



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-31-17-0491-17
Project Category: Collections Stewardship
Funding Level: \$5,000-\$25,000

Monroe County Historical Society

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$23,718
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.

Abstract

Who is the lead applicant and, if applicable, who are the partners?

The Monroe County Historical Society is the lead applicant for the IMLS Museums For American FY17 grant. The Monroe County Historical Society operates the Monroe County History Center.

What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?

The Monroe County History Center will address the problem of unsecure, insufficient storage for collections artifacts. The History Center currently uses a library cantilever system shelving for our small- and medium-sized artifacts. This shelving is inadequate for long-term collections storage, because the shelves are ten inches deep and do not have lips or borders to prevent artifacts from falling from the shelves. Many artifacts in the collection hang over the shelves into the aisle, therefore creating hazardous conditions for workers and placing the artifacts in danger.

This problem was identified and articulated by an on-site Collection Preservation Project Assessment conducted by Ramona Duncan-Huse, Senior Director, Conservation at the Indiana Historical Society in May of 2015.

What activities will you carry out and in what time frame?

As recommended by Ramona Duncan-Huse, the History Center will purchase a Montel professional museum storage system to house our small- to medium-sized collections artifacts. Once the units are professionally installed, staff and volunteers will rehouse and inventory artifacts in the new storage system. The History Center plans to begin this project October 1, 2017 and complete it by July 31, 2018.

Who or what will benefit from your project?

The History Center serves the residents of and visitors to Monroe County, Indiana and by securing artifacts and optimizing storage, the History Center will be able to expand and better preserve its collection for use in exhibits, educational programs, and scholarly research.

What are your project's intended outcomes?

This project will allow the History Center to rehouse artifacts on fully-supported, professional museum quality shelving, minimizing the potential for damage to both artifacts and staff. The professional storage system also would allow the History Center to optimize space within our finite collections storage area. The customizability of the shelving units would allow the History Center to adjust the units to the specific needs to the collection, and as needs change over time, continue to optimize space for storage.

How will you measure your success in achieving your intended outcomes?

The History Center will measure the success of the project by the number of artifacts rehoused and the square footage gained by moving artifacts from the old library cantilever shelving into new professional shelving.

Narrative

Project Justification

What do you propose to do?

This project will provide a professional, secure, and optimized storage environment for a wide range of artifacts in the Monroe County History Center's collection through the purchase of 13 museum-quality storage units.

What high-priority collections-related need, problem, or challenge will your project address and how was it identified?

This project addresses the high-priority collections problem of inadequate and unsafe storage conditions for the majority of our small- to medium-sized artifact storage. Collections storage uses four two-sided cantilever shelving units which provide eight rows of shelves for artifact housing. The units are ninety inches tall and each row consists of forty-two shelves, with the exception of row eight, which consists of forty-nine shelves, for a total of 343 shelves. Each shelf is ten inches deep by thirty-six inches wide. The shelving is designed for library books and not for the wide range of artifacts we have in the collection. This includes board games, dolls, walking canes, lamps, and retail equipment. The shelves do not protect the artifacts from potential damage from earthquakes or storage accidents as they do not have enclosed sides to protect items from falling off of shelves.

This problem was identified through an on-site Collection Preservation Project Assessment conducted by Ramona Duncan-Huse, Senior Director, Conservation at the Indiana Historical Society in May of 2015. Ms. Duncan-Huse was asked by staff to assess the Monroe County History Center's current collections storage conditions. Our goal was to ascertain areas and methods for improvement to secure and preserve the museum's collection. Her report, included as supporting documents with this application, details the need for professional museum-quality storage furniture in order to securely house the artifacts in the collection and optimize the storage space for continued collections growth. This application is in response to Ms. Duncan-Huse's report.

Who or what will benefit from your project?

