

**Delaware Department of State
Delaware Public Archives & Delaware Division of Libraries**

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STATE RECEIVES GRANT TO HELP PROTECT LOCAL HISTORY

Dover – The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has recently awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Delaware Public Archives and the Delaware Division of Libraries to aid in the establishment of a statewide Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Planning consortium.

The goal of the consortium is to protect Delaware's material heritage by sharing resources across the member organizations, which will include institutions as diverse as Winterthur Museum, the University of Delaware Disaster Research Center and the Greenwood Public Library.

"This grant will help greatly as we begin our statewide collaboration to protect Delaware's culture and history," said Secretary of State Harriet Smith Windsor, under whose purview both the Delaware Public Archives and the Delaware Division of Libraries operate.

The grant money will be used to bring in a nationally-recognized disaster preparedness consultant from the California Preservation Program, a national model, to help the group develop its operational plan. The expected result of the consortium's formation is that, in the event of a disaster, every records facility in the state would know the elements of its own plan, as well as the statewide plan, and would be ready to implement them for the safest and most successful response possible.

"This effort will allow us to help prevent the sorts of losses experienced in Louisiana and Mississippi during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita," said Joanne Mattern, Manager of Records Services at the Delaware Public Archives. "By pooling our resources statewide and developing a plan of operation in case of an emergency, large or small, we will be much better equipped to protect the many treasures that exist in Delaware institutions."

Delaware has approximately 75 small and three mid-size institutions, archives, libraries and museums that will benefit from the proposed consortium. The institutional collections include significant historical items like records for the oldest Methodist church in the nation, local historical records from many of Delaware's small towns, records on African Americans in the First State, and seafaring memorabilia.

Also included in the statewide collections are vital records maintained by a number of churches before the state government began keeping records; Civil War records from, and relating to, one of the nation's more famous war-time prisons, Fort Delaware; and large collections of pictures of life throughout the state and over many generations.

The smallest collection to be positively affected by the consortium is 3 cubic feet in size, and the largest contains 60,000 cubic feet of material.