



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/preservation-and-access-education-and-training> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Preservation Training Initiative

Institution: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Project Director: Debbie Linn

Grant Program: Preservation and Access Education and Training

Project impact and the significance of the humanities collections to be served:

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) requests funding from the *NEH Preservation and Access Education and Training* program in the amount of \$345,815 for a 36-month preservation and access training initiative. *Preservation Training Initiative* will provide training and professional development across the continuum, from college students considering careers in heritage preservation to emerging professionals in the fields of preservation, conservation, and archives to established museum and library professionals throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The project meets the *NEH Preservation and Access: Education and Training* program goals by investing in the professional development needs of both emerging and established museum professionals, creating a more inclusive and diverse museum workforce, and improving the long-term preservation of cultural assets within and beyond Virginia. VMFA's *Preservation Training Initiative* builds upon the museum's efforts to elevate the care of humanities collections in Virginia and to diversify the museum's collections, audiences, and staff to more accurately reflect the communities it serves both in Richmond and across the Commonwealth.

Funding for VMFA's *Preservation Training Initiative* will support paid training for students at key touch points in their academic careers: 1) nine pre-program undergraduate students to serve as 10-week summer interns in the museum's conservation labs (three per year); 2) one part-time, nine-month master's-level intern in Library Sciences (MLS intern) to gain practical experience in the museum's archives; and, 3) three postgraduate students to serve as advanced fellows in conservation (one per year). Additionally, *Preservation Training Initiative* will develop, in partnership with the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM), 4) two distinct preservation workshops for museum professionals statewide, each presented twice; one in documents and archives and one in the conservation and care of museum and material culture objects.

Together, these four components will enable VMFA to provide specialized preservation training for students and emerging professionals and support them in using those new skills to further the museum's statewide mandate to serve as a resource for museums across the Commonwealth. This multifaceted approach will advance the field by addressing several related needs: 1) exposing students to heritage preservation career opportunities in the undergraduate years; 2) broadening participation in the field by attracting students of color; 3) providing emerging professionals with practical hands-on, collections-based experience to hone their skills and deepen their understanding of the workings of a museum; and 4) enhancing the preservation knowledge of practicing museum professionals thereby raising the level of care for the rich cultural heritage collections across Virginia.

VMFA's facilities, staff, and prior experience with similar initiatives make it well suited to offer such training. Pre- and postgraduate students will work hand-in-hand with museum conservators and professional librarians and archivists at the flagship art museum for the Commonwealth of Virginia whose collections hold national and international significance to the humanities. Their experience at VMFA, either as undergraduate interns, master's-level intern, or postgraduate fellows will not only enhance their knowledge of museum work and specific preservation/conservation skills, but will also support VMFA's need to care for its collections, which comprise more than 50,000 works of art and more than 153,000 research volumes and 2,000 linear feet of archival materials in the Margaret R. and Robert M. Freeman Library and Special Collections Center (supportingdoc1.pdf).

Enhancing Career Opportunities

The U.S. Census Bureau and demographic experts across the United States project that, by 2060, the nation will have a majority minority population.¹ Yet the staff at museums, libraries, and other cultural

¹ <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/07/06/its-official-the-us-is-becoming-a-minority-majority-nation>

heritage organizations who are responsible for shaping and caring for the nation's collections do not accurately reflect these changing demographics. Recent studies by the American Alliance of Museums and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation indicate that “non-Hispanic White staff continue to dominate the job categories most closely associated with the intellectual and educational mission of museums, including those of curators, conservators, educators, and leadership.”² For museums and their professional staff to reflect the communities they serve, steps need to be taken now to ensure that students of color consider museums as a pathway toward a rewarding career. Correcting this imbalance is not only a matter of equity. In 2016, Sanchita Balachandran reported in her talk at the American Institute for Conservation's 44th annual meeting that, “Decades of research in numerous fields have shown that more socially diverse groups are more creative, innovative, and productive than less diverse ones, but within conservation, the need for this diversity is all the more vital because of the kind of work we do. There is much at stake at not having a diverse group of conservators responsible for the preservation of the cultural heritage of humankind.”³ To help remedy this situation, VMFA seeks to develop, through paid training opportunities, a more inclusive pool of potential applicants for graduate study in art conservation, preservation, and library science.