The project allows the Monroe County History Center to provide better, more secure long-term storage for the items entrusted to the organization for use in our museum exhibits and programs. Furthermore, the Monroe County History Center will be able to condition report each artifact as it is inventoried and rehoused into the new storage system, allowing for up-to-date records and identification of artifacts in need of conservation. By providing a more secure storage environment for the collections, the visitors and patrons of the Monroe County History Center will also benefit. Our collections holdings are accessible online through our website, monroehistory.org, and patrons or researchers are able to request to see an item in our collection through the website portal. The Monroe County History Center uses the PastPerfect 5 database system for cataloging our collections; when information is added or updated in our database, it is also updated in our online catalog. By providing an up-to-date record, image, and condition information through our online catalog, we are better able to assist patrons or researchers with their work.

How will your project advance your institution's strategic plan?

The Monroe County Historical Society's Board of Trustees approved a three-year strategic plan in December 2014 which includes the goal of optimizing collections storage areas. Under section 3: "Long-Term Sustainability," subsection K: "Develop a plan for better use of space and energy use in building and on grounds," the Collections Manager is tasked with identifying areas in collections storage which can be changed in order to improve collections storage space. The Collections Manager sought the consultation of a conservation professional through the Indiana Historical Society's Collection Preservation Project Assessment Program. Since receiving the report from Ms. Duncan-Huse, the Collections Manager has discussed her suggestions with the Director and Board of Trustees of the Monroe County Historical Society and identified sources of funding for the recommended storage improvements. This application is a result of those discussions and in accordance with strategic plan "strategies to achieve the objectives." The first strategy was to review current status of space use in collections storage. The second strategy was to identify collections storage areas in need of improvement and consider consultant assessment. The remaining strategies consist of determining a schedule for changes, implementing the changes, and evaluating the effectiveness of the changes.

The Collections Manager contacted Shelvingguys, Inc., a regional supplier/installer of Montel Shelving units, and purchased a single unit of the suggested storage cabinets in order to inspect the unit and evaluate its storage capacity with the Monroe County History Center's collection. After installation, the Collections Manager was able to rehouse 7,810 in² of the most vulnerable artifacts in the collection. She moved collections of commemorative plates, glassware, and porcelain artifacts into a unit that uses a 1,260 in² footprint in collections storage. By purchasing a single storage unit, the Collections Manager was able to determine the specific and tangible benefits to collection storage space the Montel Shelving could provide on a larger scale. Using a conservative estimate that each storage unit will be able to rehouse 7,000 in² of our current collections storage, the thirteen units requested in this application will allow the Monroe County History Center to rehouse 91,000 in² of its current 123,480 in² of collections storage. These units are also fully adjustable, providing any number of combination shelves and drawers. By purchasing units of the same width and depth, the Collections Manager has the flexibility to use any component in any shelving section. This will allow the storage units to be adjusted as the Monroe County History Center's collection grows and storage needs change over time.

How will your project address the goals of the Museums for America program and the Collections Stewardship project category?

This project directly aligns with the goals of the Museums for America program to support and strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public. The Monroe County History Center serves as an institution to safeguard the history and culture of the residents and natural environment of Monroe County, Indiana. We are entrusted with the stewardship of the artifacts in our collection for perpetuity, therefore we must provide the utmost quality storage environment that we can to properly ensure the longevity of our collection. In 1998, the Monroe County Historical Society raised funds to support the construction of an addition onto the original 1918 Carnegie Library which houses the Monroe County History Center. This addition included a purpose-built and climate controlled collections storage space on the third floor in order to provide quality care for our collections artifacts. This goal directly supports the Collections Stewardship project category of the MFA grant by contributing to the long-term preservation of our nation's collections.

Project Work Plan

What specific activities, including evaluation and performance measurements, will you carry out?

The Collections Manager of the Monroe County History Center has already obtained a quote from Shelvingguys, Inc. for thirteen additional units for collections storage included as supporting materials with this application. This quote included a site visit by Shelvingguys, Inc. staff and a discussion about the Monroe County History Center's exact storage needs.

Once the Monroe County History Center secures funding, the Collections Manager will contact Shelvingguys, Inc. to order the units suggested in the quote. When they arrive at the Monroe County History Center, staff from Shelvingguys, Inc. will install the units in the designated space in collections storage. Then the Collections Manager and student intern will line the drawers with polyethylene foam and shelves as needed.

