



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-31-17-0297-17
Project Category: Collections Stewardship
Funding Level: \$5,000-\$25,000

Fort Lewis College Center of Southwest Studies

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$25,000
Amount of cost share:	None

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2018 Museums for America grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2017 applications. This year, the maximum that may be requested from IMLS is \$250,000. Be sure to use the instructions in the FY2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

The Center of Southwest Studies (Center), a museum, archives and library that specializes in the Southwest at Fort Lewis College, respectfully requests a \$25,000 Collections Stewardship grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Museums for America Program. The Center has long been recognized for its collections, which are invaluable for understanding the diverse cultures and landscapes of the southwestern United States. The Center serves the College and the general public as a free, regional resource.

Collections preservation, digitization and accessibility are significant priorities in our 2016-2020 strategic plan. This is the first in a series of projects that support our institutional needs for collections stewardship that will systematically inventory, document, catalogue, and digitize the Center's collections with the goal of assuring that the catalogue records, digital images and metadata are accurate, searchable and discoverable on line. This project focuses on our collection of paintings and works of art on paper as the first in a series of preservation projects in response to recommendations made in previous conservation surveys. We will improve collections stewardship as we enhance our preservation efforts by rehousing the works on paper, re-backing some of the paintings, especially those by some of the Taos Society of Artists, American Modernists, and well-known Native American artists represented in the collection, planning for publication of the collection to the Web, and developing a long-range plan for a dedicated storage area for the Center's Fine Art Collection.

What activities will you carry out and in what time frame? Phase 1 of this project will take one year to complete, from October 2017- September 2018, and will accomplish Activity 1 (review and enhance records), Activity 2 (improve the rehousing of collection items) for 20% of the fine art collection, and Activity 3 (develop plan for Phase 2). The project will be sustainable beyond the one year period through staff leadership, training activities, and the creation of procedure manuals to guide these activities for additional items in the collection. The Center will consult with the Reed Library on campus who is working with Marmot Digital Archives to create a digital representation of this collection for future publication to the Web.

Who or what will benefit from your project? Students and staff will benefit from the specialized training they will receive and the procedures manual will be used in training staff and students in the future. Several Fort Lewis College students, one-third of which are Native American from throughout the nation, have academic internships at the Center. These internships provide hands-on experiential learning opportunities for art and humanities students. Many go on to careers in museums, archives and libraries. The collections will benefit from the development of procedure manuals that will continue to be used as two dimensional artworks are added to the collection.

What are the projects outcomes? The immediate outcome of completing this first phase is threefold: approximately 20% of the artworks in the collection will be catalogued and digitized, and staff and students will be trained to continue working with this collection and adapt procedures to other collection areas; the Center will be fully prepared to use digital technology to organize and disseminate this significant collection's metadata and material via our digital initiatives; and, it will enable the Center to plan for future storage that will enhance the collection's preservation and access. As the collections become more accessible digitally via the Web we will be able to measure what scholars and the public are searching for, which will help inform our future collecting policies and what is of interest as we develop exhibitions and public programs

How will you measure your success in achieving your intended outcomes? Upon completion of the project we will be poised for Phase 2 in which the Center will seek funding to allow for the uploading of the digitized images and enhanced collections information to our website and the Marmot Digital Archive and the Digital Public Archive of America, as well as implement the plan for a dedicated storage area for the Center's fine art collection.

1. Project Proposal and Justification

This project focuses on the care, preservation and intellectual access of Fort Lewis College's Center of Southwest Studies' fine art collection of drawings, prints and paintings, many by notable Native American artists. Based on recommendations of IMLS funded General and Collections Specific Surveys, consultation with constituencies who will benefit from this project, and 2016 strategic planning, the Center will work with experts on Phase 1 of this two-phase project in order to:

- 1) Review and enhance collections records, including creating high quality digital images of artwork, to supplement collections documentation and to prepare records for public sharing on the Web;
- 2) Improve the physical housing of items in this important collection to museum archival standards for preservation and safe access; and
- 3) Plan for Phase 2 of this project to publish fine art collection items to the Web, and create a dedicated storage area for these collections.

