



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-30-18-0009-18
Project Category: Collections Stewardship

Missouri Historical Society

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$93,033
Amount of cost share:	\$93,069

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 FY2019 Museums for America grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2018 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the [FY2019 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

***Seeing 1940s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection*—Abstract**

Lead Applicant and Collaborators

The Missouri Historical Society (MHS) is seeking \$93,033 from the IMLS Museums for America Program to support a three-year project entitled *Seeing 1940s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection*. The project will provide access to and promote the use of 65 linear feet of negatives and photographic prints created by the Sievers commercial photography studio during the 1940s. MHS will employ a full-time temporary Project Archivist for the full three-year project along with a part-time temporary Digitization and Cataloging Specialist for the final 15 months of the project. All work will be overseen by the MHS Photographs and Prints Archivist.

Need Addressed

Seeing 1940s St. Louis will provide intellectual control, public access, and proper long-term housing for a significant portion of the Sievers Studio Collection. For most of the twentieth century, Sievers Photographers created a rich, visual record of lives St. Louis citizens. This project will focus on the 1940s, a transformative era when St. Louis was one of the most populous cities in the country.

Project Activities

The Project Archivist will create a detailed index for an estimated 9,100 photographic job assignments; re-sleeve negatives in acid-free envelopes; evaluate and record their condition; and group them according to the levels of deterioration. The most endangered film will be digitized and placed in freezer storage. The Project Archivist will create folders for prints and location records for both film and prints. The Specialist will create item-level records and digitize about 3,000 selected images within those jobs. All descriptive records will be publicly searchable and all digitized images will be available for use free of charge through the MHS website. All item-level records will be available through the Digital Public Library of America.

Project Beneficiaries

This project will make this important material available to humanities researchers of all kinds. They will be able to review the detailed index, catalog records, and images online, and request access to all material at MHS's Library and Research Center. As an institution, MHS will benefit by continuing the processing and preservation of the Sievers Collection and by using the project results to foster community engagement and attract broad community and national audiences.

Intended Outcomes

Seeing 1940s St. Louis will give MHS full intellectual and physical control over a sizeable section of the Sievers Studio Collection; create an estimated 9,100 job-level index records and 3,000 new item-level records and digitized images; properly house and store the material for long term preservation; and advance scholarship by providing full online access to all descriptive records and digitized images.

Measuring Success

Success will be measured by the processing, cataloging, and rehousing of approximately 65 linear feet of negatives and prints. Progress will be tracked and monitored by the Photographs and Prints Archivist on a weekly basis and will be compared to established processing, cataloging, and digitization metrics. There will be full project updates every month or as needed based on any issues that occur or major changes in production rates.



Missouri Historical Society

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Seeing 1940s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection—Narrative

1) Project Justification

What do you propose to do?

The Missouri Historical Society (MHS) is seeking \$93,033 from the IMLS Museums for America grant program to support a three-year project titled *Seeing 1940s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection*. Beginning on December 1, 2018, the project will focus on providing access to and promoting the use of 65 linear feet of film and photographic prints created by the Sievers commercial photography studio during the 1940s. MHS will hire a Project Archivist for a three-year, full-time term to create a descriptive index for each of the studio's photography assignments and to re-house an estimated 55 percent of the 1940s Sievers Studio Collection. We will also hire a part-time Digitization and Cataloging Specialist to create item-level catalog records and digital surrogates for 3,000 images that will be selected according to film condition and the value of the subject matter. All work will be overseen by the MHS Photographs and Prints Archivist (Project Manager). By publishing the records on the MHS website and the Digital Public Library of America—and by releasing the digitized images through a Creative Commons license—the project will encourage widespread public use.

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

Seeing 1940s St. Louis will provide intellectual control, public access, and proper long-term housing for 65 linear feet of film and photographic prints from the MHS Sievers Studio Collection—an invaluable resource for studying social history. Isaac Sievers opened his commercial photography studio in downtown St. Louis in 1917. After World War II, Isaac's son, Alvin, joined the staff and continued to operate the studio under the name Sievers Commercial Photographers until it closed in 1989. Sievers Photographers captured a rich visual record of everyday life in a major Midwestern city over seven decades; a rich, visual record of the transformations that occurred in the civic and personal lives of its citizens during an era when St. Louis was one of the most populous cities in the country. It will be an invaluable asset for researchers studying national events and historical trends.