Diversity and inclusivity are core to VMFA's values (supportingdoc2.pdf). This commitment is reflected in the museum's Board of Trustees (34% non-white and 51% female), led by Dr. Monroe Harris, the first African American to serve as chairman of a major American art museum, and in the [senior leadership](#) team (57% non-white, 43% female). Since 2015, 33% of the museum's acquisition funds have been used to acquire works by African American artists versus the national museum average of 2%. Ongoing efforts to build a world-class collection of works by African American artists are reflected in the December 2019 permanent installation of Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War* sculpture. This acquisition has resounded not only through the local community but also across the world with over 1,000 press mentions globally.

Efforts to recruit a diverse staff include hosting Virginia's first-ever Ability Job Fair, where more than 400 job seekers met with representatives from state agencies, higher education, and both corporate and non-profit sectors. All job opportunities are posted on the Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC), Ability Jobs, and HBCU Connect websites and emphasize work experience as opposed to academic degree requirements. To encourage interest in paid undergraduate internships in art conservation and education and to solicit diverse candidates, staff regularly attend career fairs at regional universities with a particular focus on historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). To date, VMFA has been the only museum represented at these career fairs.



VMFA at a career fair at Morgan State University

² *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museum Demographic Survey Report*, by Roger Schonfeld and Mariët Westermann published July 28, 2015.

³ <http://www.conservators-converse.org/2016/05/race-diversity-and-politics-in-conservation-our-21st-century-crisis-sanchita-balachandran/>

Preservation Training Initiative builds upon similar VMFA initiatives that have enabled students and emerging professionals to gain the hands-on training necessary to begin successful careers in preservation and art conservation while working on projects that generate significant scholarship relevant to multiple humanities fields. With support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, VMFA launched its first major curator-conservator pilot study in 2015 to research and treat the museum's African art collection, which includes more than 1,200 figures, masks, textiles, regalia and ritual objects from approximately 100 cultures throughout the continent. In addition to collaboration across museum departments, the project engaged scientific experts, art scholars, and global constituents in cross-disciplinary research, including radiographic imaging, materials analysis, and dialogues with source communities that substantially benefited multiple fields of study (supportingdoc3.pdf). Training opportunities were a major component of the project and included a paid fellowship for a recent art conservation program graduate and three paid internships for first- and second-year college students. VMFA staff track their interns' work to determine professional progress. Recent interns have secured positions with conservators in labs (University of Pennsylvania Museum), in their home state (Puerto Rico, addressing works damaged in natural disasters), or have focused their schooling on achieving the necessary courses to prepare themselves for graduate school.

Following the Mellon project's successful training component, VMFA worked to integrate internships and fellowships more fully into its conservation program. In 2017, the museum received an IMLS *Museums for America* grant to extend that pilot in career enhancement as a three-year project, which allowed the museum to expand its work with summer interns and postgraduate fellows with an emphasis on diversifying the conservation pipeline. Through these two conservation projects, VMFA has witnessed the impact that working with summer interns at the beginning of their professional careers can have on developing their skills and enhancing career prospects. The museum has learned not only what constitutes an effective internship but also what proactive recruitment efforts are needed to engage a diverse applicant pool.

Through the *Preservation Training Initiative* program, VMFA seeks to expand its training opportunities to include not only the conservation program, but also the library and archives. The Freeman Library and Special Collections Center has extensive experience processing, organizing, and preserving large collections that include a variety of media and making them widely accessible through digitization. Most recently, in 2019, VMFA Archivist Courtney Tkacz completed a full-scale digitization, preservation, and access project for the Louis Draper Archive with the support of an NEH *Implementation* grant. The Richmond-born photographer's entire 6,600-object archive, which represents more than 50,000 images and encompasses manuscript materials, contact sheets, prints, slides, negatives, cameras, lenses, filters, and exposure meters, was acquired in 2015. It documents Draper's career and the early years of the Kamoinge Workshop, a collective of African American photographers based in New York City, of which Draper was a founding member. A [portal of the archival material](#) was published online, providing readily searchable access to the primary source materials. Tkacz's findings led to the publication of [an article](#) in the Society of American Archivists' Museum Archives Section publication, *The Museum Archivist*. VMFA's combined strengths in conservation and archival management will enable the museum to provide undergraduate interns with a



Mellon interns in the galleries cleaning sculpture

broad introduction to a range of potential careers in preservation and collections management as well as specialized training for a library science or archival studies graduate student and postgraduate fellows in conservation.