After preparing the shelving units for the safe and secure storage of artifacts, the Collections Manager and student intern will rehouse, condition report, and update inventory information of all collections artifacts moved into the new shelving units in the PastPerfect database.

This project will be evaluated by the number of square inches of collections storage space is rehoused into the new storage units. This will allow the Collections Manager to calculate the amount of physical storage space that has been created with the new storage system in comparison to the old library cantilever shelving.

What are the risks to the project and are they accounted for in the work plan?

The risks to this project include weather delays in shipping the shelving units and damage during rehousing artifacts in storage. The Collections Manager has accounted for any delay in shipping by providing a two week period for installation, which in reality will take only two or three days. Therefore if any delay arises from shipping the units to the Monroe County History Center, they can be absorbed by the generous amount of time allotted in the schedule for installation.

An additional risk to the project is possible damage to artifacts while the Collections Manager and student intern move them from the current locations into the new shelving units. The Collections Manager is accounting for this by providing a substantial amount of time to move objects to prevent quick and careless movements with vulnerable artifacts. The Collections Manager and student intern will also use a polyethylene lined cart to lessen the potential danger of dropping an artifact in transit. The excess amount of time to complete each rehousing activity and the careful attention to artifact handling while in transit will greatly decrease the risk of damage to artifacts being rehoused.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

Hilary Fleck, the Monroe County History Center's Collections Manager, will plan, implement, and manage this project. She has successfully led three previous collections storage shelving updating projects within the past year.

When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

Once the Monroe County History Center has been notified of project funding, the project will begin on October 1, 2017 and end on July 31, 2018.

Activity 1: Order and Ship Shelving Units and Supplies

The Collections Manager will contact a representative of Shelvingguys, Inc. and order the units suggested in the quote. The Collections Manager will then purchase polyethylene foam and archival storage boxes from Gaylord Archival supplier.

Activity 2: Prepare Collections Storage for Shelving

Coinciding with activity 1, The Collections Manager will prepare collections storage for the new shelving units by removing artifacts from storage and putting them in an offsite secure storage facility in order to make room in collections storage.¹ This includes documenting, condition reporting, and photographing all artifacts to be removed from collections storage, hiring professional movers to safely move large and heavy artifacts, and performing any needed cleaning and repair of the physical space before shelving installation in collections storage.

Activity 3: Installation

Once the shelving units arrive at the Monroe County History Center, representatives from Shelvingguys, Inc. will properly assemble and install the shelving units in collections storage.

Activity 4: Line Shelves with Polyethylene Foam

After installation, the Collections Manager and student intern will line the drawers and needed shelves with polyethylene foam to protect the artifacts from abrasion and shifting when the drawers are opened.

Activity 5: Rehouse Priority 1 Artifacts

After the shelving units are prepared for the safe storage of artifacts, the most vulnerable artifacts in the collection will be rehoused. These will include, but are not limited to, glass jars, lamps, bottles, mirrors, ceramic and porcelain figures, neon signs and plaster casts. These artifacts are currently most in danger of significant damage or destruction on the current library cantilever shelving system.

Activity 6: Rehouse Priority 2 Artifacts

After rehousing the artifacts most vulnerable to damage, the Collections Manager and student intern will rehouse the artifacts that are currently not completely supported and therefore unstable on the library cantilever shelving. These will include, but are not limited to, dolls, toys, board games, industrial and farming tools and equipment. The library cantilever shelves are ten inches deep and do not fully support artifacts of a larger size. These shelves cause artifacts to hang over the open shelving creating hazards for staff and volunteers working in storage as well as subject the artifacts to possible damage from being bumped or knocked off shelves.

Activity 7: Rehouse Priority 3 Artifacts

¹ Apart from this grant, the Monroe County History Center has secured a protected, climate-controlled offsite storage facility in order to temporarily house a large incoming loan. That site will also be used to stage the Monroe County History Center's collection during the installation of new storage units should funding for the Museums for America grant be awarded. Artifacts temporarily housed at this site will be stored according to best practices for collections storage.

