

## Workshops and Other Educational Opportunities

Working with the Regional Library Systems and other organizations, the MBLC offers half-day and full-day preservation workshops in the areas mentioned above. These workshops can be tailored to meet the needs of specific audiences or be presented to a mixed group of librarians, archivists, historical society personnel, town clerks, and others. Furthermore, the staff is available to address groups of interested citizens on preservation issues to build support for the activities of professionals instituting a preservation program in their institutions.

The MBLC also produces a calendar of preservation educational opportunities offered throughout New England and the environs that is mounted on the Web at [www.mlin.org](http://www.mlin.org). Anyone wishing to have a program listed should contact the MBLC.

As part of its role as an information source, the MBLC's bimonthly newsletter, MBLC Notes, includes a column, "The Preservation Inquirer," that addresses preservation issues raised by librarians and archivists in the field. Occasionally, longer, more in-depth articles appear as well.

## Funding

As part of its commitment to the preservation of Massachusetts' cultural heritage, the MBLC has made some of its federal Library Services and Technology Act funds available for preservation projects in Massachusetts libraries, specifically in the areas of Preservation Surveys and in the Preservation of Library and Archival Materials. Furthermore, the MBLC compiles information on federal grants that may be applied to preservation projects from the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services.



MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF  
**Library Commissioners**

# PRESERVATION PROGRAM

For further information please contact:



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**Library Commissioners**

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**P**reservation is the basic responsibility to provide adequate facilities for the protection, care and maintenance of library and archival materials.

## History

Some of the richest written and printed information resources in the United States including significant documentation of the Massachusetts' history and political, social, and economic development that dates back to the seventeenth century reside in libraries, archives, town clerks' offices, historical societies, museums, public records offices, and manuscript repositories throughout the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, even in these institutions that are dedicated to caring for and providing access to this information, many documents, books, photographs, pamphlets, ephemera, and electronic media are at risk from the dangers of unstable environments, poor storage and handling, natural and man-made disasters, and chemical degradation.

## MBLC Preservation Program

In 1988, to begin to address these preservation and access problems in the Commonwealth's repositories, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) created the position of Preservation Specialist to develop and implement a statewide preservation program. Working with the Massachusetts Archives and numerous constituents in the Commonwealth under a grant funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Preservation and Access, the MBLC published *Preserved to Serve: The Massachusetts Preservation Agenda* in 1992. This document serves as a framework for implementing a preservation program for all types of library and archival repositories in the Commonwealth.

## Information Gathering

The preservation staff of the MBLC has conducted two surveys, The Massachusetts Preservation Needs Assessment Survey (1990) and the Critical Collections Survey (1994) to identify and address the preservation needs of the Commonwealth's cultural heritage. The 1990 survey enabled the MBLC and others to focus on the specific areas where lack of information, training, or

action has put the Commonwealth's cultural heritage at risk. The 1994 survey has resulted in a compilation of critical collections and resources in the Commonwealth that are in specific need of preservation. In addition, this survey reinforced the major preservation needs of the Commonwealth's collections.

One of the key areas identified by The Massachusetts Preservation Needs Assessment Survey and by the Massachusetts Task Force on Preservation and Access, is the lack of preservation knowledge among librarians, archivists, town clerks, curators, and others responsible for the care and handling of collections. This information and knowledge is crucial to the preservation of important historic documents and volumes. Therefore, the MBLC embarked upon an active preservation education program for book and records custodians statewide.

## Consultant Services

The Preservation Specialist at the MBLC is available to librarians and archivists statewide, either by telephone or on-site, to provide advice in numerous areas of preservation including:

- Disaster Preparedness Planning
- Basic Repair of Library and Archival Materials
- The Care and Handling of Library and Archival Materials
- Commercial Library Binding as a Preservation Option
- Library and Archival Security
- Environmental Monitoring and Storage Issues
- Preservation Planning
- Local History, Special, and Archival Collections
- Local History Room Design

## Resources

The MBLC has compiled a collection of preservation library resources, in both book and video format, to provide information to the library and archival communities. These materials are available for loan from the MBLC's professional library. Furthermore, the MBLC has developed a collection of library and archival supply catalogs to serve as a

source of information for those seeking preservation supplies. The staff has also incorporated many archival and preservation supplies into the regional cooperative supply list that is available to libraries and archives throughout the Commonwealth. The staff will respond to inquiries by telephone, mail, and email regarding types of materials to employ and the various sources from which they are available.

## Environmental Monitoring Program

In 1996, the MBLC embarked on an Environmental Monitoring Program through which digital temperature and relative humidity dataloggers are loaned to interested libraries, archives, historical societies, town clerk offices, and museums for a period of five months. The MBLC staff then uses the collected data to provide an analysis and report with recommendations to the program participants for their action. Staff at the MBLC is also available to advise librarians and archivists on environmental concerns specific to storage areas such as light, ultraviolet radiation, temperature, relative humidity, and atmospheric pollutants, as well as construction issues that are applicable to preservation. This becomes particularly important during new construction, renovations, and additions to libraries and other facilities.

## Emergency Assistance Program

In 1998, the MBLC began its Emergency Assistance Program to provide training, supplies, technical assistance, and freezing and drying capabilities to libraries and archives in the Commonwealth. One of the emphases is for institutions to develop disaster preparedness plans to protect their collections, facilities, and staff. As these plans are completed, copies are filed with the MBLC to serve as a resource for others embarking on the process. Furthermore, the MBLC staff also serves as a point of information for staff having questions about the mechanics of creating such a plan, especially as part of the Emergency Assistance Program.