Methodology and Work Plan

Funding for this three-year NEH *Preservation Training Initiative* will provide VMFA with nine paid pre-graduate summer internships (three per summer); and three postgraduate fellowships in art conservation and preservation (one per year). One additional nine-month graduate internship will be offered in the museum's archives. To extend professional development opportunities, VMFA will partner with the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM), the nation's largest state museum association, to offer two distinct preservation workshops, each presented twice at sites across the Commonwealth. The project has been endorsed by Debra Hess Norris, Unidel Henry Francis du Pont Chair of Art Conservation, University of Delaware, and Patrick C. Ravines, Director and Associate Professor, Patricia H. and Richard E. Garman Art Conservation Department, SUNY Buffalo State (Attachment 5).



2019 IMLS interns casting paper.

Summer Internships: The ideal time to attract new students to preservation-related fields, be it art conservation or archives processing and management, is early in their academic careers when they are able to take essential core courses in the sciences and humanities. Raising awareness of professional opportunities among students of all backgrounds, but particularly minority students, at this critical time will increase the diversity of students willing to consider a career in museums and the preservation field. Building upon the success of its previous efforts, VMFA proposes to provide 400 hours of hands-on training to nine first- or second-year undergraduate students through 10-week paid internships (three per year). Interns

will work in groups and rotate through areas of specialization, including conservation (paintings, paper, objects), and archival processing and preservation, to gain a broad understanding of collections care and preservation (supportingdoc4.pdf). Among the topics they will learn are handling objects safely; examining and documenting the condition of objects including the drafting of reports; and basic preservation techniques including remedial care and conservation treatments, proper storage, and housing. Interns will also be exposed to various aspects of the museum's operations to gain an understanding of how the well-being of the collection intersects with other departments.

During the course of their internships, *Preservation Training Initiative's* undergraduate summer interns will prepare a portfolio describing their specific projects and experiences. In addition, they will be expected to contribute regularly to the [museum's blog](#) and other social media outlets to share their work experiences with a wider audience. Interns will be introduced to the major professional organizations – American Institute for Conservation (AIC), American Alliance for Museums (AAM), Society of American Archivists (SAA), American Library Association (ALA), and Virginia Conservation Association (VCA), a regional group of collections care professionals – to further their knowledge in the field and to benefit from additional professional development and networking. As a final outcome at the end of the summer internships, each intern will present to an audience of curators, conservators, library and archival staff, and other museum staff and volunteers, the sequence, learnings, and results of their work. Previous experience has shown that public speaking is an important aspect of the internship, and

the preparation and presentation of projects with time for questions and answers has greatly benefited the students. Knowledge of a final presentation also serves to focus work and inspire confidence, providing essential skills for future careers.

Library/Archive Graduate Internship: VMFA proposes to offer one part-time (24 hours/week) 9-month, paid archival internship (August 2022-May 2023) to a graduate student in an MLS program (or equivalent). Training will be delivered by VMFA's Archivist and Paper Conservator and will include archival processing, description standards, and exposure to *ArchivesSpace* data entry and management. To complement the core archival knowledge gained through a graduate program, the intern will be introduced to the principles of conservation as recommended by the Society of American Archivists in its "Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies."⁴ [5] The intern will be trained in the best practices for the handling of paper objects, storage and preservation standards, media and condition assessments, and how to best identify damage to paper objects (supportingdoc5.pdf). A specific practical outcome, under the supervision of VMFA's Archivist, will be the intern's processing of a collection of over 550 sketches and related documents from the archives of the [Virginia artist Julien Binford](#). The intern will also be made aware of the challenges of accessibility in digital archival collections. Through [Art Beyond Sight](#), the intern will receive online training on the best practices for verbal description in order to create alternative text to address accessibility for users with visual impairments.

Finally, the intern will participate in the development and presentation of the *Preservation Training Initiative* continuing education workshop devoted to document preservation, housing, and archival management (below). Created jointly by the departments of Conservation, Imaging Resources, and Special Collections staff, this workshop will focus on best practices for the identification, handling, housing, and treatment of non-manuscript material found in archival collections.

