

Town-Wide Preservation Assessment and Collection Identification

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This program focuses on the preservation assessment of collections in a community. It is the first step in the process of preserving, arranging and describing, and eventually digitizing historically significant local collections in Massachusetts for access through the [Digital Commonwealth](#), a non-profit collaborative organization that provides resources and services to support the creation, management, and dissemination of cultural heritage materials held by Massachusetts libraries, museums, historical societies, and archives. 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, they will need to complete a Pre-Assessment Questionnaire provided by the MBLC.

A five-year Preservation Long-Range Plan for each participating institution based on the recommendations of the consultant's report is required as an outcome of this grant.

Upon completion, the library and its partner organizations will position themselves to apply for grant funding to address the consultant's recommendations. The public library may be able to apply for LSTA funds through another grant category for their needs. Further work and assistance for all participating institutions may be available through the [State Historical Records Advisory Board's \(SHRAB\) Roving Archivist program](#) as well as from the [Boston Public Library's digitization program](#), which contributes to Digital Commonwealth.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Public libraries meeting the standard eligibility requirements for the Direct Grant programs may apply on behalf of the repositories in their community. All participating institutions must submit a letter of commitment as part of the application process. Once the project is underway, they will need to complete a Pre-Assessment Questionnaire provided by the consultants to be filed with the Board of Library Commissioners. Up to \$30,000 can be awarded to projects.

INTERESTED?

Applicants must submit a Letter of Intent with "Town-Wide Preservation Assessment" option checked off. If you need more information about this program contact Evan Knight at the MBLC, 1-800-952-7403 ext. 250 or by email at evan.knight1@state.ma.us.

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 conservation work to prolong their lives and to enable them to be handled. Moreover, a great deal of these materials will not see the light of day without a special program to identify them, provide for their arrangement and description, identify their preservation and conservation needs, and digitize them to make them available for research.