



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

## **Narrative Section of a Successful Application**

The attached document contains the grant narrative of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Assessment of Museum & Library Collections

Institution: Antiochian Village

Project Director: Julia Hilgard Ritter

Grant Program: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

## NARRATIVE

### **A. What activity (or activities) would the grant support?**

The collections of the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library celebrate the artistic, literary, spiritual and cultural heritage of Syria, Lebanon and the Holy Land, early Christian history, and the Arab American experience. Our museum attracts the general public, while our library resources are of high research value to scholars of Arab American history, early Christian history, and Christian-Muslim relations. Through this grant, the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library will retain a professional preservation consultant to conduct a general preservation assessment that will assess policies, practices, and conditions affecting the collection's long-term preservation. The assessment will evaluate the general storage conditions of the collections such as environment (temperature, relative humidity, pollution, light, pest and mold control), fire protection, security, item storage, handling, and exhibition. It will also evaluate management of the collections (policies, practices, access, and organization). The consultant's visit and evaluation will result in a written assessment report providing recommendations for conservation, preservation, management, and access to these important and valuable humanities collections. The primary goal of the project is to develop strategies to improve current collections care practices.

### **B. What are the content and size of the humanities collections that are the focus of the project?**

*The collection serves as a time capsule, a window into the concerns which the Arab pioneers had over the fate of their beloved Syria, their acculturation and successful adaptation to life in America, and their thoughts on ethnicity, race, nationalism and citizenship.*  
– Hani Bawardi, Ph.D., University of Michigan, Dearborn

The Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library collections serve as resources to visitors and scholars on many levels. Through its scholarly collections, the library offers researchers a depth and breadth of materials rarely seen anywhere else in the world. Through its exhibits, the museum serves to increase visitors' knowledge about the unique heritage of the Near East and ancient Christianity, and to broaden awareness about the experiences and contributions of Arabic-speaking people to the history of our nation and to the fabric of American life today.

Our library collection contains about 20,000 books, approximately 500 of which are rare. We house a unique collection of early Arabic books, records, correspondence, and periodicals, of high research value to scholars in the fields of Middle Eastern and Arab American Studies. This collection includes books and periodicals published in the U.S. during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Arabic literary movement known as *al-rabitah*, some inscribed by the authors, as well as books published in Arabic on the American printing press in Beirut, by authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "Arab Awakening" known as *al-nahdah*. We also hold archives relating to the immigration and settlement of Syrians in America, and the establishment of Syrian Orthodox Christian churches throughout the U.S., during the early 1900s to the present day. The collection also includes original hand-written letters between renowned poet and artist, Kahlil Gibran, and Metropolitan Anthony Bashir, who was then Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the U.S., and who translated Gibran's writings, including his most famous work, *The Prophet*, into Arabic. Other items of note include an original 1617 King James Bible, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Arabic/Latin interlineal Bible, as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 3-volume series, *Views in the Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt and Nubia*, by artist David Roberts, which features stone lithographs and unique observations of the region, as seen through the eyes of this 19<sup>th</sup> century European artist and traveller. The collection also holds musical recordings, including both 78s and 33s, ranging from traditional Byzantine chant and liturgical music to popular Arabic music from the 1920s to 1960s.

The museum collection contains over 750 items, including more than 50 religious icons dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, representing Russian, Greek Syrian, and other Eastern Orthodox traditions. Many of the icons are painted with egg tempera on wood panels, some are worked brass, or carved in miniature out of wood or tortoise shell. Other artifacts include an 18<sup>th</sup> century Middle Eastern pectoral cross, two reliquary pendants from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a Syrian funerary relief from the Byzantine era, and Byzantine coins from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Also in our collection are several hand-embroidered Syrian and Palestinian dresses from 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including a wedding dress, elaborately embroidered in gold thread on purple velvet

and worn by a bride on her wedding day in Homs, Syria in 1859. A 19<sup>th</sup> century dress from Bethlehem is made of hand-dyed linen, and embroidered with the “Bethlehem Chestpiece,” a motif which has been documented by historians who study traditional Palestinian costume. The museum collection also features items which belonged to immigrant families who came to the United States at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as worked copper Arabic coffee pots, a number of brass Arabic serving trays with accompanying folding tray stands, an inlaid wood backgammon table, a large steamship trunk, a Victrola record player from the early 1900s, traditional shoes, jewelry, scarves and other personal items.

