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INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

A RESOURCE FROM IHS LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES

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Issue 101 | March 2020

TIPS FROM 100 COLLECTIONS ADVISORS, CONTINUED

By Karen DePauw, manager, IHS Local History Services

The Indiana Historical Society is pleased to announce the [continuation of its Heritage Support Grants program](#), an initiative launched in 2015 and made possible by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The program will award \$2.5 million to local historical organizations during the next five years.

Summary of Proposal submissions for the first cycle of Project grants, which range from \$5,000 to \$50,000, are due by **March 3, 2020**. Upcoming proposal deadlines for Mini grants, which range from \$500 to \$4,999, are June 2, 2020, and Sept. 1, 2020.

Specific funding priorities for upcoming grant opportunities include the following: collections stewardship; diversity, equity, access and inclusion; sustainability; and planning. Eligible organizations must be incorporated as nonprofits in the state of Indiana with history as a significant component of their missions and annual budgets of less than \$300,000.



To celebrate 100 issues of Collections Advisor, I thought it would be fun to take a look back and gather up tips from previous issues. However, it turns out that 100 tips is quite a bit for one go, so here are 50 more tips from 100 Collections Advisors (for the first 50 check out [last month's Collections Advisor](#)).

51) Create a disaster/emergency kit containing supplies for personal protection, cleaning, record keeping and collections care. ([Issue 59](#))

[APPLY FOR A HERITAGE SUPPORT GRANT](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Collections Advisor](#)
(Local History Services, Indiana Historical Society)

UPCOMING TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

[Appraising and Insuring Historical Treasures](#)
March 3 -
Texas Historical Commission webinar.

[Looking at Glazing: Finding the Best Solution to Protect Your Works of Art and Historic Artifacts](#)
March 25 -
Connecting to Collections Care webinar.

- 52) Always wear gloves when handling objects that are breaking down to protect yourself against things like silver nitrate burns. ([Issue 60](#))
- 53) Use trays with lips in order to protect glass plate negatives from slipping off when moving them from one location to another. ([Issue 60](#))
- 54) When accessioning firearms make sure they are unloaded. ([Issue 60](#))
- 55) Track heat and humidity conditions for an entire year before making major decisions about what is and is not necessary. ([Issue 60](#))
- 56) Never forget the basic rules of working with collections. Getting lax could result in harm to you or the collection. ([Issue 60](#))
- 57) If done correctly, it is possible to create a microclimate for objects on display that protects them rather than being detrimental to them. ([Issue 61](#))
- 58) Using fake greenery when decorating for the holidays will reduce the risk of pests coming in on fresh greenery. ([Issue 62](#))
- 59) Always clean up food from events in the museum as soon as possible to keep from attracting pests. ([Issue 62](#))
- 60) Know the legal issues surrounding any fur or feather items in the collection. ([Issue 63](#))
- 61) To keep pests at bay, store furs and feathers separately from the rest of the collection and check often for pests. ([Issue 63](#))
- 62) Creating standards for the input of data into collections management systems is an important first step to make sure work does not have to be re-done in the future. ([Issue 65](#))
- 63) After making decisions regarding standards for collections database input, create a document that lists the standards and explains why certain decisions were made. This will help future individuals understand the reasons behind the decisions. ([Issue 65](#))
- 64) Digitizing a collection is a monumental task. Take steps at the beginning to understand the language surrounding digitization projects. ([Issue 66](#))
- 65) Set and record standards for digitization projects so everyone working on the project is on the same page. ([Issue 66](#))
- 66) When writing a grant for collections care, make sure to outline the professional standards being used in the project and attach relevant collection management documents. ([Issue 67](#))
- 67) Funders appreciate collections care projects that provide for staff/volunteer training and show the ability to continue the essence of the project even after funding is complete. ([Issue 67](#))
- 68) Before starting a digitization project, do a survey of the collection to create priority lists that will help with the selection of materials for digitization. ([Issue 68](#))
- 69) Keep digitization projects realistic. Instead of putting up an entire collection, consider providing digital samples of various collections to increase relevance to researchers. ([Issue 68](#))
- 70) Familiarize yourself with the various types of equipment available for digitizing collections and determine what best fits the needs of your institution. ([Issue 69](#))
- 71) Before beginning a digitization project, know how the images will be stored as this can make a difference in the standards set for the project. ([Issue 69](#))
- 72) Utilize dehumidifiers during the summer months to help lower the humidity in the air and ward off condition issues associated with moisture, like mold or pitting metal. ([Issue 70](#))
- 73) Keep curtains closed on warm days to eliminate excess heat from the sun. ([Issue 70](#))
- 74) When collecting items dealing with potentially conflict-riddled topics, make sure both sides are represented because regardless of the personal beliefs of the institution's staff/volunteers, the historical record of the future needs both sides in order to tell a full story. ([Issue 71](#))
- 75) When setting standards for data input in a collections management system, consider whether

