

**FINAL REPORT**

**WPI PROGRAM IMPACT SURVEY PROJECT**

**FOR THE WASHINGTON PRESERVATION INITIATIVE  
PROGRAM OF THE WASHINGTON STATE LIBRARY**

**OSOS No. P-3366**

**By**

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**October 16, 2006**

## **I. Project Background**

The Washington Preservation Initiative (WPI), a program of the Washington State Library, funded by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) from October 2003-September 2006, has proven to be a model of the “next wave” of statewide preservation programs, in its broad programmatic offerings and wide audience appeal. As initial funding for the program came to a close in September, 2006, a telephone survey of preservation leaders, those who have utilized the services of the WPI, and program administrators was implemented to determine the level of satisfaction with the program, its impact, and strategies for future statewide preservation activities in Washington.

The program was launched in Federal Fiscal Year 2003 to help libraries safeguard the cultural heritage of the state, through the preservation of historical library collections in all formats. Goals included helping library staff develop preservation expertise, and providing the citizens of the state continued access to collections.

In late 2003/early 2004, a preservation needs assessment survey of libraries in the state was conducted to help develop some of the direction of the WPI program. The survey, developed by the Online Computer Library Center’s Digital and Preservation Services division, revealed the need for training, preservation surveys of library collections and buildings, and grants and other supplemental funding to help libraries of all sizes with specific preservation projects to care for their collections.

During the initial three years of WPI activity, thirty-six (36) preservation workshops were held at a variety of locations throughout the state. The fact that most of the workshops were offered in both the Eastern and Western portions of the state made these sessions more accessible to a wider variety of library staff, no matter their geographic location. Another aspect of this education series which was immensely beneficial to the cultural heritage community in the state was that the workshops were offered at no cost to library staff.

At the same time, a program of preservation grants was offered to Washington Libraries. A total of forty-three (43) grants were offered during the 2003-2006 period. Among these were 31 Competitive Grants for specific preservation projects, Assessment Grants to allow 8 libraries to have their preservation needs and concerns surveyed, and 4 grants to allow institutions to monitor environmental conditions within their libraries and receive expert advice and recommendations on improving those conditions.

In the area of Competitive Grants alone, \$444,821 was awarded to libraries for an incredibly wide variety of preservation projects. The work of these projects included duplication of dangerous and deteriorating nitrate photographic negatives; preservation of special collections materials including maps, scrapbooks, diaries and other unique documents, and audiovisual materials (both films and audio recordings); mass deacidification; microfilming; application of ultraviolet filtering film on windows to

protect collections from damaging light; and preservation surveys of specific important portions of library collections.

The awareness of libraries of the Assessment Grants spurred at least two additional libraries, not selected through this part of the program or the Competitive Grants, to contract for preservation surveys to be performed on their collections.

The varied types of grant projects, wide variety of institutions receiving these grants, and the large amount of funding available to many types of cultural heritage institutions made the WPI Grants Program a more widely-representative source of preservation funding than even the long-established New York State Preservation Program or the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grants program.

To capture information about the levels of satisfaction and impact of the Washington Preservation Initiative Project on institutions in the state, preservation consultant Tom Claeson, Program Director for New Initiatives with PALINET (Philadelphia, PA) was contracted to perform a telephone survey of preservation leaders, program administrators, and WPI users in September/October 2006. Claeson was uniquely qualified to implement this survey, as he had conducted the initial 2003-2004 WPI mail and telephone survey, taught some of the WPI workshop sessions, and was part of a team that performed the eight WPI-funded preservation site surveys.

The other goal of the telephone survey, conducted between September 27 and October 13, was to help to determine future direction for the Washington Preservation Initiative Program. Claeson conducted calls with 17 cultural heritage professionals about potential program direction, funding sources, and a variety of other questions. Results of the survey appear below; a synthesis of the responses and summary set of findings appear as Section III of this report.

