



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: Preservation Assessment, Staff Training, and Preservation Materials to Preserve Archival Collections

Institution: Vermont College of Fine Arts

Project Director: Mary Louise Welz

Grant Program: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

NEH Preservation Assistance Grant Project Narrative
Applicant Organization: Vermont College of Fine Arts

A. What activity would the grant support?

The proposed project will provide critical remedial care and professional assessment of a long-neglected historical collection of approximately 2800 objects and 120 linear feet of documents relating to Vermont College of Fine Arts (VCFA). The grant will allow the collection to be consolidated from various deleterious locations into a single, environmentally-monitored space and removed from acidic boxes and rehoused in archival boxes on space-saving rolling shelving. A general preservation assessment, long-range preservation plan and collections management policy will be written by consultants to provide the VCFA administration with the necessary information to move forward in their stewardship of the collection. Additionally, a group of volunteers will be trained in object handling and collections inventorying and a free evening program on caring for collections offered to the VCFA staff, community and the public. These steps will provide Vermont College with the map it needs to reach its goals for preserving and sharing its collections.

The proposed grant will support the purchase of archival supplies, an environmental datalogger, and three on-site visits from two collections care consultants.

Supplies include wire shelving units and archival boxes. The boxes to be purchased are acid-free, lignin-free record storage cartons which will be used in an initial rehousing of materials. The datalogger that will monitor the new storage room is a Preservation Environmental Monitor (PEM), which requires no software or additional equipment.

The first on-site visit will be by Jane LeGrow, a collections manager/ registrar and alumna of Vermont College. During this visit, Ms. LeGrow will do a 'rough sort' of the objects, organizing them by type and affiliation so as to prepare the collection for conservator MJ Davis's survey, while also removing the objects from their acidic cardboard boxes and placing them instead into archival file boxes. She will make suggestions for VCFA's reference about the kinds and quantities of archival storage materials that will be necessary when the collection is properly catalogued and rehoused in the future.

During the second on-site visit, Ms. Davis will carry out a general preservation assessment. The report this generates will provide prioritized levels of recommendation, from short-term remedial improvements to long-term concerns such as permanent rehousing, exhibition, environmental controls, and emergency response. In addition to the assessment, Ms. Davis will install the environmental monitor (PEM) in the new storage room, training VCFA staff member Ms. Welz in its use at the same time. Data gathered by this unit will be accessible online to both Ms. Davis and Ms. LeGrow, who will advise staff regarding conditions as needed. Ms. Davis's site visit will be followed by three days of report writing, after which the general preservation assessment and long-range preservation plan will be shared with the President of the College. Also presented to the President at this time will be a collections management policy drafted by Ms. LeGrow.

A final on-site visit will occur after the assessment, long-range plan and collections management policy are completed. Ms. LeGrow will return to train Vermont College archives volunteers in basic object handling and collections inventory and give a free evening program on caring for collections. As an alumna, Ms. LeGrow has volunteered her time to this project; grant funds will be used only to offset her travel expenses.

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

The Vermont College collections span nearly 200 years, dating back to the founding of the college as a seminary in 1834. They relate to the school's history as a fixture in Vermont's cultural landscape and also to the history of the state's capitol, Montpelier. The collections reflect the many functions the campus has served over its lifetime as well as the varied groups of Vermonters who lived, worked, and learned here in that time.

The collection is comprised of approximately 120 linear feet of archival documents, around 2000 photographs, 200 three-dimensional objects, 400 books and pamphlets, 100 non-paper media items and an additional several dozen large-format items.

Most of the archival materials are currently housed in the basement of Gary Library, the main library on campus. These are primarily documents and photos, many dating to the mid-nineteenth century, including several original diplomas, newspapers, school registers and other records, yearbooks and the private papers of early college presidents, including correspondence, photographs and journals. The materials are currently piled in acidic boxes on metal shelving. During a preliminary visit, Ms. Davis, deemed the Gary Library Archives Room unsatisfactory for even short-term archival storage, as it is a utility room below the water line. Additional boxes of archival materials are stacked in a nearby boiler room which is even less suited to storage than the library basement.

A second substantial group of objects resides in the Montpelier Seminary Room of College Hall. This room features two large display cases filled with perhaps 100 mostly three-dimensional objects of interest to visitors and researchers. These include school banners, yearbooks, hats, uniforms, footballs, bibles, diplomas, flags, quilts and other artifacts. Although popular with visitors, these are displayed in old wooden cases without adequate supports and have not been rotated off exhibit in at least seven years.

