Museums for America

Sample Application MA-253419-OMS-23
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Access

Amherst College (Emily Dickinson Museum)

Amount awarded by IMLS: $117,237
Amount of cost share: $126,979

The Emily Dickinson Museum will improve collections documentation by digitizing institutional records related to its approximately 8,000 artifacts pertaining to the family of American poet Emily Dickinson. Museum staff will scan physical records and upload and manage the digitized files in their digital asset management system. Project staff will also travel to other repositories of Dickinson-related archival information and, with staff from those partnering organizations, conduct surveys of primary sources related to collections objects. This project will result in more complete collections information management, enabling the museum to interpret the poet's life and times more fully, and provide public and scholarly access to an important cultural collection.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Digital Product Plan

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

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"I had some things that I called mine–"
EMILY DICKINSON MUSEUM COLLECTIONS INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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1) PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Project Proposal
The Emily Dickinson Museum (EDM) seeks funding of $117,236 for a two-year project to improve documentation of its collections by digitizing institutional records related to its 8,000+ Dickinson family artifacts and linking them to catalog database records. EDM will scan physical records; upload and manage the digitized files in a Digital Asset Management System acquired for this project; and attach and transcribe information into the PastPerfect collections management system. EDM's work with its own collections records in the first year of the project will function as a pilot phase to expand digitization activities to EDM collections-related documents at other significant repositories. EDM will prepare for a future digitization phase by using the second year of the proposed project to conduct surveys of archival material at other institutions, including Amherst College, Jones Library, Mount Holyoke College, Harvard University, Brown University, and Yale University, in order to gather information on the extent of primary sources related to EDM collections objects. Following an intensive three-year IMLS-funded project to create a foundational and comprehensive catalog database, digitizing collections-related information is the logical next step in documenting the collection and understanding the histories of each object. This project will result in more complete collections information management, enabling EDM to interpret the poet's life and times more fully, and provide public and scholarly access to an important cultural collection.

Advancing the Museum's Strategic Plan and IMLS Goals
One of the four main goals in the Museum's strategic plan, approved in June 2021, is to "care for and use the material legacy of the Dickinson family—buildings, grounds, collections—to enliven and enhance the experience offered to the public." The principal strategy in achieving this goal is to "improve care of the buildings and collections consistent with museum standards to exercise appropriate stewardship of the Museum's unique cultural resources." The current condition of collections information (objects disassociated from records, physical files at different institutions) creates a barrier to meeting the goal of using the Dickinsons' material legacy to enliven the visitor experience. Ultimately, the proposed work supported by this grant will be foundational to the Emily Dickinson Museum in understanding its collection and sharing it with the public. EDM plans to continue this project in the future with assistance from a new curatorial position. EDM Board of Trustees understands the importance of maintaining and expanding access to the collections and supports this and ongoing accessibility projects.

The proposed project addresses the Museums for America goal of Collections Stewardship and Access through supporting collections information management, database management, digital asset management, and digitization.

Statement of Need
The EDM collection comprises the combined personal effects of Dickinson family members from the Dickinson Homestead (built 1813) and The Evergreens (built 1856), left at the latter house after the death of the family's last heir in 1988. Dickinson's niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, sold the Homestead in 1916 and moved her aunt's

personal belongings and household furnishings next door to her own home at The Evergreens. Bianchi's heirs transferred manuscript material, books, and a few dozen objects associated with Emily Dickinson to Harvard University in 1950 and Brown University in 1988.

The vast majority of Dickinson family possessions remained at The Evergreens, overseen between 1988 and 2003 by a private testamentary trust established in Bianchi's name. The Trust transferred the property and collection to Amherst College in 2003 so that the two neighboring Dickinson family houses and collections could be operated as a united Emily Dickinson Museum. The collection is the largest and most diverse assemblage of objects associated with Emily Dickinson and her family to be found anywhere. It consists of fine art, including an impressive collection of Hudson River school paintings; cooking, dining, lighting, and heating artifacts; children's toys, clothing, handwork, and personal possessions; musical instruments; souvenir objects and art from travels abroad; and a large assortment of clothing and textiles. The collection both captures the details of nineteenth-century life in a semi-rural educational and agricultural community and vividly illustrates the daily life and writing habits of one of the world's greatest poets. EDM's collecting plan emphasizes objects of strong provenance associated with Emily Dickinson's family.

