

GETTING IT OUT OF  
THE ATTIC

A CREOLE PRESERVATION GUIDE

ST. AUGUSTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
1997-10



National Center for Preservation Technology and Training

*Technology Serving the Future of America's Heritage*

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Final Report Cover Sheet  
NCPTT 1996 Grant

**Institution/Organization:** St. Augustine Historical Society

**Project Title:** "Getting it out of the Attic", A Creole Preservation Guide

**Grant Number:** MT-2255-6-NC-035

**Summarize requested amendments (if any) to the original Grant Agreement or Work-Cost Budget and provide the approval date(s):**

Requested and received approval for a move of \$700 from Travel category to Supplies category on November 15, 1996.

**Briefly describe each of the final grant products:**

The final product is a report of the compilation of data received through two (2) separate surveys regarding the existence and preservation of Creole material culture collections. Various institutions, archives, libraries, universities, museums, etc. were targeted for the first survey. The second survey was addressed to the general national Creole public. This report also contains the intended outline of the written and electronic versions of a proposed guide (which is not a product of this project).

**Describe differences, if any, between the planned and actual work-costs:**

Costs for required auditing added

**Provide a brief final Work-Cost Budget breakdown:**

The final budget breakdown was as stipulated in the original Grant Agreement shown below:

Salaries	\$0.00
Fringe Benefits	0.00
Travel*	1,040.00
Equipment	2,700.00
Supplies*	1,900.00
Contractural	22,400.00
Other	2,000 00
TOTAL	\$30,040 00

\*A move of \$700 from TRAVEL to SUPPLIES

**Describe reasons for differences between the planned and actual work-costs:**

N/A

**Briefly describe how the work supported by this grant advance the field of historic preservation:**

The work of this grant identified private collections and institutional repositories of material culture objects and documents associated with the Louisiana Creole cultural group. The surveys conducted discovered the desire, by the Creole public, for information and skills that would provide for the preservation of artifacts and documents related to their heritage. The necessity for access to training, publications, reference materials and electronically acquired information on the identified subject was clearly determined. The work is a breakthrough in the field of preservation. Similar research regarding this cultural group has heretofore been non-existent in spite of the Creoles significance to America's heritage.

**If there will be a publication or video, state when copies will be forward to NCPTT: N/A**

**Provide any other date or information required by grant special condition or funded work.**

None

Signed: Janet Remy-Cobson  
Principal Investigator

Date: 9/19/97

Your Title: Principal Investigator

Your Organization: St. Augustine Historical Society

# “Getting it Out Of the Attic”

## A Creole Heritage Preservation Guide

### Final Report

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This project was made possible by a grant received from the National Park Service and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the St. Augustine Historical Society and not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Park Service or the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training.

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#### **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

This final project is a report of gathered data from two (2) separate surveys regarding the existence and preservation of Creole heritage collections. These surveys were created and disbursed to gain information for the subsequent creation of a Creole Heritage Preservation Guide. This illustrated, informative guide, will be presented in a practical, simplistic and user friendly format to serve as a useful aid in the preservation, curation and/or depositing of collectible Creole objects of patrimony.

A report of the information received from these surveys is included as a part of this narrative. Also included in this report is the intended outline of the written and electronic version of the proposed guide. A detail of the various steps used to complete this project is shown below:

## **PROJECT ACTIONS**

### **ADVERTISED ANNOUNCEMENT**

The St Augustine Historical Society has an established web page containing information regarding the history and creation of the society. This page receives an average of 300 to 400 visits per month. An announcement regarding the award of the NCPTT grant was placed on this page. E-mail messages regarding the announcement placement were forwarded on a regular basis to all interested visitors to this site.

The Bayou Talk, a 10 year old California based newspaper whose audience is the general Creole public located nationwide, provided articles covering the announcement of the NCPTT grant award and the proposed survey. The Bayou Talk has a subscriber base of over 5,000 people.

### **EQUIPMENT PURCHASES**

Investigation into equipment purchase initiated as a first step in this project. Equipment purchases were made during the month of October 1996. Prior to the actual purchases, bids were received on the major components in an effort to maintain budgeted amounts. All equipment was purchased and set up by the end of October.

### **SURVEY**

#### Formation of Survey Forms

A pre-determined set of individuals were contacted regarding their participation as part of the local advisory team. The confirmation of the team members was finalized during the month of October 1996.