Phase 1 of this project will take one year to complete, from October 2017- September 2018, and will accomplish Activity 1 (review and enhance records) and Activity 2 (improve the rehousing of collection items) for 20% of the fine art collections. The project will be sustainable beyond the one year period through staff leadership, training activities, and the creation of procedure manuals to guide these activities for additional items in the collection. Activity 3 is the planning for Phase 2, which will include team-based consultation with Fort Lewis College's Reed Library and Marmot's Digital Archives to prepare for digital representation of this collection on the Web; and, collaboration with museum collections specialists and Fort Lewis College's Physical Plant team to develop a comprehensive plan for a dedicated storage area for the Center's fine art collection.

The Center has linked a collections documentation project to a collections rehousing project for several reasons. First, relocating items from storage to the collections work area only once minimizes handling and increases project time efficiency. Second, it meets 2016 strategic goals of addressing care, preservation and access, and third, it responds to IMLS collections stewardship goals which pair exemplary management, care and conservation of collections with improving broad access to museum collections through technology and digitization.

High Priority Collection-Related Need

Prior to 2001, the Center's two-dimensional fine art collection consisted of less than 100 items. However, once the Center moved to its new facility in 2001, the public recognized the Center as a leading museum and cultural meeting place for the region, which led to increased donations. College alumni, supporters and others continue to actively donate to the Center Museum, primarily in the area of fine art on Southwest themes. The collection of drawings, prints and paintings has now grown to over 1200 items. These artworks, in a variety of mediums and by Native American, Hispanic and Euro-American artists span a wide range of imagery from abstract modernism to impressionism to realism. Works by Southwest Native American artists are by far the largest part of the collection, and include works by iconic artists. A select list of artists represented in the collection is included as Supportingdoc1.

The Center embraces these donations because they speak to the heart of Fort Lewis College. Fort Lewis College has over 30 % Native students, many who practice art or come from families who work in the arts. Art is a key social and economic factor in many Native communities, and a vehicle for exploring and preserving traditions and lifeways. Native students, artists and community members come to the Center to connect with their heritage through these works of art. Researchers and others come to the Center because it is becoming a destination venue for viewing and studying important Native and Southwest art. This project will strengthen the Center's ability to care for, manage, share and interpret these works, which will broaden connections to these constituencies and others.

Many of the works in this collection are vulnerable to handling. While some artists market their work through galleries, the primary venues for marketing Native arts are regional shows and fairs, such as the annual Santa Fe Indian Market, and the Heard Museum's Market. Very few of these items are matted or framed to museum archival standards, and in fact, most are not protected in any way, but sold without mats, frames or backings to keep artists' costs modest.

Currently, many prints and drawings are stacked in boxes. A large part of the collection was received shrink-wrapped onto acidic Fomcor, and remain in this packing. In addition, the Center has had to retrofit space for these items since the Center's storage areas were primarily designed for library, archives and three dimensional archeological and historical collections. The Center has created some vertical bins for framed items, but due to space issues the fine art collection has spread into six separate storage areas, making the collection cumbersome to manage. The Center recognizes the importance of providing upgraded storage for this important collection and seeks to do that in this project. Upgrading the item level housing of these items and creating dedicated fine art storage will preserve these items in the public trust, and make them more available to all constituencies by rehousing them in ways that allow them to be safely handled and efficiently retrieved for viewing, study and exhibition.

Many of the Center's donors have purchased artwork directly from artists at regional venues; some have been collecting from these venues for their lifetimes and have become personal friends with the artists. And, as artists have learned about the Center's fine art collection, artists themselves are now donating to the Center. This has provided unique opportunities for the Center to collect information about the artworks and the artists who created them through stories, interviews and documentation provided by the donors and artists, which are maintained in our Archives collection on Southwest art and artists. The artists have indicated that the Center needs to streamline access to collection items; this had led to the Center's goal for Phase 2 which is to simplify collections management and retrieval by centralizing fine art storage into one dedicated area.

The Center has a small staff in relation to the size of the collections, and relies on supervised and trained students and experienced volunteers to assist with caring for and managing its collections. While students have been trained to accomplish in-house cataloging and data entry for basic descriptive purposes into the Center's in-house collections management database, a major goal in the 2016 strategic plan is to make our collections available on the Web within the next two years. We require a higher standard of review and cataloging for records that will be released to the public. In this project, we will hire an individual familiar with Southwest art and imagery and knowledgeable in art techniques to review and enhance the catalog records for the fine art collection. We will also work with instructors and students in the College's Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) Program to review records for cultural sensitivity issues. The intention is to review and appropriately edit records prior to Web release in Phase 2.

