1-1-1995

Fragile Harvest: Preserving Iowa's Documentary Heritage. An Action Plan

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An Action Plan

Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium
1995

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Iowa is a beautiful land, peopled with an industrious citizenry who possess a firm pride in their heritage. People came to this land of opportunity between two great river roads, plowed the prairies, developed industries, built cities, and in the process developed a society renowned for civility, honesty, and integrity. The successes and failures, dreams and debacles, sweat and tears of that building process have been duly recorded in official documents, photographs, personal letters, scrapbooks, builders plans and blueprints, business records, and a host of other record forms. Together, these records constitute our identity. They are our cultural harvest.

But the harvest is at risk. The nature of the recorded materials themselves, the environments in which they have been kept, the handling they continue to receive, and the lack of a preservation focus are fundamental elements of the threats to the cultural record of Iowa. While there is yet time, Iowans must develop the tools to insure the integrity of this gift of the past, the record of who we are. We are not without resources. But the multiplicity of materials and custodians presents formidable challenges. In this state where we proudly proclaim that we grow peace and cooperation, collaborative action is natural. Collaborative action in identifying the preservation problems, corrective strategies, and funding requirements and possibilities will preserve our fragile cultural harvest, insuring it as a bountiful harvest for the future.

The Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium has developed a specific action plan containing recommendations and priorities for a coordinated and cooperative effort to preserve, protect, and provide access to Iowa’s collections in the most appropriate formats.
In order to put an Iowa statewide preservation plan into its proper context, it is important to state at the outset that preservation action is primarily an institution-based activity. The value of a state preservation action plan is to provide a cooperative/collaborative environment whereby institutions can enhance or magnify preservation activities taking place at the local level. A statewide permanent preservation program will serve as a policy-generating, training, and funding source to encourage, guide, and plan these cooperative/collaborative preservation activities and help avoid unnecessary duplication.

Given that care of collections is best accomplished within an institution, a number of the goals of the preservation plan will be to encourage activity at the “grassroots” level. However, it is important to recognize that only a few Iowa institutions have sufficient budgets or collections large enough to warrant having a conservator or preservation specialist on staff. A statewide permanent preservation program must be established to provide a leadership role in developing programs and projects that reflect the preservation needs and capabilities of small, medium, and large institutions throughout the state.

A cooperative approach will allow the preservation expertise within the state to be widely shared in as systematic and efficient a manner as possible. A fully implemented plan has the potential to put all Iowa repositories—large and small alike—on an equal footing with regard to preservation knowledge and access to expertise. Ad hoc workshops can temporarily fulfill an institution’s immediate need for knowledge, but unless preservation information is regularly dispersed, or the people that need it know where to find it, the benefits of ad hoc activities can be very short-lived.

Goals

• Preserve collections in order to insure access to Iowa’s documentary resources using the appropriate format.

• Create a governing structure for a coordinated statewide program that will address the preservation needs of Iowa’s documentary resources.

• Insure that adequate preservation education and training programs are available for staff of Iowa cultural repositories.

• Develop cooperative/collaborative preservation projects that address the needs of similar institutions as well as foster cooperation among allied disciplines.

• Personalize preservation to the individual—citizens, legislators, decision makers, and foundations—to sensitize them to the richness of cultural items held in Iowa institutions. Create an understanding and commitment to the value of preserving Iowa’s documentary resources.

• Insure that sufficient funds are available to implement and continue a statewide permanent preservation program.
Background of Plan Development

Sheer numbers alone can give you an idea of the complexity of Iowa's preservation problems. Iowa's document collections are housed in 101 courthouses, 16 area education agencies, 21 community colleges, 28 private colleges, 3 state universities, 90 genealogical societies, 229 local historical societies and museums, 534 public libraries, 26 state agencies, 350 newspaper offices, the State Library, the State Archives, and the State Historical Society of Iowa.

The state's university libraries collectively hold more than 5.5 million volumes and the public libraries more than 11 million volumes. The University of Iowa's holdings include approximately 10,000 linear feet of archives and manuscripts and over 300,000 photographic images. Iowa State University's holdings include about 11,000 linear feet of archives and manuscripts, about 500,000 photographic images, and about 22,000 reels of motion picture film.

State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) collections number over 200,000 volumes; 35,000 reels of microfilm; 6,000 map sheets; 2,000 oral history interview tapes; as well as significant collections of manuscripts, videotapes, sound recordings, and newspapers. SHSI's photograph collection has over 875,000 images. The State Archives holds over 20,000 cubic feet of state government records and over 7,000 cubic feet of private manuscripts and organizational records.

Our collection strength is significant and diverse. The university collections have special strength in American literature; German language and literature; British and French history; American history (especially the Civil War); railroad and agricultural history; American labor and working class history; architecture, art, and design; history of science and technology; women in science and engineering; and the study of popular culture.

We've got to be able to find out what records are important to keep and which ones are not. Once we've got that established, then we can...put the effort into preserving those records that are important.

Dick Hagen, Scott County Recorder, Davenport

The State Law Library (ca. 1990) holds about 200,000 volumes
Our college collections are strong in local and regional history, local businesses, personal papers, ethnic groups, and religious organizations. Iowa’s private and community colleges often hold a significant percentage of unique items, such as texts in applied technology and regional and local history.

