Dakota Collections
Care Initiative
Dakota Collections Care Initiative

• Joint state C-2-C Implementation Grant - breaking the single-state mold

• Made good sense to partner together - Results of both state planning grants in SD and ND VERY similar despite different approaches and data collection techniques.
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Key Findings & Priorities resulting from ND state planning grant initiative (North Dakota Collections Heritage Initiative)

91% are concerned about the safety and condition of collections

77% do not have a current long-range preservation plan

Staff training

Planning surveys/collection assessments

Emergency/disaster plans

Collections care workshops
Dakota Collections Care Initiative

Key Findings & Priorities resulting from SD state planning grant initiative (South Dakota Connecting to Collections Project)

Only 21% have collections completely cataloged.

Collections are at risk from a variety of causes including improper storage, light exposure, pests, prior treatments, airborne particulates, theft, water damage, poor handling, fire, and vandalism.

Use state distance-learning systems to provide training.

Create in-state regional mutual-assistance groups.
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• Focused on key findings of the Heritage Health Index (Disaster Preparedness/Response & Training Opportunities).

• Three primary components to project. On-site assessments and hands-on workshops are designed to increase understanding of best practices in collections care and disaster preparedness at small- and mid-sized heritage institutions and build a network of individuals committed to good stewardship of collections.
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- Know your audience & hone your delivery

- FACE-TO-FACE & HANDS ON
  - Distance learning technology not a practical option to overcome large geographic area (digital divide is great).

- Earlier partnership attempt with Minnesota failed - incongruent priorities despite similar needs.

- Vast majority of our tangible cultural heritage lies within small to mid sized organizations.
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• The Need Is Great:
  • No formal, consistent means by which to assist with far reaching collections care training in either ND or SD.

• The NEED to NETWORK
  • Sparse populations and recent natural disasters (flood, tornadoes, etc.)
  • A framework will be constructed to facilitate a mutual assistance network to aid cultural organizations faced with natural disaster related assistance (preparation, training, recovery).
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• Getting the Word Out

  • Hired a PR/Marketing Firm to handle details (press, logistics, data-collection, etc.)

  • Informal and formal outlets via state museum associations, list-serves, personal contacts, etc.

  • Partner with ND and SD historical societies to host info. on websites.
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• Advisory Panel Composition, Roles and Responsibilities

• Representatives of library, Archives and museum professionals from both states to ensure voice of all three is represented in both content and delivery.

• EVERYONE HAS SOME SKIN IN THE GAME! - Initial drafting/revision of grant, DCCI staff selection/interviewing, budgetary oversight, written/telephone reporting responsibility to IMLS, regular teleconferences to update status of project, attendance by advisory panel members at all workshop locations, etc.
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• Advisory Panel Composition, Roles and Responsibilities

  • One member from each state to serve in a Co-Directorship capacity

    • Mark Ryan, Director of Collections & Operations, Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND

    • Chelle Somsen, State Archivist, South Dakota State Historical Society
Dakota Collections Care Initiative

• Are we there yet? - Project Intent and Design

• Needs Assessment/Application -

  • Weighing needs and commitment of very small and/or completely volunteer run organizations (volunteers, staff, board).

  • Advisory Panel wanted to ensure initiative had a good chance of succeeding as well as being centrally located to attract as many attendees as possible.
Dakota Collections Care Initiative
A Collaborative Project between North and South Dakota

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February 13, 2012
Dear ND and SD Collections Professionals and Volunteers:

Your institution is invited to submit the enclosed application by March 7 to be considered for a FREE, in-depth institutional collections assessment and workshop hosting opportunity! This is the first phase of the Dakota Collections Care Initiative, a collaborative project between collections care professionals at museums, libraries and archives in North and South Dakota. A five-day commitment is needed from your institution – paid/unpaid staff and board members – to take full advantage of this exceptional opportunity to learn from and work with a professional conservator to enhance your institution’s collections care activities. The first two days will be spent with the conservator on the institutional assessment, and the last three days your institution will host hands-on training workshops. Your institution will not be responsible for expenses related to the workshops.

