TIPS FOR CHOOSING A CONSERVATOR

Christine Wiseman
Preservation Services Manager

Connecting to Collections
Webinar
Heritage Preservation
May 8, 2012
PRESERVATION

The rage of activities an institution undertakes to extend the life of its collections

CONSERVATION

physical stabilization or treatment of cultural heritage items that are damaged or deteriorated
DEFINITIONS

- **Restoration** – treatment with the goal of restoring an item to its original appearance

- **Conservator** - professionals who perform the treatment of cultural property
  - Graduate school training
  - Apprenticeship training with an experienced conservator
CONSERVATORS

- Many specialties
  - art on paper
  - books
  - paintings
  - photographs
  - electronic media
  - textiles
  - furniture
  - archaeological and ethnographic objects
AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION (AIC)

- Professional organization that represents conservators
- Code of ethics for treatment
- No certification for conservators
- Categories of membership
  - Associate
  - Professional Associate
  - Fellow

http://www.conservation-us.org/
WHERE DO CONSERVATORS WORK?

- Large museums, libraries and archives
- Regional conservation centers
  - ARCC – Assn of Regional Conservation Centers
  - RAP – Regional Alliance for Preservation
    http://www.rap-arcc.org/
- Private practice
WHEN IS A CONSERVATOR NEEDED?

- Provide assistance after an emergency or disaster
- Answer general questions about collections care
- Conduct a needs assessment or condition survey
- Contract conservation treatment
ESTABLISHING TREATMENT PRIORITIES

- Needs assessment survey
  - Condition, value, use
- Exhibition
- Digitization
- Damaged items identified through use
- Special projects
  - Grants, donor funding
DO NOT “DIY”

- Deacidification sprays
- Tape repairs or lamination
- Home remedies for preservation of paper
CONSIDERATIONS

- Treatment is very time intensive
- Treatment is expensive
- Your object (or the conservator) may have to travel
- Risks associated with treatments
GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

- Conservation Assessment Program (CAP)
  - IMLS grants for needs assessment surveys through Heritage Preservation
  - http://www.heritagepreservation.org/CAP/

- Museum Assessment Program (MAP)
  - Grants for museum assessment and planning through the American Association of Museums
  - http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/map/index.cfm

- Preservation Assistance Grants (PAG)
  - NEH grants to small organizations
  - http://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/
FINDING A CONSERVATOR

- References and referrals
  - Area museums, archives, or libraries
  - Regional conservation or preservation associations
- American Institute for Conservation
  - [http://www.conservation-us.org](http://www.conservation-us.org)
  - referral online database
  - How to choose a conservator
 QUESTIONS TO ASK

► Background and training
► Professional involvement
► Number of years of experience
► Examples of similar treatments
► References and previous clients
► Insurance and bonding
WHAT TO EXPECT

- Stabilize rather than “restore”
- Proposed treatment estimate
  - Examination and condition assessment
  - Outline of procedures to be undertaken
  - Time estimate
  - Cost
WHAT TO EXPECT

- Documentation
  - Written report
  - Before and after photography

Plan of Milledgeville, GA
1808
Before Treatment
QUESTIONS?

Plan of Milledgeville, GA
1808
After Treatment
CONTACT INFORMATION

Christine Wiseman
Preservation Services Manager

Georgia Archives
5800 Jonesboro Road
Morrow, GA 30260
678-364-3761
cwiseman@sos.ga.gov
www.GeorgiaArchives.org