



PO BOX 10951  
Tallahassee, FL 32302  
Ph: 850.222.6028  
Fax: 850.222.6112  
[fam@flamuseums.org](mailto:fam@flamuseums.org)  
[www.flamuseums.org](http://www.flamuseums.org)



*A Call to Action ...*

## ***Summary of Connecting to Collections Discussions***

***September 2008, Miami***

### ***Forum***

Forty archeology, archives, historic house, library, natural history, art, and history museums and special collections professionals met at the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami on September 6, 2008. Graig Shaak, Steering Committee Chair, and Myriam Springuel, FAM Program Manager welcomed Forum participants. Graig Shaak provided an overview of the national and Florida's Connecting to Collections initiatives and the Heritage Health Index. Rivers Buford, Steering Committee members and Director of Legislative Affairs at the Florida Department of State, provided an overview of how Forum participants can help convince their legislators that collections matter and that their care and preservation deserves federal state, county and municipal funding.

Forum participants then broke into small groups to identify priorities for collections in Florida. The groups worked first within disciplines to identify priorities and then across disciplines. Small groups reported back to all Forum participants. The participants were then asked to place dots on those issues they believe to be the most critical. The most critical issues are (in order of importance at this Forum):

- Collaboration during disaster recovery. Forum participants recognized the need for pre-established regional networks to provide recovery, triage, networking, communication and assistance after a disaster. They suggested the creation of mobile units to provide assistance, as needed, within a region.
- The need for enhanced facilities to care for and store collections. Suggestions included considering regionally shared storage spaces and planning for facilities collaboratively, as well as the creation of regional conservation labs.
- The need to create a survey of all organizations with collections, and to have data documenting collections needs.
- Training in all aspects of collections care including preservation and conservation, and identifying organizations that can provide training on a state-wide and a regional basis, providing funding for training, and planning for training for both professional staff and for volunteers.
- For each of these four topics, suggestions stressed the importance of working collaboratively and across disciplines.

Additional topics to be considered include:

- The importance of collaborating with community partners including local businesses and other community-based organizations, and the importance of establishing community collaborations before they are needed for disaster recovery

- Identifying private collections and working with private collectors to help them understand how to care for collections because they will become the “collections of the future” for public institutions
- Digitization and accessibility of collections
- Health risks for those who work directly with collections

Forum participants again broke up into small groups to discuss which, if any, priorities could be addressed at the local level. All the groups talked about the need for regional networks organized by an institution or organization able to facilitate the work of these networks. FAM, the Department of State, Florida’s Department of Emergency Management, and SEFLIN were mentioned as organizations that might create and maintain regional networks. The networks might address any of the topics discussed over the course of the afternoon, and in particular serve as a resource for:

- Disaster preparation and recovery
  - It was generally recommended that one organization with capacity for working collaboratively collect information about resources available in the region and make it available to all participants through a secure mechanism. Each organization’s senior management should be involved as well as staff with responsibilities for collections.
  - The network should consider internal plans and resources within each organization, as well as contacts with emergency operation centers, and county and state officials. It should consider ways to make information available when power is out.
  - The networks should be managed by one organization.
- Training for all aspects of collections care including preservation and conservation, and disaster preparation and recovery
  - Collaboration with a museum studies program should be explored
- Educating legislators about the importance of collections

In a wrap-up discussion members of the Steering Committee and participants commented on priorities established. Overarching comments included:

- Many participants noted their surprise at how much collections-related issues are shared across disciplines. This strengthens the ability to create an infrastructure useful to many organizations in Florida, whether for collections care, including preservation and conservation and disaster preparation, or for training.
- The discussion about training centered on both highly specialized training and basic assessment that could be conducted by trained students or volunteers.
- Participants in the room do not represent the statistics about the state of the nation’s collections. Those attending the Forum are all from organizations with the ability to make financial commitments to caring for their collections. As the inventory of the state of Florida’s collections is undertaken, it is critical to include the smaller or less well-established organizations not represented at the Forum.
- All of the priorities require funding. It is imperative to articulate clearly to legislators why collections are important, and what objects in collections may be more important than others. It is also imperative to communicate with the business community and with volunteers who can provide support.

During the course of the Forum, the Florida Cultural Alliance and the Florida State Parks were specifically mentioned as organizations that should be part of the on-going discussions.

## ***FAM Conference Session***

The Forum was followed by a session at the Florida Association of Museums Conference with 19 attendees, for those who may not have been able to attend the Forum. Graig Shaak and Myriam Springuel provided an overview of the priorities listed during the Forum and asked session participants what they saw as priorities. Their consensus was similar to the consensus reached during the Forum. Issues included (listed in order of priority for session participants):

- The need for additional storage facilities
- The importance of managing records and keeping inventories up to date
- General issues of collections care and conservation
- The need for additional staff to care for collections
- The need for training staff involved in collections
- Collections held by private collectors