The Dakota Collections Care Initiative (DCCI) is funded by a Connecting to Collections implementation grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This project is a follow-up to the separate statewide planning projects conducted in North and South Dakota between 2008 and 2010:

• North Dakota Cultural Heritage Initiative and its Collection Conversations
• South Dakota Connects to Collections

These prior planning projects assessed the status of collections in both states and provided the foundation for this new partnership designed to provide much-needed collections care and emergency preparedness and response training to small and mid-sized museums, libraries and archives across the two states. This year from May to September, DCCI will provide 12 in-depth collections assessments at selected institutions, six in North Dakota and six in South Dakota. Following a two-day assessment by professional conservators, each recipient institution will host a series of three full-day collections care workshops open to paid and unpaid staff from all area museums, libraries and archives. Terri Schmelzl, a conservator affiliated with the Museum Training Network, has been selected to lead the institutional assessments and training workshops for DCCI. She brings 20 years of collection-related experience working with small, rural and tribal institutions throughout the region to the project.

The application must be received electronically or postmarked by Wednesday, March 7. The application, along with additional information about DCCI, is posted on the websites of the State Historical Society of North Dakota (http://history.nd.gov/) and the South Dakota State Historical Society (http://history.sd.gov/) or and may be downloaded, completed and submitted electronically. Should you have any questions or to request the electronic application, contact DCCI Administrator Dana Schaal at (701) 355-4458 or clearfour@btinternet.net. Selected institutions will be notified by March 23.

We encourage your museum, library or archive to submit the application today. The institutional assessments and collections care workshops this summer are only the first phase of DCCI. The second year of the project will include disaster preparedness and recovery workshops, along with development of a mutual aid network to connect collections care professionals across the two states. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months!

Sincerely,

Mark Ryan
DCCI Co-Director
Plains Art Museum, North Dakota

Chelle Somsen
DCCI Co-Director
South Dakota State Historical Society

P.S. Time is short – submit the application now so you don’t miss the March 7 deadline!
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- Geographic & Climatic Considerations
  - Timing is everything - snow possible almost every month of the year and many of our target demographic are seasonal operations.
  - Population centers spread wide and far. High level of logistical planning required.
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• Welcome border state cultural organizations.

• Large area and significant time devoted to each site meant strategic planning to ensure we considered:
  
  • Conservator’s time
  
  • Availability and willingness of participant organizations
  
  • Convenience of would-be attendees
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• Hands-On vs. Take Aways…when is too much, too much???

• Lengthy discussion amongst members of Advisory Panelists as to what constituted ESSENTIAL across museum, library and archives.

• *Providing USEFUL tools vs A Comprehensive List of Resources.*
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- Outline of information presented was consistent, basic and provided the participants with core information.

- In addition to the consistent content offered at all location, there was latitude to discuss additional topics depending on findings of assessment or preference/priority of host organization.
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- Hands-On Component
  - Use objects attendees are already familiar with
    - Facilitate dialogue with owner of object and other attendees on how THEY would proceed with treatment given what was presented earlier.
    - Conservator moderated discussion, provided demonstrations utilizing appropriate materials, tools and techniques.
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• Assessments…what a deal!…but nothing is for free

• Host location required to function as local arrangements/PR contact, etc.

• Recipient organization agreed to share findings of the assessment to be utilized as teaching tools.

• The resulting report to use as leverage for future collections care funding.
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- DCCI Staff Selection

- We Can’t Do this Alone!….HELP!

- Working with the state of North Dakota Office of Procurement - fair, transparent and thorough.
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• Conservator Job Description:

  • Familiarity with and ability to connect with target demographic essential
  • Flexible and organized (have lab, will travel…)

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
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• Evaluation
  • Info. gathering critical
    • Need to improve workshops as the initiative is underway.
    • Post C-2-C AMMO: Perhaps even more important to gather critical info. for future use (grant writing, as well as helping organizations make the case for private, federal, legislative and/or municipal funding for collections care).
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• More to Come in Year 2! - disaster planning and preparation
  • Workshops to be hosted in population centers throughout each state.
  • Focused on both drafting a comprehensive and functioning disaster preparedness plan as well as practical hands-on techniques.
  • Huge need in the Dakotas for disaster preparedness and response training relative to water-related issues (floods).