



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-30-19-0666-19
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Public Access

Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$96,300
Amount of cost share:	\$96,303

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 FY2020 Museums for America grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2019 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the [FY2020 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Abstract: Comprehensive Rehousing, Storage Renovation, and Cataloging of Small Objects and Artifacts

The Memorial Art Gallery's (MAG's) collection of small objects, sculpture, and artifacts reflects the cultural and chronological breadth of the museum's encyclopedic collections. The MAG requests a \$96,300 24-month IMLS Museums for America Collections Stewardship grant to improve the storage room and conditions of these collections.

The proposed Collections Stewardship project "Comprehensive Rehousing, Storage Renovation, and Cataloging of Small Objects and Artifacts," the second phase of our institution-wide storage renovation project, comprises a comprehensive and systematic effort to evaluate and properly rehouse and store over 2500 objects in the MAG's permanent collection. The project, which supports an important objective of MAG's most recent Strategic Plan, to apply "current museum best practices of scholarship, conservation, display and interpretation to grow, care for, reinterpret, and refine the permanent collection," involves several activities, all of which have been designed to support this important stewardship goal. The systematic rehousing of all 2500 of these objects will ensure their long-term safety and care, and will allow them to be safely and more easily handled when necessary. In addition, the installation of a custom designed high-density mobile storage system will provide the space to better care for the existing collection, and allow for growth and expansion of the collection. In addition to bettering the storage conditions of these collections, the curatorial department will research and update the cataloging information for objects that are currently not accessible via the museum's website. Updating this information will allow these records to be viewable on MAG's website, increasing the web accessibility of these collections by roughly 40%, and ensure database records are updated with the most current information. Finally, this project will allow for the completion of an ongoing initiative to have digital photographs of every object linked to the object records in the collection management database; 15% of the collections in this storage space are still in need of high-resolution digital photography.

Over the course of this two-year project, MAG Curatorial staff will move and temporarily store the entire contents of its Small Object Storage room, have a custom high-density mobile storage unit installed, and transfer all of the objects into their new storage locations. Concurrently, and according to recommendations made by Hélène Gillette-Woodard, Head Objects Conservator at Williamstown Art Conservation Center (WACC), the Curatorial staff will also rehouse each object in archival materials, according to best practices and preservation standards. The new space-enhancing storage furniture designed specifically for MAG's diverse collections will accommodate newly housed objects, increase the ability to access works safely and with minimal handling, and provide for increased growth of the collection. All of these activities will together move the museum's ability to care for, properly exhibit, and increase access to its exceptional small object and artifacts collection well into the future. The project's focus on improved stewardship fulfills the overall goal of the Museums for America program, "to strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public" and that of the Collections Stewardship program, "to contribute to the long-term preservation of materials entrusted to the museum's care."

Narrative

1. Project Justification

What do you propose to do?

The proposed Collections Stewardship project “Comprehensive Rehousing and Storage Renovation of Small Objects and Artifacts,” the second phase of the Memorial Art Gallery’s (MAG’s) institution-wide storage renovation project, comprises a comprehensive and systematic effort to evaluate and properly rehouse and store over 2500 objects in the museum’s permanent collection. During the course of this two-year project, MAG’s Curatorial department and contract staff will rehouse all objects within this storage room with archival materials as recommended in a recent consultation with H  l  ne Gillette-Woodard, Head Conservator of Objects at Williamstown Art Conservation Center (WACC) in Williamstown, Massachusetts. The Small Object Storage room will be renovated to include a new custom high-density mobile storage system. This storage system, designed specifically for MAG’s diverse collections, will provide space for the proper rehousing of current collections. Because the new system will increase capacity by 60%, the project also allows for future growth (see Appendices B and D). The new storage system and object rehousing will vastly improve the museum’s ability to properly care for, store, handle, and exhibit these objects. In addition to bettering the storage conditions of these collections, the curatorial department will research and update the cataloging information for objects that are currently not accessible via the museum’s website (approximately 1000 of the over 2500 total objects stored in this room). Updating this information will allow these records to be viewable on MAG’s website, increasing the web accessibility of these collections by roughly 40%, and ensure database records are updated with the most current information. Finally, this project will allow for the completion of an ongoing initiative to have digital photographs of every object linked to the object records in the collection management database; 15% of the collections in this storage space (roughly 400 objects) are still in need of high-resolution digital photography.

What need, problem, or challenge will your project address and how was it identified?

