

# INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

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## Strategic Fundraising for Collections Care

By Tamara Hemmerlein, Director, Local History Services

Whether an unexpected disaster or every-day needs, caring for collections requires funding. For some ideas on how to be strategic about your fundraising and create a solid plan for its success, check out this article originally written by our colleague Jamie Simek for the September 2015 Collections Advisor.

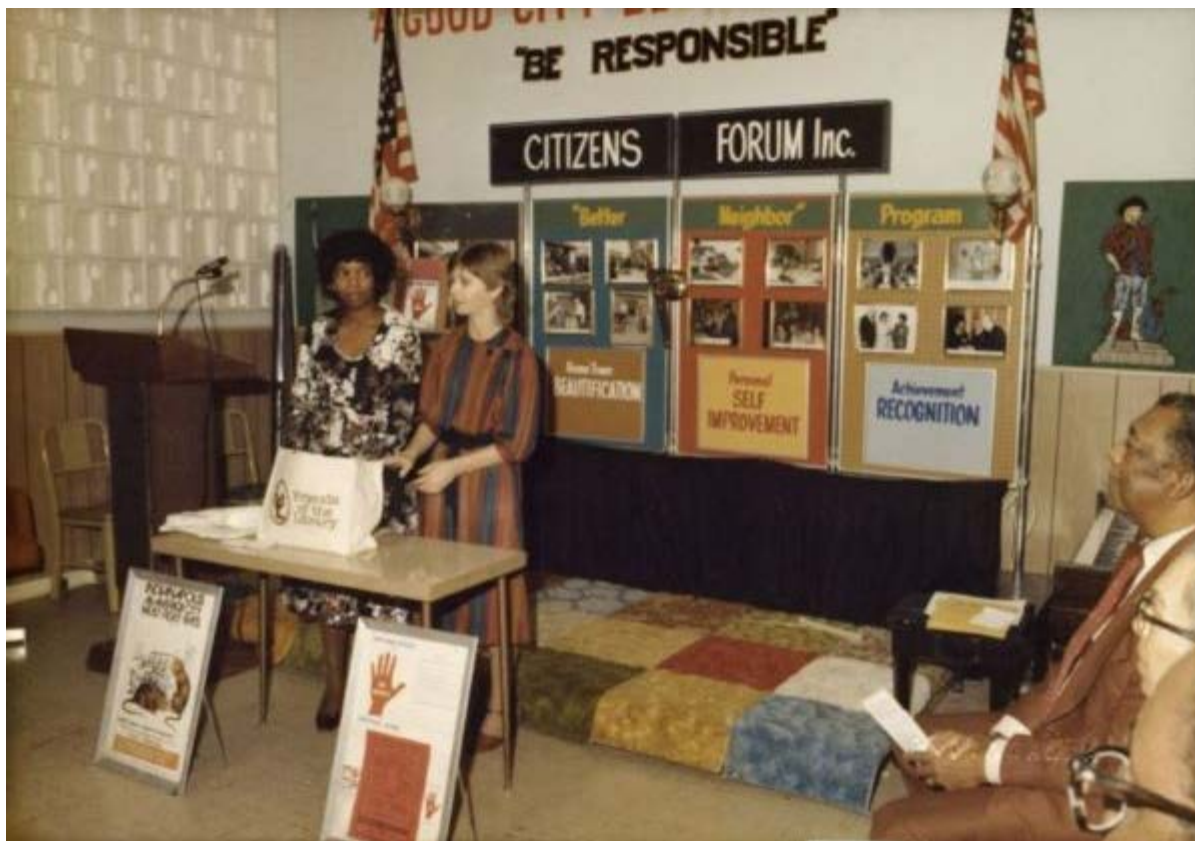


[\*Gene Stratton-Porter's Equipment\*](#) (Indiana Historical Society, M1235)

From heat, humidity and insect infestations to overstuffed cardboard boxes and incomplete inventories, possible threats to historic collections can be daunting and to-do lists are often long. Time and again, historical organizations find themselves wondering how to budget (and attract) resources for collections care. Emergent “front of house” issues and disasters du jour quickly consume our resources – particularly those of time and money. This often leads to reactive (versus strategic) fundraising.

In order to attract funders to your mission and goals – including collections care – you must provide a clear, strategic vision for the future of your organization. By putting pen to paper, you can clarify what is important to your organization, set reasonable goals, prioritize important collections care projects and develop strategies to match donor interests with your opportunities. There are many resources from trusted sources like the American Alliance of

Museums and the American Association for State and Local History, as well as local history field services experts and nonprofit consultants, available to help you with all aspects of your institutional plan.



*Flanner House Library at Citizens Forum (Indiana Historical Society, M1086)*

As you consider your needs and start thinking strategically about how to move forward, remember these important aspects of the planning process:

1. Review your organization's mission and goals. Your mission should clearly and concisely state your organization's reason for existing. Does it speak to the work you do? To the people you serve? Do you have big picture goals that support your mission?
2. Know your collection. For many historical organizations, their collections are their biggest assets. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your collection and/or your collections care process? What opportunities could your collection provide? How can you address any threats to it?
3. Identify priority projects in line with mission and goals. Planning is a continual process of prioritization and assessment. What projects are critical to your mission? How can you address the urgent while still planning for the important?



*[Prisoner of War and Christmas Parcels Shown by Home Service Volunteers](#) (Indiana Historical Society, M0551)*

4. Define project objectives. Be specific about what you want to accomplish with your limited resources. What outcomes will put you on the path towards achieving your goals and fulfilling your mission?
5. Identify tactics and activities. Your activities will consume the bulk of your time and you want to use it well. What tactics can you employ to use your resources strategically? What activities will help you achieve your desired outcomes?
6. Determine project cost in terms of time, money and people. You are seeking a balance between your needs and resources. What resources are essential in order to meet your objectives? What can you provide from within your organization? What will you need to secure from other sources?
7. Take stock of potential funding sources. Diverse funding sources contribute to organizational stability. How do you generate income now? What would you need to do to secure other sources of income through fundraising or earned-income strategies?
8. Show and tell your story. At the heart of every case for support is the story. What is your organization's story? Why is it important and why does it make you worthy of outside support? Collections care is often overwhelming. Likewise, fundraising is often overwhelming. However, both are made significantly more manageable when they become clear priorities in organizational planning.

- [Collections Advisors](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Timely Tips](#) (Indiana Historical Society)
- [Developing an Institutional Plan](#) (American Alliance of Museums)
- [DIY Strategic Planning for Small Museums](#) (American Association for State and Local History)

## Collection Trainings

[Where to Find Aid and How to Get Training for Disasters](#)

**May 2** – (Connecting to Collections Care)

[Reel Priorities: Creating a Film Preservation Plan](#)

**May 3** – (Lyrasis)

[How to Keep All Those Donors Your Museum Worked So Hard to Get](#)

**May 18** – (Texas Historical Commission)

[Digitization: Planning for Success](#)

**May 23** – (Northeast Document Conservation Center)

[Exhibiting Your Collection](#)

**May 25** – (Northeast Document Conservation Center)

[Webinars](#)

**Recorded** – (Indiana Historical Society)

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