

This publication is a service of the *Hoosier Heritage Alliance Connecting to Collections*

# COLLECTIONS

## Advisor



Martin Collection, Indiana Historical Society, cropped from original

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### Hoosier Heritage Alliance Connecting to Collections Survey Report: Collections care in Indiana's heritage collecting institutions

[www.indianahistory.org/hha](http://www.indianahistory.org/hha)

In the fall of 2008, the Indiana Historical Society, utilizing the expertise of the Hoosier Heritage Alliance partners received a "Connecting to Collections" grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services to perform a comprehensive assessment of Indiana's collections conservation needs.

The survey was distributed to custodians of heritage collections throughout Indiana. Libraries were asked to report only their special collections and not circulating materials.

- 1,006 surveys were delivered (1,028 were mailed; 22 were returned undeliverable)
- 272 surveys were completed (240 reported data; 32 replied that they hold no collections)

Organizations were asked to describe their collections stewardship (management and care) practices. Analysis of the responses strongly suggests that high-priority areas for



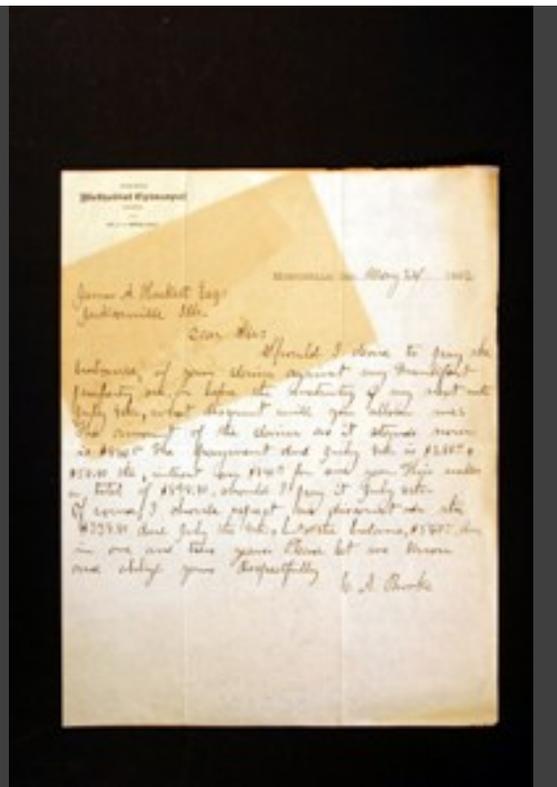
*Conservation Lab image, Indiana Historical Society*

collections care are increasing awareness, training and funding. The same issues for Indiana's heritage collections had been identified in a survey (of museums only) of status and needs conducted in the fall of 1991 by the Association of Indiana Museums. Similar nationwide issues were found in the collections conservation and preservation survey carried out by the Heritage Health Index in 2005.

A major finding is that 83 percent of Indiana's heritage collecting organizations do not know the condition of items in their care (a higher percentage than the 70 percent reported nationally by HHI). Nearly half of responding organizations do not have a complete listing of items in their collection. This is reflective of the need for ongoing physical inventory, knowledgeable staff and collection records management. Of those responding, the majority have no policies for storage, preservation, pest management, condition documentation, disaster planning or the security of the collection. In 1991 AIM reported that 60 percent of Indiana's museums did not have a conservation plan. The HHA survey indicates that currently more than 80 percent of Indiana's heritage collecting organizations do not have a conservation plan.

Fifty-nine percent of organizations in Indiana self-identified staff training as a need in all areas of collections stewardship. This is in agreement with the HHI's indication that for 70 percent of organizations nationwide the most common need is staff training. A majority of Indiana organizations utilize volunteer staff for conservation and preservation needs rather than an external provider, paid conservator or collections staff.

Many organizations lack funding for staff training in collections stewardship, especially training in the proper conservation, preservation and management of their collections. Funding was also a key issue identified in both the AIM and HHI surveys. Only 12 percent of HHA respondents have funds budgeted specifically for the conservation/preservation of their collection. Overall, slightly more than one-third of organizations have some type of funding available for collection stewardship. Lack of funding for staff training and conservation/preservation of collections poses a considerable risk to the stability of Indiana's heritage collections.



*Conservation Lag image, Indiana Historical Society*

- The following is the breakdown by function of the 240\* HHA survey respondents:

- 72 - Archives/Library
- 14 - Genealogy group
- 50 - Historical society
- 97 - Museum
- 17 - Preservation society

\* Ten organizations indicated they had more than one primary function.

- 74 percent of the respondents indicated that collection preservation is a part of their mission.

- 147 of the organizations that responded indicated they are stewards of a total of 338 historic buildings.

- Based on the survey responses received, it is estimated that the 1,028 custodians of Indiana's heritage collections hold more than 20 million historical objects, and the total of linear (shelf) feet is 424,000 of primarily historical documents. The total of historical objects in the collections held by respondents is 5,064,037, and the total linear feet of historical documents is 105,911. The average number of items in respondents' collections is 21,188, and the average of linear feet is 441.

- On average, a typical collection contains:

- Books and Bound Volumes – 32 percent
- Historic Objects – 20 percent
- Unbound Sheets – 12 percent
- Photographic Materials – 12 percent
- Archaeological Materials – 8 percent
- Textiles – 5 percent
- Art Objects – 4 percent
- Natural Science Specimens – 3 percent
- Moving Images – 1 percent
- Recorded Sound – 1 percent
- Digital Materials – 1 percent
- Ethnographic Objects – 1 percent

The complete Hoosier Heritage Alliance Connecting to

Collections survey report can be found at [www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/hoosier-heritage-alliance/2009-hha-survey](http://www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/hoosier-heritage-alliance/2009-hha-survey)

Resources:

- AASLH StEPs recorded webinars “Hope Is Not a Strategy: Fundraising in Tough Times” and “Juggling Balls and Other High Wire Acts: How a Well-crafted Collections Management Policy Can be the Safety Net that Saves Your Collections” both available at [www.aaslhnetwork.org/steps/category/recording/](http://www.aaslhnetwork.org/steps/category/recording/)
- Connecting to Collections Online community [www.connectingtocollections.org](http://www.connectingtocollections.org)
- Indiana History Society Lending Resources Center [www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/lending-resources](http://www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/lending-resources)

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For more information about the Hoosier Heritage Alliance, please visit [www.indianahistory.org/hha](http://www.indianahistory.org/hha).



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