This history of the formation of the EDM collection is a major part of the challenge to be addressed by the grant-funded project. Family papers originating at the two Dickinson houses were dispersed to other institutions; those papers include details of household life and acquisitions. In addition, EDM itself has amassed a large number of unprocessed physical and digital files as it has worked to gain insight into its collection.

Despite its relative youth, EDM has made considerable progress in improving collections management. Four years after its formal establishment, EDM completed an IMLS-funded furnishing and exhibition plan, which compiled documentation about objects on display. In 2016, EDM completed a Collections Stewardship MAP assessment which supported EDM's successful 2019 application for IMLS Museums for America funding to properly catalog the entire collection for the first time. A MAP follow-up visit in fall 2021 (Supportingdoc1) has framed the proposed project to implement one of the 2021 chief recommendations: completing an archival project, which would include identifying historical resources associated with the poet and using that information to augment EDM's interpretation of the homes and the poet. In an effort to improve collections stewardship, the proposed project would help the museum gain greater intellectual control of the collections. MAP reviewer Nancy Bryck was encouraging about EDM's collections stewardship progress and noted several areas for further attention. Bryck pointed out that "archival information on Emily Dickinson and her family are not primarily in Amherst so there may need to be a gathering of information from various archives across the country for use here at EDM. …[I]t may be a good idea to create a project to have [staff] visit all archival repositories to look for that information that connects [to the collection.]"

Project Beneficiaries
Institutional archiving and digital asset management are two areas in need of focused effort to more fully document and understand the EDM collection, make it useful for scholarly inquiry, and satisfy public interest in Emily Dickinson's material environment and legacy. By implementing a formal digital asset management system and digitizing physical records, EDM will be better able to share details of the collections with these interest groups.

First, EDM collections objects will directly benefit by being reunited with their direct historical and contextual information. A well-documented collection will allow EDM to enrich educational and interpretive programming and exhibitions about the material culture and environment within which Dickinson created her transformative poetry. For example, with proper documentation, objects that originated at the Homestead but were later transferred to The Evergreens can be returned to their original surroundings to enrich the interpretation of the writer's space. EDM staff as well as curatorial and interpretive advisers have been fully engaged in identifying and prioritizing higher uses for collections objects since the 2016 MAP review. Second, purposeful augmentation and publication of database records will result in greater access to information resources for researchers at all levels. Those who access object documentation via the PastPerfect collections database will find records with much greater depth of specific and contextual information that exponentially enhances understandings of the collections and the Dickinson family's daily life. Scholars in Dickinson studies, student interns, and K-12 teachers seeking professional development and classroom activities have worked with selected objects from the collection and have sought deeper documentation and broader access. More complete information management will have an immediate impact on these users. Third, training and applied learning opportunities for staff and paid interns in digitizing archival material will create professional development opportunities for students contemplating museum careers and expand EDM's overall capacity for collections management. Interns have been enthusiastically engaged in the current collections documentation project and have requested hands-on opportunities to learn more about object-level resources. Finally, the general public is the ultimate beneficiary of collections information management efforts which impact EDM interpretive furnishings and tours and offer online access to all collections objects.

2) PROJECT WORK PLAN

Specific Activities
What specific activities will you carry out, and in what sequence?
Year 1 focuses on digitizing collections records and other relevant information held at the Emily Dickinson Museum. EDM collections records date from as early as 1965 and contain hard-copy files with specific information about approximately 500 artifacts along with photographs and slides of objects and the historic homes, correspondence, and conservation records. The volume of EDM material to be digitized, organized, extracted, and linked to digital object records is estimated to be at least 20 linear feet, including paper documents, print materials, photographic prints, slides and negatives.