Iowa’s museum collections are rich resources for the study of art, architecture, history, natural history, and the sciences. These art and object collections are augmented by photographs, manuscripts, diaries, and films.

Public libraries, local historical and genealogical societies, newspaper office archives, and county courthouses hold collections that document the heritage of the local and regional communities, including ethnic groups, civic and religious organizations, community leaders, and private industry.
We have urgent preservation needs. Each year, more and more of Iowa’s paper-based collections are at risk as they become brittle due to highly acidic paper and improper storage conditions. Parts of our history and culture are lost each day as pieces of text fall to the floor from documents used for research in courthouses, libraries, archives, and other records repositories. Unique images of Iowa’s early life on fragile glass plates and chemically deteriorating nitrate and acetate negative film are vanishing.

The committee in Winneshiek County... is racing the clock literally in our struggle to make sure that the records that are gradually filling the offices in our courthouse are preserved. We are very concerned. We need to do something as quickly as possible...like yesterday.

Stan Jeffers, Member, Decorah Genealogical Association

Some examples of preservation needs by organizational type:

1. Four-year and community college libraries, which regularly review their collections in order to keep them current, routinely discard materials which may be the only copy within the state. Additionally, because many college libraries are small, they often do not have the funds to support a preservation expert and hence lack information about basic preservation activities such as disaster planning and appropriate book repair.

2. The state’s university libraries have vast quantities of brittle materials in their collections in need of preservation. Critical needs include staff time and resources to identify unique materials, improved storage and housing for their collections, and additional funds for this work.

3. Public libraries serve as a final “resting ground” for local memorabilia such as city council records, cemetery lists, private press monographs, and photographs of local subjects. However, few public libraries have staff with any training in preservation techniques. Preservation priorities are often unclear and when articulated compete for budget dollars needed to acquire current materials.
4. The keepers of county and municipal records face perhaps the most challenging situation. Governmental regulations stipulate retention and disposal schedules of documents and records, but are often based on inaccurate or inadequate knowledge regarding the use of these documents by historians, genealogists, and local citizens. Records are often dispersed irregularly between the various county and municipal agencies, public libraries, historical societies, and even private homes, making identifying and locating needed records difficult or impossible. In addition, many agencies face critical shortages in space and staffing. There is also a lack of knowledge about sound preservation principles which has led to damaging "repairs" being performed on valuable documents.

5. Local historical and genealogical societies have been collectors of local and family history and have been the recipients of government records that the local government agencies do not have means to archive and maintain. Most of these organizations depend solely on volunteers with little or no preservation training or funding to maintain their collections.

We have a problem of who's responsible in our community. Nobody seems to want to get involved in the space, the time, the expenses involved in maintaining this type of material. So I think we need some guidance and funds to know who is responsible for the preservation of these materials at the local level.

Arthur Hielkema, Library Director, Northwestern College, Orange City
Cooperation is a key to solving our preservation problems. Over the years organizations in the state of Iowa have collaborated at the local, state, and national levels in efforts to preserve and share local resources. We have successfully completed a number of cooperative preservation projects.

The Iowa Newspaper Project was a cooperative effort among organizations and communities across the state. The major contributing organizations were the Iowa Genealogical Society, the Iowa Newspaper Association, the State Library, the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the State Historical Society of Iowa. The Iowa Newspaper Project, completed in 1992, cataloged 4,500 newspaper titles representing 9,600 holdings and filmed 3.9 million pages of newspapers.

We have no money, none. But we have been able to provide volunteer services with Salt Lake City assistance [Genealogical Society of Utah]. Our county board paid for the film, the genealogical society spent five years going through the records, putting the documents in individual packets. Salt Lake filmed the record and now it's available.

Marlene Nelson, Scott County Clerk of District Court, Davenport

The Coal Mine Project was a successfully completed cooperative program undertaken by the Department of Soil Conservation, the Iowa Geological Survey, and the State Historical Society of Iowa to conserve 1,465 maps of Iowa's abandoned coal mines. The restored coal mine maps represent the only source of detailed information relating to many abandoned mines in the state.

In 1974 the Iowa County Records Project began as a cooperative program between the State Historical Society of Iowa and the Genealogical Society of Utah to begin microfilming county records with historical and genealogical value in Iowa counties. In 1979 filming was suspended. Microfilming efforts were resumed in 1983, with additional as-
sistance from the Iowa Department of Public Health. To date approximately 14,500 reels of microfilm have been produced through the Iowa County Records Project.

The Iowa State Archives published and distributed the *Iowa Municipal Records Manual* in 1982 and the *Iowa County Records Manual* in 1987. The League of Iowa Municipalities and the Iowa State Association of Counties assisted in these efforts. Iowa county and municipal governments now have a guide to consult when determining the retention requirements for current and/or historical records.

The State Library of Iowa and the regional libraries cooperatively conduct training sessions around the state for library directors, staff, and trustees. Courses in preservation have covered collection management, book repair, protective enclosures, and disaster preparedness planning.

The spirit and the willingness to work cooperatively is present; but a formal structure is needed to maintain a consistent and focused effort to solve state and institutional preservation needs.