Hand in hand with releasing our collections records (text/metadata) to the Web is the goal of pairing the item records with high quality color balanced digital images of each artwork. To accomplish this we need to improve our photography set-up, and hire a professional photographer to manage a digital photo documentation project and train staff and students. High quality color balanced digital images will provide documentation of each item's current physical condition, as well provide and prepare images for Web publication in Phase 2.

Project Beneficiaries

This collection care, management and access project will benefit from enhanced inventory, cataloging, documentation, digital photography and rehousing. This project will not only make the collection more accessible for on-site viewing, as well as access through the Web, but it will also enable the Center to better preserve these valuable painting and works on paper for future generations of artists, researchers, and the public.

Students and staff will benefit from the specialized training they will receive, and the resulting procedures manual will be used in training staff and students in the future. Fort Lewis College students, including a high percentage of Native students, have internships and work opportunities at the Center. These internships and work opportunities provide hands-on experiential learning for art and humanities students. The Center has an exemplary record of launching students toward successful careers in museums, archives and libraries through this mentorship program.

Contemporary Native artists and others will become more aware of the paintings and works on paper in the collection as they become more accessible via the Web. Artists who have visited the collection have also pointed out how important it has been for them to view originals, and have insightful comments that are added to collections documentation. As researchers become aware of the breadth of the collection, it will provide additional resources for their research, and their publications will further promote the collection. As the fine art collection becomes more widely known, better preserved and further organized, we look forward to being able to more easily host on-site visits, and publish additional collection information to the Web.

2. Project Work Plan

This proposed project is the first phase of a two-phase project to improve the care, access and interpretation of the Center's works of art on paper and paintings collection. In this project the Center will systematically review and enhance collections documentation, including producing quality digital images; rehouse individual works of art on paper and paintings to archival standards; and plan for Phase 2 of the project. Phase 2 of the project, which will be accomplished outside the scope of this grant through future fundraising efforts, and anticipated for late 2018-2019, will accomplish comprehensive fine art collection rehousing goals by creating a dedicated storage area for artwork in this collection, and activate improved access to collections by making them digitally available on the Web through the Marmot Digital Archives and the Digital Public Library of America.

This project was developed in response to recommendations made in IMLS funded Conservation Assessment Program surveys (General Survey, 1990s; Collections Specific Survey for Paper-based Collections and Paintings, 2007) and other assessment projects. Survey recommendations for collections preservation, digitization and accessibility have been incorporated into the 2016 Strategic Plan as key priorities.

This project has been planned by Center staff with input from the named consultants and other experts, and adherence to recommendations from previous surveys and assessment projects. Grant reporting and compliance will be managed by Center director Dr. Shelby Tisdale. Project activities and consultant participation will be coordinated by Center curator/project manager Jeanne Brako. Day-to-day project activities, including workflow and student and volunteer orientation, participation, and supervision will be jointly managed by the Center's Museum staff: curator Jeanne Brako and collections manager Elizabeth Quinn. The project will be accomplished by a team made up of Center's Museum staff, consultants, trained students, experienced volunteers, and FLC's physical plant staff. Project progress will be reviewed in meetings of the Museum staff every two weeks. At those times, each project component and progress will be assessed, and adjustments will be made in project work plan or procedures as required. Museum staff will have access to consultants for phone consultation throughout the project, and in person during the site visits.

Activity 1: Review and Enhance Collections Records

Intellectual control of collections has been a Center priority and the subject of several key projects. A 2005 IMLS National Leadership project allowed the Center to improve physical and intellectual access to Center collections through the creation of the Center's integrated "Sharing Culture Collections Management Database" in Microsoft Access. This database has continued to develop through staff and volunteer efforts into a core collections management tool. Data created, collected or enhanced in this project will be incorporated into

relevant database fields, many which have already been customized to accommodate data pertinent to fine art items, such as mat and frame sizes, rehousing need, artist cultural affiliation, and exhibit readiness.