## **II. Telephone Survey Results**

The survey respondents for the project were chosen through work with WPI Project Manager Susan Barrett, Washington State Library, and WPI Advisory Group Chair Gary Menges, University of Washington Libraries. Seventeen of the twenty suggested respondents for the survey were able to participate in the interviews; the three other respondents were not available for interviews during the survey timeframe. Of the group, eleven can be primarily characterized as “WPI Users,” whose main contact with the program was to utilize the education, consulting, and information services; three are current or former members of the WPI Advisory Committee (one of these is also a strong user of WPI services); and three are current or former program administrators (including one former administrator of OCLC Western Services).

In the survey, there were a few questions to establish the context about which the representative was speaking, including information about the current preservation program or activities at the institution, and its particular informational or programmatic needs in preservation.

## **Level of Involvement**

When queried about the types and levels of staff involvement with the Washington Preservation Initiative, the broad reach of the program began to be illustrated. The users and advisory members all spoke of attending, or having staff attend multiple WPI workshops, either in-person or online or both. In fact, some of the institutions surveyed had acted as hosts for one or more training sessions. A number of respondents had participated in preservation needs assessment surveys, and two were currently involved in the grant-funded environmental monitoring program. One of the institutions had participated in **all three** cycles of competitive grants (several others had one or more of these grants). In addition, there were four institutional representatives that had participated in the three-week “Pacific Northwest Preservation Management Institute,” a preservation education opportunity presented by the Northeast Document Conservation Center, in partnership with Amigos Library Services, Inc., the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA), Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC), the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) and the University of Washington Libraries (UW). The Institute was funded in part by a leadership grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and hosted by the University of Washington Libraries.

## **WPI’s Impact on Cultural Heritage Institutions**

Involvement in this variety of programmatic offerings from the Washington Preservation Initiative unanimously helped move preservation forward in the surveyed institutions. One respondent noted that the WPI’s “excellent combination of training,” and “the important step of actually offering funding for preservation projects” gave Washington’s cultural heritage institutions an “unprecedented opportunity” to advance preservation.

Another respondent noted that “before WPI, our library had some money for preservation supplies and small projects, but we could not have been able to do the larger, very necessary projects” without the WPI Competitive Grants. At the same institution, a preservation needs assessment survey was “of great benefit, giving our program directions to take for the future.” Yet another institution called the survey report “a blueprint for future preservation activities.”

Other institutional representatives called the WPI’s efforts “hugely helpful” in moving preservation forward for their library. In a direct benefit from the program, one library utilized information, training, and exercises from the WPI to develop a report on the current state and preservation needs of its University Archives. This report, which went to the University’s Provost and President, will be utilized to generate future funding. A tribal library used their preservation survey/assessment report to successfully apply to their Tribal Council for an improved storage site for their materials. And, to take the usefulness of WPI programmatic offerings in leveraging additional preservation funding a step further, one institution reported that WPI educational information and consulting reports had helped it to secure two federal preservation grants.

## **WPI's Impact on Washington State**

When asked about the impact of the Washington Preservation Initiative program on cultural heritage institutions in the state of Washington, the response was even more positive.

“The state of preservation in Washington is worlds ahead of where it was three years ago,” said one WPI Advisory Council member. “This effort allowed people from all over the state to learn about preservation. Before WPI, they had very few opportunities,” noted another, who was among several respondents who felt that the program offered an opportunity to raise the awareness of new staff about preservation topics.

This awareness-raising activity was mentioned almost unanimously by the respondents as one of the greatest benefits of the program. In addition, they felt that the profile of preservation as an important institutional activity was heightened in libraries across the state.

Partnerships for preservation, including the preservation of film collections, were also generated through WPI. One respondent spoke of the WPI's activities as “lifting the preservation community.” She was trying to develop a disaster plan during the early days of the WPI, and “called around” to colleague institutions, “but no one seemed to have a plan.” After training on disaster planning was offered by WPI, the number of plans, and the number of colleagues willing to help this librarian grew.

Another example of a specific benefit to a group of libraries which is often underserved with preservation information, is that, through information learned from the Washington Preservation Initiative and the Preservation Management Institute, “preservation education was provided to en masse all community college library directors throughout the state, and a website was developed to provide them with preservation information.”