The entire Sievers Collection includes more than 253 linear feet of photographic negatives, prints, and business records. MHS has committed to processing this collection in decade-long segments. In 2016, MHS received a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to process the 1930s portion; the NHPRC project is proceeding on schedule and will conclude in August 2018. *Seeing 1940s St. Louis* will focus on the 65 linear feet of 8×10 and 4×5 negatives and prints the studio generated during the 1940s.

Like many studios, Sievers photographers organized their work by giving a sequential number to each assignment. All negatives and prints associated with a particular assignment were filed together according to that number. This arrangement, the diversity of topics, and the random nature of studio work make browsing and using large photo collections nearly impossible without an index. The MHS Photographs and Prints Collection contains multiple studio collections, but many of them are unindexed, so they are rarely used. In 2014 the staff indexed the Mac Mizuki Photography Studio Collection, and it is now one of the most frequently used collections. *Seeing 1940s St. Louis* will enable MHS archivists to establish administrative and intellectual control over this segment of the collection and make these valuable materials accessible for the first time.

The project will also enable MHS to properly house the collection. The 1940s segment is primarily composed of cellulose acetate negatives and 8×10 prints. Currently, over 55 percent of the negatives and prints are stored together in their original acidic paper envelopes from the 1940s. The project will allow MHS to separate the materials by type, provide proper envelope and folder storage, and examine the condition of the vulnerable film. As the most endangered film is identified, it will be segregated and placed into MHS's cold storage vault.



Seeing 1940s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection—Narrative

Throughout our work administering our current NHPRC grant on the 1930s portion of the Sievers Collection, we have discovered that much of the acetate film has deteriorated beyond use. Initial examinations of the 1940s material show it is in better shape, but the film still needs further evaluation and better storage to prolong its life. In addition to creating an index and item-level records, *Seeing 1940s St. Louis* will also digitize at least 3,000 images to provide online access to the public. Digitization has long been an important goal for MHS, and all projects in the Photographs and Prints Department include a digitization component. Digitization priority will be given to the negatives designated for freezer storage, but the overall selection criteria will also take into account the historic significance and research value of all of the images. Preference will be given to images illustrating the following topics:

- Nationwide events, such as World War II and race relations
- St. Louis industry, commerce, and working life
- The diversity of civic, religious, social, and recreational lives of St. Louisans during this pivotal decade
- Development of the urban environment and the landscape of the St. Louis metropolitan area

Who or what will benefit from your project?

Seeing 1940s St. Louis will focus on the segment of the collection that documents a decade of great economic, social, and political change. During this period, St. Louis was the eighth-largest city in the nation. Along with the rest of the country, St. Louis experienced the lingering effects of the Great Depression, the upheaval and opportunities of World War II, growing suburbanization, the evolution of mass media, and major shifts in civic and personal identity. The Sievers Studio Collection will provide a window into these events and changes, and more themes will emerge as the collection is indexed. The Sievers Collection includes advertising shots and architectural photography, but its most defining photographs are the ones that show St. Louis residents at work and play. Photographs from the project will be available to researchers and to the Museum for future institutional exhibitions, programming, social media projects, and publications.

This project will also build upon our processing of the Sievers Collection in its entirety. Full studio collections are some of the most important photographic resources in any archive. They are prized by scholars of American studies, cultural studies, visual studies, and historical researchers alike. The scope of a complete work-for-hire collection lends critical insight into the commercial sector and also reveals the cultural ephemera, built environments, and details of the day-to-day experiences of an urban citizenry. The accompanying business records provide thorough documentation about the creation of the images. Alvin Sievers, the last owner of the family business, donated the collection to MHS, and he helped identify the material from the 1930s and 1940s. As a result, all of the studio's film and print records have a handwritten inventory sheet personally filled out by Sievers that includes basic identifications and occasional comments and reminiscences not found elsewhere in the business records.

Seeing 1940s St. Louis will provide public access to descriptive records (indexes and item-level) for all images through the MHS website. Non-digitized images will be accessible for viewing at the Missouri Historical Society's Library & Research Center, and digitized images will be available for viewing and download through MHS's Online Collections. MHS has adopted an open access policy and will provide all of the images generated by this project free of charge at master-file size (described below). All item-level records and digitized images will also be available through the Museum's partnership with the Digital Public Library of America (through the Missouri Hub).