Additional items are scattered across the campus. Numerous historical photographs line the hallways and offices of College Hall, most of them framed and matted with acidic materials. Many have no mat at all and the emulsions are in direct contact with the glass. Several framed oil paintings have been removed from the walls in recent years and are stored piled against each other in a closet in College Hall. These include portraits of prominent historical figures related to the campus, including alumni and former presidents. Other artifacts stored around campus include a full set of silver tableware from the original seminary and desks from the seminary classrooms.

C. How are these humanities collections used?

The Archives Room of Gary Library is open to the public during regular library hours, 10am to 6pm, Monday through Friday. Archival materials stored here have been used primarily by researchers interested in aspects of Vermont College history as well as the history of Vermont. The most significant historical research on Vermont College itself was completed in 1962 by Eldon Hubert Martin for a book entitled *Vermont College, a Famous Old School*. In addition, former Lieutenant Governor of Vermont Peter Smith, who is now a Trustee of Vermont College of Fine Arts, wrote his doctoral thesis on the state of the college in 1972. Many other local historians have taken an interest in these materials over the years and, once made more accessible through better stewardship, the materials could be used by a wider range of researchers, including genealogists, students of social and religious development in the 19th century, historians of

women's education, or even the College's own graduate students, who might mine the collection for source materials for works of historical fiction or other artistic projects. The full potential of this promising collection has yet to be realized.

For many years, the Montpelier Seminary Room in College Hall was essentially maintained as an exhibit space, accurately recreating an 1872 classroom as well as holding several cases displaying the historical objects described above. Until very recently the room was open to the public on special event days and by request. That space has since been reclaimed for administrative use and the objects relocated to a smaller room in the same historic building.

Over the years, Vermont College's wealth of historical collections have not been given the care they deserve. For a few years in the 1970s and '80s, the college employed a librarian/archivist who was tasked with the organization, preservation and display of these collections. Since that time, changing ownership of the college and a lack of staff expertise have caused the collections to be mostly relegated to a distant back burner until now. However, even in these circumstances the college continues to receive regular requests for access. While access is available to anyone who wishes it, the collections are no longer well organized or preserved. The primary aim of the project described in this proposal is to provide a "road map" of goals to work toward in order to conscientiously preserve the collections while making them more accessible.

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

Vermont College officially opened its doors as Newbury Seminary in Newbury, Vermont, in 1834. Since 1868, Vermont College has been located on a 31-acre campus in Montpelier. The striking campus, patterned with brick buildings and centered by a scenic college green, was previously the site of a Civil War hospital. College Hall, the centerpiece of the campus, was built in 1872 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In June 2008, Vermont College of Fine Arts (VCFA) bought the historic Vermont College campus and three MFA programs from Union Institute & University, which had owned the campus since 2001. The academic offerings have since expanded to include additional MFA programs in Graphic Design and Music Composition. Vermont College of Fine Arts is the only low-residency graduate school in the United States dedicated exclusively to fine arts education.

The mission of the new VCFA is to grow over time into a national center for the fine arts, a Vermont institution with global value. VCFA is an institution that values language, ideas and art; a place that nurtures its students, faculty, and employees; a place that reaches out to make a difference in the state of Vermont and makes an impact in the larger world.

Vermont College of Fine Arts employs 39 full-time staff and 60 part-time faculty. Its annual operating budget is \$7,362,000. It is developing a core of volunteers through the Vermont College Alumni Association. The campus is accessible to the public approximately 335 days per year.

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

The institution has never had a preservation or conservation assessment or consultation.

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

With the purchase of the historic campus by VCFA came a reinvestment in its past. Vermont College celebrated its 175th year in 2009, and a capital campaign is underway to support new projects and to preserve and maintain the campus and its archival collections. VCFA has been making efforts to re-engage the thousands of alumni who attended the school in one of its various incarnations. The Vermont College Alumni Association is active in VCFA projects and has expressed interest in assisting with the collections preservation effort.