An invitational letter requesting participation as a part of the Survey Review/Support team was composed and mailed to various individuals nationwide. After receipt of the acceptance letters, the listing of this team was finalized. See Attachment No 1

A meeting was held with the local advisory team in November 1996 to devise initial survey questions and concept. A report of that meeting is included as a part of this report as Attachment No. 2

This report was mailed to the Review/Support team members for analysis and comment. Return letters included a few additions and changes to the proposed survey. These adjustments were discussed with the local advisory team and incorporated into the final survey forms.

### Database Formation for Survey Results

A potential listing of archives, museums and historical organizations was compiled to be included as a part of this survey. Although a listing of the likely institutions was assembled to address a nationwide sampling, the largest ratio was located in Louisiana. The research involved analyzing over 500 different locations.

Additional names were gathered and subsequently added to the existing database of the general Creole public to be included as a part of the final survey. The resulting database numbered in excess of 1500 names.

The initial database was setup using MS Works due to its ease of use for the average computer user. There is also the ability to export the database to more powerful programs to enable the creation of detailed reports and graphs.

Individual database fields were designed for each survey to allow for various reporting methods. A cut-off date was established in order that data received by that date could be compiled.

### Survey I - Targeted Institutions

A survey form directed towards the targeted institutions that could be accessed and answered through the Internet was designed. The survey contained questions relative to the existence and maintenance of collections or exhibits associated with the Creole culture and history, policies involving accepting collections, policies regarding providing workshops and/or seminars; recommended publications regarding cataloging and preservation of cultural items; status of Internet access, and contact information of the institutions. Once the survey form was completed, an Internet search was performed for web sites to the targeted 500 plus institutions.

Each site was reviewed and an e-mail message was sent regarding the survey and directed the recipient to St Augustine Historical Society's web page, which contained a complete informational sheet and the actual survey.

The Internet survey form was set-up to allow for return of e-mail messages with each answer identified. Example of this concept is shown below:

Question submitted. What is your policy on accepting collections?

- Permanent placement only
- Temporary placement only
- Both methods
- None

*If answer was “permanent placement only”, the e-mail returned:*

COLLECTION POLICY = PERMANENT

This system allowed for correct and quick entry into the database.

### Survey II - Creole Public

A survey form directed at the general Creole public was composed of Yes or No questions that could be easily completed in a brief amount of time. A direct mailing of this survey was performed using the existing database on hand. The survey form was also carried as a part of the St. Augustine Historical Society’s web page with a link from the informational sheet mentioned above. E-mail messages were also sent to individuals on file who have Internet access.

All data was entered into the appropriate database and the results are shown below.

### Survey Results - Targeted Institutions:

1. **Creole Collections** - All institutions answering the survey indicating that they maintained collections and/or exhibits labeled as “Creole” are located in Louisiana. It should be noted, however, that over 20% of the answers received outside of the state indicated that they were either interested in obtaining Creole collections or requested additional information regarding Creole collections.
2. **Collection Policies** - Of those institutions reporting a collection policy, over 73% indicated that their policy was on a permanent basis only. A small portion (13%) of the units surveyed indicated that both permanent and temporary policies were used.
3. **Workshops and/or Seminars:** None of the institutions responding to the survey indicated that they provided workshops and/or seminars on a regular basis. It should be noted however, that a small portion of these units did state that they would consider the idea. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the respondents did indicate that workshops were held on an irregular or as-requested basis. See Chart No. 1

- 4 **Recommended Publications on Preservation Methods.** The following is a listing of the most named publications recommended by the surveyed institutions for the general public:

“Introduction to the Usmarc Format for Archival and Manuscripts Control”, Marion Matters, SAA

“Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts”, Fredric M Miller, SAA  
(2)

“Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts”, F. Gerald Ham/ SAA

“Society of American Archivists Manual”

“Preservation Series”, published by the Historical New Orleans

“Keeping archives”, 2nd edition (as a good overall guide) ed Judith Ellis

“Registration Methods for the Small Museum”, Dan Reibel

5. **Recommended publications on collection methods.** The following is a listing of the most named publications recommended by the surveyed institutions for the general public:

“Preserving Archives and Manuscripts”, Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler/ SAA (2)

“Northeast Document Conservation Center Technical Leaflets”

“The Care of Antiques and Historical Collections”, Bruce MacLeish

“Society of American Archivists Manual”

“Preserving Library Materials”, Swartzburg, Susan G.

