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North, South Dakota receive collections care grant from IMLS

PIERRE, S.D. -- The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has awarded a Connecting to Collections implementation grant of \$237,703 to North and South Dakota for the Dakota Collections Care Initiative (DCCI).

This implementation grant follows up on the initial information gathered in both states by their Connecting to Collections planning grants.

Partners in the initiative are the North Dakota State Historical Society, South Dakota State Historical Society, North Dakota Library Association, South Dakota State Library, the Plains Art Museum in Fargo and the Association of South Dakota Museums.

The grant is good news for the museums, archives, libraries, and historical societies in North and South Dakota, said Helen B Louise, Museum Director, and Chelle Somsen, South Dakota State Archivist for the State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. They said the IMLS grant will allow both states to collaborate on a project that will ultimately create lasting partnerships in local communities, as well as across both states, and that the next two years of activities will move both states forward in the goal of preserving the history of the Dakotas.

The DCCI will provide regional training workshops on collections care and facilitate the development of disaster plans and disaster-response skills. The initiative will result in an educated and informed core of collections-care staff and volunteers across the library, museum, historical society and archive fields in both states who will be better prepared to provide good stewardship for the collections entrusted to their care and to assist neighboring institutions in time of need, Louise and Somsen said. Throughout the initiative, a mutual aid network of experts and trained responders will be developed which will be accessible following the grant period via a calling tree.

Starting in the summer of 2012, two grant-funded employees -- a conservator and an administrator -- will do in-depth collections assessments for 12 locations -- six in North Dakota and six in South Dakota. The sites chosen for the 2-day assessments will then host three days of collections-care workshops open to all.

The second year of the project, summer 2013, will focus on disaster preparedness and response. Eight workshops on developing and implementing a disaster plan will be presented. Workshop participants will develop site-specific disaster plans for their facilities with the help of the conservator. The participants will then meet again to review their plans and receive hands-on training in handling materials likely to be damaged in the event of a disaster, such as charred or waterlogged objects.

The IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas.

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The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.