the main end user of that field is a researcher or museum staff, it might change how you define the field. ([Issue 72](#))

76) Make sure each collections management record includes an item's accession number, object ID, and object name/title. ([Issue 72](#))

77) Aim to keep exhibit galleries between 68 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit to provide comfort for both visitors and objects. ([Issue 73](#))

78) Rotate items on display frequently in order to keep the cumulative damage from light to a minimum. ([Issue 73](#))

79) When working with historic properties, always reference the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. ([Issue 74](#))

80) When writing a new strategic plan, make sure collections are represented and integrated into the overall institutional plan. ([Issue 75](#))

81) Planning a new storage or research space requires lots of thought. Start by listing all of the activities planned to take place in the space so you make sure to plan for all of them accordingly. Figure out what the main activities are and what the secondary, and possibly less constant, activities are. ([Issue 76](#))

82) Moving collections to temporary or new permanent homes can be stressful. Take the time to plan for how many people are needed, what types of moving equipment is needed, and even exactly where everything will go in the new space before the move begins. ([Issue 77](#))

83) Chemical cleaning supplies should never be used with collection objects. ([Issue 78](#))

84) Never use adhesives on historical items. ([Issue 78](#))

85) Check in on collection items that use real flora and fauna frequently. These items can be very desirable to pests and the sooner you identify a possible start of an infestation the easier it is to eliminate. ([Issue 79](#))

86) For numbering objects, use a barrier layer. B-72 is for use on hard, non-porous collection objects, while B-67 works well with hard plastics, painted wood, and metal. ([Issue 81](#))

87) Keep the insurance for your collections up to date and always make sure you know what your art insurance does and does not cover. ([Issue 83](#))

88) Having policies about use of digital images from your collection is an important part of collections management. ([Issue 84](#))

89) Before loaning out objects from the museum collection, make sure to set up clear policies and procedures that outline the requirements for providing an object on loan. ([Issue 85](#))

90) Know the difference between a Temporary Receipt (non-legal or binding document) and a Deed of Gift (legal document transferring ownership) and use each appropriately. ([Issue 87](#))

91) Never laminate historical documents as lamination is permanent and irreversible. Instead, encapsulate documents, which is 100% reversible and does not harm the document. ([Issue 88](#))

92) Identify potential sources of water that can put your collection at risk, from pipes in storage areas to having a museum in a flood plain. Have plans for how to deal with each type of water emergency so you can quickly protect your collection if something ever happens. ([Issue 90](#))

93) The spring cleaning arsenal for a museum should include simple equipment: vacuum, natural bristle brush, water-only cleaning cloths, and micro-fiber cloths. ([Issue 91](#))

94) Know the difference between environmental deterioration (caused by external factors that are often preventable) and inherent vice (which refers to deterioration that comes from within, usually due to the raw materials or the manufacturing process used to create the item). ([Issue 93](#))

95) Understanding how to take good photographs of 3-D items is just as important as being able to scan 2-D items. Utilize cameras and simple photography set-ups to create the best possible

photos of objects. ([Issue 95](#))

96) When dealing with grave memorials and burial items in museum collections, always reference Indiana Code 14 to know what can and cannot be done with such items. ([Issue 96](#))

97) Cleaning the surface of archival objects can often be accomplished quite simply. First determine whether the document can and should be cleaned and then determine the best tool to use: soft natural bristle brush, cosmetic sponge, soot sponge, or grated eraser crumbs. ([Issue 97](#))

98) Remember that when items enter the museum collection most of them cease to be used for their original purpose. For instance, clothing is no longer worn, cups no longer hold drinks, and furniture is no longer used. ([Issue 98](#))

99) Make sure all objects received during the year have signed Deeds of Gift. ([Issue 99](#))

100) Care for your collection remembering that it is the link to the past for future generations.

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