“Collection, Use and Care of Historical Photographs”, Weinstein, Robert A.

6. **Internet access of cataloging information:** Of the institutions surveyed, over 62% stated that their catalog could be accessed through the Internet. This number increases when including only the major universities and archives. Of the

remaining 38%, at least one-third stated that they were in the process of getting their catalog online or had future plans to do so.

### Survey Results the Creole Public

1. **Collection owners:** Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the surveyed individuals stated that they had items considered to be artifacts relating to the Creole culture and history. This is based upon the reply regarding having items such as photographs, historical documentation, books, furniture, tools, needlework, folkcrafts, etc. Of this number, only 17% stated that these items were either organized for storage purposes or were on display. See Chart No. 2
2. **Collection Donations or Loans:** In answer to the question on whether the individual was willing to donate items to an institution which could catalog, preserve and display their collections, 17% answered yes. Over one-third of the individuals surveyed stated they would be willing to loan items for display. An even larger number of 68% stated that they would be willing to loan paper artifacts (copies of prints, photos, and historical documents) for the purpose of scanning the information for public research and access. See Chart No. 3
3. **Learning to Preserve and inventory collections:** Over 85% of the surveyed individuals indicated that they would like to learn ways to protect their collections. This same number stated that they did not have access to information regarding general preservation methods and would be willing to attend a workshop that would address the subject. See Charts No. 4 and No. 5
4. **Types of help needed:** Chart No. 6 gives a breakdown of the percentages regarding various types of assistance this group desires through local archives, museums, libraries, etc. The largest percentage (85%) of information requested addressed the existence and listings of reference materials on Creole history and culture.
5. **Maintaining collection ownership:** Over 88% stated that they had not made arrangements for future ownership of their collection as a part of a will or similar type document.

## **PRESERVATION GUIDE OUTLINES**

### **THE WRITTEN GUIDE**

The following is a proposed outline for a printed Creole Preservation Guide. The contents of this outline is based upon research involving various institutions housing Creole related collections as well as the survey results discussed above.

#### **I. TIP’S FOR HANDLING AND PRESERVING YOUR CULTURE**

This will be the largest section of the Guide and will be divided into two parts. The first part will be devoted toward preserving material items. The second part will be concerned with methods to use to document and preserve family memories.

Tips for material preservation will cover the basic care and handling of documents, books, photographs, memorabilia, sound recordings, and other tangible items. These tips are to be gathered from various recommended reference publications obtained through the initial survey of the targeted institutions. This information will be presented in an illustrated and informative manner in a practical, simplistic and user friendly format.

The second part of this section will be directed towards methods used to preserve those non-tangible items - the remembrances, biographies, and oral histories. Examples of helpful aides in documenting these details will be included.

#### **II. WHERE CAN I FIND COLLECTIONS ON THE CREOLE CULTURE AND HISTORY?**

This section will contain reports of institutions that house information regarding Creole history and culture. This information will consist of a brief overview of the collection contents (provided by the institution) as well as contact information, personnel, geographical location, and operating hours.

#### **III. WHERE CAN I DONATE OR LOAN ITEMS FROM MY COLLECTION?**

This section will contain information on institutions that have a permanent and/or temporary placement policy regarding obtaining collections. This information will contain contact information, personnel, geographical location, and operating hours.

**IV. WORKSHOPS AND/SEMINARS**

This section will contain information regarding workshops and/or seminars, contact personnel, location and operating hours.

**V GUIDE TO DONATING FAMILY COLLECTIBLES**

This section will suggest matters for consideration when pondering the donation of family collectibles and documents. A checklist for the potential donor will be included which will contain details to consider as well as recommended points of contact

**VI. EXAMPLES OF HISTORICALLY VALUABLE FAMILY DOCUMENTS.**

A listing of the types of materials of interest to researchers will be included in this section. This list will cover such items as letters, diaries, professional papers, genealogical information, brochures and flyers, photographs, etc.

