**Conservation Assessment Program
Spotlight Article**

**Erie Art Museum
Erie, Pennsylvania**

For more than 100 years the Erie Art Museum in Pennsylvania has been exhibiting the works of local and national artists. The collections include artworks from ancient times to the present, from the United States and around the world. Steady growth in both the collections and buildings prompted the Museum to plan a major building expansion and renovation in 2009 and 2010. As part of this planning, the Museum participated in CAP.

Conservator Ann Shaftel from Halifax, Canada, conducted the Museum’s assessment in November 2008. Although collections management practices at the museum were already established, Ms. Shaftel made many timely recommendations. To increase the effectiveness of the monitoring of temperature and humidity, Ms. Shaftel recommended the purchase of new data loggers for the exhibition galleries and collections storage, which the Museum’s staff implemented. Another recommendation was for steel shelves to be constructed for an important photography collection. The Museum’s registrar, Vance Lupher, was able to carry out the recommendation and simultaneously save funds by constructing the required shelving himself.

The Erie Art Museum staff has been creative in identifying cost effective ways to complete collections care projects. For archival rehousing and other collections management projects, Mr. Lupher is assisted by a work-study student from Gannon University, located a few blocks from the Museum. He has also found a qualified assistant from Senior Aides, a federally funded program that provides employment opportunities up to 20 hours per week for eligible senior citizens.

The museum’s building project improves the preservation of and access to its collection. It creates a new, visitor-friendly entrance, connects the Museum’s five historical buildings into a single complex, and dramatically increases exhibition gallery space, including galleries for both changing exhibitions and collections. The CAP survey kept collections issues in the minds of staff as the project advanced. For example, to consider the needs of oversized art storage and incoming traveling exhibits, the plans were revised to include a new first floor collections storage facility convenient to the loading dock rather than having it on the third floor which would have required an elevator.

Mr. Lupher said, “I take the CAP survey very seriously, and we use it as a tool to guide improvements in our collections storage and handling as we move forward into the new facilities.” (CAP*abilities*, Spring 2010, Vol. 16 Issue 1)