

**Montana State Library – LG-41-10-0020-10**  
**Connecting to Collections Statewide Planning Project**  
**Final Performance Report to IMLS: Part 1, Narrative**  
**June 29, 2012**

Goals for Montana's Connecting to Collections Project: A Statewide Preservation Initiative were to assess the status of cultural heritage collections in the state and develop recommendations to ensure the ongoing preservation of these collections. The project was coordinated by the formal partners, Montana State Library (MSL) and Montana Historical Society (MHS). The Montana State Library served as the administrative and fiscal agent for the project. Montana's CTC Project ended on March 31, 2012.

**Project Activities:**

As reported in the April 2011 interim report to IMLS, the following activities were accomplished during the first year of the project:

- preservation training: five face-to-face workshops, an online webinar, and presentations at two professional conferences reached 142 individuals

- creation and implementation of an online survey assessing preservation needs at Montana's cultural organizations; 138 survey responses were received

- analysis of survey data and production of a 21-page survey report (available at [http://msl.mt.gov/For\\_Librarians/Grants/surveyLyrasisApril2011.pdf](http://msl.mt.gov/For_Librarians/Grants/surveyLyrasisApril2011.pdf))

From the final reporting period of May 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012, there are five additional CTC activities to report:

- proposed and received IMLS approval for changes in project activities

- conducted two site surveys at selected cultural organizations

- participated in the AASLH CTC Continuing Conversation Exchanges sessions

- hosted a final preservation workshop

- designed, printed and distributed Montana's CTC call to action brochure

■ **CTC Project Adjustments**

After the half-way point was reached in the CTC Project, the partners were able to suggest an adjustment in the project's direction. This was possible because of lower than expected attendance at the CTC workshops which made \$5,000 available for additional activities. The new direction recommended by the partners and approved by the Task Force was based on data collected in the CTC survey: 74% of the organizations responding had not participated in a preservation survey. It was proposed to IMLS that unused grant funds be used for formal site surveys at two cultural organizations. At the time of the request, the surveys were seen as a small pilot project that would provide information for the CTC Implementation Grant proposal that was

being considered for Montana. IMLS approved the change in grant activities in June 2011.

### ■ CTC Site Surveys

The site surveys were essentially a continuation of the preservation training component of the CTC grant providing valuable information to the selected cultural organizations. Survey sites were selected by the CTC Task Force from the 138 cultural organizations that completed the CTC needs assessment survey. The objective was to select one library and one museum: the Conrad Mansion in Kalispell and the Thompson Hickman Library-Archives-Museum in Virginia City were offered a one-day visit by a preservation specialist.

The surveys were completed during summer 2011 by Audra Loyal, a preservation specialist in the state. Following each site visit, she prepared a detailed survey report and submitted it to the organization for review. Both reports included recommendations for actions that could be taken by the organization for little or no cost to improve storage, environment, exhibit, security, and access issues discovered during the visit. The organization was asked to make those changes if possible and to consider seeking funding for other actions that had a cost. Initially, the reports were going to be posted on the MSL website so other museums and libraries could benefit from the recommendations, but because of the details included in the reports about collections and facilities – including security – it was decided this information should have limited exposure.

Six months after the reports were given to the two selected survey sites, directors at the organizations were contacted and asked to describe actions that had been taken to address the issues and recommendations highlighted by the consultant.

In an interview with the Virginia City library director, it was determined that 100% of the “immediate priorities” and 75% of the “short-term priorities” recommended in the survey report for the library and archives programs have been addressed. This included environmental monitoring of temperature and relative humidity, establishing a budget line item for preservation needs, removing materials from stairways, removing collection items from bottom shelves, and updating/reviewing the countywide disaster plan which includes the library building. The librarian had invited the fire department to tour the facility to become familiar with the collections having the greatest value. A new building addition has been designed and funds are currently being raised. The librarian reported during the interview that the recommendations/priorities given in the survey report were considered during the planning process and will be implemented in the new facility. Because the museum is closed during the winter months, the volunteers in charge of that program were not able to implement any of the recommended changes by the time the follow-up interview was done.

When the Conrad Mansion was contacted at the end of the six-month period, it was learned that the Executive Director at the time the site survey was done had left the museum in December, shortly after receiving the survey report. A new director started in February, but was not aware of the survey or report until the end of May.

In an interview, the new director stated that none of the priorities or recommendations have been addressed. She said that she found the report to be interesting, thorough, and exceedingly helpful because of the outside perspective it offered. The report will be shared with staff and used during the next few months as a guide to determine what areas will be addressed first. The Conrad Mansion will be contacted again later in the year to review the impact of the report's recommendations on the museum's storage and display practices.

#### ■ **CTC Continuing Conversation Exchanges**

In September 2011, the CTC partners were able to attend the AASLH conference in Richmond, VA and participate in the CTC Conversation Exchanges event. Sue Jackson from the State Library attended with a travel assistance grant from the Texas State Library and Archives, and Molly Kruckenberg from the Historical Society was a member of a panel presentation about connecting in a rural environment. Montana's CTC Task Force members were encouraged to attend the conference using the complimentary registrations that were available, but none were able to attend.

All of the sessions during the Exchanges were motivating and pertinent to the Montana project. It was an inspiring and rewarding four days of sharing and brainstorming. Not only were there opportunities to learn about CTC successes across the country, there was also a change to meet face-to-face with the LYRISIS consultants working on the Montana project to talk further about the final planning project efforts and the direction and details for an implementation grant proposal.