**VII. SUGGESTED REFERENCE MATERIALS REGARDING CREOLE HISTORY AND CULTURE**

A listing of reference materials compiled by the St. Augustine Historical Society will be contained in this section Any reservations regarding the contents or accuracy of the suggested materials will also be a part of this listing

**VIII. SUGGESTED REFERENCE MATERIALS REGARDING PRESERVATION METHODS**

The listing of references received through the survey of targeted institutions will be submitted for approval to a selected advisory board The resulting recommended listing will be contained in this Section

## WORLD WIDE WEB PAGE – OUTLINE

The proposed outline for the web page portion of the Creole Preservation Guide is essentially the same as the written guide with additional sections included due to the options available through multimedia and electronic methods. The following is an initial outline for this site which provides for a “living document” with the option for changes enhancements:

### I. TIPS FOR HANDLING AND PRESERVING YOUR CULTURE

*Same as for Written Guide with the following additions:*

...Links to numerous online sources containing a wide range of methods as well as documented examples.

...A feedback section that will allow users to submit questions, suggestions and problems in a conference type arrangement which will enable interaction between the public and proven professionals.

...A repository set-up to accept various non-tangible items the user wants to share. These items will include, but not be limited to, biographies, oral histories, genealogy data, and links to personal web pages.

### II. WHERE CAN I FIND COLLECTIONS ON THE CREOLE CULTURE AND HISTORY?

*Same as for Written Guide with the following additions:*

...Links to the identified online sources.

...An update of these links.

### III. WHERE CAN I DONATE OR LOAN ITEMS FROM MY COLLECTION?

*Same as for Written Guide with the following additions*

...Links to the identified online sources.

...An update of these links.

...A current listing of items available and contact information of the owners (only those owners giving permission for release of this data will be included)

**IV. WORKSHOPS AND /SEMINARS**

*Same as for Written Guide with the following additions:*

...Current information can be updated on an as needed basis allowing for a truly “living document”

...Feedback from participating institutions offering specialized workshops and/or seminars will be housed here.

**V. GUIDE TO DONATING FAMILY COLLECTIBLES**

*Same as for Written Guide with the following addition*

...Links to online sources

**VI. EXAMPLES OF HISTORICALLY VALUABLE FAMILY DOCUMENTS**

*Same as for Written Guide with the following additions:*

...Links to personal web pages that contain actual copies of items such as letters, diaries, professional papers, genealogical information, brochures, etc.

**VII. SUGGESTED REFERENCE MATERIALS REGARDING CREOLE HISTORY AND CULTURE**

*Same as for Written Guide with the following additions:*

...Links to existing sources on the Internet

...Links from recommended listing to information regarding locations housing these materials

**GRANT RESULTS**

The work supported by this grant has allowed the following advancements in the field of historic preservation:

1. Identified institutions housing Creole cultural collections
2. Identified the collection policies of institutions housing Creole cultural items

3. Identified private owners of Creole cultural collections who are willing to grant access to these items for exhibition and cataloging purposes.
4. Identified a lack of, and access to, reference materials regarding the Creole history and culture by the Creole public.
5. Identified a genuine need for a Guide detailing preservation methods of tangible and non-tangible items associated with Creole culture.

### Conclusions/Recommendations

Compilation of this data indicates a very real need regarding preserving not only material items from the Creole history but also protecting and promoting this culture. The two surveys developed through the support of this NCPTT grant has produced a large assortment of data that would support future projects. A recommend listing is as follows.

1. **Creole Heritage Preservation Guide**  
Creation and subsequent distribution of the Creole Heritage Preservation Guide using the outline submitted as a portion of this final project. The Guide once created, would be distributed in written and computerized formats. The computerized format would allow for dissemination of the guide through the Internet as well as through disk copy.
2. **Workshops on Imaging**  
The presentation of workshops introducing the methods and results of scanning images to disks. These workshops would allow the general public to gain knowledge of this concept while further identifying sources of collectible items. The ability of the general public to experience this concept would aid in the encouragement of others to participate, which in turn would contribute to a potential extensive library of images.
3. **Digitized Exhibit**  
The most effective mechanism available today to store and transport large amounts of information is the CD. This mechanism would allow for the creation of a multimedia exhibit featuring selected items loaned for scanning by owners of Creole related collections. This project would address many issues regarding preservation of these items as well as the Creole culture. A few of the issues addressed would be the introduction of the process to the general public; the actual preservation of these items by allowing access without exposure to the original; the ability to share these collections to facilitate research, teaching and learning;

and the ability to use new computer tools and innovative methods to present obscured items in an enhanced and more visible manner.

