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August 2009

As Secretary of State I am so very pleased to endorse the Statewide Preservation Plan proposed in the Washington Connecting to Collections Project report for the state of Washington. This is a crucial time in the development of the state of Washington and in United States history, as we grow and change as a society. We have witnessed an explosion in communications technology over the last century, and we have learned to harness that power to express ourselves and to communicate our history to the world. In many ways we have been at the forefront of the information age, and yet there are so many valuable assets that came before. We must keep the maintenance and care of these materials as part of our long-term vision as well.

The Washington State Library has partnered with the Washington State Archives, Washington State Historical Society, University of Washington Libraries, Washington Library Association, Washington Museum Association, and the Yakima Nation to strengthen our commitment to the materials in our custody. This alliance of Washington libraries, archives, historical societies, and museums is truly a testament to the dedication of these professionals to preserving the history and culture of this region.

This statewide plan will serve as a model for preserving Washington's cultural heritage collections; giving shape, scope, and form to institutions both large and small as they seek ways to sustain the health of their collections while providing outstanding outreach to Washingtonians and the citizenry at large.

Please join me in supporting this comprehensive statewide plan for meeting the needs of the treasures of centuries past as we safeguard them for life in the 21st century.

Sincerely,



SAM REED
Secretary of State



Washington
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August 2009

The wonderful and unique records, publications, and objects held in Washington's numerous archives, libraries, historical societies, and museums are keys to the education of our citizens and our world about Pacific Northwest arts and culture; they render the vivid and complex history of the many people who have come to call this land home. Our cultural institutions have cooperated many times in the past, creating a legacy of conveying history for the enlightenment and enjoyment of all. There is so much rich material in this region that needs to be preserved, and that is why I am excited that the Washington State Library is part of the Connecting to Collections initiative.

The statewide Connecting to Collections preservation plan will attend to the ongoing needs of Washington's cultural heritage collections both large and small, and prepare institutions statewide to meet the demand to make the collections of museums, historical societies, archives, and libraries available to the many generations to come.

The better preserved these materials are, the better we can learn from them and draw upon them as we forge ahead into the future. It is with great hope and a sense of purpose that we have come together once again to preserve our regional treasures. In doing so, we may continue to enjoy and learn from these magnificent resources for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jan Walsh".

Jan Walsh
State Librarian

Washington Statewide Preservation Plan

September 18, 2009

Thomas F. R. Clareson
Senior Consultant for New Initiatives

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Statewide Preservation Plan

In the development of a plan to move Washington's preservation activities forward, five elements should be considered. Continued work in Organization/Governance, Funding, Communication/Education, Disaster Preparedness, and Advocacy and Sustainability will build upon the successes achieved by the Washington Preservation Initiative (WPI) and will make these elements an integral part of the practices of cultural institutions in the state. Taking action on all of these fronts will help to continue the momentum not only of the WPI, but also the successful collaborations seen in Washington's Connecting to Collections Project, and the work of individual Washington cultural heritage institutions in preserving their collections. Descriptions of necessary activities within each of the five elements make up the core of Washington's Preservation Plan.

Organization/Governance

During their work together as partners on the WPI, and even more widely during the Washington Connecting to Collections Project, some of the state's leading institutions and associations formed a collaborative alliance which must be continued in the future to ensure their constituents, the state's cultural heritage community, and the citizens of Washington have continued access to important collections within the state.

The Washington State Library, Washington State Archives, Washington State Historical Society, University of Washington Libraries, Washington Library Association, Washington State Tribal Libraries, and Washington Museum Association and their staff and members have come together, especially in 2008-09, in a cooperative manner which few long-time cultural professionals in the state can remember seeing before. The broad representation of institution types in the first and second Connecting to Collections conference, and the Work Groups in between, have galvanized support from all sectors of the cultural community for statewide preservation action. Because this unprecedented cooperation has worked so well, the "vehicles" for cooperation developed during the LSTA and other IMLS projects should not be changed; only strengthened and enhanced.

"A key factor in successful statewide preservation efforts is having a core of dedicated people. Without this core statewide efforts do not have sustainability" – Building a Sustainable Statewide Preservation Program Work Group Report.

Initially, the Connecting to Collections Steering Committee and Work Groups can continue to function as noted below. As an infrastructure evolves, the work of these temporary groups will be absorbed by the permanent bodies. There are many models for statewide preservation programs. We are proposing a hybrid model that includes an independent, non-profit organization and, in the long-term, a statewide coordinator for the WPI within an existing state agency.