*Book Mobile, (1927) State Librarian Johnson Brigham is standing on the right.*
Within the last decade the two largest of the regents’ state university library systems and the State Historical Society of Iowa have developed conservation treatment facilities to address the physical preservation needs of their own institutional book and manuscript collections. All three facilities are equipped to undertake a range of physical treatments from basic cleaning and repair to full conservation, including deacidification and encapsulation. The Iowa State University Library is currently in the process of constructing an enlarged conservation treatment facility and preservation department offices appropriate to the preservation needs of its collections. In addition to addressing the conservation treatment needs of its collections, the University of Iowa Libraries facility is the base for a well-established and nationally recognized training program in book binding and conservation.

These treatment facilities are an expression of the development of preservation programs at these state institutions. Each institution has a full-time professional preservation administrator and/or conservator to manage preservation plan development and insure appropriate treatment for collection items needing attention. The programs and facilities have not been designed, funded, or staffed to address the needs of collections beyond those of the home institutions. Other libraries within the state, usually academic libraries, have recognized preservation needs through assignment of responsibility, but none other than the three state institutions noted above have de-
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Developed a full-time professional preservation position. The preservation professionals at the three state institutions are professionally active and have served as an informal resource for preservation and conservation matters for the state.

Binding has long been and will remain a principal preservation treatment for book materials. Iowa is not home to any members of the Library Binding Institute, which defines the standard for commercial library binding, although such service vendors are located in surrounding states. However, a significant supplier of binding products to the library binding industry is located in Des Moines, Iowa. A division of this company manufactures and sells archival quality housing products and supplies. Iowa is also home to microfilming service vendors that provide preservation-quality filming service and long-term master negative film storage.
The Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium [ICPC] is a typical Iowa grassroots organization. It started as a cooperative venture in 1989, when academic librarians from around Iowa met at a leadership retreat to identify and discuss mutual issues. Preservation was identified as an area of concern and a preservation working group was established.

The preservation working group struggled with a number of issues during its early meetings, including the multi-organizational nature of an effective preservation program. The working group grew out of the academic library environment but the members knew that it was necessary to involve a broader group of organizations, to have an effective statewide preservation plan or movement.

In 1991, the preservation working group invited the State Historical Society of Iowa to assist them in their transition from an academic library-based group into a multi-organizational group. In the fall of 1992 the transition was complete, ICPC was born, and the original working group disbanded.

Our hearts were touched that you thought about us ... and [were] willing to share these booklets with us. The information is absolutely incredible. We truly appreciate your generosity.

Annette LoVoi, Governor's Ombudsman, Office of the Governor, Texas

As of 1995, the Consortium represents about 20 organizations statewide with extremely diverse collections ranging from courthouse records to large university collections.

ICPC’s first challenge came when Iowa experienced serious flooding during the summer of 1993. ICPC members had organized so that they could address statewide preservation needs, anticipating that a disaster-recovery plan would be one of their activities. Fortunately, the network was in place — even if the plan wasn’t. The information that was gathered and dispersed during the summer was compiled and published in the Flood Recovery Booklet. This booklet was distributed to libraries, museums, courthouses, and other organizations in Iowa. ICPC has also worked with the states of Georgia, Texas, California, and Louisiana in order to make copies available to their citizens during
their floods. During the 1995 winter storms, the state of California distributed over 20,000 copies of the *Flood Recovery Booklet* to its citizens to provide assistance with disaster recovery.

In January 1994 ICPC received funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a statewide preservation plan which would establish priorities for a coordinated and cooperative effort to preserve, protect, and provide access to Iowa's collections in the most appropriate formats. This planning effort had three goals: to increase awareness of preservation issues, to create an understanding and commitment to preservation activities, and to develop a statewide preservation plan.

During 1994 ICPC met with librarians, genealogists, archivists, museum curators, clerks of court, and county officials at their respective fall meetings. Using a variety of resources, including a preservation film called "Slow Fires," information booths, and handouts, ICPC encouraged discussion and participation in their planning efforts.

ICPC also mailed out a preservation survey to 25% of each identified repository type — museums, libraries, archives, newspaper offices, and courthouses. The survey instrument was based on discussions with groups around the state, other statewide preservation surveys and three survey efforts taking place in Iowa by other organizations: the Iowa Historical Records Advisory Board, the Upper Midwest Conservation Association, and the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

Responses echoed what ICPC members had heard earlier at statewide meetings. Identified top priority preservation needs are sufficient space for storage, improved storage conditions, funding for preservation activities, preservation expertise, expertise for evaluating items for retention or disposal, and staffing.

An emerging picture of the typical Iowa repository is one that is funded by local government with four or less paid full-time staff and no volunteers, open 21 or more hours per week, spends less than $1,000 on preservation activities, and does not have anyone assigned as a preservation staff person. Less than half of those that responded had a microfilm reader. Most have computers and photocopy machines. New technology is raising additional concerns about preservation of electronic information.

*I am aware of the need for preservation of my records, but funding is not available. If there was a natural disaster, my records would be lost. I am the only employee of this office, so I am very busy.*

*Mary L. Miller, Adams County Recorder, Corning*

A majority of those surveyed (82%) had not performed a collection condition survey. Most indicated that they do not need to develop policies for retention or disposal but indicated a strong need for expertise for evaluating items for retention or disposal.