#### 4. Online archival collections

An online archival collection featuring scanned items donated from the identified owners of Creole heritage related collections. This project would enhance and aid the preservation of many items that are often fragile and require care in handling. It would benefit both the researcher and the general public by providing digitized versions of these collections online.

#### 5. Workshops on Preservation Methods

Workshops on preservation methods and materials actually showing the items written about in the Guide. Although the written and computerized guide would provide the ways and terms of preservation, an actual physical presentation would serve to amplify and reinforce this information.

CREOLE PRESERVATION GUIDE  
St. Augustine Historical Society  
NATIONAL REVIEW/SUPPORT SURVEY TEAM  
NCPTT Grant

Ms. Maryann Aaron-Rodriguez, Director of Finance  
Walt Disney Studio California  
Creole representative

Ms. Barbara L. Allen  
Assistant Professor of Architectural History  
USL  
Professional representative

Dr. James A. Caillier  
President, University of Louisiana System  
Professional representative

Mr. Alfred E. Lemmon  
Curator of Manuscripts  
Historic New Orleans Collection  
Professional representative

Mr. Theresa Conant Demery  
Teacher Naples Florida  
Creole representative

Mr. Pervis J. Bathazar  
Designer Chicago, IL  
Creole representative

Ms Kinga Perzynska  
Archivist  
Catholic Archives of Texas  
Professional representative

CREOLE PRESERVATION GUIDE  
St Augustine Historical Society  
November 22, 1996 Meeting

ATTENDING: Janet Colson, Susan Dollar, Pete Gregory, John Hammer, Theresa Morgan, Rick Seal, Alicia Trissler & Mary Linn Wernet

A meeting was held with the local advisory team associated with the Creole Preservation Guide grant supported by the National Center for Preservation Protection & Training. This was the initial meeting of the group whose purpose is to develop the groundwork for a survey form that would provide information for the proposed guide.

Opening remarks by Ms. Janet Colson stated the overall concept and mechanics that would be used. The main issues are:

1. Two surveys would be prepared and submitted addressed at identifying owners and collectors of traditional properties memorabilia, and documentation associated with the Creole culture and history. One survey is to be addressed to various institutions (museums, libraries, universities, archives, and historical organizations) nationwide. The second survey would be directed to the general Creole public identified as collectors, persons involved in collecting, and persons interested in the preservation of the culture through collecting.
2. Both surveys should be as concise as possible, but, allowing for as much data gathering as possible.
3. Invitation to participate would be mainly made electronically to the various institutions (the majority of which are online) and via mail and news articles to the general Creole public.
4. The survey results would be made available as a part of the present web page maintained by the St. Augustine Historical Society as Phase II of the present grant.

It was stated that a definition of Creole is necessary in identifying the subject of the survey questions. The definition used as a part of the opening statement of the survey was unanimously approved.

A general discussion was held regarding the need for the disbursement of information regarding the services and information available concerned with the preservation of collections. The survey to the institutions and the published results would serve as a way of distributing this information.

CREOLE PRESERVATION GUIDE  
St. Augustine Historical Society  
November 22, 1996 Meeting

The involvement of the general Creole public in determining their needs regarding preservation information would be a means of identifying those individuals who would most benefit from this guide.

Also discussed was the need for institutions to be aware of the need for a source that the general Creole public could reference regarding their culture. The survey questions should be written in a manner that would invite this discussion among this targeted group.

It was also pointed out that the survey to the general Creole public should consider that the average person is probably not aware of the information regarding preservation methods that is available at these institutions. This survey should also indicate the genuine effort of the Society to furnish a guide towards provide information that would assist in preserving personal collections and not as a source of obtaining their property.

It was decided that references regarding the “cataloging” of collections would be addressed through the term “inventory” as a means for further clarification. The development of an inventory form that would assist in cataloging a personal collection was considered. The existence of the form would be a part of the survey. This would allow for additional feedback from those persons having personal collections.