Components

Steering Committee

It is recommended that the current Steering Committee structure be continued, with changes in personnel as terms of service conclude or other professional responsibilities make members unable to continue.

Work Groups/Action Teams

At the May 2009 conference, although the Steering Committee was not sure if the Work Group members would want to continue their service, each group, in either their presentations or discussion with the project consultant, expressed strong interest in continuing their work. Some groups, such as the Collaborative Disaster Work Group, have worked to complete their planning documents (for instance, the Model List of Disaster Recovery Supplies). Other groups were motivated by the May Conference to carry their work into future phases.

It is recommended that the Advocacy and Collaborative Disaster Response Work Groups continue as they are, and the two Sustainability Work Groups be combined. This combination is suggested as a result of written and spoken comments that strengthening and sustainability of institutional preservation programs will help to sustain the statewide program, and vice versa. Because the groups have completed their initial assignments, one suggestion is that they could become “Action Teams” in future phases of their activity. Additionally, if there are new people with new skills who are interested in joining the WPI Work Groups/Action Teams, that definitely should be encouraged.

Washington Preservation Initiative Champions

Many of the state cultural heritage decision makers on the Reactor Panel at the May 2009 Conference suggested the need for, and desire to work on, a WPI Champions Committee to assist the Steering Committee and Work Groups/Action Teams in the further development of the state’s preservation program.

Utilizing the political and funding prowess of the top administrators from each of the partner institutions to develop strategies for continued support of the statewide program will be extremely beneficial to the effort.

Additionally, Connecting to Collections Steering Committee members felt it was important to identify champions from outside of the partner institutions and cultural heritage community to join the Champions Committee and provide an enthusiastic voice for the general public’s support of preservation.

It is recommended that such a committee be named and hold their first meeting in Fall 2009, in order to aid the immediate planning and funding needs of the statewide effort. Working with the Steering Committee, the Champions Committee should help to decide if the responsibility for a statewide preservation program will continue to be shared, or will become resident in one institution. The group can develop a recommended organizational structure to indicate chains of responsibility.

Washington Preservation Consortium

The Washington Preservation Consortium (WPC) has been suggested as an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation with a sliding-scale, dues-based membership. It would hold an annual conference and serve as an advocacy group for preservation in the state. Models for such a consortium exist in Iowa <http://web.grinnell.edu/individuals/stuhrr/icpc/index.html> and North Carolina <http://www.ncpreservation.org/index.html>.

WPI Manager

In the longer term, the goal is to hire a WPI Manager based in the Secretary of State’s Office who would provide preservation assistance and outreach services to the State’s cultural institutions. Massachusetts has a statewide preservation specialist on the staff of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (<http://mblc.state.ma.us/advisory/preservation/index.php>).

Funding

During a time of economic crisis, it may be difficult to continue funding for preservation efforts. However, both the Work Groups and the Reactor Panel at the May 2009 Conference felt preservation was a shared priority for the state, and they had a number of excellent leads to explore for future collaborative preservation program funding in the state. Potential funding sources include:

- IMLS Connecting to Collections Implementation Grant
- The Heritage Capital Grants Program
- Washington State Library, Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funding
- Local, State, and National Foundation support

Utilizing this Statewide Preservation Plan as a basis for a detailed work plan, it is recommended that the Steering Committee, newly-combined Sustainability Committee, and the newly-developed WPI Champions Committee hold a joint meeting in Fall, 2009, to develop a course of action for future program funding, laying out a schedule of funders to approach by date/deadline, fit with the program's mission, and feasibility of receiving funding from the specific funder organization.

Additional areas where funding support is most needed are the Preservation Site Survey program and Grant program originally developed by the WPI. These efforts were true "differentiators" for the WPI from many other statewide preservation programs, as they allowed institutions to have their current preservation status assessed, then to improve upon that status through grant-supported projects and programs.

Communication

As detailed in the Work Group reports, the WPI survey reports, and in comments at the two Connecting to Collections meetings, the State of Washington had extensive success in raising awareness of, educating constituents on, and supporting grant programs dedicated to preservation during the era of the WPI. In addition to becoming a recognized "brand" and program/funding sponsor in the state, the WPI became known throughout the nation for its programmatic activities. A strong recommendation in this plan is to re-establish this highly-regarded name as the future name for collaborative activities within the state. Beginning with the first meetings and efforts generated by this report, all future activities of the program should occur under the "WPI" umbrella.