The primary mending technique is the use of pressure sensitive tape. Most do not know whether standards or guidelines are being followed for their microfilming and binding or whether acid-free paper is being used when photocopying.
While a third are using vaults or safes to store part of their collection, close to half of those surveyed have resorted to using warehouses, garages, attics, basements, and private homes. Very few reported any difficulties with pest or insect infestations within the last two years. One-third reported problems with minor leaks. The typical facility has a HVAC system that does not maintain constant environmental control 24 hours a day. Most do not have any type of environmental monitoring device. Approximately 70% of the facilities have fire extinguishers but not necessarily throughout the entire facility. A variety of methods are being used to provide security to the collections with a vault or safe being the most frequently used. Over one-third reported that they take no security measures. Typically, the respondent reported that either collections were not in acid-free housing.

More than half had not attended a preservation workshop within the last two years due to being unaware that any existed, a lack of funds, not enough staff, or distance.

On March 3, 1995, over 130 people attended a teleconference via the Iowa Communications Network to discuss a statewide preservation plan drafted by ICPC and based on input from statewide meetings, the survey response, and key players. ICN teleconference participants reaffirmed the need for funding, space, expertise, and staffing for preservation. They also expressed a strong desire for a central office which could provide preservation information, advocacy, and leadership in developing cooperative/collaborative preservation programs within the state.

Today we are working with and relying on some modes of communication that seem like they're light years apart. To conduct such a meeting over our new fiber optics network is becoming a common way for us to do business. To create the kind of documents and historic records that we are concerned with today was a very time-consuming, labor-intensive task and, sometimes, even an art. I'm sure that science will meet art hundreds of times as the "Fragile Harvest" progresses.

Joy Corning, Lt. Governor

Many state agencies and organizations expressed their commitment to the preservation of Iowa’s documentary resources by contributing in a variety of ways to the planning process. However, no single agency felt it had the resources to establish a permanent statewide preservation office. On March 24, 1995, ICPC members voted to incorporate and become a membership organization to establish a coordinated statewide preservation program which would address the preservation needs and concerns expressed by participants in the planning process. If the preservation challenges facing Iowa are to be met, coordination must eventually become the first responsibility of an identified individual rather than a volunteer effort added to other duties.
GOALS: A DISCUSSION

Preserve collections in order to insure access to Iowa’s documentary resources using the appropriate format.

This preservation plan is based on the idea that collections contained in Iowa libraries, archives, and historical societies are vital to the government, education, and cultural life of the state. Federal, state, and private resources have been used to build these collections. School children, high school students, college students, business people, county clerks, as well as the general public seeking information and entertainment use these collections every day.

These collections are at risk of being lost. Lost because they are printed on impermanent paper. Lost to fire, flood, or tornado. Lost because of theft or mutilation. Or lost simply because they are so heavily used and will eventually “wear out.” If these significant collections are lost or damaged, the citizens of Iowa may not be able to replace them. An attempt must be made to define those collections that are of local, state, national, and international significance and then to take action to insure that these collections are preserved to remain accessible to anyone who wishes to use them.

I think there’s a mindset everywhere that surely everything will be available in electronic format and there will be no need to keep anything. You may gasp at that. I think it’s necessary that we step back from this and really be able to explain and to justify the reason for having some of these original documents and to find mechanisms and ways of technology of making them available to everyone.

Sharman Smith, State Librarian, Des Moines

these collections are preserved to remain accessible to anyone who wishes to use them.

It is likely that a small public library may contain material about its community that is not replicated anywhere else in the state. It is also probable that a subject such as immigrant history or state and regional economic development might be represented in more than one collection. Identification of these collections will enable preservation efforts to be focused at the institutional level while insuring that subject areas of widespread interest remain accessible to the public.
Related to this identification process is defining the most appropriate preservation actions for each collection. California, in its state planning efforts, has used CALIPR (an inexpensive software package designed to identify preservation needs and priorities) to quantify preservation needs for various collections. A similar approach would work well in Iowa. An attempt to define not only where significant collections reside but the state of "risk" this collection is subject to is necessary.

No single solution exists to preserve collections. Choices of action might include: mending, library binding, improved storage, reformatting text from paper to microfilm, conservation treatment, and environmental and security upgrades.

It is essential to establish preservation action priorities and, whenever possible, to use and make available uniform standards. One of the most frequently voiced concerns during the planning process, particularly from smaller libraries, historical societies, and government record offices, was the need to feel comfortable that preservation actions would be cost effective and beneficial to the collections.

The types of preservation treatment options available to large institutions are the same as those for small institutions. The application of these options may be different. For example, it makes sense to preserve local history items in a small collection. It may not be appropriate to reformat large portions of such a collection. A larger institution may reformat large portions of its collections and move more slowly in treating its rare materials.

[There] are some potentially huge problems in the future because I don't think we can say just because something is available today and I have access to it means that it's been preserved.

Robert J. Strauss, Preservation Planner/Consultant, Minneapolis, Minn.
Create a governing structure for a coordinated statewide program that will address the preservation needs of Iowa’s documentary resources.

During the planning process a number of administrative alternatives to continue preservation within the State of Iowa were reviewed. The Department of Cultural Affairs, State Historical Society of Iowa, and State Library all affirmed in their planning documents an interest and commitment to the preservation of Iowa’s documentary resources. Many professional associations encouraged staff and members to participate in the planning process. A partial list of participants included the regents institutions, private colleges, the Iowa Genealogical Society, the Iowa Museum Association, the Iowa State Association of Counties, the Iowa Humanities Board, and the Iowa Historical Records Advisory Board.