REPORT END

# **Creole Preservation Guide**

## **Final Report**

*Chart No. 1 - Workshops and/or Seminars Provided*

*Chart No. 2 - Collections of the Creole Public*

*Chart No. 3 - Sharing the Culture*

*Chart No. 4 - Workshops Provided vs. Needed*

*Chart No. 5 - Access to Reference Materials?*

*Chart No. 6 - Types of Help Requested*

**National Center for Preservation Technology & Training**  
**1996 Grant No. MT-2255-6-NC-035**

# Chart 1

## Workshops and/or Seminars Provided

*Surveyed institution's policies regarding frequency of providing workshops and/or seminars on collection and cataloging procedures.*

Targeted institutions included university archives, libraries, historical groups and museums

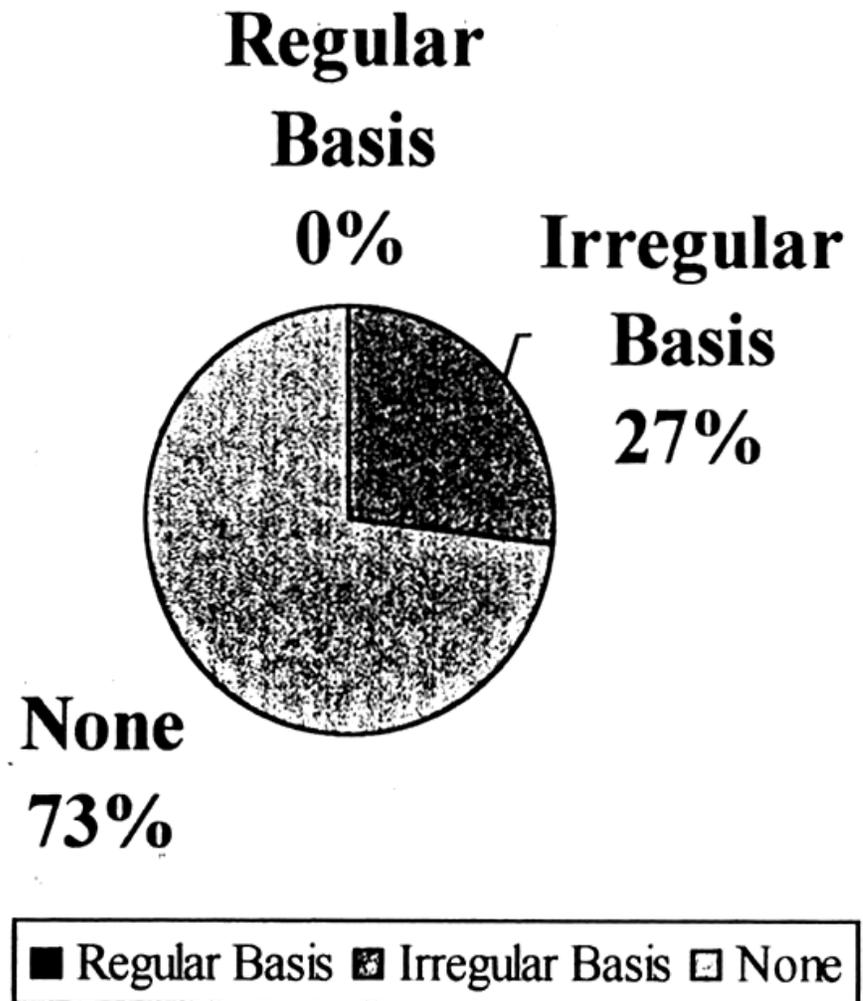


Chart No. 2.

# Collections of the Creole Public

	Yes	No
<b>Have collection</b>	78%	22%
<b>Collection organized</b>	17%	83%
<b>Collection on display</b>	17%	83%