Continuation and extension of current communications activities is also highly important. The PreserveNW listserv, which now reaches 355 subscribers, should continue to be utilized for Washington preservation planning. Even though there are subscribers from outside the state on this listserv, their knowledge of and feedback on WPI activities can only be beneficial to the WPI program and preservation activities in their own states. The University of Washington Libraries Preservation Web Resources page is also an excellent site and should be spotlighted in future communications strategies.

Additionally, the Washington Connecting to Collections website has become, in less than a year, an excellent repository for information about statewide preservation plans and activity. Whether continued as an effort of the Washington State Library, or re-established as an independent website, this important resource should continue to be allowed to grow. Finally, organizations such as the Washington Museum Association and the Washington Library Association should both establish links to PreserveNW and the Connecting to Collections websites and could also focus more attention on developing preservation-related stories and articles on their own existing websites.

Finally, whether through e-mail, web postings, or other means, regular progress reports and announcements about the work of the WPI should be made to all of the partner groups' boards and in their membership newsletters, to keep these constituencies informed and to expand the outreach efforts of the WPI.

Education

Finally in this area, one of the most important ways in which the WPI extended its influence was through the provision of workshops throughout the state. In some cases, classes were led by Washington-based preservation experts; other sessions featured national experts contracted to present in Washington. Independently, "traveling" workshops by Regional Alliance for Preservation organizations and other national associations were scheduled in the state.

Under “management” by the Steering Committee, or, if necessary, by a new committee to be established in the future, preservation workshops at the planned “pace” of one per quarter in both eastern and western Washington will be scheduled.

Finally, project partners and participants should be continually encouraged to give presentations on preservation and the WPI at cultural heritage-related meetings and conferences, as well as to the general public.

Disaster Preparedness

Among the Work Groups, the Collaborative Disaster Planning committee set out the most specific goals for its work in both its documentation and presentation to the May Conference.

At the Conference, the work of this group was acknowledged by the other Work Groups and the Reactor Panel alike as being a cornerstone of activity to protect Washington’s cultural heritage collections.

The work of this group should be continued, and even expanded, to set a baseline for collection safety. Among the key efforts to be carried out:

- Completing and disseminating the Model List of Disaster Recovery Supplies.
- Establishment of three to four County or Regional Disaster Response Networks.
In order to test the feasibility of the proposed network structure and mutual aid agreements, the Disaster Response Work Group should have a goal to develop 3-4 networks by May 2010, when a meeting would be held to discuss the establishment and growth of the programs. At the May 2009 conference, at least three localities (Seattle, Tacoma/Olympia, and Bellingham) expressed interest in beginning work immediately on such networks; an Eastern Washington County or metropolitan area should be targeted for development of another of these pilot networks.
- Statewide Response Team.
Once some initial County/Regional networks are established, the development of a statewide team can begin in earnest. Implementation of the “Washington Collections Emergency Response Team” should begin as soon as possible, with a target date for full implementation of December 31, 2010. This will include contracting with an established commercial disaster recovery company, and other statewide supply or service contracts as seen necessary.
- More “Alliance for Response” Initiatives.
In addition to the above activities devised by the Work Group, it is strongly suggested that the State of Washington, with or without funding from Heritage Preservation, utilize that organization’s “Alliance for Response” program in an eastern Washington location such as Spokane, to strengthen the relationship of cultural heritage and emergency response professionals in that location.

Advocacy, Sustainability, and Marketing

To continue building awareness of and support for preservation in the State of Washington, the Advocacy and two Sustainability Work Groups, among their other findings, suggested the development of case studies or models of successful institutional preservation activities or programs as a learning tool for other institutions in the state.

Through the continued work of the Advocacy Group, and the newly-combined Sustainability Group, the writing and dissemination of these case studies/models should begin immediately. Ranging from one to four pages, and including illustrations whenever possible, these studies can be made available on the Web and as PDFs for printing. The Work Groups/Action Teams should begin to solicit and publish these success stories as soon as possible, with the goal of presenting three to four per year.

Additionally, these Work Groups/Action Teams should promote the development of conference programs on the WPI as was previously mentioned.

Two potential additional activities which could be addressed by these groups and/or the Steering Committee:

- Advocacy and education on the preservation and sustainability of Washington's born-digital and digitized materials; and
- A program of evaluation, via surveys or focus groups on a three-year basis, to determine the longitudinal impact of the WPI program.

Through programmatic activity in these core areas, the WPI can continue its success, and act as a model statewide preservation effort for a majority of states across the nation.