Preservation plans were reviewed from states such as New York, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Ohio, and Kansas to examine how these states addressed the need for statewide preservation coordination. In each of these state plans the first choice was to establish a preservation office or position within an existing state agency. However, in many of the state plans, an alternate scenario had to be chosen. In most of these state departments and agencies (including libraries) the trend is toward reduction of staff and operating budgets. Iowa is no exception to this trend.

Participants in the March 3, 1995, teleconference expressed a strong desire for a central office which could provide preservation information, advocacy, and leadership in developing cooperative/collaborative preservation programs within the state. The leaders of the State Library and the State Historical Society of Iowa are very interested in and committed to seeing cooperative preservation activity continue. However, neither of these organizations is able to establish a permanent office at this time.

The Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium has been effective in bringing together the preservation leaders from a wide variety of institutions. ICPC’s leadership is recognized by the executive branch of government, the heads of state agencies, and professionals throughout the state of Iowa. In order to capitalize on the interest and momentum developed during the planning process the Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium has voted to incorporate as a not-for-profit 501-(c)3 corporation. ICPC will examine its current governance structure (establishing a board of directors), review its mission statement, and develop strategies for implementation of goals in the plan. The newly incorporated ICPC will address four concerns expressed by participants during the planning process:

1. To develop a membership which will benefit from the actions of ICPC;
2. To facilitate, encourage, and coordinate cooperative/collaborative preservation activities within the State of Iowa;
3. To encourage funding for preservation activities;
4. To continue to monitor the desirability of a long-term, permanently funded office for preservation of collections.

This course of action will be most cost effective since no single agency will be expected to fund the entire cost for a statewide preservation program. Membership will insure that all programs and services offered in the future are developed in response to expressed institutional need. This course of action is a response that
seems in keeping with the “grassroots” beginnings of ICPC. It is very important to emphasize the pride taken in Iowa communities. The planning participants are keenly aware of the need to direct programs to large, medium, and small repositories. Membership should enable rural communities as well as urban areas to have an effective voice and representation on the board and realize the benefits of programs developed by ICPC.

**Insure that adequate preservation education and training programs are available for staff of Iowa cultural repositories.**

The history of preservation in the United States has largely been shaped by the experience of professional conservators. Libraries were the first cultural organizations to establish an administrative position for preservation specialists, expanding the role from treating objects to developing policy at the administrative level. Most of the preservation administrators have been on the job for less than 15 years. Few historical societies and archives have been able to add a similar type of administrative position to their staffs. The technical and scientific nature of conservation, combined with the relative newness of preservation management strategies, contributes to an atmosphere of uncertainty among curators and directors when they must make preservation decisions. This sense of uncertainty complicated by the specialized technical language of the preservationist manifests itself in a desire for continuing education and training in preservation among those working in repositories.

Carl Orgren, Director of the School of Library and Information Science, University of Iowa, suggests that, “Perhaps basic education, as provided at institutions such as ours, should also be mentioned in the plan.” He goes on to say, “In other words, we can respond better when we know what you want our graduates, or the audience at our continuing education events, to be able to do, know or understand.”

**When you run for elected office, it is not required that you be a historian. We need desperately to be educated on how to preserve county records.**

*Marilee Monroe, Floyd County Recorder, Charles City*

![Spray deacidification of an oversize design document by Ivan Hanthorn, Head of the Preservation Department, Iowa State University Library.](image)
The most basic need expressed during the ICN meeting and in response to the surveys was the need for basic information: How do I take care of photographs? Are we using the right kind of ink for our records? Should I ever consider lamination? Tip sheets are already being produced by ICPC in an attempt to respond to this type of need. Written material, pamphlets, newsletters, articles, and handbooks are the most often requested teaching aids. A regular publication program is needed.

ICPC should also consider serving as a clearinghouse, a network for referral when questions concerning preservation arise. Given the number of preservation options and services available, it is important to disseminate current technical standards and standards of practice. This is particularly significant in light of the rapidly expanding role of digital and electronic sources of information and records. In fact ICPC may be able to take advantage of this new electronic environment by providing a preservation list service to its members. The largest institutions in Iowa have been able to either hire staff or contract on a regular basis experts in the field of preservation. Medium and small-sized repositories have not been able to do this. Yet taken in aggregate they may have preservation needs larger than any single major institution.

Teleconference and survey respondents expressed a strong desire for education and training through workshops, presentations, publications, and classes. This need will be the most difficult for ICPC to address. Education is expensive and time consuming. More investigation is needed before ICPC will be able to develop specific training programs. Immediate needs for training can be met through partnership with groups such as the Upper Midwest Conservation Association and Library Binding Institute. The ICN network offers Iowans an opportunity to receive education and training at a low cost and reduces travelling distance. The teleconference worked very well as a meeting vehicle during the planning process and should be considered a valuable resource for use in future training programs.

Tip Sheet

**Tip #1 -** Surface cleaning removes dust, dirt, and foreign matter that may cause damage to books and documents. A dusting brush and document cleaning pad are the least disruptive to paper fibers. Begin with a dusting brush first, using a light touch. Proceed cautiously. You do not want to clean the words right off the paper!

**Tip #3 -** Archival Products - If you want the next generation to enjoy your keepsakes, then you need to use archival-quality storage materials. Archival materials are becoming easier to find these days. There are several mail-order companies that stock materials for storing everything from books to photos and wedding dresses to baseball cards. You can often find archival products at your local photocopy, stationary, or art supply store.
Develop cooperative/collaborative preservation projects that address the needs of similar institutions as well as foster cooperation among allied disciplines.

