

2019 NEH Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions
Appalachian Mountain Club Library & Archives
The Historic Outdoors: A Preservation Initiative
Project Narrative

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

A Preservation Assistance Grant to the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) Library & Archives will allow us to continue implementing measures set out in a 2010 preservation assessment, which was funded through an NEH Preservation Assistance Grant. Specifically, a grant will support the addition of high density shelving units to the AMC Library & Archives' new location. In 2018, AMC's Library & Archives are moving from the organization's headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts, to AMC's Highland Center at Crawford Notch, New Hampshire. The Highland Center is a lodging facility as well as an outdoor recreation and education hub in the heart of the White Mountains, where our founders first explored, hiked, and advocated for the environmental conservation of wild and scenic landscapes. Moving our archives here will allow the general public increased access to our incredible collections by providing additional space, regular programming, and locations for rotating educational exhibits of archival materials.

Upon moving, we will outfit our new space with a high density shelving system. This consists of a rail and carriage system, museum-grade flooring used for archival applications, tile covering over this elevated flooring, and one stationary fixed unit that can accommodate up to 80 cubic feet of paper records in standard archival cartons, as well as approximately 60 cubic feet of mixed-size photographic storage boxes. A moving unit will then be placed on the rail system, creating an aisle that can be closed or opened using simple, mechanical assist rollers. This unit will provide storage space for an addition 112 cubic feet of records cartons. The Preservation Assistance Grant will fund yet another unit, thereby adding another 112 cubic feet of storage. With future funding, we will purchase more units until we are able to store up 580 cartons and 200 cubic feet of mixed-sized storage boxes. This will eventually replace all temporary shelving, as well as the need to store materials in an offsite facility (which we do with some of our collections now). Not only will investing in this shelving therefore provide us a more financially sustainable future for our archives by removing the need to pay any storage rental fees, but it will also give us room to grow with new collections acquisitions.

This high density shelving will also be made of steel, which is a huge upgrade from our previous location where almost all of our shelving was made from wood. These old built-in units were not compatible with our materials by preservation or efficiency standards, being shallow book shelving with few options for customization. Our new shelving will be deeper and configurable to accommodate the standard cartons sizes we use as well as our smaller photographic storage boxes and oversized materials cartons.

The goal of the project is to keep up the momentum of replacing our storage shelving with furniture that is conducive to preservation in a timely and cost-effective manner. The extra space provided will make it easy to access collections for our patrons, provide security and organization, and give sustainability to our collections growth objectives.

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

The AMC Library & Archives' full array of collections contains a wealth of materials tying arts, culture and history to American landscapes and outdoor recreation from the 1870s to the present. The Library consists of over 3,000 book and journal titles, creating an excellent reference library to complement our primary source materials. The Archives consist of institutional records, scrapbooks, manuscripts, images, audio recordings, artifacts, films, and maps. The logbooks from the Club's historic mountain huts can be found here, recording the thoughts of mountain travelers across an entire century.

The Archives are particularly rich in visual materials, with well over 20,000 images covering the 1870s to the present. AMC has an extensive collection of lantern slides documenting our early history, and hundreds of postcards and stereograph cards with views of the mountains of the world, with a special focus on the Northeast United States. Other image formats include modern photographic slides, glass plate negatives, and prints featuring a mix of processes such as albumen, cyanotype, silver gelatin developed-out prints, and modern prints. Our Photographic Slide Collection comprises 10,000 Kodachrome, Ektachrome and tourist slides range in date from the 1930s through 2010. The collection as a whole is a visual documentation of outdoor modes of travel, styles of dress and recreation gear, people, mountains, trails, events and changes in the social fabric of the outdoor community over time.

