Town-wide Preservation Assessment & Collection Identification

Grant Amount: $30,000

Time Range: 1 year

Eligibility: Public Libraries

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Summary:
Assess local history materials throughout the community.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This program focuses on a preservation assessment of collections in a community. It is the first step in the process of preserving, organizing, and eventually sharing historically significant local collections in Massachusetts. The public library and other local repositories will receive a preservation assessment conducted by an MBLC-hired consultant who will:

- Focus attention on preservation needs and identify the type of work that these might entail, including actual conservation treatment as well as storage, handling, and security suggestions.
- Help the staff determine the treatment priorities of those items in need of work and the steps necessary to accomplish it.
- Evaluate the buildings and make suggestions for steps to be taken to prolong the life of the materials, including environmental conditions and controls.
- Review policies and procedures for collection management and make recommendations as to their revision or creation.
- Examine emergency preparedness and any existing disaster plans for collections.
• Review housekeeping and pest management practices and evaluate storage and handling practices for materials.
• Assist in identifying collections of historical significance within the collecting areas of the repositories that would be in need of arrangement and description before they could become candidates for digitization and posting to Digital Commonwealth.
• Provide a report to each repository, and if feasible and appropriate, one for the community’s repositories as a whole. The report will delineate the findings of the assessment and will provide short, medium, and long-term recommendations to improve the long-term viability of each repository’s collections.

All participating institutions must submit a letter of commitment as part of the application process. Once the project is underway, each institution must complete an MBLC Self-Assessment.

Each institution must submit, upon grant completion, their special collection management priorities (template provided.)

BACKGROUND

The documentary heritage of Massachusetts is essentially intact from its founding. Throughout the Commonwealth, repositories house irreplaceable collections of books, as well as private and public documents that serve as a rich resource for researchers. Libraries, historical societies, municipal departments, museums, and other repositories have long collected materials that document their immediate and adjoining locales, as well as focusing on specific collecting areas. Many of these collections are in need of preservation work to prolong their lives and to enable them to be handled.