Every library, archive, historical society, and records office has a local responsibility to preserve their collections. Before cooperative/collaborative programs can be put into place, we must understand what preservation efforts are being undertaken at the local level. These efforts might include cataloging, protecting documents by placing them in folders or boxes, installing air conditioning, or contracting with a professional conservator.

During the statewide planning process a presumption that cooperative projects could enhance institutional efforts formed every discussion. A note of skepticism was also heard relating to cooperative projects that might serve a preservation need identified by an umbrella agency but not having a high priority at the institutional level. Iowa has a history of cooperation from the grassroots level up to its largest and most complex institutions. Identification of successful cooperative projects, whether or not these projects are specific to preservation, is a logical first step in this process. A good example of a successful cooperative project is the response to the devastating floods of 1993.

ICPC represents the interests of many types of institutional collections. This presents two areas of opportunity for cooperation: first, to foster institutional grants for collection care or training that address more than a single type of collection; second, to continue developing partnerships with allied organizations such as extension services and the Iowa League of Municipalities. ICPC will rely on its membership for its strength and vision. The more voices it hears the more effective it will be in advocating the cause of preservation.

This planning process addressed collections specifically related to the humanities. However, it is clear that the same preservation problems exhibited in these collections are shared by other institutions and disciplines. Representatives of county clerks, genealogists, records managers, and newspaper associations all contributed valuable insight during this process.

Clearly cooperative projects addressing specific library or archival concerns will be needed. It is just as clear that local records management programs, local historical societies, and museums will all benefit from this same type of collaboration.

Information could be made available electronically that is now too fragile or in formats (such as maps) that do not easily lend themselves to public distribution and use. The Office of the State Archaeologist is developing a project called Iowa Archaeology Home Page for the Internet. This project proposes to “develop expertise, techniques, and software to enable the interactive dissemination of information on Iowa history and prehistory to its citizens via a World Wide Web site and Home Page.” A similar approach could assist ICPC with its statewide efforts to preserve Iowa’s documentary heritage.
Personalizing preservation to the individual — citizens, legislators, decision makers, and foundations — to sensitize them to the richness of cultural items held in Iowa institutions. Create an understanding and commitment to the value of preserving Iowa’s documentary resources.

When people are able to watch a book or art conservator working they become fascinated. When this conservation work is completed it becomes invisible to those who read the book or look at the painting. So if you don’t witness the work you will probably not know that it was done.

The citizens of Iowa use the collections contained in records offices, libraries, and archives every day. Yet few if any of these citizens are aware of the difficulty of keeping these collections in serviceable condition. If a house is restored and becomes a local museum, residence, or bed and breakfast, the entire community is aware of what has happened. They have driven by and seen the transformation. They may have contributed funds to the project either directly or through some form of tax-incentive program. Many of these same people will not be aware that their town newspaper has been microfilmed, preserving its content so that their children and grandchildren will be able to read about the restoration they observed as well as the past history of the building.

The story surrounding preservation of Iowa’s collections has not been well told. Evidence of this can be found in “The Iowa Cultural Plan: Summary of Goals, Actions 1994-2000.” Responses to the cultural survey demonstrate that the citizens of Iowa value cultural resources. They value the libraries, community colleges, historical societies, arts organizations and other cultural institutions that house our cultural resources. They believed that the attitudes and rules in the state will preserve historic buildings. In the survey questionnaire not one question was asked about the importance or attitudes concerning the preservation of the collections that are
contained in these institutions. This situation must change. Iowans are doing an enormous amount of work to see that these collections are accessible to all citizens. This work must not be invisible to the public eye. Cultural institutions need to be more vocal about their needs and accomplishments in the care of Iowa’s cultural resources. Only then will the care of cultural resources be automatically incorporated into institutional and state-wide strategic planning processes and surveys. We must be better advocates for these collections.

ICPC can be this advocate. It will work to inform the citizens, legislators, and decision makers of both the accomplishments and challenges facing those who care for collections. The paper-based resources held by Iowa repositories are the basis from which all new information systems will be built. It is in the interest of the future that we see to it that the record of the past is not lost.

**Insure that sufficient funds are available to implement and continue a statewide permanent preservation program.**

The need of additional funding devoted specifically to preservation was mentioned in every meeting and discussion during the planning process. This need for funding was tempered with the knowledge that additional or new allocations would be difficult to obtain.

Iowa organizations are currently utilizing a variety of resources to augment their preservation funding needs — applying for grants from federal, state, and local government agencies and foundations and appealing to local citizens and foundations through fundraising campaigns. Successfully securing additional funds is dependent upon the granting agency recognizing that funding preservation activities is a top priority and the applicant meeting all the application criteria.

ICPC can assist Iowa organizations in securing funds for preservation activities by identifying funding sources and serving as a clearinghouse; informing foundations, corporations, and individuals of the need for funds; encouraging state government to allocate funds; and identifying areas where organizations can be more successful by applying cooperatively. Some states such as New York and New Jersey have allocations devoted specifically to the preservation of documentary collections. Such a strategy in Iowa would require a persuasive presentation of need to the State Legislature. All of these strategies will benefit from the existence of *Fragile Harvest* and the planning that went into its creation.