Prior to the grant project start date, EDM will work with Widen, a digital asset management (DAM) vendor, to audit EDM's physical and digital collections assets in preparation for acquiring and implementing the DAM system (Supportingdoc4).

Grant-funded activities will begin in September 2023 with acquisition of the Widen digital asset management system and a 12-week implementation period. During the implementation period, the Collections Manager and Communications Manager will create a file naming convention, file storage structure, and metadata guidelines. Once standards are set, the Collections Manager will create digitization workflows, quality control checkpoints, and written procedures. Workflows will then be tested to confirm goals for the number of records digitized per month.

In January 2024, the Collections Manager will begin digitization of photographic prints, slides and negatives. Procedures will include recording metadata and properly naming and storing the digital files. EDM will hire one intern during the Spring 2024 semester who will be trained to follow digital asset management procedures and digitization workflows and standards. The spring 2024 intern will focus on digitizing records, recording metadata, and properly naming and storing digital files. The Collections Manager will match information from the digitized photographs and slides with PastPerfect catalog database records, and will transcribe and attach relevant object information to PastPerfect catalog records in batches.

Starting in March 2024, the Collections Manager will begin digitization of paper documentation and print materials, which will include recording metadata and properly naming and storing the digital files. The Collections Manager will continue matching information from the digitized records with PastPerfect catalog database records, and will transcribe and attach relevant object information to PastPerfect catalog records in batches. EDM will hire one intern during summer 2024 through the Amherst College Summer Museum Cohort program. After training in digital asset management procedures and digitization workflows and standards, the summer intern will digitize records, record metadata, and properly name and store digital files. The Collections Manager will continue transcribing and attaching relevant object information to individual PastPerfect catalog records.

Year 2 focuses on an external survey of primary source materials at other institutions. Continuing digitization activities will be completed in Fall semester 2024 and summer 2025 with the assistance of one intern each period. The interns will be trained in digital asset management procedures, and digitization workflows and standards, and will assist the Collections Manager with any remaining digitization. The Collections Manager will continue transcribing and attaching relevant object information to individual PastPerfect catalog records.

Beginning in September 2024, the Collections Manager will begin to identify primary source materials at other institutions that concern objects in the EDM collections (Supportingdoc2). The EDM Collections Manager will contact curators at each institution and review online finding aids to identify material to be surveyed in person: some material may already have been digitized by the institution, and can be reviewed remotely, while other documents will need to be physically surveyed. During each visit, a resource list will be created from the institution's finding aids and examination of primary source materials as it relates to EDM collections. This resource list can be used to educate EDM staff and inform future research projects and digitization partnerships. Because information at one institution may lead to discoveries at the other institutions, the Collections Manager will visit each institution twice, in two full cycles. One site visit per month will be conducted during the second year of the project. Institutions in close proximity to EDM – Amherst College, Jones Library, and Mount Holyoke College – will be surveyed before institutions requiring travel – Harvard University's Houghton Library, Brown University's John Hay Library, and Yale University's Beinecke Library.

Risks
The greatest potential risk to the success of the project is mismanagement of the digital assets. Misnaming or misfiling digitized records could be caused by human error. To reduce this risk, the Collections Manager will survey the physical files before digitization starts to establish a metadata schema and a digitization plan, including the order in which files will be processed. This survey will inform file naming conventions and file structure, both of which will be discussed and agreed upon with the project team. Procedures will be written before the

digitization starts. Strict file naming conventions and quality control checkpoints throughout the project should mitigate any discrepancies.

Another risk is that implementation of Widen, the digital asset management system, could take longer than expected, negatively impacting the digitization start time. To mitigate this risk, EDM will work with Widen prior to the project start date to ensure that the museum is prepared for implementation in September 2023.

Falling behind schedule and digitization benchmarks is another risk. If weekly progress meetings show slippage in the schedule, EDM will bring on additional temporary paid staff.