The process of fine tuning our approach to cataloging the fine art collection will be a collaborative effort between museum staff, a contract fine art cataloger, and digital content managers from the Reed Library in consultation with the Marmot staff. We plan to institute the use of standardized terminology, such as, the vocabulary from the Getty's Art and Architecture Thesaurus, and develop clear cataloging protocols for fine art collection item records so that they are effective for collections management purposes, useful for exhibition and interpretative projects, and include metadata for future online representation. The decisions made through this team-based process will be documented by the collections manager, and serve as the basis for a cataloging manual to be compiled by the collections manager and contract cataloger. The manual will be used during cataloging to assure consistency in collecting and recording data about fine art items, for training future staff, students, and volunteers in fine art cataloging, and to guide future cataloging of additional fine art items accepted into the collection.

Following an initial team meeting to set cataloging standards, and over a two month period, a fine art cataloger with credentials in cataloging paintings and works of art on paper and particularly Native art will review database catalog records. The cataloger will edit terminology with an eye towards standardization, improve item level descriptions, and identify artistic techniques of approximately 240 specific works. The cataloger will conduct at least three training sessions for project participants on fine art terminology and identifying art processes relevant to the collection being cataloged.

This project will also produce high resolution color balanced digital photographs of each artwork cataloged. Prior to 2004, some items were photographed with Polaroid film, which has now faded and color-shifted. Since 2004, we have routinely photographed new acquisitions for documentation purposes, although most photos have been quick digital snapshots with automatic point and shoot cameras. However, we were fortunate to have acquired and put into use color-balanced fluorescence lamps (Scandles brand) that were designed for art conservation documentation processes and are safe for photographing light and heat sensitive items. We have been advised to improve the photo set-up further through the purchase of a new camera and a neutral gray photo backdrop system, as recommended through ATALM's 2016 workshop for photographing museum collections. Following recommendations of the Marmot Digital Archives project, we plan to create color-balanced high resolution digital images for release to the Web. Improved digital photographs will also be added to the collections database for collections management purposes and condition documentation. To accomplish this, we will hire a professional photographer who will conduct training sessions for the project team in managing and adapting the proposed photography set up in order to produce high quality color balanced digital images of fine art items suitable for uploading to the Web. Following the training sessions, the Museum staff will manage the photo documentation project.

This project will also serve as an ongoing inventory of our fine art collection as records and location information is updated in the Center's database as items are retrieved and reviewed during the project. At the end of this activity, the Center will have defined procedures and created a manual for cataloging paintings and works of art on paper in the fine art collection; have a selection of improved records that include high resolution color balanced photographs for management and research purposes; and, will be poised to publish these on the Web.

Activity 2: Improve the physical housing the fine art collection

A primary conservation survey recommendation for specific items in this collection is the improvement of item level storage to museum archival standards. Priority recommendations from the Collection Specific Survey include creating archival window mat folders for accomplishing boxed storage of unframed prints and drawings, adding solid support backings to paintings that currently have inadequate protection, and replacing

any adjacent acidic or inappropriate materials with archival materials, taking into consideration special issues such as original artist framing.

Drawings, paintings on paper and prints: The Center will conduct a rehousing project for paper-based items that will benefit from archival rehousing under the guidance of consultant Rebecca Elder. According to the Collection Specific Survey in 2007, approximately 60 of the 97 items surveyed require rehousing upgrades; this number has significantly increased since the time of the survey. Based on survey recommendations and input from Elder, the Center will have upgraded storage housing for select works of art on paper in the collection. For relevant items, this will include determining appropriate standard outer dimension mat sizes in order to create a modular storage system for works of art on paper for preservation, ease of handling and future presentation framing. Elder will create a manual to act as a road map for continuing these storage upgrades beyond the timeframe of this project. This will allow the Center to efficiently and effectively house, handle, care for, and present collections to the public, as well as sustain the project beyond the grant period.

Elder will initially spend one week at the Center assisting with project set-up and developing a rehousing protocol. Project assistants (staff, students and volunteers) will locate and retrieve items and provide documentation and assistance to the consultant, as requested. Elder will provide training to the project team in standard matting, framing and rehousing issues and other preventive maintenance procedures. Following the week-long visit, the project team will continue rehousing upgrades for additional items targeted by the consultant, under the supervision of the curator and collections manager. Elder will return to the Center partway through the project to will assess project progress, and make adjustments to procedures based on her expertise and observations of project activities.

