

# Mitigation for Memory: Safeguarding Massachusetts Cultural Heritage

## Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), on behalf of COSTEP MA (Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness in Massachusetts) seeks HMGP funds for a two-year public awareness project on mitigating damage to cultural collections and essential government records in our state. The project, called *Mitigation for Memory: Safeguarding Massachusetts Cultural Heritage*, is designed to educate emergency management professionals, municipal planners and officials, Regional Planning Agency directors, and cultural custodians about the importance of including cultural resources in hazard mitigation planning. Gregor Trinkaus-Randall of the MBLC will serve as Project Director.

*Mitigation for Memory* will focus on outreach to small and medium-size communities. First, at least 14 meetings – one in each regional planning jurisdiction – will take place at the municipal or regional level. These community meetings will facilitate communication among cultural custodians, emergency managers, town planners and officials, and regional planners; establish a command and control structure for cultural heritage institutions that can be integrated into existing municipal emergency preparedness plans; and help communities identify and address ways to mitigate against future damage to their collections. Second, six to eight meetings will be held with Regional Planning Agencies and town planners to ensure that they include cultural institutions in their planning. Third, four full-day workshops will train cultural custodians how to conduct a risk assessment of their facility to identify and implement mitigation activities. Finally, a framework will be drawn up that provides a blueprint of approaches to mitigation for cultural institutions that can be used region wide.

This project directly relates to the Massachusetts State Hazard Mitigation Plan goal “to reduce the statewide loss of life, property, infrastructure, and **cultural resources** from natural disasters through a comprehensive hazard mitigation program. . . .” *Mitigation for Memory* will be the first major planning, awareness, coordination, and project development effort to secure the state’s cultural resources. It will raise awareness of the role that cultural institutions play in a municipality’s economy and identity, increasing the likelihood that first responders will make these institutions and their collections a priority. It will also encourage cultural custodians to work with their emergency manager, town planner, and regional planning representative to develop and implement mitigation activities for their institution.

Since 2006, COSTEP MA has been cultivating a close working relationship between MEMA and the Commonwealth’s cultural heritage organizations. Comprised of 46 partners from 30 state, local, federal, and cultural entities, COSTEP MA is well positioned to execute this project. Funding to increase public awareness and provide education about hazard mitigation at the local level will reduce loss to our Commonwealth’s irreplaceable cultural resources and essential records. If funded, this project will serve as a model that can be replicated across FEMA Region I and as a national model that enables all states to protect this country’s valuable and vulnerable cultural heritage.