Seeing 1940s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection—Narrative

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

As part of MHS's 2015–2020 strategic plan, one of its five goals is to “Collect and Preserve the St. Louis Region's History.” Each goal includes specific priority actions and an implementation timeline. *Seeing 1940s St. Louis* directly advances two priority actions in support of this goal:

- Collections Cataloging and Processing: “Action is needed to eliminate the backlog in cataloging and processing and expand upon existing catalog records to make the collections more meaningful to all users, internally and externally.”
- Digitization and Access: “An expanded digitization effort will be undertaken to maximize the accessibility of our collections and allow for innovative use of collections online and in our exhibit galleries.”

The 1940s segment of the Sievers Studio Collection has been in the Photographs and Prints Department backlog since the 1990s. This project will take it from obscurity and provide thousands of data-rich, descriptive records and finally make the images accessible to the public and the institution. The digitization component of the project will provide online access to item-level records and make the images available for a wide variety of uses and users. The Missouri Historical Society strongly encourages the use of its images through traditional venues, such as exhibition and publication within the institution, but it also reaches audiences around the globe. MHS actively encourages users to share images across its popular social media platforms such as Pinterest, Facebook, and Instagram. The majority of the images are available for free use through MHS's open access policy.

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

This project aligns well with the IMLS goal of exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections and promoting the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage. The rehousing of the negatives and prints into size-specific, acid-free envelopes and folders also meets the rehousing collections goal. In addition, the item-level cataloging and digital reproduction of 3,000 selected images will meet the goal to expand access to and use of the Museum's collection through digitization.

By creating a detailed index of all of the photo studio assignments, the project will create intellectual access to an estimated 9,100 photo shoots. Once posted online, this index will allow researchers to explore the depths of this historically significant collection.

MHS Photographs and Prints staff does not currently have intellectual access to the contents of this material. The project would include creating an index and item-level catalog records in Mimsy, the institution's collections management database. Staff could then provide user access, track the location and condition of the material, and create a basis for future inventories of this segment of the collection.

2) Project Work Plan

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

The Project Archivist will begin by creating an index of set records for each photography studio assignment. Set records are a level of processing unique to photo studio collections. The Project Archivist will use *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS) guidelines to describe each photo assignment at the Added Value Single level. These records include important information tailored to the needs of photo research. Each record contains subject terms from the Library of Congress Subject Headings or Thesaurus of Graphic Materials, as well as a brief description for each assignment, the client, the format, the number of images included, the creator, the place it was made, and the date it was created. This provides full intellectual access to the material but avoids the impractical task of creating item-level records for each image. Full item-level catalog records can then be



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easily generated as needed for researchers or internal projects. These records incorporate relevant information from the parent set record and customize it for each image.

Because the set-level record preserves the intellectual structure of the original arrangement, the prints and negatives can be segregated by format and stored in conditions that are most favorable to long-term preservation. The Project Archivist will re-sleeve the negatives in acid-free envelopes, evaluate and record their condition, and then group them according to the levels of deterioration described in the Northeast Document Conservation Center's "A Short Guide to Film Base Photographic Materials" preservation leaflet. The most endangered film will be prioritized for digitization and prepared for freezer storage using the National Park Service's cold storage guidelines. The Project Archivist will also create folders for the photographic prints and create location records for both film and photographs.

In February 2020 MHS will hire a Digitization and Cataloging Specialist for the last 60 weeks of the project. This position will be responsible for digitizing and creating item-level catalog records for the 3,000 images selected by the Project Archivist. These images will be selected first on the basis of their condition with priority given to images showing advanced states of deterioration. The second criterion will be subject matter; preference will be given to historic and research material (outlined in the first section).

The Specialist will use the set record created by the Archivist to generate a full catalog record. Based on the workflow of our *Picturing St. Louis* project, it should take no longer than 10 minutes per image to create a DACS Optimum-level record including title, description, creator, date and place made, subject terms, and copyright holder/client.

The Specialist will then digitize the film using our Canon EOS 6D camera and 50mm lens. S/he will be instructed on the process using the Photographs and Prints Department digitization manual. All files will be stored as 900dpi, 16-bit TIFF files with Adobe RGB 1998 color space. The raw CR2 files will also be retained on LTO tape. After digitization, the Specialist will return the images to the stacks for storage or prepare them for freezer storage as appropriate.