Key Project Staff
Executive Director Jane Wald will provide overall planning direction, project oversight, and financial management. She has been project director for EDM's numerous grant-funded documentation studies as well as its structural, infrastructure, and restoration improvements.
Collections Manager Megan Ramsey will be responsible for project implementation including establishing work flows; logistics and scheduling; digitization; direct supervision of interns; working with consultants with expertise in records management and digitization. As Collections Manager during EDM's IMLS grant-funded cataloging project, Ramsey has acquired valuable first-hand knowledge of objects in the Museum's collection and considerable digitization experience.
Communications Manager Patrick Fecher will assist with the coordination of the implementation of the digital asset management system and will continue general system oversight and management.
Education Programs Manager Elizabeth Bradley will provide support to the Collections Manager in supervising interns including recruitment, hiring, orientation, training, coordination with the parent organization internship framework, planning and implementing intern professional development activities.

Project Resources
The expected project duration is 24 months. Over the two-year project period, work time allocated directly to project digitization and survey activities will be 1,518 hours for the Collections Manager, 800 hours for interns.

Grant funds needed to accomplish project goals are (1) funding for the Collections Manager at 40% FTE in Year 1 and 33.3% FTE in Year 2; (2) acquisition of a document scanner; (3) support for transportation, lodging, and daily expenses for the Collections Manager to survey special collections at other institutions.

EDM will contribute (1) funding for implementation and annual subscription fees for the Widen digital asset management system in both years of the project; (2) staff time for project oversight, financial management, and reporting, as well as for recruitment, training and supervision of interns. Compensation and summer housing for interns will be provided by Amherst College.

Evaluation and Tracking Progress
The project team will establish goals for the number of physical records processed each month, taking into account time required to scan larger physical files and to record more extensive metadata, and unknown conditions that may emerge. The plan will also set standards for the quality, consistency, and completeness of digitization, including file names, storage, and metadata. The Collections Manager will test these measures prior to digitization and will be responsible for tracking progress, using an Excel spreadsheet to report the number of files scanned and metadata recorded each week. The Project Director and Collections Manager will meet

bi-weekly to review the status of the project, effectiveness of work methods, budget status, and progress toward goals. In addition, the Collections Committee of the Board of Governors will meet at intervals throughout the project to assist in evaluating the achievement of project goals from a governance and policy perspective. Success will also be measured by the number of updated collections records made available online through the PastPerfect Online database. Records with updated information can be promoted on EDM's social media sites, and traffic to those records can be monitored.

3) PROJECT RESULTS

Intended Results
The project is intended to advance the Museum's strategic objectives of improving care of collections and exercising appropriate stewardship of EDM's unique cultural resources, as well as the IMLS objectives of supporting stewardship of museum collections and investing in tools, technology, and training that enable people of all backgrounds and abilities to discover and use museum collections and resources.The collection will be more publicly accessible in a variety of ways, especially its discoverability through PastPerfect Online database available on the EDM website. The ability of researchers to easily access information will lead to an increase in the use of the collection.

Researchers at all levels who access object documentation via the PastPerfect Online will find records with greater depth of specific and contextual information that exponentially enhances understandings of the collections and the Dickinson family's daily life. With greater access to collections documentation, these researchers will better understand the place in which Emily Dickinson called home. Similarly, depth of specific and contextual information will inform the Museum's interpretation of daily life and material culture for visitors to the museum, program attendees, and education groups.

Products
The digital products created during the proposed IMLS collections information management project will include newly created digital assets scanned from physical records and managed in a digital asset management system, Widen, and updated PastPerfect catalog records with attached digital assets and information transcribed from the scanned records. Written procedures for digital asset management will be produced for EDM staff. The Collections Manager will create an internal resource list of primary source material at other institutions with the intent of continuing research of these materials and building closer relationships with the stewards of these materials in the future.