However, there is still work to do on preservation awareness and education. In response to the state impact question, one respondent noted that awareness “needs to be heightened even further, especially the preservation awareness of library administrators,” and another noted the need for even further preservation education penetration in Eastern Washington, “which might most easily be accomplished via distance education.”

Finally, one respondent felt that the WPI program may have “fished for people, rather than teaching them to fish,” and noted the need to instigate, and sustain, institutional preservation programs.

## **Evaluating WPI's Training Offerings**

When queried specifically on the quantity and quality of preservation training offered by the WPI, almost across the board, response was positive. According to one respondent,

“the quantity and quality of training was excellent,” and another called the efforts “top-notch.” “The audience was never disappointed with the presenters the program brought in,” said one respondent. “Even when the training was not specifically relevant to our library’s situation, everyone who attended from my staff was impressed with the workshops,” one respondent noted. The online “Caring for Scrapbooks” workshop was particularly well-received by the survey respondents.

“Without the WPI’s training efforts, there would be nothing,” one cultural heritage professional noted. However, there is still room for expansion and improvement in the educational offerings of the initiative. Respondents noted that the workshop sessions “bear repeating more than once” (especially noted here was the book repair training, even though it was offered eight times in three different parts of the state). Future workshops should “build on what has already been offered,” and classes could be more in-depth, at an intermediate or advanced level. One respondent echoed earlier concerns that even greater workshop activity needs to happen in Eastern Washington, and that distance education is an excellent way to reach rural and remote libraries.

A program administrator detailed another important benefit of the workshop series. “The training was tremendous, both in the number of training offerings, and the number of people trained. But what was special about this initiative is that, through this training, it reached a constituency that many previous statewide efforts had not reached. The WPI attracted a broad spectrum of institutions, including academic libraries, special libraries, museums, historical societies, and genealogical societies,” which expanded its success beyond the traditional public library realm that many LSTA-sponsored programs reach across the U.S.

### **Comparison to Other Washington Statewide Programs**

Other respondents also compared the WPI to other program offerings of the Washington State Library. Most echoed the statements that the WPI has been doing a good job on raising awareness of preservation in Washington State; one said that the workshops, in particular, were “universally well-accepted.” The consulting program was seen as especially helpful to small-town and rural libraries.

A number of respondents, however, offered further details in their comparisons of LSTA-sponsored programs. “Only the subsidized database program has had a greater impact across the state,” said one respondent. “No other continuing education program has had this great of a reception in the past ten years,” they continued, stating that the WPI transcended traditional activities by “going beyond the library types and geographic boundaries seen in many statewide programs.”

An administrator noted that “there were several years where Preservation was the only program giving subgrants. “The WPI tried something very successful, with libraries able to apply for subgrants to get preservation surveys. This approach, which had not been done before, proved a model for subgranting on projects such as the LSTA-funded

marketing initiative.” This was seen as “better than the traditional approach of having to complete program contracts with every library.”

An Advisory Group member stated that the WPI was “one of the WSL grants with the most to show for itself” as far as results at the institutions where the funding was directed. And, in a recent decision by the Library Council of Washington, the “competitive grant cycle for preservation projects in 2007” ranked third out of sixteen funding priorities for the new LSTA year.

But, there is room to grow, and model other statewide programs in this area, too. One respondent felt that the need for preservation education and consulting is so large that “even more marketing of the WPI program and subgrants is needed,” and another pointed to the marketing and press coverage of the Washington State Digital Archives program as a great success which the WPI should attempt to emulate.

### **Ongoing Preservation Priorities**

The comments on digitization and digital archiving were seen as a place for expansion of the WPI program. When asked about key, ongoing preservation priorities for libraries and cultural heritage institutions in the state, some common themes emerged.

The need to both digitize the unique and historical materials for greater access, hand-in-hand with preserving the original artifact or information, was mentioned almost universally by the survey respondents. As libraries and other cultural heritage institutions make more materials available digitally, the concerns about dealing with digital media, through digital and electronic records preservation, is of concern to librarians throughout the state and the nation.

