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NEH grant will make museum collections more accessible



The new Enrich/Discover project will increase the accessibility of thousands of museum resources by ensuring their descriptions are clear and culturally accurate, thus making them easier to find by Five College students and faculty members.

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Known as Enrich/Discover, the project will increase the accessibility of thousands of museum resources by ensuring their descriptions are clear and culturally accurate, thus making them easier to find by Five College students and faculty members, as well as people worldwide. Led by Jessica Nicoll, director and chief curator of the Smith College Museum of Art; and Tricia Paik, director of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Enrich/Discover will be informed by five Cultural Advisory Councils composed of experts with academic, professional or lived knowledge of cultural heritage objects.

“This grant is coming at a critical juncture of our collections management project,” said Nicoll. “A study last year of people accessing our collections showed that we need to be more accurate, equitable and transparent in how we describe objects if we want people to make the best use of these resources. The Enrich/Discover project should help us accomplish that.”

As part of its three-year NEH funding, Enrich/Discover will hire a full-time cataloging librarian who will work with the museums and Cultural Advisory Councils to develop descriptions of museum objects that are both accurate and easy to discover. And by standardizing and aligning how museum collections are cataloged, researchers will be better able to locate artifacts across multiple collections.

Enrich/Discover will serve as a critical component to the museums’ ongoing effort to sustain and evolve a shared collections database and user portal for Amherst College’s Mead Museum, the Hampshire College Art Gallery, UMass Amherst’s University Museum of Contemporary Art, the Smith College Museum of Art, the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum and Historic Deerfield – an independent institution. Ultimately, hundreds of thousands of paintings, sculptures, manuscripts and other cultural artifacts will be more accessible online for anyone to enjoy and learn from.

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.

Based in Amherst, Massachusetts, Five Colleges, Incorporated is a nonprofit educational consortium created in 1965 to advance the extensive educational and cultural objectives of its member institutions — Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke and Smith colleges and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

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