public and encourage support of the hosting local history organization.

Collections Advisor monthly e-mail will describe ways to improve collections care, case studies, etc. to keep collections care in the minds of recipients.

A poster will be distributed to all collecting organizations that highlight one or more important aspects of collections care as a relatively permanent reminder.