



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: Purchase of Flat Files and Supplies for Preservation of Oversized Materials

Institution: City of Boston

Project Director: John Joseph McColgan

Grant Program: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

**City of Boston Archives Grant Application
National Endowment for the Humanities
Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions**

**“Purchase of Flat Files and Supplies for Preservation of Oversized Materials”
Narrative**

A. What activity would the grant support?

This grant would support the purchase of flat files and preservation supplies needed to fulfill recommendations made in a Preservation Needs Assessment completed on 28 May 2015. This assessment was conducted by the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC).

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

City Archives’ collections document Boston’s foundation and development. They provide sources for the history of Boston’s administration, policy, services, economy, politics, civic engagement, and the City’s role in the larger world. Historical records serve as evidence of government actions. Providing equitable access to historic public records makes it possible for citizens to understand their community and to hold their government accountable for those actions.

The City of Boston Archives contains approximately 19,000 cubic feet of records in its facility at Rivermoor Street and 15.5 terabytes of records in its digital repository. The Archives includes records created and received by the government of Boston and annexed municipalities from 1630 to the present. The Archives holds a great many oversized materials, generally plans generated by city departments. There are currently 180 drawers of flat files and an estimated 2,000 rolled plans in various formats including paper, blueprint, polyester, linen and cloth-backed. Other oversized materials include panoramic photographs and materials from the Boston Marathon Bombing Memorial collection. This project would provide archival storage for oversized materials currently stored exposed on shelves and plans that are currently stored improperly in overstuffed file drawers. The project will specifically focus on the following collections:

Boston Marathon Bombing Memorial collection (50 oversized items)

After the bombings at the Boston Marathon in 2013, a temporary memorial sprang up at the finish line in Copley Square. The memorial stayed in place in Copley Square until June of 2013 when the City Archives was asked by the Mayor’s Office to collect the items left at the memorial and preserve them. Items left at the memorial included sneakers, stuffed animals, banners, posters, cards, medals, etc. Significant items in the collection include a banner presented to the City of Boston by the Town of Sandy Hook, Connecticut and the flag that flew on Boylston Street the day of the bombing. The many posters, cards, etc. left at the memorial show the response and feelings of the general public to the tragedy. A large portion of the objects that were left at the memorial are generously housed free of charge at Iron Mountain. The paper based materials were transferred to the City Archives. A large portion of the paper based materials have been stored in archival folders and boxes. However, a small amount of oversized

posters, banners, etc. which are too large for boxes are being stored temporarily lying open on shelves exposed to light and allowing dust to accumulate.

Panoramic photographs (9 photographs)

The City Archives holds a number of panoramic photographs of classes from Boston Public Schools dating from the early 1900s to 1970. Based on recommendations from the NEDCC preservation assessment, most of the panoramic photographs have been removed from the frames and placed in folders and boxed with items of similar size. There are a small number which are too large for the boxes and could be stored in flat files.

City plans (approximately 3700 plans)

The City Archives holds a number of plans from the Public Works Department and the Parks Department. The Public Works Department Engineering and Highway Division plans span the years 1892-1958 and the Bridge and Ferry Division plans span the years 1849-1959. The Parks Department plans span the years 1890-1975. The plans document the changing streets, landscapes, buildings and structures in the city. Items of significance include plans of bridges, street and sewer plans, and plans of Boston Common, the Public Garden and the Emerald Necklace. The Parks Department plans include a number of plans by Arthur Shurcliff, a noted American landscape architect. Many of the plans are stored in their original flat files that are overcrowded or are rolled and stored on shelves.

C. How are these humanities collections used?

The Boston Marathon Bombing Memorial collection has been included in [Our Marathon: the Boston Bombing Digital Archive](#) which is a community project hosted at Northeastern University. “Our Marathon” is a crowdsourced site of stories, pictures, videos and social media relating to the bombing. The City Archives worked with Northeastern University to digitize materials from the memorial and include them on the site so that they could be shared with people all over the world. Through the site the public can see the reactions of everyday people, expressing their grief and sympathy over this tragedy.

Materials from the memorial collection have also been used in exhibits honoring the anniversaries of the bombing including the exhibit “Dear Boston: Messages from the Marathon Memorial” which commemorated the first anniversary of the bombing in 2014. This exhibition was organized by a partnership that included the Boston City Archives, Boston Art Commission, New England Museum Association, and Boston Public Library. It was made possible with the generous support of Iron Mountain and was displayed at the Boston Public Library 7 April to 11 May 2014.

The Attleboro Art Museum featured some of the items in an invitational art exhibition entitled “A Long Distance Relationship: The 26.2 Mile Journey.” The show featured original paintings, sculpture, interactive digital art, etc. that explored the endurance and strength of distance runners and wheelchair racers. The exhibit was held 10 April to 5 May 2018.

Reporters and journalists have used materials in their stories about the bombing and how a community reacts to tragedy. NPR member station WBUR used the collection in their story "[After A Tragedy Like The Marathon Bombing, What Do We Do With All The Stuff Left Behind?](#)" by Ali Jarmanning published on 12 April 2018. The general public also comes to the Archives to view the materials in person to understand the profound impact that the bombing had on the City of Boston and the world.