After rehousing the most vulnerable and unstable artifacts in the collection, the Collections Manager and student intern will then turn to rehousing the artifacts small enough to fit into archival storage boxes, rather than shelves or drawers. These will include, but are not limited to, eyeglasses, medicine and cosmetic bottles, doll house furniture, small toys, and pens. This activity will also include rehousing the remaining artifacts stored on the library cantilever shelving system into the new professional shelving units.

Activity 8: Update Location of Artifacts in Database

At the same time as activity 5, 6, and 7, the Collections Manager and student intern will update the locations of all rehoused artifacts in the collections PastPerfect database. This will be done on a rolling basis so that artifacts will continuously have the correct location in the database and remain available to the Exhibits and Education Managers for the development of exhibits and educational programs at the Monroe County History Center.

Activity 9: Resolve Any Artifact Database Issues

With any inventory or rehousing project, issues with artifact information or cataloging will arise. This project will therefore allow for a two month period when these issues can be addressed and resolved. This will ensure that by the end of the project all collections artifacts are correctly catalogued and accounted for in the Monroe County History Center's PastPerfect database.

Activity 10: Calculate and Describe Results

Once the physical rehousing of the artifacts is complete and any issues with artifacts resolved, the Collections Manager will assess the effects of the new storage units and describe improvements made to the storage environment. By calculating the new square footage of collections storage against the previous square footage, the Collections Manager will be able to determine how much space was gained through the new shelving units.

What financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

As this is a non-cost sharing grant, the Monroe County History Center will use the requested funds towards the purchase of the shelving units, supplies for rehousing artifacts, and two paid internships to assist the Collections Manager with the project. Our request of \$23,718.00 is based on the quote provided by Shelvingguys, Inc., supplies prices from Gaylord Archival, and the Monroe County History Center's rate for paid internships.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?

The Collections Manager will track the progress of the project by referring to the Schedule of Completion provided with this application. If any activity takes longer than anticipated to complete, the Collections Manager will adjust the timeline to accommodate the changes with the goal in mind to complete the project on the target completion date of July 31, 2018.

How and with whom will you share your project's results?

Once all artifacts are rehoused and updated in the collections database, the Collections Manager will contact the local newspaper, *The Herald Times*, to invite them on a tour of collections storage to view the new units. In addition, the Collections Manager will write a session proposal for the Annual Meeting of the regional professional organization Southern Indiana Collections Connection

Association, as well as invite members to tour storage. The Collections Manager will disseminate information about the project in the Monroe County History Center's newsletter, *The Historian*, social media sites, and invite the student intern to write about the experience on our museum's blog.

Project Results

Referring to your Project Justification, describe your project's intended results that will address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified.

The intended results of this project are to provide a more physically secure storage environment for our collections artifacts and to optimize the physical space within collections storage in order to be able to sustain the continued growth of the collection through the foreseeable future.

How will the care, condition, management, access to, or use of the museum collections and/or records that define the focus of your project improve?

By rehousing the collections artifacts from library cantilever shelving into museum storage units, the Monroe County History Center will be able to provide an improved storage environment for the artifacts entrusted into our care. Through this effort, the Collections Manager and student intern will also update our collections database information, which is available to the public internally and through our website. In addition to increased accessibility for patrons, the updated database information will also allow for increased accessibility for staff to use artifacts in exhibits and educational programming.

What tangible products will result from your project?

The Monroe County History Center's collection will be safely and securely stored in professional museum storage environment. The database records of all artifacts transferred into the new shelving will be updated and are accessible to patrons online through PastPerfect. Through this project, the Monroe County History Center will be able to provide better access to and care of our collections that are not on display.

How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project?

The project will be sustained by the Collections Manager and a student intern who will complete an inventory of collections storage on a continuous rolling basis. The physical condition of the artifacts will be updated in the database, PastPerfect, which is accessible to patrons through the Monroe County History Center's website. Additionally, the selected storage system is fully adjustable and additional components are available through Shelvingguys, Inc. if in the future the needs of collections storage change and a different configuration best supports the collection.

