The Virginia Collections Initiative (VCI) is a statewide partnership created to provide assistance to museums, libraries and archives throughout the Commonwealth and DC. With critical funding support from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the VCI helps collecting institutions be better stewards of the historic and cultural collections entrusted to their care.

IMLS and Heritage Preservation co-sponsored an extensive nationwide survey in 2005 that resulted in the groundbreaking report, A Public Trust at Risk: the Heritage Health Index (HHI) Report on the State of America’s Collections. The report’s sobering findings revealed that our nation’s objects, documents, and digital materials are in great need of care. In fact, the study found that nearly 190 million objects in the U.S. are in need of conservation treatment.

This call to action led to the creation of the Connecting to Collections Initiative, which aims to create greater public awareness of the importance of preserving our nation’s diverse treasures that are important to telling the American story. And at the heart of that story is Virginia.

Virginia Association of Museums and its partners are leading the way in supporting the role of museums, libraries and archives that tell our state’s unique story through the new Virginia Collections Initiative. This significant endeavor will help ensure the continued care of our state’s collections by addressing the major recommendations of the Heritage Health Index (HHI) Report: Increased Public Awareness, Improved Safety of Collections, and Disaster Planning.

A project of the Virginia Association of Museums in partnership with

John Tyler Community College
Mid Atlantic Regional Archives Conference
Preservation Virginia
Virginia Conservation Association
Virginia Department of Historic Resources

cnewton@vamuseums.org
www.VAMUSEUMS.org

IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas.
Engaging the public about the importance of preserving our historical and cultural assets is a major recommendation of the HHI and a direct goal of the Connecting to Collections initiative. The VCI project increases broader appreciation for collections through the Conservation Marketing Toolkit and Top 10 Endangered Artifacts program.

Conservation Marketing Toolkit
Visit www.vamuseums.org to download a variety of resources, from developing a marketing plan to learning to communicate your story to the media more successfully.

Virginia’s Top 10 Endangered Artifacts
Without care, irreplaceable objects from our past are lost each year. Objects that have meaning to our local communities, our state, as well as the nation. The “Virginia’s Top 10 Endangered Artifacts” competition is an exciting new campaign that engages the media and greater community to better understand the important work that our museum, library, and archive communities play in caring for our cultural and historical heritage. Visit www.vatop10artifacts.org for more information and to take part.

VAM has a long track record of offering high-quality training programs, focused on hands-on, practical learning for Virginia’s museums, libraries and archives. The VCI provides new online training and continues to support the successes of VAM’s Technical Assistance to museums.

Online Training
In partnership with John Tyler Community College, a series of online college-level courses provide credit and continuing education to those working with collections while introducing essentials of collections management to those interested in pursuing a career in a related field. Courses last 3 weeks and are one-credit “short courses.”

VCI provides numerous archived webinars on the VAM website that offer additional advice on day-to-day management of collections. Some topics include basic conservation instruction, collections inventory and storage, and pest management.

Circuit Riders
Conducted as an introductory museum assessment program, “Circuit Riders” offers museums assistance from a team of two traveling collections experts - a curator and an archivist – who address various areas of stewardship. Museums can apply quarterly through the VAM website to seek support from this successful program in order to develop preliminary strategies for improving collections care.

Collections In Action (CIA)
Responding in times of need, collections management professionals volunteer their time to assist museums with collections-related projects. Past CIA volunteer projects have included preparing collections for storage, creating an inventory of items, photographing objects, and moving and re-housing collections.

Technical Assistance
Institutions seeking additional advice on collections care or other topics can access VAM’s network of Technical Advisors. Visit www.vamuseums.org to find out more about the program and to download an application.

Preparing for an emergency that might never happen may seem unnecessary, but devastating situations can happen without a moment’s notice. Whether a flood from a waterline break or a natural disaster, the HHI wisely recommends that every collecting institution develop a plan. The VCI helps you create it.

Disaster Planning
Disaster Planning Templates & “Lock-Ups”
Small-to-medium-sized institutions can develop necessary disaster plans with the help of expertly crafted Disaster Planning Templates available through VAM.

Museum and library professionals can gain personal assistance in drafting a disaster plan unique to their site at newly developed “Disaster Lock-Ups.” Attendees will gain personal advice from experts in the field at these one-day workshops scheduled to take place across the state. Ensuring your collections are getting the care they need is as easy as taking a day out of the office and leaving with a plan in hand!

Museum Emergency Support Teams (MEST)
VAM encourages cultural institutions to plan for emergency response, coordinate local resources, establish relationships with emergency officials, and create response teams to assist in emergency situations. Visit the MEST website www.vamest.org to find a toolkit that will assist with establishing a MEST in your area and help groups share information with other members throughout the state.