The panoramic photographs are used by a variety of researchers including academic researchers and genealogists. The photographs can show the changing racial composition of Boston Schools at various time periods, changing dress and hair styles and offer a glimpse at what life was like for students in Boston. Genealogists researching their history often use the photographs to find photographs of their ancestors.

The City plans are used by staff of the City's Public Works Department and Parks Department in their current work on streets, bridges and parks. Researchers use the plans to understand changes in the layout of streets, street construction and materials, the evolution of the design of parks and the study of old bridges and the ferry system that operated in Boston.

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

Although Boston is approaching the beginning of its fifth century, only in 1988 did State legislation create a formal City-wide archives entity following an NHPRC funded survey of the City's records. The mission of the Boston City Clerk Archives and Records Management Division ("the City Archives" or "the Division") is to provide a government service that ensures the comprehensive and systematic management of all Boston's municipal archives and records. The Division has instituted professional archives and records management initiatives in City government by way of creating fundamental program infrastructure in four functional areas: records management; physical and intellectual control of archives holdings (collections management); reference services; and, outreach. Workload is distributed among its five permanent full-time staff, all of whom are trained professionals with advanced degrees in archives management. The Chief Archivist directs the Division, setting strategic direction and priorities, directing the work of professional staff, evaluating candidates for open positions, writing and coordinating grants, establishing interdepartmental collaboration, etc. The Records Management Analyst promotes the Division's program for the retention and management of records City-wide. The Archivist for Collections Management implements goals for the acquisition, preservation and documentation of collections received by the City Archives. The Archivist for Reference and Outreach provides secure, efficient and lawful access to City Archives holdings and promotes their use. The Assistant Archivist provides support for processing, reference and digital preservation. Non-personnel budget for FY 2019 was \$74,205. The City Archives is open for research Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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

Yes. Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) provided a general preservation assessment of historical records in the custody of the City Archives on 2-3 March 2015. The purpose of the assessment

was to identify short-, mid-, and long-term priorities for a City Archives preservation program. The assessment:

- Assessed potential risks to collections from building- and environment-related problems;
- Addressed fire protection and security concerns, including emergency preparedness;
- Evaluated institutional policies and procedures as they apply to preservation;
- Provided recommendations for improving storage and handling practices; and
- Reviewed the general condition of paper-based materials, including documents, bound volumes, plans and drawings, as well as audiovisual materials, microforms, photographs and negatives.

NEDCC submitted its observations and recommendations in a written report for use as a planning document for initiating a preservation program (See Appendix), and for use as part of its submission to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a Preservation Assistance Grant. NEH awarded the grant to the City Archives in 2016 to support creation of an environmental monitoring program to record temperature and relative humidity over time and help establish a sustainable environment optimal for preservation of Boston's municipal archives. NEDCC served as consultants for the project and the implementation of the environmental monitoring program was completed on 28 June 2017. The City Archives continues monitoring and recording data every 3 months.

The Boston City Archives also contracted with NEDCC for the rehabilitation of the Records of the Town of Boston, Vol I, 1634-1660. In 2007 NEDCC collated and disbound the volume; removed cellulose acetate from pages with ethanol and water; washed and alkalized pages with calcium hydroxide; mended tears with Japanese kozo paper and wheat starch paste; encapsulated leaves in polyester film; and post bound the volume in full cloth, titling the cover with a gold-stamped leather label.

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

The importance of this project is that it will enable the Archives to follow assessment report recommendations for addressing and optimizing the storage environment for oversized materials. The preservation assessment highlighted many improper storage issues due to a lack of proper shelving and storage furniture. The City Archives has begun addressing the storage issues and following the recommendations from the preservation assessment. Custom boxes were purchased in fiscal year 2017 and fiscal year 2018 for the storage of fragile and damaged volumes including City of Charlestown records, City of Roxbury records, Town of Dorchester records and Board of Aldermen records. Panoramic photographs have been removed from frames, placed in folders and stored in flat boxes. Materials from the Boston Marathon Bombing memorial collection were stored in archival folders and archival boxes. This project will allow the City Archives to properly store the oversized materials too large for boxes. It will also help to relieve some of the overcrowding of plans in existing file drawers and provide tube storage for rolled plans.

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

City Archivist John McColgan will coordinate the acquisition of the storage furniture and supplies. Collections Manager Kristen Swett will supervise the migration of the oversized materials from their current storage conditions to the new flat files and storage boxes. John McColgan has 30 plus years of experience in archival and records management. He has served as City Archivist since 1995. Kristen Swett has 20 years of experience in collections management and reference services. Please see resumes in appendices.

H. What is the work plan for the project?

Week one and two

- Research current pricing for flat files, oversized map folders and map storage boxes (McColgan, Swett)
- Plan for placement of new flat files and transfer of oversized materials (McColgan, Swett)
- Order flat files, oversized map folders and map storage boxes (McColgan)

Week three

- Install flat files and begin transfer of oversized materials to folders, flat files and boxes (McColgan, Swett)

Week four to twenty-five

- Continue to transfer oversized materials to folders, flat files and boxes as time allows and update locations in City Archives catalog. (Swett)