The present project builds on and continues the significant achievements of collection management efforts directed toward collection storage and housing over the past several years. During the process of writing MAG’s Long-Range Collections Preservation Plan in 2002, the needs of the collection storage spaces were clearly one of the greatest challenges facing the museum’s stewardship abilities. MAG has systematically approached this institutional challenge of improving collection storage spaces and methods since the Long-Range Collections Plan was developed through a combination of curatorial assessments and rehousing efforts of discrete areas of the collection. In September 2016, MAG was awarded an IMLS grant to renovate and install new storage furniture in the Textile Storage room, as well as survey and rehouse each object in archival materials. For the second phase of this storage renovation, the museum is addressing the renovation of the Small Object Storage room. As noted in the plan (see Appendix F), specific types of objects, namely Ancient, Ethnographic, Asian, and Sculpture and three-dimensional objects, are in need of storage method improvements. The majority of these types of objects are stored in the Small Object Storage room (see Appendix A for a full description of these objects.)

Who or what will benefit from your project?

The benefits of this project are multi-faceted, in terms of stewardship, preservation, and access. The rehousing of all objects in Small Object Storage will ensure their long-term safety and care, and will allow them to be safely and more easily handled when necessary. Fragile objects such as stained glass panels and porcelain will be stored in custom archival boxes and trays that minimize direct handling and provide stabilization during both relocation and permanent storage. The addition of drawers also presents a more stable and contained space for small, friable

objects such as cuneiform tablets (118) and ancient ceramics and glass (365). Securing these objects in drawers will also allow for easier and safer access. In addition to improving the storage housing of the objects, the new compact storage system will increase the capacity of the Small Object Storage room by 60%. While the physical improvements will be significant, making all of these objects accessible via MAG's website will increase their visibility and use by researchers.

Additionally, MAG's involvement with University of Rochester (UR) art history and fine art classes has increased in the last several years. Andrew Cappetta was hired as the Assistant Curator of Academic Programs and as the main liaison between MAG and the University's River Campus, he conducts tours of the museum's exhibitions and collection for classes; he develops collaborative programs with faculty and students including symposia, lectures, performances, and special events; he teaches courses about contemporary museum issues and practices. MAG's collection is central to student and faculty engagement. Depending on the nature of the course and visit, MAG's Curatorial department works closely with Mr. Cappetta to give students and faculty access to objects from the works on paper collection that are not currently on view. A modified and expanded small object storage space would make more objects accessible for teaching purposes. Furthermore, with the growth of interest in museum careers, there has been an increase in learning about museum practices, including the methods employed in the care, storage, and presentation of cultural objects. A renewed small object storage space would itself become a tool of learning.

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

MAG's most recent strategic plan, adopted in 2016, identifies four strategic initiatives. "Comprehensive Rehousing and Storage Renovation of Small Objects and Artifacts" will significantly advance Strategic Objective #1, "Value Impact/Financial Perspective." The overarching goal of this objective is to "engage the community in art and creativity," an objective achieved by applying "current museum best practices of scholarship, conservation, display, and interpretation to grow, care for, reinterpret, and refine the permanent collection," which will be achieved through the increased web accessibility of the collection, and also allow the collection to be used by the Academic Programs department (museum education) in a more expanded and direct way. Finally, the increased capacity of the new high-density storage system will "enhance our storage and stewardship capabilities to accommodate the growth of the collection in both traditional and new media."

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

This project fulfills both the overall goal of the Museums for America program, "to strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public," and that of the Collections Stewardship program, "to contribute to long-term preservation of materials entrusted to the museum's care." This comprehensive rehousing initiative of all objects in Small Object Storage both utilizes museum best practices and maximizes storage capacity. Completion of this project will allow MAG to make these objects more accessible to its public, better care for the existing collections, and allow for growth and expansion of the collection.

2. Project Work Plan

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

This comprehensive project comprises three major activities: 1) the systematic rehousing of all objects in MAG's Small Object Storage room 2) the installation of a new high-density mobile storage system, and 3) updating cataloging information to make collection records web-accessible. It is designed as a team project that will last two

years, from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2021. The installation of the new system and the bulk of the object movement will occur toward the end of the first project year, while the rehousing activities will occur throughout the entire course of the project.

Upon notification of the grant award, Courtney DiMartino, the Permanent Collection Registrar and Project Director, will order the new storage system furniture, shelving for the temporary storage room where objects will be stored during the installation of the new system, and rehousing materials and supplies. Ms. DiMartino will begin to coordinate with the Facilities Mechanics to prepare for the setup of the temporary storage room and communicate with the Curatorial Department about scheduling object movement.