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

When designing this project, we used statistics gathered during the first year of our NHPRC 1930s Sievers project to estimate the length of time we will need to process the collection. The material in the 1930s segment had already been removed from their original envelopes, sorted, and placed in new acid-free sleeves and folders. In the 1940s segment, more than half of the material has not yet been sorted, and the negatives and prints are housed together in their original envelopes. Based on an examination of eight boxes (four sorted and four unsorted), we found that there are three times the number of photography studio assignments per linear foot in the unsorted boxes than there are in the ones that had been sorted. Though our processing statistics indicate that we should only require about 18 to 20 months for processing work (not including time for training, meetings, Specialist supervision, vacation/sick time, etc.), we have added an additional 16 to 18 months to accommodate the anticipated extra volume of unsorted material.

The NHPRC project also revealed that the acetate film in the 1930s portion of the collection was significantly decayed. An initial inspection of the 1940s portion did not indicate that it is in the same danger, but we are currently evaluating it using AD strips and placing it in freezer storage if the condition warrants. The testing and storage preparations will be complete by the start of the proposed project (December 1, 2018). If we do find a significant amount of loss, we will address it in the same way as the 1930s project: Many of those assignments



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had accompanying prints. We recorded the original content of the set, deaccessioned the damaged film, and used the prints as the sole representatives of the assignments.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

The project was planned and will be managed by the Photographs and Prints (P&P) Archivist, Amanda Claunch. Ms. Claunch has worked at MHS for 20 years and has successfully overseen the processing of similar collections and projects including the Mac Mizuki Studio Collection and the NHPRC project *Picturing 1930s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection* (please see attachment titled “Digitalproduct.pdf” for example of digital images and online records from the *Picturing 1930s St. Louis* project, and “Supportingdoc2.pdf” for a sample index from the Mac Mizuki project).

The Project Archivist and Digitization and Cataloging Specialist will be new hires. The Project Archivist will be full time (35 hours per week) for a term of three years, and the Specialist will be part time (25 hours per week) for a term of 15 months. The Project Archivist position will require a master’s degree in library and information science (MLIS) and must have experience working with photographic negative collections. The Specialist will be a current MLIS student or a recent graduate.

When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

Upon receiving notification of the award, the Missouri Historical Society will immediately post a job description for the Project Archivist; we anticipate s/he will start work on December 1, 2018. After two weeks of training from the P&P Archivist, s/he will begin entering set records in Mimsy, MHS’s collection management system. Records will include: reference code; title; date of creation; extent; creator; scope and content (description); use, physical, and technical restrictions; copyright status; languages; and place created (if known). We estimate this will take roughly 35 hours per linear foot, though the more densely packed unsorted boxes will take about twice as long. All records in Mimsy are imported quarterly to the MHS Online Collections, where researchers can access them on-site and remotely.

In July 2020 we will post a job description for a Cataloging and Digitization Specialist who can come on board for the last 60 weeks of the project (with an anticipated start date of September 1, 2020). This person will immediately begin cataloging and digitizing the images selected by the Project Archivist. Catalog records will be created in Mimsy. Digital images will be stored in our digital asset management system (Piction), linked to their data records in Mimsy, and displayed together in the MHS Online Collections.

During the final three months of the project, the Project Archivist will update the existing EAD finding aid for the collection with a record for this series, create a truncated index for a comprehensive view, and ensure that all data and digital records have been published online. MHS is a participant in the Missouri Hub of the Digital Public Library of America and publishes all item-level records from our Online Collections there as well.

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

- Staff: P&P Archivist/Project Manager (36 months, full time at 5% annual salary); Project Archivist (36 months, full time at 100%); Digitization and Cataloging Specialist (14 months, part time at 100%)
- Supplies: An estimated 20,000 acid-free envelopes. The majority of the film is 8×10 format, but an unknown number are 4×5. This could lower the cost of the supply budget, but it’s an unknown factor until work is underway.
- All other necessary equipment (computers, camera, etc.) and supplies are already in place at MHS.



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

After the initial training period, the Project Archivist and the P&P Archivist will meet monthly (and as needed based on any issues that occur or a faster-than-anticipated rate of production) to track progress. The P&P Archivist will also supervise the work of the Digitization and Cataloging Specialist. As part of the department's regular digitization workflow, the P&P Archivist reviews and uploads all digital images produced. This will allow her to closely monitor the rate of production and perform quality-control checks.