Another key area of concern, which many libraries asked for assistance in addressing, is development of workflow, staff time, and staff funding to do preservation work at individual institutions. Developing preservation staffing scenarios for smaller institutions, and teaching simple, basic archival holdings maintenance which a variety of staff can learn, were seen as important future activities for the WPI.

Other specific concerns were mentioned, including a continued focus on disaster preparedness, preservation of audiovisual materials and a care of a variety of other formats as well. Collecting and caring for materials in private hands (such as family records and business records), conservation assistance, dealing with artifacts and textiles, and a focus on cellulose nitrate negatives were other priorities expressed, but those interests may not translate across a large number of institutions, so might be better offered as areas of consulting assistance.

No matter what area of preservation was discussed, the further education of administrative and I.T. personnel about preservation was discussed. One vehicle by which to accomplish this, as well as further disseminate preservation information, is via the Web. “Most of these libraries don’t have a preservation expert, and many do not even

have an MLS-trained librarian on staff. If the WPI and other efforts could put more information on the PreservNW listserv and provide deeper information on a Web Page, such as information on vendors and copies of existing disaster plans, that would be helpful to all constituents.” A suggestion here is to expand the University of Washington’s preservation website (<http://www.lib.washington.edu/Preservation/>) to include more information which can be used on a statewide basis.

### **Continuation and Expansion of the WPI**

Could the current Washington Preservation Initiative project be expanded in a future phase to include digitization and digital preservation? This was a recurring theme when respondents discussed one of the most important themes of the WPI Survey, the methods and models for continuation of the WPI program.

Many respondents mentioned that stable funding for preservation education, information, and consulting was more important than “huge amounts of funding” for continued activity. Whatever the form of the future activity, it needs to remain statewide and as inclusive as possible.

Numerous survey participants shared the opinion that “leadership and concrete activity is difficult without funding.” Several respondents said they were not adverse to the formation of a voluntary preservation cooperative/consortium with a \$75-100 membership fee, or the continuation of preservation workshops offered at a modest fee. Program administrators from the Washington State Library said that they could assist with meeting logistics and facilitation, and bring together collaborative groups, but most respondents, no matter what their affiliation, felt that there was little chance of future continued funding of the Washington Preservation Initiative program in exactly the same program format as it is currently available (although the possibility is open, according to one administrator, for project managers to return to the Library Council and ask to run another preservation project). Those who did note the across-the board success of the program suggested that possibly the Washington Secretary of State’s Office could support the program as a continuing budget item. Additionally, several respondents mentioned approaching community, state, or national foundations based in Washington for continuing support. Could an endowment program help sustain the efforts?

An expanded Washington Preservation Initiative Program, combining traditional and digital preservation education, information, and consulting, was seen as an approach which might interest a variety of funders. “The digitization ‘hook’ can grab the attention, and possibly the funding, of institutional administrators,” one respondent noted.

Others suggested a model for continued funding similar to the New York State Preservation Program model, with ongoing funding from the state each year to the largest academic library preservation programs, which then develop programs and efforts for smaller institutions, among other activities. A model where larger institutions would provide the “driving force” for preservation activity was also seen as a way where local

historical museums and historical societies can advocate and support for preservation funding to be given to “leader institutions.”

Other models included the very real possibility of trained Preservation Management Institute “graduates” serving as mentors for libraries seeking preservation information and consulting, as well as a “Speakers’ Bureau” approach, where PMI graduates could speak to institutional staff or consortia about specific preservation issues. Another approach could be the establishment of “sub-regional” preservation cooperatives throughout the State, with a leader institution in each geographic region. Here again, the development of a website which could serve as a preservation information clearinghouse of best practices, as well as a resource list, was suggested by a number of respondents.

### **Working with Other Organizations and States**

Another key concept explored in the survey was building stronger partnerships and collaborations with other groups in Washington and the Western United States that are interested in preservation.