Fellowships: Another essential component of the *Preservation Training Initiative* will be advanced training opportunities for three postgraduate art conservation fellows (one per year). The art conservation fellows will be recent master's graduates (or equivalent) looking to augment their level of practical skills and enhance their knowledge of preservation activities within a major museum. Fellows will be expected to undertake an in-depth, multifaceted research project in their respective conservation specialty that results in either a publication or presentation at a professional conference. Recent fellowship projects have included a technical study of a Kongo Nkisi, the analysis of red painted surfaces on central African masks, a study of traditional Zulu beadwork techniques, a technical study and treatment of Betty Blayton's *Consume #2*, and the analysis of an ancient Roman funerary bed made from bone. Assistant Chief Conservator Debbie Linn and the respective conservation department head will meet with the newly hired fellows to determine areas of interest based on VMFA's list of potential projects (supportingdoc6.pdf). Once a project is selected, fellows will draft a research plan articulating each step with specific outcomes with input from senior conservation staff, the appropriate curator, and Dr. Michael Taylor, Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Art and Education. In addition to being full participants in the research and treatment aspects of their projects, fellows will be expected to participate in all ongoing department activities including exhibition planning and development, examining works for proposed loans/acquisitions, and performing treatments to prepare objects for loan or display in the galleries. Fellows will also have an opportunity to rotate through all divisions of the museum's organizational structure in order to gain a better understanding of museum operations.

Working in tandem with museum staff (conservation, library, archives), fellows will also help develop and present the two distinct preservation workshops, each presented twice in coordination with the

⁴ <https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/graduate/gpas/curriculum>

Virginia Association of Museums (below) to gain experience in teaching and public speaking. Fellowships will include travel funds to other museums and archives in support of their research. All of these components will help fellows hone their leadership skills, build working relationships across departments, expand their professional networks, and develop a rich understanding of the complex workings of a museum.

Continuing Education Workshops: To broaden the fellows' experiences and benefit the museum field as a whole, VMFA proposes to partner with the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM)—the largest state museum service organization in the United States—to present two distinct preservation workshops, each presented twice, to museum professionals across the Commonwealth. This focus aligns not only with the needs of VAM members as illustrated by a recent survey where 80% of respondents expressed strong interest in specific object-based training courses for collections care and archives management, but also addresses a key staff training need identified in the [2004 Heritage Health Index report](#) and the more recent [2019 IMLS Protecting America's Collections](#) report. Such hands-on workshops will augment VAM's noted Circuit Rider program (mini-collections assessment) and its online collections training as well as its current offering of professional development workshops.

Building upon the insight and experience VAM gained through its 2009-IMLS funded *Connecting to Collections Implementation Grant*, VMFA has developed a curriculum that emphasizes practical, hands-on training (supportingdoc7.pdf). Participants will learn how to create a conservation plan, implement low-cost strategies for collections care and storage, improve storage conditions, and identify early signs of deterioration. The first workshop will focus on the care and preservation of material culture objects, and the second will focus on document preservation, housing, and archival management. All sessions will be taught by a VMFA senior level conservator or archivist and one fellow/MLS intern. Each day-long workshop will be presented at VMFA and then repeated at a partner museum in another part of the state (Tidewater or Shenandoah Valley). Due to the hands-on nature of the workshops, attendance for each will be capped at approximately 30 participants.

Project Timeline: Preservation Training Initiative will require thirty-six months (September 1, 2021-August 31, 2024). Each year of the *Preservation Training Initiative* project will begin in September in order to align with the academic year. Recruitment for the first fellow in Year One will begin in April 2021 as a pre-grant activity. The first fellow will be chosen by July 2021, begin their one-year appointment in September, and work through August 2022. The recruitment process for the second fellow will begin in April 2022 with the candidate chosen in July 2022. The second fellow will begin their work in September 2022 and continue working through August 2023, and the third fellow will work from September 2023-August 2024. Recruitment of summer interns will begin in November of each year with three finalists selected by March of the next. The 10-week summer internship program will begin in June of each year and run through August of the same year. Recruitment of the MLS intern will begin in June 2022 with an anticipated start date in late August 2022. This part-time internship will run through the academic year until May 2023. The MLS intern will participate in the planning and delivery of the second workshop.