## Chart No. 3.

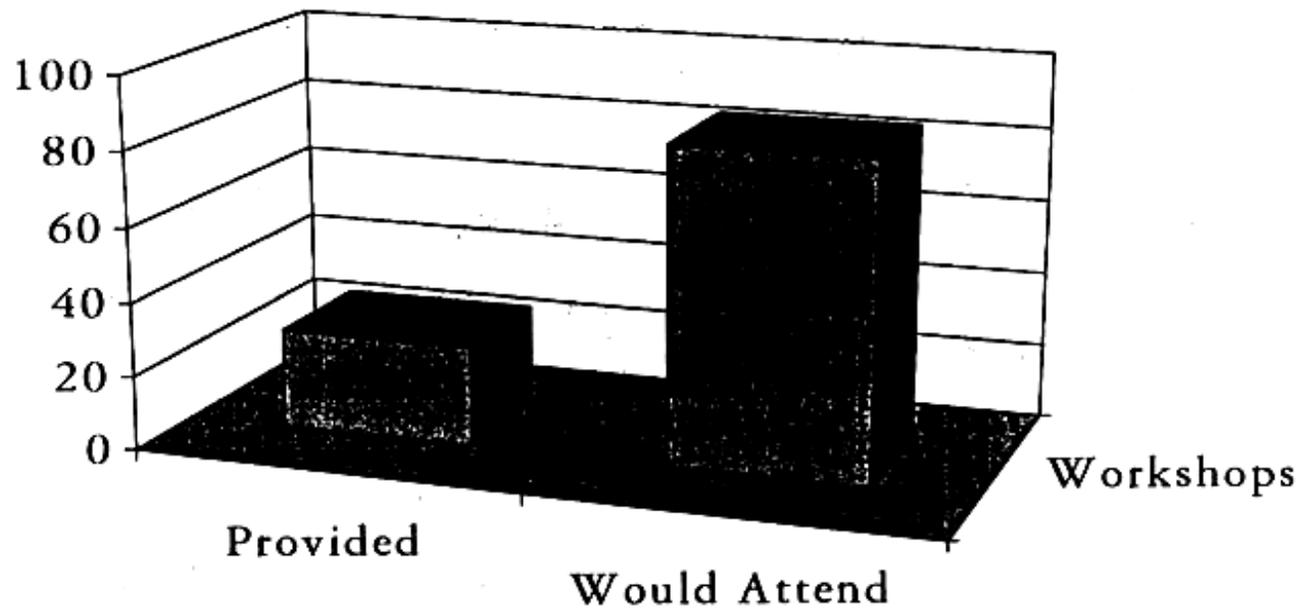
# Sharing the Culture

	Yes	No.
<b>Willing to Donate?</b>	17%	83%
<b>Willing to Loan collection items?</b>	32%	68%
<b>Willing to Loan items for scan?</b>	68%	32%