Among the groups which were suggested as allies for future preservation activities (although none cuts across the different types of cultural heritage institutions, and types of library/archival/museum work as the WPI does) were:

- Orbis Cascade Alliance
- OCLC Western
- PORTALS
- A potential National Endowment for the Humanities multi-state/regional preservation field service effort, the “Western States and Territories Preservation Assistance Service” (WESPAS), coordinated by the State of California for eight Western states.
- The Northwest Archivists, Inc.
- The Pacific Northwest Library Association

Some groups with a narrower audience and scope were also seen as needing continued information and education in preservation, and might be collaborators in reaching new or expanded audiences:

- Pacific Northwest Association of Independent Schools
- Northwest Oral History Association
- Tribal College Library conferences

Other models for dissemination of preservation information were again suggested in response to this question: virtual information and education; subregionals (such as Florida, where six subregional networks exist); and a preservation cooperative for the joint purchase of supplies and collaboration on the development of preservation information resources.

## **“Visions” for Preservation**

Whether a new collaboration with other states, or a new model of collaboration within Washington State, respondents saw the need for a “preservation presence” which continues, and even expands upon the WPI, as an important future activity. The last question of the survey asked respondents to provide their 3-5 year vision for preservation activities in the State of Washington. While many answers included ideas already expressed in this report, including a strong support for continuing workshops, there were other components of the preservation vision, as well.

Support of disaster planning and recovery was seen as crucial by a number of survey respondents. One person suggested the establishment of regional disaster recovery groups in a number of locations (Northwestern Washington, the Puget Sound, Southern Washington, Eastern Washington, and the Portland area, for example). These groups would provide support in disaster plan development, disaster recovery training, and might even provide a basis for mutual aid in disaster recovery.

Expanding the focus of the Washington Preservation Initiative to digital projects, digital preservation, and education in developing and dealing with digital projects was another strong interest of the group.

This work on disaster planning and digital preservation can only be accomplished through “continuing communication between institutions on preservation topics,” according to several participants. Utilizing existing models such as the Film Preservation project led by the University of Washington Libraries may be a way to drive forward other collaborative efforts.

Utilizing an existing or planned institutional conservation lab for both conservation activity and training was seen as another way to leverage existing resources. Additionally, a suggestion of a “circuit-riding preservation professional,” who could help institutions across the state, was expressed.

Some survey respondents and program administrators feel that the preservation vision established at the “Swimming Upstream: Cooperatively Preserving Collections in the Pacific Northwest” event, held in September, 2000, is still a strong and valid vision for collaborative preservation in the region. The statement emphasizes recognition of the importance of preservation, and development of commitment and support for preservation among cultural heritage institutions in the Northwest. Information about the event, and the vision statement, are available at <http://www.lib.washington.edu/Preservation/vision.html>.

Whatever approach is taken, even greater marketing of future preservation efforts needs to be done. If cultural heritage institutions can make Washington citizens and elected

officials aware of continuing preservation needs, and if the demand for preservation information and education continues to remain steady or grow, several respondents felt that there might be continued funding and support for preservation through statewide legislation.

One respondent noted the imminent arrival of a large donated collection and her concern about its condition and preservation needs. Her final comment summarized the feelings of the majority of the respondents to this survey: “Preservation needs continue, and there is a continued need for a structure like the Washington Preservation Initiative to meet those needs.”

### **III. Summary**

The Washington Preservation Initiative program impact survey project showed the high regard librarians and cultural heritage professionals in the state hold for a preservation information, education, and consulting program developed in a mere three years. The level of satisfaction with the program is extremely high, and the impact of the program has been high as well. There are still a number of preservation topics and concerns which need to be focused upon in the future, including digitization and digital preservation, collaborative disaster planning and recovery, as well as sustainable institutional preservation workflows and funding.

From the survey interviews, it became obvious that the activities of the Washington Preservation Initiative need to be carried forward. Methods to do this might include new collaborations within the state or region, adoption of program models which have been successful in other states, and utilization of preservation leadership and mentoring skills developed through the work of the Washington Preservation Initiative and the Preservation Management Institute. Funding sources might include fee-based activities such as training or annual membership dues, continuing support from the Secretary of State’s Office, or support through legislation or foundation funding. A preservation constituency has been built through the programs of the Washington Preservation Initiative. Utilizing the ideas and advocacy of that constituency to continue the program is key in helping all types of institutions to “safeguard the cultural heritage of the state.”