Sustained Project Benefits
Continuing to enhance public knowledge is a priority of EDM. EDM's strategic plan includes an overarching digital strategy that relies on a digital asset management system to organize, store, secure, and distribute intellectual content to various constituencies. Information, histories, and context about collections objects is one of EDM's chief assets to be shared with the public, education groups, and researchers. As the strategic plan unfolds, EDM will add a curatorial position to broaden and deepen the Museum's use of collections–and information associated with these objects–for exhibition, tour, and interpretive purposes. Enhancing collections records now, managing them in a purpose-built DAM system, and preparing a detailed guide to primary sources at other institutions will help to set this position up for success. With a resource list of primary source material at

other institutions, EDM can plan for partnerships with these institutions to digitize and/or share these records with the public in a future phase.

Improved Collections Stewardship
EDM collections stewardship will improve in various ways. Intellectual and physical management of collections will improve by uniting objects with specific and contextual information about them. Access to collections will improve by enhancing public catalog records and promoting newly discovered information. Use of the collections is expected to increase with the ability of museum staff and researchers to easily access information in the PastPerfect Online collections database.

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ACTIVITY	YEAR ONE											
	2023				**2024**							
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
Prior to grant period: Prepare for Widen digital asset management system implementation												
Widen digital asset management system implementation	█	█	█									
Survey of physical material in EDM institutional archives	▓											
Creation of file naming convention, file storage sturcture, and metadata standards		█										
Creation of digitization workflows and written procedures			▓	▓								
Test workflows and evaluation plan				█								
Scan photos & slides, record metadata, & properly name and store					▓	▓						
Train & supervise interns on digitization workflows and standards					█	█	█	█		█	█	█
Scan paper documentation, record metadata, & properly name and store								▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Match information in newly digitized files with PastPerfect catalog records					█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Prepare interim IMLS reports												▓

"I had some things that I called mine–"
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ACTIVITY	YEAR TWO											
	2024				2025							
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
Train & supervise interns on digitization workflows and standards	▒	▒	▒	▒						▒	▒	
Scan paper documentation, record metadata & properly name and store	█	█	█	█						█	█	
Match information in newly digitized files with PastPerfect catalog records	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	▒
Review finding aids at Amherst College and identify material for physical survey	█						█					
Survey material at Amherst College and create resource list of EDM-related records	▒						▒					
Review finding aids at Jones Library and identify material for physical survey		█						█				
Survey material at Jones Library and create resource list of EDM-related records		▒						▒				
Review finding aids at Mount Holyoke College and identify material for physical survey			█						█			
Survey material at Mount Holyoke College and create resource list of EDM-related records			▒						▒			
Review finding aids at Harvard University, Houghton Library and identify material for physical survey				█						█		
Travel to Harvard University, Houghton Library to survey material and create resource list of EDM-related records				▒						▒		
Review finding aids at Brown University, John Hay Library and identify material for physical survey					█						█	
Travel to Brown University, John Hay Library to survey material and create resource list of EDM-related records					▒						▒	
Review finding aids at Yale University, Beinecke Library and identify material for physical survey						█						█
Travel to Yale University, Beinecke Library to survey material and create resource list of EDM-related records						▒						▒
Prepare final IMLS reports												█

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Digital Products Plan

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Type
The digital products created during the proposed collections information management project will include newly created digital assets scanned from physical records and managed in a digital asset management system, Widen; and updated PastPerfect catalog records with attached digital assets and transcribed information from the scanned records. Metadata will be embedded in the digitized records to indicate file origin, keywords, authors, file types, and access.

Physical records will be scanned using an overhead scanner and will be captured at 400 DPI in TIFF format as the master copy. The digital asset management system, Widen, will be able to generate derivatives of JPEG and PDF formats for regular use. Photoshop will be used for image editing. EDM currently has at least 20 linear feet of physical records to digitize as part of this project, resulting in an estimated 1500 newly digitized records. In digitizing these records, EDM will follow guidelines set forth by the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative, American Library Association's Association for Library Collections & Technical Services, as well as those followed by Amherst College Archives. Digital asset management (DAM) is a new initiative at the Emily Dickinson Museum, and this project will be one of the first digitization projects using DAM software, helping to set standards for future institutional digital archiving.