### **C. How are these humanities collections used?**

Our exhibits and collections are accessible to the public year-round, with no admission fees. Visitors include researchers, scholars, members of the local community, bus tours, school groups, families, clergy members, as well as a wide range of people who are guests of the Antiochian Village Conference Center where the Museum & Library collections are located.

The library is open to the public and also serves as a vital resource for the Antiochian House of Studies (AHOs), which is a program of distance learning that offers Master’s and Doctoral levels of study in partnership with Balamand University in Tripoli, Lebanon, as well as the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Since it began over 30 years ago, the AHOs has served approximately 4500 students. In just the past five years, about 1500 students from 12 different countries have participated in the program. During the course of their study, students attend three one-week residencies at the Antiochian Village, during which time they make use of the library in person. During the rest of the year, the library’s resources may be searched online and requested by students.

As noted earlier, the library has been used by a number of outside scholars in the course of their research. Four examples of scholars are described below:

**Hani Bawardi**, Associate Professor in History and Arab American Studies at University of Michigan in Dearborn, has frequently used the Antiochian Heritage Library’s resources in conducting his research. He presented several papers in national and international conferences relying on our collections, including recent publication of the paper “From Nazareth to Flint: the Importance of Ameen Farah and Immigrant Historiography,” and the book-length study, “The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship.” He notes that our collection holds a rich selection of materials from the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Arab *nahdah* (cultural and political awakening), including examples of the first Arabic-language Bible printed by the American missionaries in Beirut, the first Arabic-Arabic dictionary, and the first modern printings of Arab classics by Ma’arri, Ibin Khaldoun, al-Bukhari, Al-Mutanabbi, and many others. These, as well as original publications by the members of the famed *Pen Bond* (a.k.a. *Pen League*, or *al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah* in Arabic), to which Kahlil Gibran, Elia Madey, and Mikhail Naimy belonged, are rarely found, and are of high research value to those studying the emergence of Arab American identity. Bawardi sees our collections as a window into the culture and identity of Arabic-speaking people of the Syrian provinces (today comprising Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Historic Palestine), saying, “the value of these resources for research on the early Arabic-speaking immigrants is immeasurable. They help document the hopes, habits, and interests of the early Syrian immigrants the way no other resource can.”

**Matthew Stiffler**, who earned his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in American Culture, conducted research at the Antiochian Heritage Library for his dissertation, “Authentic Arabs, Authentic Christians: Antiochian Orthodox and the Mobilization of Cultural Identity” (2010). Stiffler notes:

*The most helpful aspect of the archives was the collection of commemorative books from individual parishes and archdiocese conventions, dating from the 1940s until the present day. It is the only collection of its kind anywhere in the country. They offer an amazing record of the daily lives of Antiochian Orthodox Christians, and how they celebrated both their spirituality and their unique Arab American heritage. I also found some of the papers of Frank Maria very useful, since he played an active role in shaping the Archdiocese’s relationship with U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and worked hard*

*to change the negative perceptions of Arabs in America. The library's collection of The Word magazine is also rare, and it is very useful to have all of the issues in one place.*

**Jess Bier**, who earned her Ph.D. in 2013 from Maastricht University, The Netherlands, conducted archival research at the Antiochian Heritage Library while completing her Master's degree in Geography at the City University of New York. Her thesis was a history and geography of Arab American neighborhoods in New York City, from 1880-1914, with a focus upon how daily economic life affected conceptions of national, cultural, and linguistic identity. Bier has found the collections of the Antiochian Heritage Library invaluable to her research, stating:

*The collections of the Antiochian Heritage Library were invaluable to my research, especially several dozen volumes that were printed in Syrian communities in New York in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The books deal with a variety of topics, from original literature to travel volumes, political tracts, and also a wealth of information on Syrian American businesses from local business directories. While Syrian American newspapers have been catalogued elsewhere, these locally-printed books, which were often issued in small editions, are rare. As such, the collection of the Antiochian Heritage Library is incredibly unique, particularly in terms of the age and variety of sources, as well as the high standard of preservation.*

**Francesco Medici**, who earned his Master's in Italian Literature at Università degli Studi di Bari, Italy, is a literary critic and translator, and one of the Italy's foremost experts in the work of poet and artist Kahlil Gibran. He has edited and translated several books by Gibran, including *The Prophet* and *Twenty Drawings*, and is the editor of the first Arab-American poetry anthology published in Italy. Our collection of original hand-written letters between Kahlil Gibran and the Antiochian Archbishop in North America at the time, Metropolitan Antony Bashir, are featured in Mr. Medici's 2010 paper, titled *Un abito arabo per "Il Profeta": Lettere inedite di Kahlil Gibran a Antony Bashir (An Arabic Garment for "The Prophet": the Unpublished Letters of Kahlil Gibran to Antony Bashir)* (Kervan, 7-11, January 2010, pp. 37-57). Medici states that these letters, "exchanged between 1924 and 1928, provide a window into the way these two men worked together to translate Gibran's writings from English into Arabic, and shed light on the process of communication and assimilation which many Arab Americans experienced during the early 1900s."

In addition to the library, visitors may view the Museum's permanent collection, as well as changing exhibits which are usually displayed on an annual basis. Examples of changing exhibits have been: *The Art of Kahlil Gibran*, 2004 (original drawings on loan from the Telfair Museum of Art, Georgia); *Holy and Historic: Scenes of the Near East in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Prints and Photographs*, 2007 (original engravings, lithographs and photographs from the permanent collection); *Splendor of Damascus: Textiles and Artifacts of Traditional Syria*, 2009 (hand-embroidered 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century clothing and textiles on loan from the collection of Hanan and Farah Munayyer); *Spirit and Whimsy: the Art of Niko Chocheli*, 2010 (original paintings and illustrations of the renowned Philadelphia artist and iconographer, originally from the Republic of Georgia); *Structure and Symbolism in Stone: the Architecture of Ancient Christian Syria*, 2011 (photographs from Princeton University's historic 1899-1907 archaeological expeditions to Syria); *Titanic Connections: Unique and Untold Stories*, 2012 -2014 (little-known passenger stories that connect to our region, to the Antiochian heritage, and to the fabric of American life today); *Little Syria, NY*, June-September 2013 (travelling exhibit on loan from the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, MI, exploring the vibrant early Syrian-American community in New York City).

#### **D. What is the nature and mission of your institution?**

Through its resources and exhibits, the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library preserves and presents to the public the artistic, cultural, literary and spiritual heritage of the people of Antioch and its surrounding area, thereby seeking to increase knowledge and understanding of ancient Christianity and Middle Eastern culture and history, and to increase awareness of the unique contributions of Arabic-speaking people to American life and to the world at large.

Located at the Antiochian Village Conference Center, which is owned by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library serves as the educational wing of

the facility and operates with a separate mission statement that focuses on the cultural heritage of the Antiochian people. The 300-acre property, which was originally a summer camp with only rustic facilities, was purchased by the Archdiocese in 1978. The first phase of the Conference Center (lodging rooms, meeting rooms, and dining room) was built in 1985, its museum space at that time consisting of a series of small, adjoining lower-level rooms. The library was established in 1989 and was expanded in 2004, during the construction of the state-of-the-art museum wing, which is the most recent addition to the Conference Center facility. The goal of the 2004 expansion was to be able to store the collection in a secure and climate-controlled environment that would stand the test of time, as well as to provide a more appropriate exhibit space for the unique treasures in the collection. With the new construction, the library gained a climate-controlled rare book room, and the museum gained a spacious, well-lit exhibit space and a climate-controlled storage vault. The combined budget for both Museum and Library is currently \$155,000 annually.