A next step to insure adequate funding might begin with a study similar to ones being performed in California and Massachusetts to determine more specifically the condition of collections. Such a study will make it easier to specify solutions and quantify the amount of money needed to accomplish desired goals. This type of study will also help identify partners for collaborative projects as well as give some indication as to the duration of specific projects.

It is also appropriate to examine redistribution or reallocation of existing funds to address preservation concerns. Clearly this budgetary process goes on regularly at the institutional level. State agencies should consciously undertake an examination of their programs to insure that the cultural collections which have already been bought and paid for are being adequately preserved for the citizens of Iowa.

*The idea of reallocating funds is kind of a frightening thing - Do any of us currently have enough funds allocated that we can reallocate them and still do the work we have to do? I think we are talking about needing to find new money, and that needs to be looked at from a variety of sources...*

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Jerome Thompson, Acting Administrator, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines
In Conclusion: An appeal should be made to the citizens, corporations, and foundations to assist in preserving these collections. Funds have been established to protect our natural environment, adopt-a-highway, and build playgrounds. If the public were made aware and had a way to contribute to the preservation of Iowa’s written history, our fragile culture, they surely would do so.

Prudent investment to maintain a resource is typically Iowan. We have done it so often, often without a lot of flourish and fanfare, and reaped the rewards in this state in which we Iowans reside. We did it with education and have a system which is enviable in the nation. We were pioneering in ground-water quality legislation and other environmental issues with the result that Iowa remains a clean and healthy place to live. State-funded international cooperative ventures have been innovative investments in our economic future. The preservation of our cultural collections for use by succeeding generations requires similar development of funding mechanisms which will assure that they are the future’s bountiful harvest.

Shirley Sparling, an Iowa State University graduate student in Botany, dissects a member of Iowa’s botanical harvest (1951). Iowa’s “fragile harvest” of records is well represented by the plant samples located in folders behind Sparling in the Ada Hayden Herbarium. Photograph courtesy of the Iowa State University Archives/Women in Science and Engineering Archives.
PRESERVATION ACTION PLAN

Goal: Preserve collections in order to insure access to Iowa’s documentary resources using the appropriate format.

—Identify collections of importance and assess the preservation needs of these collections
—Identify and define preservation solutions to address problems exhibited with collections
—Establish priorities to begin implementation of collection preservation action
—Insure knowledge of and adherence to standards relevant to preservation activity undertaken

Goal: Create a governing structure for a coordinated statewide program that will address the preservation needs of Iowa’s documentary resources.

—Develop a governance structure and board of directors for ICPC
—Redefine mission for ICPC and review/revise goals on a regular basis
—Incorporate ICPC as a not-for-profit 501-(c)3 entity
—Develop strategies for implementing goals in statewide plan
—Encourage, facilitate, and coordinate cooperative/collaborative statewide preservation activities
—Identify and develop funding resources for cooperative/collaborative preservation activity
—Continue to monitor the desirability of a long term, permanently funded office for preservation, policy and management

Goal: Insure that adequate preservation education and training programs are available for staff of Iowa cultural repositories.

—Identify categories, persons/organizations in need of awareness and education in preservation management
—Develop partnerships with education providers to address identified constituency needs
—Insure that training will address needs of professionals in allied fields or institutions
—Publish articles in newsletters, periodicals, and newspapers, etc.
—Investigate capacity to serve as an information clearing house and referral service
—Encourage development of a preservation list serve

Goal: Develop cooperative/collaborative preservation projects that address the needs of similar institutions as well as foster cooperation among allied disciplines.

—Identify exemplary cooperative/collaborative programs that might serve as models
—Continue to develop partnerships with interested organizations
—Encourage/advocate the development of local records management programs
—Bring partners together and develop fundable projects to present to foundations and federal agencies
—Explore group purchasing programs to reduce cost and increase availability of preservation supplies, equipment, and services
Goal: Personalize preservation to the individual — citizens, legislators, decision makers, and foundations — to sensitize them to the richness of cultural items held in Iowa institutions. Create an understanding and commitment to the value of preserving Iowa’s documentary resources.

—Develop a well-thought-out market research project
—Respond to market research with a public awareness campaign
—Identify key organizations and individuals to present information
—Publicize success stories and accomplishments
—Insure that public relations is an on-going activity
—Participate in professional meetings, forums, and programs
—Monitor all preservation activity relevant to cultural property

Goal: Insure that sufficient funds are available to implement and continue a statewide permanent preservation program.

—Develop a fund-based membership of ICPC
—Identify and inform foundations, corporations, and individuals of the need for preservation funding
—Continue to encourage the state government to allocate funds to preserve humanities collections
—Explore reallocation/redefinition of existing funds

Henry Field Seed Co.
Catalog Cover
A SELECTIVE PRESERVATION BIBLIOGRAPHY

General


Mibach, Lisa. "Collections Care: What to Do When You Can’t Afford to Do Anything." Illinois Heritage Association Newsletter 9.6 (Nov./Dec.): Technical Insert, No. 54. Also available from author at Mibach & Associates, Collection Conservation, MPO Box 623, Oberlin, OH 44074-0623 for $1.60.

