

FACT SHEET

FY2009 Manuscript Arrangement and Description

BACKGROUND

The documentary heritage of Massachusetts is essentially intact from its founding, and much rich information and documentation exists. Throughout the Commonwealth, repositories house irreplaceable collections of books, as well as private and public documents, which serve as a rich resource for researchers involved in local, state, regional, national, and international studies. Library staffs in public and academic libraries and in other repositories have long collected materials that document their immediate and adjoining locales as well as focusing on specific collecting areas. Although much of this material is monographs and pamphlets, a significant portion is manuscript material (personal and organizational papers), photographs, posters, ticket stubs, broadsides, etc. Through this grant program, applicants can focus on the arrangement and description of archival materials.

Much archival material housed in libraries remains unorganized and inaccessible due to limited staff with archival training. Furthermore, many libraries do not have local history/special collections/archives' collection development policies that assist in determining the scope and subject areas of the institution's holdings.

This program will provide funding for the arrangement and description of archival materials according to currently accepted national standards, assistance with collection development and other appropriate policies, training for staff in basic archival theory and practice, and preparation of finding aids at the collection level for increased access. (These finding aids should be online whenever possible.) This will be done by contracting with an archival consultant for the project. The MBLC will provide applicants with a list of criteria for hiring an archival consultant as well as a list of archival consultants who have met these criteria. Any consultant not on this list will need to be approved by MBLC staff.

The completion of a preservation survey and a library preservation action plan is required to be eligible for this program. The MBLC has funded numerous applications for Preservation Surveys with LSTA funds. The interest in preservation surveys has shown a serious concern among librarians for the long-term well-being of their collections. Preservation surveys, whether funded through LSTA grant funds or by individual libraries, have resulted in reports used by library staff and trustees to develop multi-year preservation action plans. These reports document such things as:

- the preservation problems in libraries as they relate to the collections (particularly the local history/special/archival ones);
- building concerns;
- storage, enclosures, and handling practices;
- environmental issues;
- emergency preparedness;
- preservation policy and planning;
- in-house repairs;
- reformatting needs .

Each applicant will be required to provide information as to the quantity, overall condition, and general subject matter of the manuscripts in their library; how these relate to local, regional, state, or national issues; a description of the current state of their arrangement and description (if any) and storage, including the environment and security; and a description of any archival training that staff have received.

One approach (involving practical experience) will be to hire an archivist to:

- Inventory the holdings, arrange and describe one manuscript collection, and provide staff with training in basic archival theory and practice to deal with manuscript and other non-monographic materials to be arranged and described by the staff during the remainder of the grant period and in the future;
- Respond to questions and problems in person or by telephone during the remainder of the grant period;
- Return to the repository to review and evaluate the work of the staff and to provide further training as necessary;
- Assist in developing rules, regulations, policies, and procedures for defining the collection scope and content and for the secure operation of the local history/special collections/archives room.

A second approach will be to hire an archivist to:

- Inventory the institution's manuscript collections and provide full arrangement and description of these collections;
- Provide staff with basic training in archival theory and practice so that they may deal with manuscript and other non-monographic materials in the future;
- Assist in developing rules, regulations, policies, and procedures for defining the collection scope and content and for the secure operation of the local history/special collections/archives room.

MASSACHUSETTS LONG-RANGE PLAN GOAL

Goal 1: Massachusetts residents, no matter where they live, will find and obtain the resources they need using an improved technological infrastructure that links all types of libraries and provides and coordinates shared electronic resources. Residents will have access to digitized images of unique and valuable resources, improved access tools, and properly preserved physical and electronic materials.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Any library or cooperating group that meets standard eligibility requirements for Direct Grant programs is eligible to apply. A cooperating group may apply on behalf of one or more of its members. To apply for funds this program, a library or cooperating group must:

- Have completed a "Preservation Survey" within the past five years and developed a Preservation Action Plan based on this survey. Be a member of a regional library system and, for public libraries only, remain certified for the State Aid Program throughout the application and award process;
- Have a long-range plan on file at the MBLC by October 1, 2007 that meets the requirements of the *Massachusetts Long-Range Plan, 2008-2012* and the *LSTA Policies and Procedures 2008-2012*. If a plan is already on file, an updated Action Plan for FY2009 must be on file by December 3, 2007. If a cooperating group is applying on behalf of one or more of its members, all participants must meet this requirement;
- Provide at least one fifth of the total project costs to achieve the required 4 to 1 ratio of federal to local funds.

PRIORITIES AND FUNDING

Under this program priority will be given to materials of local, state, regional, or national importance that contribute to an understanding of our historic and cultural heritage. Preference will be given to collections in the following order and subject areas: 1) collections documenting significant Massachusetts historical, geographical, cultural, economic, and natural developments and/or collections with direct application and relevance to Massachusetts; 2) unique collections representing resources unavailable in any other repository;

and 3) collections located in Massachusetts repositories that provide a unique and/or cohesive resource, independent of subject area. Libraries will be awarded grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000.

INTERESTED?

Applicants must submit a **Letter of Intent** by **December 3, 2007** with the “Manuscript Arrangement and Description” option checked off under **TYPE**. Applicants should refer to the enclosed calendar of due dates in this year’s round. An informational workshop to assist applicants in completing an application for this program will be held in late January or early February 2008. A preliminary schedule is enclosed. If you need more information about this program, please call Gregor Trinkaus-Randall at the MBLC, 800-952-7403 x 236 or e-mail him at gregor.trinkaus-randall@state.ma.us.