In Year One, beginning December 2021, Linn and conservation staff, along with the conservation fellow will initiate planning with VAM staff to finalize the first preservation workshop curriculum, which will focus on the preservation of museum and material cultural objects. This workshop will be offered in the Spring and Summer of 2022. In December 2022 (Year Two), Linn, senior library and paper conservation staff along with the conservation fellow and the MLS intern will again work with VAM staff to finalize the curriculum for the second preservation workshop, which will focus on document preservation, housing, and archival management. The second workshop will be offered in the Spring and Summer of 2023. Each workshop will be presented at VMFA and then repeated at a museum partner in another part

of the state. Specific dates and locations will be selected during the planning process. VAM will be responsible for promotion and registration for the workshops among its members.

Participant Recruitment and Outreach

Through past projects, VMFA has developed strong relationships with faculty and career services staff at a number of nearby Virginia and Washington, D.C. universities, including historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) such as Howard University, Hampton University, Norfolk State University, and Morgan State University, as well as Virginia State University, Virginia Commonwealth University and University of Virginia. Kimberly Wilson, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Director for Human Resources, Volunteers, and Community Service, has led the museum's efforts to attract a more diverse applicant pool for all positions, while Chief Conservator and Senior Deputy Director for Conservation and Collections Stephen Bonadies, has implemented these strategies for conservation training opportunities. Over the past three years senior staff have engaged more than 300 students in individual conversations about potential careers in the museum field with a particular focus on conservation and collection care. These senior staff, along with Assistant Chief Conservator and Project Manager Debbie Linn and other VMFA conservators and library staff, will continue participating in area college and university career fairs, working to create durable partnerships between VMFA and arts and sciences faculty, and traveling to these institutions to discuss careers in conservation, preservation and library science, as well as the courses needed for admission to graduate programs. Based upon past experience, project staff expect to be able to attend between three and four career fairs for each intern class. Finally, VMFA's own education program, Museum Leaders in Training (M.LiT), may also provide a qualified pool of candidates. M.LiT is a free 12-week after school program for students in grades 8-12 who wish to explore careers in museums and the arts (supportingdoc8.pdf).

With NEH support for VMFA's *Preservation Training Initiative*, VMFA will recruit and hire the postgraduate conservation and master's level library/archives positions in the appropriate project year. The art conservation fellow candidates (Years One, Two, and Three) will be expected to have completed their graduate degree or equivalent study in art conservation, while the MLS intern (Year Two) will be a current master's candidate in Library Science. VMFA will recruit for these positions by posting notices in printed and online publications and listservs (including the Association of African American Museums and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History), contacting the directors of conservation and library science graduate programs across the country, and speaking with colleagues at other museums to identify potential applicants.

Evaluation

VMFA conservation and library staff are committed to assessing training outcomes for both fellows and interns. Fellows and interns will be evaluated through regular feedback from the project manager and senior conservation and library staff. This is accomplished by regular individual meetings (monthly for fellows, biweekly for interns) to check-in and confirm they are mastering the curriculum content being presented. As part of the fellows' research plans, specific milestones will be established in order to keep each project on track with an eye towards completion. Fellows and interns are also expected to discuss their work with curators, volunteers, and donors in both informal and formal settings. During these interactions, the fellow or intern's ability to share their knowledge and clearly explain a particular treatment method or archival processing will be observed and constructive feedback provided during the next regular individual meeting. At the close of each position, the fellows and interns will be required to submit an evaluation of their work and its impact. Fellows and interns will also be mentored and tracked for a five-year period post-fellowship/internship.

VMFA is currently working with a University of Richmond MBA student who is conducting an evaluation of the museum's intern/fellowship program as their capstone project. The analysis will result

in a set of recommendations and strategies to promote the inclusion of a more diverse population of individuals in these initiatives; as well as identify marketing, operational, and financial needs and opportunities to support this goal. The project will provide useful data and information for the museum to use in future decision-making regarding internship and fellowship strategy (supportingdoc9.pdf).

Similarly, participants in the VAM-sponsored continuing education workshops will be requested to complete evaluations of the workshops and their effectiveness. Previous workshops conducted through a VMFA/VAM partnership have provided (b) (4) for conservation staff on how to improve presentations as well as additional topics or activities in which participants wish to engage. VMFA will continue to evaluate upcoming workshops through similar evaluative tools (supportingdoc10.pdf).

Staff, faculty, and consultants

Preservation Training Initiative will involve a number of VMFA staff to guide the project (see *Research & Related Budget*).

