PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Section 106 Review of Worcester Polytechnic Institute’s Project to Preserve Its Humanities Collections

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) has awarded the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) a grant to preserve its humanities collections by improving the environmental conditions under which they are accessed and stored. NEH is an independent grant-making agency of the United States government dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities. This public notice is issued as part of NEH’s responsibilities under 36 C.F.R. Part 800, the regulations which implement Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 470. NEH, as a funding agency, is required by regulation to identify and assess the effects of any proposed actions on historic properties. If any proposed action will have an adverse effect on historic resources, NEH works with the appropriate parties to seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects. Additionally, the Section 106 regulations require NEH to consider the views of the public on preservation issues when making final decisions that affect historic properties.

WPI proposes to improve the environmental conditions for the special collections wing of the George C. Gordon Library, which houses WPI’s humanities collections related to the history of industry and technical education in the United States. The wing affected includes the Archives, Special Collections, Gladwin Gallery, Digital Reformatting Center, Preservation unit, and four storage areas on the south end of the building’s ground floor. The work will include the following activities:

- Isolating the special collections wing in a contiguous space by installing a curtain wall and new door;
- Enhancing existing fire protection systems;
- Installing a separate environmental control system;
- Installing a new air vent in an exterior wall;
- Updating ductwork.

The WPI’s George C. Gordon Library is located at 100 Institute Road in Worcester, Massachusetts. The building, dedicated in 1967, realized the WPI’s goal to consolidate library services in a single, modern building. The building was designed by the architectural firm O. E. Naults & Son, and construction began in 1965. The library was completed during the 1966–67 academic year and was dedicated on October 28, 1967. The library is a four-story, concrete and steel beam building with exterior brick and limestone cladding. Founded in 1865, the WPI campus is a historical area, and the library building is near the Washburn Shops, a campus structure built in 1868 that received a historic preservation award from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) in 2012.

WPI has determined that this project will not adversely affect the building, its surroundings, or the campus. A description of the project sent to MHC, which serves as the State Historic Preservation Office for Massachusetts, was reviewed on November 23, 2011. At that time, MHC determined that the project will have “no adverse effect” on significant historical or archaeological properties.

As required by Section 106, NEH is providing the public with information about this project, as well as an opportunity to comment on any knowledge of, or concerns with, historic properties in the proposed project area, and issues relating to the project’s potential effects on historic properties. The deadline for submitting comments is October 10, 2013. Comments may be submitted to the NEH by e-mail at preservation@neh.gov or by regular mail to: National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Preservation and Access, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Room 411, Washington, DC 20506.
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
George C. Gordon Library, 100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609-2280

Area of Potential Effect