Paintings: Similarly, select paintings require rehousing upgrades. The Collections Specific Survey identified oversized, unframed and miniature paintings as especially in need of storage upgrades and backings for preservation. Jack Townes, an experienced museum preparator with extensive experience matting and framing paintings and works of art on paper to archival standards, will accomplish the recommended upgrades for 40 paintings. These include adding solid support backings to paintings that do not have them, and creating custom storage enclosures for oversized paintings and miniature paintings as recommended by the Collections Specific Survey's paintings conservator. Staff, students and volunteers will assist as is appropriate, and determined by the consultant. The Center curator, who is a trained conservator, in concert with the consultant, will determine which portions of this process might be completed in-house by supervised students and volunteers for future artworks acquired by the Center. The consultant will also prepare a manual for this project component.

Upgrades to Storage Bins for Painting and Framed Paper-based Items: The Collections Specific Survey recommended upgrades to storage bins for framed items. The College Physical Plant carpenters will add additional dividers to select shelving units in order to create additional divided bins for storing framed items. The design of these bins was developed by the curator/conservator and approved by the survey conservators, who asked to be able to share the design with other collecting institutions. In addition, sheet Coroplast will be procured, and cut to standard bin sizes to replace ill-fitting item-to-item dividers, some of which are cardboard. The creation of additional divided bins will mitigate overcrowding until new dedicated storage is developed in Phase 2. The Coroplast dividers will transfer to the new storage area once Phase 2 is initiated.

Activity 3: Planning for Project Phase 2

Phase 2 will publish fine art collection items to the Web for public sharing, and create a dedicated storage area for these collections. In this current project, we will complete planning and preliminary steps to guide the enactment of Phase 2 as a later project.

Planning for a fine art collection Web presence: The Center's staff frequently works with Reed Library, the College's general library, on collaborative projects. Most recently, the Center's Library and Archive division,

the Delaney Southwest Research Library and Archives, has been working on a pilot project to digitize a sample of the Archives collection for Web release. This initial project focuses on the Nina Heald Webber Postcard collection, a signature collection of the Center's Archives that is being released to the Web in early 2017. The Center worked with Reed Library and Marmot's Digital Archives (MDA) to set the standards and protocols for this project, has provided Marmot with relevant postcard scans and metadata, and viewed a test upload in preparation for the 2017 release. We are very pleased by the results, which has launched our 2016 strategic plan goal to "Embrace Digital Technology."

Based on this collaborative experience, the Center desires to enter a project with the same partners, Reed Library and MDA, to put a selection of the Museum's records on the Web as a Phase 2 project. To plan for Phase 2, the Center will assemble a team to develop standards and outline protocols for taking the Museum's fine art collection to the Web through Reed and MDA. The team will include the Center's director, curator, collections manager, archivist Nik Kendziorski, Reed Library director Martha Talman and Reed's technical staff, and representatives from MDA. The team will review the current pilot project, and make a plan to adapt the project for publishing the Museum's fine art collection's items on the Web, beginning with the 250 item records and images to be addressed in Activity 1 of this project.

Planning for a dedicated fine art collection storage area: In a second planning project for Phase 2, a team approach will be used to plan for dedicated storage for the fine art collection. The fine art collection is in severe need of improved housing, both for individual items and for the collection as a whole. Although the initial Center building plan (late 1990s) did not anticipate growth for this specific collection, the Center of Southwest Studies facility is a two story multi-use building which was designed with building-wide temperature and humidity climate controlled space. The Center already has approval to acquire additional building space in order to develop a dedicated space for fine art storage. In this planning phase, a team will assemble and review space options within the building, decide on the specific space to be converted, and make plans for its conversion to dedicated fine art storage. The project team will consist of the Center director, museum staff, consultants Elder and Townes, and the FLC Physical Plant architectural team. The planning product will be a Scope of Work document, design drawings, and a fixture plan for the space. In addition, the team will prepare an estimated budget for the establishment of the dedicated fine art collection storage area.

