

July 2014

Making Dreams Come True

Kyle Jansson
Oregon Heritage Commission

Recommended Citation

Jansson, K. (2014). Making Dreams Come True. *OLA Quarterly*, 17(4), 25-27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1342>

© 2014 by the author(s).

OLA Quarterly is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

Making Dreams Come True

by **Kyle Jansson**
kyle.jansson@state.or.us
Coordinator,
Oregon Heritage Commission

Imagine that you have designated adequate funds in your budget for preserving your library's heritage collections. In addition, you have had adequate training to manage those collections, and you have a plan in place to deal with them during disasters. Moreover, if some collections management issue comes up and you need technical help, assistance is a phone call away or a skilled mentor is less than two hours away ready to visit or talk on the phone.

Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

Those are many of the dreams that members of the Connecting to Collections (C2C) committee have been working to realize by developing an implementation grant proposal to the Institute of Museum and Library Services. That proposal, which is due early next year, has been the focus of the committee's effort since last summer.

The committee had concluded after its surveying was completed a year ago that a plan to address the preservation needs of Oregon's libraries, archives and museums needed to focus on a structure and funding for providing information, training, consulting, mentoring, and networking. Specifically, six categories needed attention: collection care, strategic planning and priority setting, collection management, disaster preparedness, preservation advocacy, and practical technology for preservation.

A second item to be considered in the planning was how to have a delivery system that supported libraries, archives, and museums around the state, a special challenge for Oregon, which is ranked 39th from the top in population density.

A third issue was finding an organization that would take the lead implementing the plan. This issue was solved when leaders of statewide collecting organizations, including the Oregon Library Association and the Oregon State Library, requested at a March summit that the Oregon Heritage Commission take the lead. The Heritage Commission accepted the request at its July 17 meeting. The Commission also agreed to appoint a Collections Preservation Cabinet, which will regularly meet and advise the Commission on collections preservation initiatives.

Creating the Implementation Grant

Meanwhile, the coordinating group for the initial C2C planning grant continued to move forward and began planning how to implement their recommendations. Committee members had already concluded that the initial items to be considered on that agenda would be: developing a plan for requesting grants and other funds to implement their recommendations, conducting a statewide inventory of critical objects and collections to ensure they are given attention, and submitting an IMLS implementation grant of up to \$250,000 to carry the preservation agenda forward.

Because of the immediacy of the IMLS grant deadline, the coordinating group formed a couple of subcommittees to try to identify the four most interesting opportunities:

1. **A "Cool Stuff" Campaign.** Organizations would self-identify two or three objects, collections or documents. Then, perhaps, communities could decide the most significant among those, construct displays highlighting them, and have them included in a statewide competition.



2. **Disaster Planning and Response.** Organizations would partner to present a variety of training opportunities in disaster planning and response. Besides the trainings, this possible project would include developing and promoting a Virtual Resources Web portal, an emergency hotline, and a regional response network.
3. **An Oregon Collections Preservation virtual resource.** Drawing upon the expertise of the Heritage Commission's Collections Preservation Cabinet, information would be selected and compiled for quality and relevance to the needs of Oregon's libraries, archives, and museums. It would be actively maintained by a paid professional with preservation expertise.
4. **A Training the Trainers Program.** This would include a Preservation Academy to train a Mentor Corps involving people from all parts of the state. Key curriculum areas would deal with document preservation, object preservation, digital preservation, human relations (personal and political), and finding resources (financial and other.)

Kyle Jansson, the coordinator of the Oregon Heritage Commission and the project director of the Oregon C2C group, then attended a national C2C Conversation Exchange at the American Association for State and Local History's national conference. He heard presentations about projects in more than a dozen states and met with IMLS leaders of the C2C project.

Jansson reported back to the Oregon C2C group regarding some developments affecting their proposals:

1. Heritage Preservation, with funding from IMLS, has created a C2C Online Community at www.connectingtocollections.org. The Community's goals are to help smaller libraries, museums, archives and historical societies locate reliable preservation resources, and to engage with each other and top professionals in the field. It includes free Webinars, a discussion forum, highlighted resources, a calendar and an archive.
2. At least one other state has used the "Cool Stuff" idea, with much of their grant money going to develop an online contest, as well as materials and training for museums on how to market the educational and cultural value of their collections and the objects in them.
3. In geographically large states, regional networks seem to be most effective. Libraries, museums and archives seem most willing to participate with other organizations within a couple of hours drive, especially when it can help connect them with other local organizations such as disaster response units.

The IMLS is looking closely now at the potential sustainability of C2C projects when reviewing grant proposals.



The Oregon C2C group has since narrowed the focus of its proposal to the Mentor Corps, creating an Oregon portal to collections and disaster preparedness resources, and disaster planning grants. These will be further modified during grant planning prior to the Feb. 1 application deadline.

Moving Into the Future

The Oregon C2C group won't hear from the IMLS regarding grant awards until September. However, statewide efforts to improve collections preservation planning will continue. Heritage Commission chair Jan Mitchell has contacted statewide organizations for recommendations of people to serve on the Collections Preservation Cabinet. The Cabinet will be made up of representatives of professional organizations such as the Oregon Museums Association, the Oregon Library Association, the Northwest Archivists Inc., and agencies such as the Oregon State Archives, the Oregon State Library, the Oregon Historical Society, the State Historic Records Advisory Board, and so forth.

The initial planning agenda for the Collections Preservation Cabinet, which will include members of the C2C group, is:

- Develop a plan for requesting grants and other funds to implement the committee's recommendations.
- Conduct a statewide inventory of critical objects and collections to ensure they are given attention.
- Advise the Commission on other collections preservation initiatives.

The Cabinet will be meeting 2–4 times a year. Oregon has received few statewide collections grants during the past decade and the Cabinet has the potential for initiating projects and receiving more grant public and private funds. This could be particularly valuable as libraries and other collecting institutions strive to be more efficient in their work, to make sure their staffs have adequate training, and to be prepared for a variety of potential disasters.

For more information about the Cabinet or the C2C effort, contact Kyle Jansson at kyle.jansson@state.or.us or 503-986-0673. 