Significant prints in the collection document 19th century wilderness camps, cabins and alpine mountain huts in the White Mountain region of New Hampshire. They are an important record of people who travelled "off the beaten path" in New England during a time when stays at grand resort hotels were the norm. These contrarian adventurers played a key role in the growing concerns over land management and protection in the Progressive Era. AMC's collections show the accomplishments of the conservation movement from the recreationist's view. For example, the results of the hard work put into the passage of the Weeks Act of 1911, which allowed for the creation of the White Mountain National Forest, can be seen in sweeping views of the region in our photo collections as well as through our institutional record of our advocacy.

Paired with our visual materials are numerous manuscript collections, diaries, scrapbooks and unpublished reports of Club excursions and adventures. One example is the Thelma Bonney Hall Towle Collection of correspondence, writings, photographs, maps, and scrapbooks of a budding journalist, spanning 1929 to 1948. The bulk of the collection consists of typewritten scrapbooks of personal narratives on trips throughout New England and the Western United States. They are a unique window into the life of woman pursuing a career in writing and journalism while finding adventure as a rock climber in the 1930s, when few women were involved in the sport.

Underlying our wonderful photographic, manuscript, and memorabilia collections are AMC's institutional records. These consist of the minutes of every corporate meeting of the club since its founding in 1876, as well as documentation of our work on hiking trails like the 230-mile Bay Circuit Trail circumnavigating the city of Boston, our programmatic and educational programs, partnership work with groups like the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and Northern Forest Alliance, and the official records of our twelve regional chapters.

C. How are these humanities collections used?

The primary use of the Special Collections and Institutional Records has been in the areas of publication and research. Internally, the Library & Archives support all of our departments in promotion of the AMC through its magazine, journal, web presence and marketing campaigns. Externally, scholars from a wide variety of disciplines such as history and environmental science, use the collections to study topics from genealogy to alpine ecology and beyond. Our materials have appeared in programs and publications presented by PBS, the National Geographic Society, *Yankee Magazine*, and the Vancouver Art Gallery in British Columbia. Images of hikers in the 1890s have been used in an interactive exhibit at Duke Farms in Hillsborough, New Jersey, to illustrate a conservation timeline. The Bradford Washburn American Mountaineering Museum featured AMC's images when it first opened in 2008.

Environmental scientists are a growing segment of our patrons. In 2007, University of Vermont graduate student Kimberly Beal scanned historic photos of mountain summits. She then re-photographed the views in person and compared old and new to chart the amount of tree growth on alpine summits as an indicator of climate change. Leslie Bergum of the Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee in New Hampshire used images to successfully protect the watershed of the river. The Club has been the subject of two studies, completed by Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology scholars. Both created case studies using our archives to analyze critical success factors and changes in governance for non-profit institutions.

Additionally, authors and scholars use the collections in numerous projects. Primary sources such as hiking journals and mountain summit logbooks from the early 20th century provide a window into the minds of outdoorspeople exploring the Northeast mountains before modern equipment and GPS mapping. Our photographic collections show striking differences in modes of travel and in the landscape itself. Our manuscripts and images have appeared in works such as the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forest's journal *Forest Notes*, Maurice Isserman's *Continental Divide: A History of American Mountaineering* (2017), Jeffrey H. Ryan's *Blazing Ahead: Benton MacKaye, Myron Avery, and the Rivalry That Built the Appalachian Trail* (2017), and Silas Chamberlin's *On the Trail: A History of American Hiking* (2016). The collections reflect AMC's ties with the U.S. Forest Service, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Images and documents have been used to illustrate topics such as the fight to preserve California's Hetch Hetchy Valley, the Wilderness Act of 1964, and the protection of thousands of acres of wild lands in the mid-Atlantic region through the Highland Conservation Act of 2005.

Moving the Library and Archives from our Boston headquarters to the Highland Center will introduce new audiences to these collections. The Highland Center is visited by well over 100,000 individuals, including overnight guests, hikers, and educational groups, each year. The facility hosts numerous programs year-round and there are places to install displays, making it an ideal location not only to expand our collections storage, but to highlight our collections in a highly visible way. Upon our move to New Hampshire, we will regularly begin to display rotating exhibits of our unique historical materials. In doing so, we will connect thousands of visitors annually to the history of not only the Appalachian Mountain Club, but also the unique

role that past visitors of the White Mountains have played in America's recreation and conservation history.