It is always difficult to gauge how far one will progress with a hands-on project that incorporates several activities to be led by consultants, and training protocols that are to be presented to a mixed group and continued by staff. The Center is fortunate to have a dedicated and experienced staff that will successfully nurture and manage this project, as they have the motivation, drive and skills to see this project to completion. While the Center staff would like to eventually enhance documentation and rehouse the approximately 1200 fine art items to the standards outlined in this project, it is not feasible to do so within the timeframe of this project because of the multiple responsibilities of the Museum staff in any time period. In addition, until we can accomplish dedicated storage for the fine art collection we will not have adequate space for placing 1200 re-housed items back into storage, since many of the recommended storage improvements involve utilizing more space.

Our aim is to focus on settings standards for these processes; to accomplishing team training relevant to project goals; to create a series of manuals to guide these processes on an ongoing basis; and to accomplish the enhanced documentation and rehousing for 20% of the fine art collection. At the end of the one year project our goal is to have upgraded collections text records and produced high resolution digital photographs for approximately 240 items; accomplished rehousing for approximately 200 works of art on paper, and added protective backings to 40 paintings. The 200 works of art on paper to be selected for this project will meet the criteria set by the curator and Elder as appropriate for archival storage in window mat folders to be layered into archival drop front boxes. Many of these items (approximately 180, based on a preliminary count by the curator/conservator) will fit standard size pre-cut archival mats and backboards. Approximately 20 items will

need custom cut mat windows, which will be accomplished by the consultant at her home facilities based on measurements collected during the on-site visits.

At the end of this project, the Center will have a detailed plan for Phase 2 activities. Our goal is to finish the cataloging and digitization of the remainder of the collection, and incorporate the remainder of paper and painting rehousing needs into a larger Phase 2 project. This Phase 1 project will help us set realistic goals for the Phase 2 project. At that point in time, we also hope to address some of the more complex works of art on paper and paintings rehousing projects as we develop a plan for a dedicated fine arts storage area.

3. Project Results

The Center has been innovatively solving complex collections issues by breaking goals into manageable components and developing a corresponding implementation plan for each component. This project uses similar methodology and addresses upgrading collections care, preservation and access on several levels.

The Center has assembled an expert team for this project. The method of bringing in recognized experts in various specialties to conduct training for collections projects is a tried and true process for maximizing the impact of on-site consultant visits, as is the process of following up on survey recommendations by designing in-house projects to address collections documentation, storage and rehousing needs. This project incorporated exemplary training and supervisory components in order to insure a high quality product; the increased preservation and access of the fine art collection through improved housing, documentation upgrades, and digitization.

The nationally recognized experts selected for this project will be able to assist with these project activities in an efficient manner, and are knowledgeable about best practices and recent advances particular to their area of expertise. Through their participation, this knowledge will be passed on to the host institution, and its staff and students. In addition, consultants often bring the cutting-edge knowledge to the institutions with whom they work, even before it may be in published form. All consultants will present an overview of recent developments in their area of expertise to project staff as part of training sessions, enhancing the educational component to the project.

Policies, Procedures and Conservation Practices: Staff will work with the consultants to incorporate any new recommendations for policies and procedures into the Center's long range plan for conservation and collections care, as well as into the Center's strategic plan. At the end of this project the Center will have a defined procedure for cataloging fine art collection items, improved records for care, management and research purposes, upgraded housing for a number of these items, and a better sense of the overall condition of the collection. Staff, students, and volunteers can be trained on these new procedures with manuals to work from and reference when cataloging and digitally photographing the rest of the fine art collection and new acquisitions.

We will also be more informed to make decisions about future projects – including assessing care and conservation needs for our fine art collection. We will use the information and skills gained from this project to assess our needs for a new, dedicated fine art storage area. We will be able to continue the photo documentation/digital image project because we will have obtained an upgraded set-up and instructions and guidelines for using it effectively. We will have examples from which to model and measure our in-house production and processes, and the training and confidence to move forward as new collection items are acquired. This project will provide us with a prototype project to adapt to other areas of the Museum collection, and can be used by other institutions to improve collection care, storage and access of related collections. We will make our project manuals available on our Website to serve as models for other institutions with similar needs.

Center of Southwest Studies Schedule of Completion
 IMLS Museums for America Grant Application December 1, 2016