Once the rehousing materials are received, Ms. DiMartino and other members of the Curatorial Department will, in consultation with WACC conservator H el ene Gillette-Woodard, begin rehousing activities. In summer 2017, and in preparation for this application, Ms. Gillette-Woodard conducted a general storage assessment and made specific recommendations on how to improve the archival storage of the objects in Small Object Storage (see Appendix C for her report). Objects that will require special attention or more complicated rehousing will be set aside to be addressed when Ms. Gillette-Woodard makes her visit to MAG to advise; this visit will likely occur during the second project year, when specific objects that need the conservator's attention have been identified. Object rehousing will continue for several months before the new storage system is installed. Since the majority of the object movement and new furniture installation is scheduled toward the middle of the project period, rehousing some objects before that time and continuing to do so afterward will ensure the staff has enough time to rehouse all objects. Ms. Gillette-Woodard will be available for consultation throughout the entire project via phone and email to advise and answer questions as necessary.

To house all of the objects from Small Object Storage while the new storage furniture is installed, a separate, secure room within the museum will be retrofitted with new shelving to store all of the objects. This space has been used in the past for collections storage and survey projects; it is an ideal space because it is located within the museum itself, is climate and humidity controlled and monitored, and is able to be secured. Locks will be changed so that access is only available to curatorial project staff. Michael Allison and Robert Stressler, both Building Mechanics/Carpenters in MAG's Facilities Department, will set up temporary shelving units in the same configuration as the current setup of Small Object Storage. The temporary storage space will be a replica of the current configuration, allowing the Curatorial staff to easily, efficiently, and safely transfer objects from Small Object Storage into this retrofitted space.

After the temporary space has been outfitted, the Curatorial Department will move all objects from Small Object Storage. This work will be coordinated by Courtney DiMartino, and carried out by Lauren Tagliaferro (Curatorial Assistant), Almudena Escobar Lopez (Curatorial Assistant), Kerry Schaubert (Curatorial Research Assistant), Carol Acquilano (Preparator), and Cynthia Culbert (Exhibitions and Curatorial Technician). Any objects that are moved to different locations as a result of rehousing will be updated in EmbARK, MAG's collection management database.

After all objects have been removed from Small Object Storage, Mr. Allison and Mr. Stressler will empty the room of all old storage furniture. The Curatorial Department will continue rehousing in the temporary storage space during this phase. Once Small Object Storage is completely empty, new storage furniture custom-designed specifically to accommodate the diverse media and object types will be installed. According to the furniture manufacturer's representative, who made several visits to assess the contents and configuration of Small Object Storage, capacity will increase by 60% with the new compact mobile system. The furniture specified in this proposal (see Appendix D) includes a Spacesaver high-density mobile system with a combination of drawers and shelves that can accommodate a variety of different object types and sizes. The new furniture will also include four Viking museum-grade cabinets with glass fronts and gasket seals, which are ideal for metals, such as silver and polished bronze,

and other fragile objects. The glass-front doors will minimize handling of these collections while still keeping them accessible for viewing by staff and scholars.

When the new furniture system is completely installed, the Curatorial Department will prepare the shelves and drawers for the return of objects to Small Object Storage. All objects will be moved into their new storage locations, and new locations will be immediately updated in EmbARK. Most of objects in Small Object Storage already have high-resolution photographs in EmbARK; this has been done as a part of previous collections projects, and also as part of regular collection management. This project will allow for the remaining photography to be completed as objects are moved and rehoused. Approximately 400 objects are still in need of large-format photography, and completing this will allow those images to be viewed on MAG's website.

After all objects have been moved out of the temporary storage space, Mr. Allison and Mr. Stressler will restore the space to its regular configuration. Concurrently, the Curatorial Department will continue to rehouse objects. Throughout the project, Jessica Marten, Curator in Charge/Curator of American Art, and Nancy Norwood, Curator of European Art, will evaluate and document specific objects in the collection throughout the course of this project. This project offers a unique opportunity to easily see and access the collection, making it an ideal time for this type of focused evaluation. Their primary focus will be to research and update object cataloging information, with the intention of making remaining object records accessible via the website. Kerry Schaubert will assist with research as needed, and will make appropriate changes to the database as information is updated. Both curators will also use this opportunity to evaluate the collection to assess the collection and consider potential exhibition opportunities.