AMC materials complement research in many areas of science, sociology and history. As an organization with more than 275,000 constituents, including members, advocates and supporters, AMC has played a leadership role in conservation of land and water in the Appalachian Mountain region for over 140 years. We know of no other collection in the Northeast or anywhere else in the U.S. that so completely documents Northeast mountain culture and the early conservation movement.

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

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is America's oldest nonprofit conservation and recreation organization. We promote the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of the mountains, forests, waters, and trails of the Appalachian region. We believe these resources have intrinsic worth and also provide recreational opportunities, spiritual renewal, and ecological and economic health for the region. Because successful conservation depends on active engagement with the outdoors, we encourage people to experience, learn about, and appreciate the natural world.

The mission of the Appalachian Mountain Club Library & Archives is to collect, organize and provide access to information on AMC's efforts in the area of conservation, education, and recreation. While the core of the Library & Archives is historical in nature, it will seek to acquire and make accessible contemporary information sources as well. The Library & Archives are open to the public at large for research purposes.

General Information:

Operating Budget (FY18): \$41,746

Number of full-time staff members: 0

Number of part-time staff members: 1

Number of volunteers: 2

Number of interns: 1 per semester

Schedule of open hours: Tuesday – Thursday 9am – 5pm, (approximately 156 days per year)

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

The AMC Library & Archives was assessed on April 5, 2010, by Monique C. Fischer, Senior Photograph Conservator for the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC). In this assessment it was stated that the collections would benefit from improved housing and shelving. The report specifically recommended that we place materials on proper metal shelving. A grant from the National Endowment for Humanities would directly support the completion of this task.

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

The Appalachian Mountain Club Library & Archives is dedicated to the long-term care and sharing of historical materials relating the history of the AMC and the Northeast outdoors. Since the preservation survey in 2010, progress has been made in stabilizing our large photographic print collections. Recommendations for climate control and cold storage have had a dramatic impact on the preservation and longevity of our collections. The next step is to continue this work with our overall storage scheme, ensuring that the stage is set for the future preservation of this outstanding resource.

Promotion of the Appalachian Mountain Club Library & Archives through the AMC's magazine, journal, informational displays at AMC's Annual Meeting, web presence and word of mouth is predicted to increase use by 30% this year. This is a tremendous boon to collections that have not seen the light of day in years. The fact of our move from Boston to New Hampshire means we will have far greater foot traffic by day visitors, lodge guests, and hikers alike.

Although environmental controls are now in place, the storage situation for the collections is not ideal. A lack of space produces situations in which crowding becomes a problem. Now that climate controls have been added, the next step is rehousing for the photographic materials, making them easier to find and safer to handle.

The AMC Library & Archives' IMLS-funded preservation initiative, past NEH funding and the current project signal a true sea-change in the attention given the long-term care of our collections. In the past two years alone we have overcome the major hurdles of securing guidance from a professional conservator, maintaining climate control in our archives space, and creating much needed storage spaces for oversized photographic items. We hope to maintain this momentum into the coming year.

G. What are the names and qualifications of the staff involved in the project?

Rebecca M. Fullerton has been the Librarian and Archivist for the Appalachian Mountain Club since 2005, and will act as grants administrator for this project. She has a BA in Art History and Studio Art from Hartwick College, an MA in Museum Studies from the Harvard University Extension School, and is certified by the Academy of Certified Archivists. She runs the Library & Archives in its day-to-day operations, managing the organization's archive and collections of books, images, maps and journals by answering all patron queries, performing cataloging, archives processing, preservation activities and educational programming and outreach.

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

January 2019

- Purchase high density shelving unit (Rebecca M. Fullerton)

February 2019

- Install high density shelving unit and move collections materials in (Rebecca M. Fullerton)

Ongoing

- Install additional high density shelving units up to max capacity (Rebecca M. Fullerton)