In our current NHPRC 1930s Sievers project, we have kept careful statistics on processing, digitization, and cataloging rates. This data is populated from a time-tracking application into a spreadsheet maintained by the P&P Archivist. We will use the metrics we developed for that project to evaluate the progress of the 1940s project. So far we have found that, on average, one linear foot can be processed in about 35 hours, and each image can be both cataloged and digitized (9.6 and 6.6 minutes per record, respectively) in 17 minutes. We will continue to track the same statistics with this project as part of the evaluation of our progress.

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

- Press release to local media outlets
- Announcements in both MHS and professional publications and newsletters
- Periodic blog posts in *History Happens Here*, the MHS blog
- Social media promotion through Facebook (over 41,500 followers) and Twitter (22,400 followers)
- Dedicated sections on our Pinterest (341,500 followers) and Flickr sites (over 4.7 million lifetime views as of October 2017)
- The MHS Online Collections is designed to easily accommodate record-linking, and it facilitates users posting images to their own social media accounts

3) 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 *Seeing 1940s St. Louis* project will give the MHS Photographs and Prints staff full intellectual and physical control over a sizeable section of the Sievers Studio Collection for the first time since its donation in the 1990s. This project will allow MHS staff to create content-rich records in our database that will give both internal and external users full access to the intellectual content of this material. As described above, this will achieve one of our strategic goals of providing more meaningful records for our users. It will also meet the IMLS Collections Stewardship goal of developing and enhancing collections databases to improve collections management and facilitate access and discovery.

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?

This project will greatly improve the storage conditions and longevity of the material. It will allow staff to place the materials in proper housing, track their location and condition, and provide freezer storage as needed for the most endangered cellulose acetate negatives. It will also separate the negatives from the prints to minimize the effects of any off-gassing that may occur.

The digital files created during the project will be the highest quality that the institution is capable of producing. Not only will the files provide visual access to the negatives for researchers, but they will also be quickly and easily accessible for publications, documentaries, exhibition graphics, or virtually any project that calls for digital images. This meets the MHS goals of using digitization to expand access and facilitating innovative uses of our collections.



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MHS will have full intellectual control over the 65 linear feet of film 1940s segment of the Sievers Collection, and it will create catalog records and digital images of approximately 3,000 photographs. Records and assets will be available through MHS's Online Collections (collections.mohistory.org), including title, description, usage rights, location made, creator (if known), and date of the photograph.

What tangible products (ex: reports, inventories, catalogs, treatment plans, publication, presentations, and databases) will result from your project?

Tangible products from this project will include:

- An estimated 9,100 set records, all fully accessible to the public
- 3,000 digital images available for download with no usage or licensing fees under our open access policy
- An updated EAD finding aid for the Sievers Studio Collection and a brief index to all the photo shoot assignments from the 1940s
- Proper housing for an estimated 20,000 negatives from their current storage in the original acidic envelopes to acid-free, unbuffered sleeves in appropriately sized boxes

How will you sustain the benefits of your project?

This project will require minimal active work after its completion. The set records for the photo assignments will continue to be used by MHS staff and interns to generate item-level catalog records as individual images are requested for projects. All new records and any necessary corrections to the existing data will be performed in Mimsy with automatic updates appearing in the Online Collections. Adherence to cataloging and metadata standards will ensure interoperability.

The 3,000 digital files will be maintained in Piction where derivatives will be generated as needed. The files will easily integrate into the existing robust digital and long-term preservation workflow, including a backup server and redundant dark archives stored at separate physical locations.

The endangered film will be placed in the freezer to arrest any further deterioration, and condition reports generated during the project will be used as a baseline for MHS staff to monitor their condition.



Missouri Historical Society
Seeing 1940s St. Louis: The Sievers Studio Collection
 Schedule of Completion

Year 1 (2018-2019)

ACTIVITY	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19
Project Archivist arranges, rehouses material and creates set records (<i>Position posted Oct 1, 2018 with start date of Dec 1, 2018</i>)												
Archivist publishes set records to the Online Collections												

Year 2 (2019-2020)

ACTIVITY	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20
Project Archivist arranges, rehouses material and creates set records												
Archivist publishes set records to the Online Collections												
Specialist catalogs and digitizes item level records (<i>Position posted July 1, 2019 with start date of Sept 1st</i>)												
Archivist uploads digital files and publishes to the Online Collections												