Leadership staff:

Stephen Bonadies, Chief Conservator and Senior Deputy Director for Conservation and Collections, joined VMFA in 2009 after a 27-year career at the Cincinnati Art Museum where he served as Chief Conservator, Director of Museum Services, Deputy Director, and Interim Co-Director. In addition, he was involved with the design and launch of that museum's first minority youth internship program in 1990. Working with members of the curatorial and conservation staff, Bonadies will oversee the organization of the project, the recruitment and mentoring of the conservation fellows and interns, and ensure that the project timeline and anticipated outcomes are met.

Kimberly Wilson, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Director for Human Resource Services, Museum Operations and Volunteers, joined VMFA in 2015. She directs the museum's human resources department and provides VMFA with an organizational development perspective to drive overall organizational success. Wilson will work to develop recruitment strategies for both the fellows and interns and make connections with HBCU's and other universities to ensure a diverse and qualified candidate pool.

Conservation Staff:

Debbie Linn, Assistant Chief Conservator, will act as Project Manager. Prior to joining VMFA in September 2019, she worked at the Field Museum in Chicago where she gained extensive experience in project management, exhibitions, preventative conservation, and disaster recovery. Her additional experiences working on a wide variety of materials include the Chicago History Museum, the Newberry Library, and in private practice. She has held internships at the Library of Congress, Freer-Sackler Galleries, National Museum of American History, and Harvard University Library.

Sheila Payaqui, Senior Conservator and Head of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, joined the museum's conservation team in 2008 following previous appointments at the National Park Service (Harpers Ferry Center), Queensland Art Gallery (Brisbane), Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Ainslie Harrison, Associate Objects Conservator, joined VMFA in 2016. Before coming to VMFA, she was an objects conservator at the National Museum of American History and an archaeological conservator for sites in Panama and Turkey. She has held postgraduate fellowships at the Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute, the National Museum of the American Indian, the Penn Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and was a 2005 Fulbright Fellow to Italy.

Carol Sawyer, Margaret H. & William E. Massey Senior Conservator of Paintings, was VMFA's Head of Conservation and Conservator of Paintings from 1984-1990 and is currently Head of Painting Conservation. Prior to joining VMFA, she was a Sherman Fairchild Painting Conservation Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a Painting Conservation Intern at The Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum.

Samantha Sheesley, Conservator of Paper, was hired as VMFA's first dedicated Paper Conservator in 2015 following a seven-year career as Paper Conservator at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia. During that post, she was an affiliated fellow at the American Academy in Rome, conducting research and performing conservation treatments at the Vatican Museums.

All conservators will oversee fellows and interns for projects devoted to their areas of expertise and will be members of the workshop curricula planning team and potential workshop presenters.

Library and Archives Staff:

Lee Ceperich, Director of the Library and Special Collections for the Margaret R. and Robert M. Freeman Library at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, assumed her current role in 2010, and has been a librarian at VMFA since 2005. Prior to her arrival at VMFA, she held positions at The Library of Virginia and the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. She has served as a consultant for institutional special collections, as a reviewer for NEH grant programs, and as an adjunct faculty member for Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Courtney Tkacz, Archivist, has fulfilled various roles in the VMFA Library since 2003, becoming VMFA's first full-time Archivist in 2016. Prior to joining VMFA, she worked at Agecroft Hall in Richmond. She has a BA in Medieval and Renaissance Studies from Washington & Lee University and an MLIS in Public and Academic Librarianship from the University of Pittsburgh.

Project staff to be hired with grant funds include three postgraduate **fellows** in art conservation and preservation for one-year appointments in the conservation department. Fellows will be selected after a six-month recruitment period from a pool of candidates with an eye toward diversity and inclusive excellence. One nine-month graduate-level **intern in Library Science** will work with VMFA's Archivist and will be recruited through a national network of MLS programs and peer-to-peer networking by VMFA staff. Over the course of the grant period, VMFA will hire nine 10-week *Preservation Training Initiative* **summer interns** (3 per year). Positions will be open to first- and second-year college students considering careers in conservation or collections care. Summer interns will work in tandem with the fellows and museum staff and will be expected to report on their experiences through presentations, blogs, social media, etc.