## Chart No. 4

# Workshops

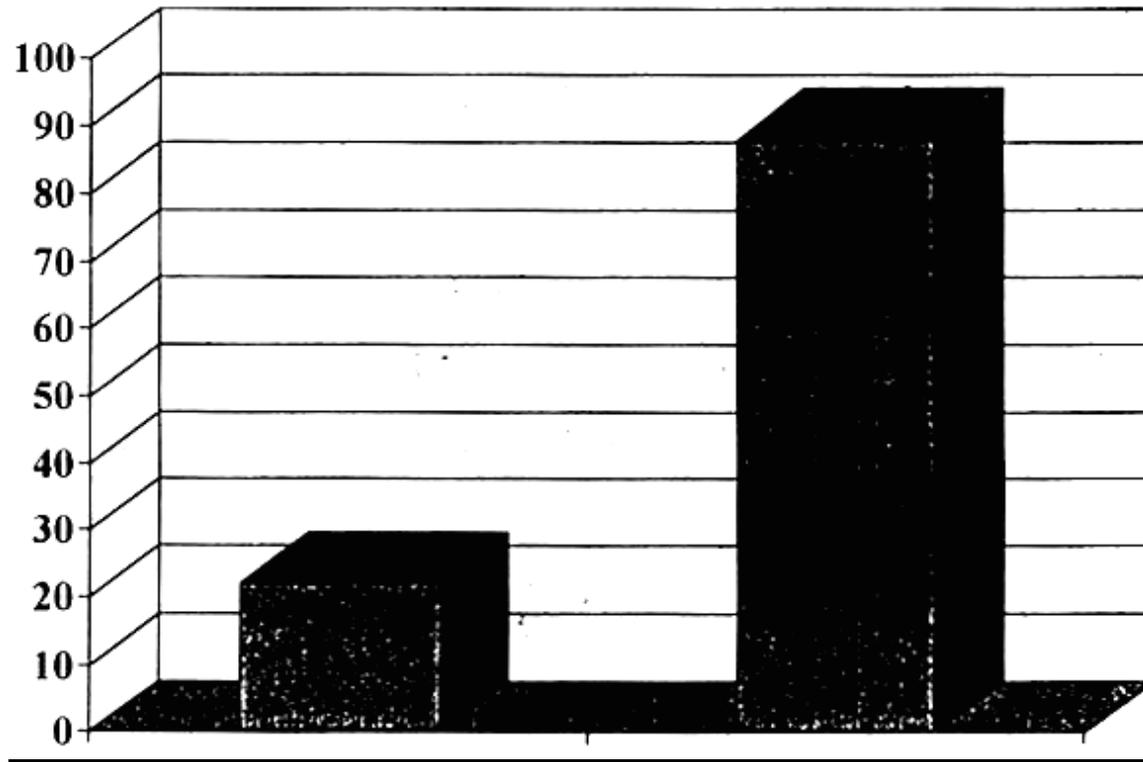
*Provided vs. Needed Ratio*



1996 NCPTT Grant No: MT-2255-6-NC-035

## Chart No. 5

# Do you have access to reference materials on Creole history & culture?

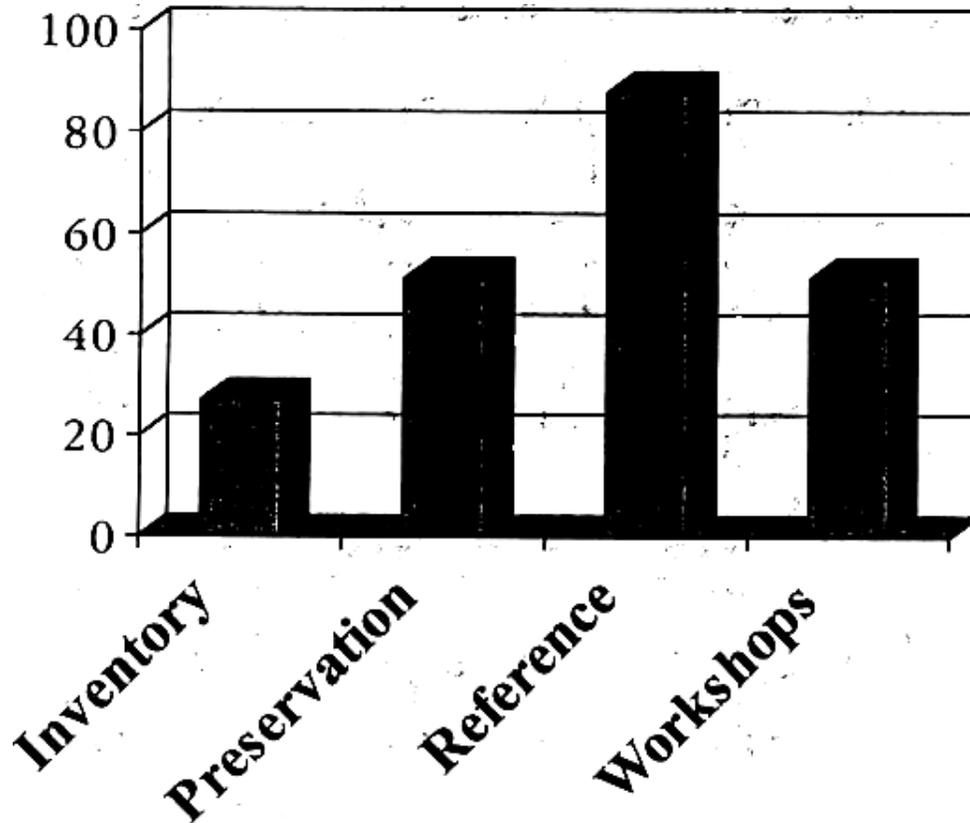


**Chart based  
on nationwide  
responses  
received from  
Creole public**

## Chart No. 6

# Type of Help Requested by Creole Public

*QUESTION: What type of help would you like your local archive, museum or library, to provide?*



**INVENTORY** - Methods used to set-up and maintain collections.

**PRESERVATION** - Methods that can be used in the home to help preserve collectible items

**REFERENCE** - Listings and access to information regarding Creole history and culture.

**WORKSHOPS** - Sessions that would teach ways to protect collectible items.