The library is open year-round, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For the months of June to October, the museum is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday 12 noon to 4:00 p.m. During the rest of the year, the museum is open Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and evenings/weekends by appointment. The collections and exhibits of the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library are managed day to day by the Museum Curator & Librarian (30-35 hours/week). An Associate Librarian handles daily library responsibilities including cataloging and circulation (24 hours/week). The Museum & Library has also benefitted from interns and student assistants who have been either volunteers, or funded by state grants (when available). Generally, these assistants have worked during the summer months for 25-40 hours/week.

**E. Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment or consultation?**

No.

**F. What is the importance of this project to your institution?**

Preservation and proper storage of our collections is of foremost importance. While we have climate-controlled environments for both display and storage, we have concerns that some items are being stored in ways that could potentially compromise their long-term preservation. For example, our wooden icons, hand-painted with tempera and dating from the 12<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, are currently stored in cardboard boxes, leaning up against each other, separated by paper folders.

The information and guidance gained from a professional assessment will be put into practice in whatever way is necessary, whether through the purchase of new storage materials, shelving, etc., or through further staff education in best practices. If costly measures are recommended, the assessment will serve as a basis upon which future funding campaigns are developed. The professional assessment will provide us not only with the knowledge of our current state of affairs, but also with a tool with which we may work to improve.

**G. What are the names and qualifications of the consultant(s) and staff involved in the project?**

Julia Ritter has served as Museum Curator and Librarian for the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library for the past seven years. Prior to her current position, she worked in the non-profit sector in the fields of cross-cultural communication and graphic design. Her experience includes working closely with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art as it transitioned to its new building in 1995. She earned a B.A. in Human Biology from Stanford University (Stanford, California), a B.F.A with Distinction in Graphic Design from California College of the Arts (San Francisco, California), and recently completed the *Save Pennsylvania's Past* training for museum & library professionals. A resume for Ms. Ritter is attached (Attachment 5).

Kathryn Strevig has served as Associate Librarian for the Antiochian Heritage Library since February 2012. After earning her B.A. in English Literature from Saint Vincent College (Latrobe, PA), she pursued a Masters of Library Science, which she earned in 2010 from Clarion University of Pennsylvania (Clarion, PA). She recently completed the *Save Pennsylvania's Past* training for museum & library professionals. A resume for Ms. Strevig is attached (Attachment 5).

The Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library will retain the services of the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) to prepare the general preservation assessment. Established in 1977, CCAHA has grown to become the largest non-profit regional conservation center in the United States and specializes in the

treatment of works of art and historic artifacts on paper. Through its preservation services department, CCAHA has provided general preservation assessments to more than 500 institutions.

The consultant for the project is Laura Hartz-Stanton, CCAHA's Director of Preservation Services. Ms. Hartz-Stanton has worked with collecting institutions for over eight years, including work on a wide variety of preservation assessments for museums, libraries, historic sites, and archives located throughout the country. She joined the CCAHA staff in 2005 after serving for three years as Curator of Collections at Siouxland Heritage Museums in Sioux Falls, SD. Previous to her position at Siouxland Heritage Museums, she worked as an intern at the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown, NY and the Litchfield Historical Society in CT. She has a Master of Arts from the Cooperstown Graduate Program, with an emphasis in Museum Studies.

CCAHA letter of commitment as well as a resume for Ms. Hartz-Stanton are attached (Attachment 6).

#### **H. What is the plan of work for the project?**

*January:* On notification of receipt of the grant, the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library will contact CCAHA and sign a contract for a General Preservation Assessment.

*February-March:* Pre-visit survey will be completed by Julia Ritter, Museum Curator and Librarian, and submitted to CCAHA.

*April-June:* A one-day site visit by Laura Hartz-Stanton, CCAHA Director of Preservation Services, will be scheduled and conducted. The site visit will consist of a review of the site, an examination of the collections, interviews with relevant staff, and discussion of preliminary findings.

*July-September:* Ms. Stanton will draft the Assessment Report and submit it to the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library for review and approval.

*October:* Final report submitted by the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library to NEH. Project completed.