Dissemination: The Project Manager will ensure that the *Preservation Training Initiative* project is shared with the general public, VMFA members, educators, and academic and professional audiences through a variety of channels. *Preservation Training Initiative* will be promoted on VMFA's website and through fellows' and interns' blog posts (see examples from the [2018 IMLS summer interns](#) and [2016 Mellon summer interns](#)). As a requirement of the position, VMFA fellows will either publish their research in a peer reviewed journal or present at a professional meeting of conservators. VMFA will promote the project and the related efforts to increase diversity to professional organizations with feature articles in publications such as *Museum* (American Alliance of Museums member magazine) as well as through museum channels, including *VMFA*, a thrice-yearly membership magazine that reaches 36,000+ members, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the Education department's Tumblr account. A press release will be sent to approximately 500 media outlets to include local, regional, and statewide publications, freelancers, and bloggers.

Budget and Resources: VMFA requests funding from NEH for *Preservation Training Initiative* in the amount of \$345,815 to support 1) the recruitment and hiring of three graduate fellows in art conservation; one paid master's-level intern in library science/archives; and three annual summer interns over the three project years; 2) travel associated with the fellows research projects; 3) housing support for the summer interns; and 4) supplies and associated staff travel for the continuing education workshops. VMFA will commit its own funds to support the work of its staff on this project. Quarterly reports will assess in-house progress and adherence to the project's timeline. A final report outlining each phase and tracking actual hours/expenses against estimated hours/expenses will be prepared.

Project Results: *Preservation Training Initiative* will expand training opportunities in preservation, conservation, and collections care for students and emerging professionals, encourage greater diversity within the field, and provide continuing education in the care of collections to museum staff across Virginia.

For college-aged summer interns, students of diverse backgrounds with an interest in careers in art history, science, library studies, and/or museums will be exposed to preservation and art conservation as professions earlier in their academic career. The anticipated result of their work will be an increased potential pool of applicants of color for graduate study, thereby helping to diversify the fields as a whole. Interns will be mentored (during and after their time at VMFA) by a member of the senior staff and will receive help preparing their portfolios for graduate school. At the end of the summer internships, each intern will present the sequence, learnings, and results of their work to an audience of curators, conservators, library and archival staff and other museum staff and volunteers. They will also be expected to discuss their work experience in online venues, including VMFA's blog, and to gain public speaking skills through both internal and external presentations on their work.

The MLS intern will gain hands-on experience processing an archival collection, building upon the theoretical framework taught in their master's program. That kind of practical knowledge can provide them with material to create presentations at professional conferences, increasing their national and regional networks, which in turn increases their chances of finding postgraduate employment in their field of choice. Participation in the VAM continuing education workshop will provide valuable training in creating content for allied professionals, as well as public speaking experience. In addition, the intern's continued exposure to cross-disciplinary and complementary fields in the museum could possibly open up other avenues of employment in the broader cultural heritage field.

In addition to hands-on training, fellows will gain valuable professional experience and tangible accomplishments for their CVs. With ongoing mentoring by museum conservation and library staff, *Preservation Training Initiative* fellows will develop leadership and project management skills, experience the workings of a large museum, and have the opportunity to network with museum colleagues across the state. VMFA staff will also benefit from exposure to new developments in conservation theory and practice and updates in library science, which are often pioneered in graduate programs. Fellows will be required to publish and/or present findings at appropriate professional conferences and expected to participate in teaching the VAM continuing education workshops.

The continuing education workshops in collections care and archival processing and management will address the expressed need of Virginia's museum professionals for additional training that will ultimately improve the level of collections care practiced in museums across the Commonwealth and potentially heighten interest in future funding of conservation projects at the participants' respective museums. The development of two complete workshops (each presented twice) for VAM is an outstanding resource for museum professionals across the state.

Through the *Preservation Training Initiative*, VMFA will contribute to the development of the next generation of art conservators, archivists, and collections care professionals. Working to attract candidates from underrepresented groups at key points in their education will increase diversity within the cultural preservation pipeline. The project will strengthen existing partnerships between VMFA and local HBCUs and Virginia universities, as well as relationships among Virginia's cultural institutions through the continuing education workshops developed with the Virginia Association of Museums. VMFA's partnership with VAM will extend training opportunities to allied organizations and museums across the Commonwealth that may have little to no access to preservation, conservation, or archival professionals. Disseminating information about the project and the participants' experiences will also generate greater public interest in the field of conservation and preservation, and the profession as a whole.