What is your project's maturity level (i.e. exploratory, piloting, scaling, or mainstreaming)?

This project is at the piloting level. MAG's Curatorial staff has completed project similar to this in the past, most recently with the Textile Storage renovation and rehousing project (funded by IMLS), so that staff is familiar with the process and all of the steps that go into a project of this scale. This project adds in the task of updating and confirming object cataloging information, which, on this scale, is a different element to tackle. Given that this project will vary in that regard from previous projects completed at MAG, the process may still change slightly as we progress. We would, however, be willing to share how we came up with the work plan, and our ultimate results, once completed.

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

In the schedule of completion, there are entire months blocked off, sometimes more, for single tasks. This extra time is built in to account for other professional responsibilities that will likely overlap and coincide with this project. By including extra time for things like ordering materials and supplies, the staff has some flexibility in accomplishing tasks related to this project, while also maintaining regular responsibilities.

In addition, there is the possibility of delays when ordering and installing both new and temporary storage furniture. For that reason, additional time is built in (on top of the provided lead times) to allow for such delays. Installation is expected to take two weeks, but a month is noted on the schedule of completion. Adequate time is allowed for rehousing both before and after the collection moves in order to allow for possible shifts in the schedule.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

The project was planned by Courtney DiMartino, the museum's permanent collection registrar. With Ms. Norwood, Curator of European Art, and Ms. Acquilano, Collections Preparator, Ms. DiMartino consulted with Ms. Gillette-Woodard on furniture and rehousing. She also met with the Facilities Department to coordinate their involvement with the setup and breakdown of the temporary storage space and the old Small Object Storage furniture. The project's proposed schedule was brought to all MAG department heads to coordinate timing and ensure that this project would work within the institution's schedule.

Ms. DiMartino will serve as Project Director. She will work directly with the Facilities Department, conservator, and other Curatorial Department members to schedule and monitor all project activities. With Ms. Gillette-Woodard's guidance, Ms. DiMartino will oversee all rehousing activities. She will schedule staff time and coordinate project activities around existing schedules. Ms. Schaubert, Ms. Tagliaferro, and Ms. Escobar Lopez will assist with object movement and rehousing, and will manage updates to the collection management system. Ms. Schaubert will also handle photography of the objects that are in need of high-res images. Ms. Acquilano and Ms. Culbert will focus primarily on rehousing. Ms. Marten and Ms. Norwood will conduct research on the collection, update cataloging information, and will evaluate the collection for potential exhibition.

Each week at the Curatorial Department meeting, any updates on the project will be shared and discussed. Quarterly meetings of the larger project group will be scheduled to evaluate and monitor the progress as a whole. Measures include the number of objects rehoused, the number of object records made web-accessible, the remaining objects being photographed, efficiency of work space, and interfacing the scheduling of work with other professional obligations.

When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

As shown on the schedule of completion, activities will commence on October 1, 2019, with the ordering of rehousing materials, and shortly after, the ordering of both new and temporary storage furniture. At this time, internal labor for relocation and rehousing of objects will also be scheduled. The hours and number of staff needed for these activities were determined by Ms. DiMartino, who is project lead for the current "Detailed Collection Survey, Rehousing, and Storage Renovation for the Textile Collection" project, which is funded by a 2016 IMLS MFA grant. After materials arrive, beginning in December 2019, MAG staff will begin rehousing objects based on Ms. Gillette-Woodard's recommendations.

The new storage furniture will be ordered in March 2020. This takes into account the 12-14 week lead time provided by the manufacturer. The temporary shelving will be ordered in April 2020 to account for the 5 week lead time. During this time, Ms. DiMartino will work with the Facilities Department to make preparations for the temporary storage room. Beginning in June 2020, after shelving has been set up in the temporary storage space, the Curatorial Department will begin to move all objects from Small Object Storage into their temporary storage locations. During this time, both curators will begin the process of evaluation and documentation.

In July 2020, the new storage system will be installed in Small Object Storage, allowing for a two-week installation window. After the new furniture is installed, the Curatorial Department will gradually move all objects into their new storage locations, with completion by the end of August 2020. At that time, rehousing will continue for several months until all objects are rehoused, concluding by July 2021. A final inventory will be conducted no later than September 30, 2021.