Available directly from NEDCC, 100 Brickstone Square, Andover, MA 01810. The cost is $40.00 (including shipping and handling). This is a collection of NEDCC Preservation leaflets. It is divided into sections each of which contains lists of organizations, sources for information and supplies, bibliographies, and technical leaflets for all aspects of preserving and protecting collections. If you own one book, this is the book to own. It contains the following sections: Planning and Prioritizing; The Environment; Emergency Management; Storage and Handling; Reformatting; Conservation Procedures.

Pflieger, Fran, ed. Preservation of Library and Archival Materials. APPA Monograph. Alexandria: Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers, 1991. ISBN: 0913359602. This work is the result of a seminar held cooperatively by the APPA (Association of Physical Plant Administrators of Universities and Colleges) and the Commission on Preservation and Access. It was attended by librarians, archivists, and facilities officers, and thus provides a unique perspective to the issues covered.


Photographs/Archives

American Association of State and Local History Technical Leaflets. Suite 102, 172 Second Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee 37201. This is a series of leaflets providing technical information of interest to historical societies and museums.


Kenney, Anne R. The American Archivist 53 (Mar. 1990). The entire issue is devoted to archival preservation. Articles cover preservation microfilming, holdings maintenance, planning and education.


Other Nonbook or Electronic Media


Disaster


Kraft, Nancy and Catherine Larson, compilers. *Flood Recovery Booklet*. Iowa City, Iowa: Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium; State Historical Society of Iowa, 1993. *Prepared in response to the Iowa floods of 1993, this work was distributed to repositories across Iowa, and has since been made available to other flood-damaged areas.*


Computer Network Resources

Conservation DistList
This is an preservation discussion group available through the Internet. If you are a subscriber to this list, a mailing is sent out to you electronically one or two times per week. Each mailing is made up of information and questions. When a question is sent into the DistList, responses come in from all over the country and the world. Experts and novices alike participate in the Conservation DistList. You must have access to the Internet to participate. To subscribe send a message to "consdist-request@lindy.standford.edu." Your message should say who you are, and that you want to subscribe to the list. Unlike many other Internet discussion lists, you do not send a subscription message to a "listserv."

Conservation OnLine (CoOL)
Preservation documents, the Conservation DistList archives and access to other Internet preservation sites are stored on CoOL which is available through Stanford's World Wide Web (WWW) server. If you have access to WWW through your Internet connection "go" to the following URL (WWW address) to locate CoOL:

http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/index.html

If you have access through a gopher you can search the following address:

gopher://palimpsest.stanford.edu

You may want to ask your resident computer expert for a fuller explanation of these instructions.
## IOWA COOPERATIVE PRESERVATION CONSORTIUM MEMBERSHIP

### Executive Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Representing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Kraft (Chair)</td>
<td>State Historical Society of Iowa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jill Miller</td>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beverly Lind</td>
<td>Public and regional libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharman Smith</td>
<td>State Library of Iowa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kristi Little</td>
<td>Records Management Commission</td>
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<td>Scharlott Goettsch Blevins</td>
<td>Iowa Historical Records Advisory Board</td>
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### Advisory Council

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<tr>
<td>Beverly Hinders Trost</td>
<td>Area Education Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dreama Deskins</td>
<td>BCR/OCLC Users Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pam Spitzmueller</td>
<td>Centers for the Book &amp; Conservator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlene K. Nelson</td>
<td>Clerks of Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duane Fenstermann</td>
<td>Historical Societies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joan Bidwell</td>
<td>Iowa Genealogical Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michelle Parrini</td>
<td>Iowa Humanities Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lanny Haldy</td>
<td>Iowa Museum Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. Alan Smith</td>
<td>Iowa Newspaper Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Stuhr-Rommereim</td>
<td>Iowa Private Academic Libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marilee Monroe</td>
<td>Iowa State Association of Counties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivan Hanthorn</td>
<td>Preservation administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Eaton</td>
<td>Regent’s institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken Davenport</td>
<td>Regional libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kay Runge</td>
<td>Larger public libraries</td>
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<td>Ricardo H. Suaro</td>
<td>Iowa Library Association</td>
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<td>Gerald Peterson</td>
<td>Special collections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nancy Lee</td>
<td>State documents librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gordon Hendrickson</td>
<td>State Archivist</td>
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*The Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium mission is to initiate, encourage, and enhance preservation and conservation activities in and among all Iowa repositories/institutions whose collections include a variety of two-dimensional materials such as audio-visuals, microforms, and paper-based and electronically-stored information for the benefit of present and future generations.*
Acknowledgements

This document was jointly authored by Nancy Kraft, Ivan Hanthorn, and Robert Strauss. It represents, however, the thoughts and actions of a much larger community on whose behalf it was written. Like the statewide preservation planning process, the making of this document was truly a collaborative effort. The authors were assisted in selection and provision of illustrations by Lanny Haldy, Jill Miller, Alan Smith, and Kristi Little. All would have been for naught without the able and cordial assistance of Kristi Little and Krista Straw of the State Printing Office in the design and mechanics of production of this document. In addition to contributions to project activities, members of the Iowa Cooperative Preservation Consortium contributed comments and critiques of early drafts of this document.

Special acknowledgement is due to the custodians and users of research and record materials who responded to the project conservation needs survey, participated in open meetings, and otherwise contributed to the shaping of a preservation agenda for the state of Iowa.

The development of a statewide preservation plan was made possible, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Robert Strauss served as a Preservation Consultant. Nancy Kraft was Project Director; Catherine Larson and Jill Miller were Assistant Project Directors.

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