As the new owners of the Vermont College campus, and as stewards of its historical assets, we feel this project is extremely important. The archival collections have been orphaned over the years, and it is VCFA's responsibility to both address long-term preservation issues and to improve access to the collections for alumni, the local community and state residents. The most immediate concern is the short-term remedial improvements to storage and housing of the collections. Dealing with this issue alone should help us to reduce the risk of further damage or loss to the collection. Beyond that, the assessment and long-range preservation plan will help VCFA to identify further projects to pursue and the order of priority in which the collection concerns should be tackled. The collections management policy will provide museum industry standards as a guide for exhibition, environmental conditions, access and accountability.

Very important also is the public evening presentation by Jane LeGrow. This program will in part be a public service, educating community members about the kinds of damage art and artifacts are vulnerable to and what they can do to prevent damage to their own treasures. It will also raise awareness of the VCFA collections project and why the preservation effort is so necessary to the future of the collections. Lastly, it will build connections between VCFA and those in the community who are interested in supporting the historic collections.

The Vermont College of Fine Arts administration is committed to responsible stewardship of the historical collections and buildings in its care. Following the completion of the grant project, the institution will have in hand professional assessments, prioritized recommendations, and a policy reflecting standards of care to guide its planning for the future of the collections. From these, funds can be raised and grants applied for to support specific projects or personnel that would further improve the care the VCFA collections receive. This project is a critical first step on our road to better collections stewardship.

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

Mary Jo Davis graduated from the State University of New York College at Buffalo in 1994 with a Master's in Art Conservation and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Paper Conservation. From November 1995 to March 2004, Ms. Davis worked part-time for the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance (VMGA) as the Project Director for the statewide collections care program.

In October 2000, Ms. Davis was chosen to participate in the FAIC/National Task Force on Emergency Response Train the Trainers disaster workshop. In 2003, Ms. Davis organized the Vermont Emergency Response Team for Cultural Institutions.

Ms. Davis has co-presented several workshops on the Wet Salvage of Collections with her colleague Barbara Moore. From November 2007 through May 2008, they completed the training of 60 museum professionals, nationwide, to be participants in the newly formed AIC-CERT (American Institute for Conservation—Conservation Emergency Response Team) rapid response team funded by IMLS. Her resume is included in this application.

Jane LeGrow has been the Collections Manager / Registrar at Heritage Museums & Gardens in Sandwich, Massachusetts since 2002. She has experience working with a wide range of materials and has written collections policies for the museum. In 2003, Ms. LeGrow began a major collections assessment initiative intended to improve collections access, care and accountability. Prior to 2002, Ms. LeGrow worked in Collections Management at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. She has presented workshops and training sessions on caring for collections and on labeling and marking collection objects.

Ms. LeGrow received a BA in Anthropology from the Pennsylvania State University in 1998 and an MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults from Vermont College in 2003. She was the Boston Public Library's 2005-2006 Children's Writer-in-Residence. Her resume is included in this application.

Mary L. Welz, an alumna of Vermont College, will serve as the primary staff person involved in the project. She is Executive Director of Institutional Advancement at VCFA and her mission is to advance public understanding, build and strengthen lifelong relationships, and enhance philanthropy in support of the Vermont College of Fine Arts and the historic Vermont College campus. She will be responsible for general oversight of the project and all financial management. Ms. Welz has 20 years of experience in fundraising, holds a BA from Vermont College, and an MFA in Writing from Goddard College.

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

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| January 2012 | Grant award announced and Letters of Agreement between consultants and VCFA signed. Ms. Welz will order the archival supplies and environmental monitor for the site visits and consolidate the collections in the new storage room in College Hall. Ms. LeGrow's first two-day site visit will take place. |
| February 2012 | Ms. Davis's two-day site visit will take place and the environmental monitoring unit (PEM) will be installed. Ms. Davis will train Ms. Welz in the PEM's use. |
| March/ April 2012 | Ms. Davis's draft assessment and long range plan will be due. Ms. LeGrow's draft collections management policy will be due. |
| May 2012 | Ms. Davis will submit final assessment and long range plan to Ms. Welz. Ms. LeGrow will submit final collections management policy to Ms. Welz. |
| June 2012 | Ms. Davis shares reports with President of the College. |
| September 2012 | Ms. LeGrow's second on-site visit, during which she will train VCFA volunteers on basic object handling and inventorying. She will also present a free evening program on caring for collections. |
| January 2013 | Ms. Davis submits final analysis of year-long environmental monitoring and makes recommendations for the storage area. |