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

This project is an institutional priority that will be implemented by the Curatorial Department. Curatorial staff members will be “all hands on deck” during the course of rehousing and object movement. Due to other curatorial responsibilities during the course of this project, we determined that an additional, contract employee will be necessary to successfully implement the labor-intensive components of this project. Cynthia Culbert, a contract “time as reported” exhibitions and curatorial technician, was identified to work on rehousing and object movement because of her extensive experience during the current textile rehousing project and past collection storage projects.

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

Ms. DiMartino will bring project updates to each weekly Curatorial Department meeting as needed. In addition, she will organize quarterly meetings with the larger project group, at which each member will analyze the progress of the activities for which he or she is responsible, and determine how to make any changes deemed necessary. Ms. DiMartino will also keep track of how many of the 2500 objects have been evaluated and/or rehoused each month, how many records have been made web-accessible, and how many high-resolution photographs have been taken and added to the database.

3. Project Results

Referring to the Agency-Level Goal selected on the Program Information Sheet prepared for your application, write one or more statements to describe what success will look like for your project and identify the relevant data that you will collect and report.

We do what?	Update/confirm object cataloging information.
For whom?	Researchers, students, MAG Curatorial department
For what outcome/benefit(s)?	Updating this information will allow these records to be viewable on MAG’s website, increasing the web accessibility of these collections by roughly 40%, and ensure database records are updated with the most accurate and current information.

We do what?	Make non-approved records web-accessible.
For whom?	Researchers, students, general public
For what outcome/benefit(s)?	This will increase the objects’ visibility and use by researchers, scholars, and the general public in a way that allows access anytime.

We do what?	Complete digital photography of small object collections.
For whom?	Researchers, students, general public, MAG staff
For what outcome/benefit(s)?	This will improve the curatorial department’s records by making them more complete and specific to each object. The photos will also be added to the web-accessible records, so that they are viewable from MAG’s website.

We do what?	Rehouse objects in archival-quality materials.
For whom?	MAG Curatorial department
For what outcome/benefit(s)?	The rehousing of all objects in Small Object Storage will ensure their long-term safety and care, and will allow them to be safely and more easily handled when necessary. The addition of drawers also presents a more stable and contained space for small, friable objects. In addition to improving the storage housing of the objects, the new compact storage system will increase the capacity of the Small Object Storage room by 60%.

Referring to your Project Justification, describe your project’s intended results that will address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified.

This comprehensive rehousing and storage improvement initiative will allow MAG to properly store and care for more than 2500 objects in its permanent collection. The increase in storage capacity will provide adequate space for objects to be properly housed and stored. Some rehousing methods will increase the “footprint” of certain objects on a shelf, and additional shelves and drawers will accommodate those additions. The 60% increase in capacity realized from this project will also allow MAG to “enhance our storage and stewardship capabilities to accommodate the growth of the collection in both traditional and new media.”

The manner in which collections are rehoused will be on par with best practices in the museum field. As noted in Ms. Gillette-Woodard’s recommendations for Small Object Storage (Appendix C), the current storage situations for several objects are not ideal, and could be much improved. Proper housing with archival materials ensures safer handling and access to the collection.

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?

By moving every object currently located in Small Object Storage, the registrar and curators will have the opportunity to assess the collection, both for rehousing and storage needs, but also to evaluate and prioritize any condition issues that may exist. The comprehensive nature of this project presents a unique opportunity to evaluate the collection in its entirety. Many of the objects in Small Object Storage are also in need of improved housing, and the rehousing element of this project will make the objects’ storage in line with conservator-approved preservation and collections care standards.

In addition, the improved storage system will allow for safer and easier access to the collection, both for Curatorial staff, but also for viewing by scholars, researchers, and classes of university students.

What tangible products (i.e. reports, inventories, catalogs, treatment plans, publications, presentations, and databases) will result from your project?

As the objects are moved into the new storage furniture, their new locations will be updated in our collection management system. In addition, a shelf-by-shelf inventory of the storage room will be conducted upon completion of all rehousing and object movement activities.

How will you sustain the benefits of your projects?

The increased storage capacity and flexibility of the Small Object Storage room will greatly improve the ease of use of the space for the Curatorial staff and their ability to safely handle the objects when necessary. Object evaluation during the course of the process will allow for prioritization of conservation treatment needs. The involvement of Ms. Gillette-Woodard throughout the course of the project provides access to a conservator’s specific recommendations and, when needed, object assessments. The rehousing methods and materials will ensure the long-term safety and care of over 2500 objects, and will guide the ways in which additions to the collection will be stored and housed in the future.