Availability
The Emily Dickinson Museum's PastPerfect collections management system database will be published on the museum's website using PastPerfect Online at the culmination of an IMLS-funded cataloging project in fall 2023. PastPerfect Online will be openly available to the public and allows for Google Indexing, enabling the collections to become accessible to anyone using Google. PastPerfect Online comes with keyword search, advanced search, catalog search and search by term features. As information is discovered in the digitized records during the proposed project, data directly related to a specific object will be recorded in PastPerfect catalog record, in a place that will be part of the Online record, and will include the citation of the original source. This will allow for newly discovered information to be public and searchable on the database, as soon as the record is edited. Updating PastPerfect catalog records allows for iterative research and sharing: as more information becomes available, the record can continue to expand. On the backend of the database, digital assets will be attached to the catalog record so that the original source of information is included, which is important for future research projects at EDM.

In addition to the PastPerfect collections database, digitized records will also be part of a newly implemented digital asset management system, Widen, resulting in greater access to EDM staff, with a long term goal of sharing publicly. Program staff as well as guides will have access to these materials, allowing for enhancement of interpretation within the museum.

Access
Text, images, illustrations and other intellectual property in the collections database are protected by copyright and other restrictions belonging to the Emily Dickinson Museum (The Trustees of Amherst College). Users may download, print or store portions of the database protected by copyrights held by the Emily Dickinson Museum

for personal, educational or noncommercial purposes in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons License. Users must include copyright information and the credit line with the content. Thumbnail photographs included in object records within the publicly accessed collections database will not be of publishable quality. Any use of such content for commercial purposes other than fair use as defined by law, must be requested and permission received in writing from the Emily Dickinson Museum. Modifying or altering the content in any way is prohibited.

The Emily Dickinson Museum will record available information about copyright status, trademarks, and restrictions on use of digital products in individual catalog records. Where the Museum has determined, to the best of its ability based on available information, that the content is unlikely to be protected by copyright interests and, in all likelihood, is in the public domain, it will use the phrase "no known copyright restriction" in the "legal status" metadata field. However, the Museum can make no guarantee or assurance that all pertinent information is provided or that the information is correct in each circumstance. The user will remain responsible for determining what additional permissions are needed.

The Emily Dickinson Museum will adhere to the Amherst College Acceptable Use Policy, which describes the special rights and responsibilities that attach to use of the College's E-Resources. The Policy also explains the roles of those charged with maintaining, operating, and overseeing College E-Resources. E-Resources may be used only for the purposes authorized by the College. These purposes generally comprise work, study, research, service, or student residential activities consistent with the College's mission and priorities. Users must respect intellectual-property rights, including copyrights, in all use of College E- Resources. All use of content, including text, images, music, and video, retrieved from E-Resources or stored, transmitted or maintained using E-Resources, must comply with copyright and other applicable laws. Copied material, used legally, must be given attribution in conformance with applicable legal and professional standards.

Because digital assets and object information recorded in the database during the proposed project are intended to document historic resources, no privacy concerns are anticipated. The digital products created during the proposed project are made available "as is". The Museum makes no guarantee that digital products will be free of objectionable matter.

Sustainability
PastPerfect database (and its public component PastPerfect Online), as the collections management database, and Widen, the digital asset management system, will remain dissemination platforms for EDM through the duration of the project and after the period of performance. Records digitized during the proposed project will be some of the first files stored and managed in Widen. Digital asset management is a new initiative for EDM, but is the next step in the museum's digital strategy to focus staff efforts and resources on providing digital content to the public and creating more efficient workflows for staff. By using a trusted and proven digital asset management system like Widen, there will be lower risk of digital asset loss, increase in the findability of digital assets, and assurance of data quality of digital assets.