#### ■ **Final CTC Workshop**

The final training component for CTC was a hands-on basic paper preservation workshop hosted by the MHS on March 26, 2012. The event was advertised using established listservs and the CTC partner's websites. Class size was limited to 14 and the participants who attended represented public and academic libraries (3), historical societies (3), archives (3), museums (3), and county records offices (2). Students worked in teams to do paper repair with wheat paste and heat-set tissue, hinge tightening, tip-ins, encapsulation, and constructing simple enclosures. CTC grant funds were used for the presenter and to purchase basic supplies and tools for the participants to use. These materials will be available for future hands-on workshops.

Feedback from the workshop indicated that the training met the expectations of 100% of those completing the evaluation form. All respondents could describe one new skill they acquired that would benefit their organization's collection. Participants comments included: "Loved learning how to repair the paper and I have already used my new box-building skills to store manuscripts. Audra's recommended sites and resources were very helpful"; "I liked Audra's presentation and her passion for doing repairs which preserve and maintain the item in the best possible way. Also enjoyed her triage piece and that you have to be flexible and keep in mind your collection and your institution's goal"; "Enjoyed the demonstrations and hands-on practice. I was paired well with my partner, too"; "The hands-on portion was the most useful. Seeing it done was great, but being given the opportunity to try our hands at it was really helpful and fun".

Additional preservation training was available in Montana in spring 2012 as part of the Western States and Territories Preservation Assistance Service (WESTPAS). This two-part training – Protecting Cultural Collections: Prevention, Preparedness, Response & Recovery – was done at Crow Agency and Livingston and was focused on disaster planning and preparedness. The CTC partners helped promote this free training across the state.

#### ■ **CTC Brochure & Letter**

The final project product was the *Montana Connecting to Collections: A Statewide Preservation Initiative* brochure. The Montana partners received permission from the Ohio Connecting to Collections Project (administered by the State Library of Ohio) to use their brochure as a model. Design/marketing staff from MHS and MSL worked together to develop the brochure. Illustrative materials were located by MHS staff and by members of the Task Force. The design process was long, but the brochure is very striking and informative. It was printed in February – 5,000 copies -- and distribution began in March.

Multiple copies of the brochure were sent to all public, academic, and special libraries; county records offices; museums; historical societies; and archives that were part of the CTC mailing lists (numbering 450+). A letter, signed by the State Librarian and MHS Director, was included with the brochures describing the CTC project goals and offering suggestions about how the brochures could be used and further distributed. Cultural organizations were encouraged to use the brochure to start a conversation with local government officials and with the community's local history supporters in an effort to bring them together to find solutions and funding for preservation needs.

Brochures were also sent to every member of the Montana House and Senate and to a wide range of state agencies and offices. Copies were available at the 2012 conferences for both the Museums Association of Montana and the Montana Library Association.

#### **Project Audience**

The primary audience for the project has been the state's cultural organizations which have historical materials in their care – archives, county records offices, historical societies, libraries, and museums. An additional audience was the leaders – local and state – who are in a position to help these cultural organizations provide care and preservation to the collections they have documenting the heritage of our state. A final audience was those citizens of Montana who are committed to helping preserve the state's history.

#### **Project Analysis**

All of the original goals – preservation training, assessment survey and data analysis, prioritization of preservation needs, call to action brochure -- were accomplished during the two-year grant project. The partners were even able to expand on the original goals, as detailed above, by offering additional training and two site surveys.

The value of these accomplishments is clear:

- 156 staff and volunteers of cultural organizations received basic preservation training. Most of these individuals had not received this training in the past.
- The survey and resulting report serve to document the most pressing preservation needs in Montana – for the first time statewide. This data is available to all cultural organizations and to leaders in our state as a planning tool and documentation of preservation needs. Recently, a museum accessed the survey data as the director considered submitting a grant application. The data will continue to have value in our state long-term.
- Reports from the site surveys have been (or will be) used by the two participating organizations to provide protection for and preservation of collections. These comprehensive surveys are some of the first efforts done for Montana’s smallest cultural organizations to help improve conditions. The impact of the priorities and recommendations included in the reports will be long-term for these two organizations.
- The call to action brochure has served to start a buzz amidst cultural organizations to highlight – both locally and statewide – the problems faced in providing proper care and access for valued historical materials. The brochure will continue to be used next year as the state legislature comes into session again in January.

There were no obstacles or unanticipated events as part of the planning project, but a major roadblock was confronted concerning anticipated next steps. From the time the planning grant was written, it was always the intention of the Montana partners to continue the CTC effort with the submission of an implementation grant proposal in 2012. An implementation project was actually in draft format when leadership changes took place at both MHS and MSL. The State Librarian retired in September and the acting Director of the Historical Society resigned in August. Because interim leaders were unable to commit agency staff or resources to another grant project, it was decided that an implementation proposal could not be submitted for the February 2012 deadline. Neither agency was in a position to assume the lead role as administrator or fiscal agent. It was very difficult for the CTC partners to give up on another grant effort, but it was the right decision.

**What’s Next**

The Montana partners will continue to offer training opportunities for staff and volunteers on preservation issues and skills as well as promote training offered by others in the state. We will continue to use and promote the CTC Online Community as a valuable resource for getting answers to important preservation questions and learning about training opportunities.

The Montana CTC brochure will be available in January as MHS and MSL host legislative events that provide an opportunity for staff and others to speak with legislators – new and returning -- on important issues facing the organizations we serve.

If there is another opportunity from IMLS for CTC Statewide Implementation Project grants, the partners will give careful consideration to preparing and submitting an application if approved and supported by our new leadership.

**Grant Products**

Included with this report are three copies of the *Montana Connecting to Collections: A Statewide Preservation Initiative* brochure and accompanying letter that went to cultural organizations and governmental leaders across the state.