

**California Connecting to Collections Project
Final Report
15 August 09
(for October 08 – August 09)**

Project purpose

The project had four objectives:

- 1. Host two, full-day, in-person regional meetings for representatives of regional and statewide organizations of heritage professionals.** Two meetings, one each in the northern and southern parts of the State with the content and process the same for both, will be needed because of the size and diversity of California.
- 2. Draft a plan for a statewide preservation program.** The draft plan will consist of two parts: a shared vision for a program to assist California heritage organizations implement actions to achieve the four recommendations of the HHI, and a development plan, including organizational infrastructure and funding, to provide the education, training and assistance needed by heritage institutions to achieve these goals. Discussions at the regional meetings will result in identification of the basic elements of the statewide preservation plan.
- 3. Conduct a series of feedback sessions at annual meetings of California heritage professionals on the draft plan.** Members of the PWG will attend annual meetings to facilitate discussion, receive feedback, and compile responses from members of the organizations.
- 4. Assess the feasibility of the draft plan by soliciting feedback from potential funders and supporters.** Comments from the feedback sessions will contribute to the Project evaluation. A frank assessment of the feasibility of the funding plan from the perspectives of the administrations of the Project partners will form another element of the evaluation. Perspectives will be solicited from California funding organizations whose support could be integral to plan implementation.

Activities carried out

The Project had five partners (California Association of Museums, California Preservation Program, California State Library, California State Parks, and Historic Monterey) selected to capture multiple perspectives of statewide and regional agencies to inform the statewide preservation planning process. Each partner provided one or two staff members to serve on a Project Work Group (PWG).

The PWG met in person three times for all-day meetings and by conference call twice to pursue the Project objectives. The PWG held regional meetings October 2, 2008 at the Huntington Library in Pasadena and October 7, 2008 at the San Jose Museum of Art. Twenty eight statewide heritage organizations participated in the meetings,

a total of approximately 60 participants. We are delighted to report that Christine Henry attended the October 2nd meeting to represent IMLS.

A no-cost extension was requested to complete feedback on the draft statewide plan and to continue work on a video targeted to heritage community.

Outputs of the project

Members of the PWG very quickly developed a shared vision for the Project process and demonstrated an extraordinary willingness to work collaboratively. This powerful commitment to collaboration and participation informed the agenda for the PWG meetings and led to the development of an agenda, a discussion process, and a staffing plan for two regional meetings.

A web page was created for Project documents and online registration for the regional meetings (<http://www.calmuseums.org/c2c.html>).

After meeting invitations went out, follow up was required to get commitments from organizations to participate in the process, but once the Project was explained, usually through a phone call, interest and enthusiasm were high. At the regional meetings, the PWG noted the remarkable alignment of comments, advice, and proposed priorities. The need for education and training as well as statewide promotion of care of collections trumped all other priorities.

With their colleagues' advice in hand, following the regional meetings the PWG drafted a statewide plan to reflect expressed priorities. The plan, now in its 4th draft, received editorial comments from the participants at the regional meetings as well as from heritage professionals who were not able to attend (http://www.calmuseums.org/C2C_DRAFT_plan_2009.06.22.pdf).

Additional feedback on the statewide plan was received from organizations that had their annual meetings in February – May 09, as well as feedback on a promotional video for preservation of California's heritage. The second draft version of the video can be viewed at <http://sunsite3.berkeley.edu/barclay/barclayDVD.mp4>.

An assessment of the feasibility of the statewide plan was undertaken by several of the PWG members' institutions, concluding that a combination of institutional support and external funding could lead to a viable statewide program. The draft then was reviewed by the Irvine and Getty Foundations for their interest and possible funding. While the foundations generally are not funding new initiatives at this time, the Getty in particular expressed an interest in the plan's goal to "develop a culture of preservation management" in the heritage community, and invited further communication.

Outcomes of the project

Perhaps the most important outcome of the project was an IMLS-engineered (and supported) discovery by representatives of California organizations of heritage professionals that working together to plan preservation services for the whole heritage community--not just museums, libraries/archives, and historical societies, each working within its own group--makes sense and could address more effectively the State's challenges to preserving its cultural heritage. We discovered we have many preservation-related problems in common and that our individual efforts could be scaled up cost effectively to help address the needs of the larger heritage community.

The project participants discovered that working across types of heritage organizations is enriching and enabling. By creating a larger pool of heritage professionals from which to draw time and talent, participants met new colleagues with valuable talents and insights, dramatically increasing our collective capability to make a difference to heritage preservation in California.

The California heritage community made clear its need for and interest in a statewide preservation program tightly focused on promotion of care of California's collections and preservation education for heritage professionals. The wisdom and maturity of this advice positions the State to align resources to maximize the impact of a statewide program.

The Project's regional meetings revealed that California already has several elements of an infrastructure with which to deliver preservation services statewide, but not in any one organization or institution:

- Statewide preservation training services for some sectors of the heritage community already are in place at a modest level; the California Preservation Program serves the library and archives community, and the Balboa Art Conservation Center serves the museum community. These organizations, as well as others, could be reviewed for their potential to reach larger percentages of the cultural heritage communities.
- California has many statewide organizations representing different segments of the community of heritage organizations that maintain ongoing communication with members and undertake educational programming on their behalf: the California Association of Museums, the California Library Association, the California Association of Research Libraries, the Society of California Archivists, the California Council for the Promotion of History, the California Preservation Foundation, and California State Parks. All of these organizations could be enlisted to help identify the preservation needs of their members and organize education, training, and information dissemination.
- California is fortunate to have world-class institutions that research and teach cultural heritage preservation principles and practices. Large institutions in major metropolitan areas, the Getty Conservation Institute, and University of California, for example, have deep expertise that can be tapped for teaching assignments and assistance in emergencies involving the collections.

The Project created its own successor, a statewide preservation program steering committee made up of representatives from the communities served. The five heritage organizations that facilitated the Project (California Association of Museums, California Preservation Program, California State Library, California State Parks, and Historic Monterey) volunteered to serve as a start-up team to pursue funding, develop an organizational structure for a statewide heritage preservation program, and initiate its activities. After the start-up phase, a call will be made to organizations in the heritage community to create a steering committee to succeed the start-up team. The steering committee is charged with:

- continuously assessing the preservation needs and progress of the heritage community
- developing and evaluating the services of the program
- raising funds to underwrite the services
- communicating about the services to members of the community
- contracting with consultants and service providers to deliver preservation services
- contracting with a fiscal agent to provide financial services

Additional comments about a statewide program (from the statewide plan)

The overarching goal and desired outcome of a California heritage preservation program is creation of a culture of preservation management, where institutional resources are committed to preservation and the sustainability of the program is ensured by support from institutional managers addressing their preservation needs. Preservation management will become another new management skill, much as online communication technologies and institutional marketing recently have been added to current management skill sets.

To ensure progress toward this outcome, a California heritage preservation program will assist institutions:

- initiate public awareness and/or fundraising initiatives for collections care
- make measurable improvements to conditions for storage of collections
- develop disaster response plans for collections
- assign responsibility for collections care to members of the staff

Multiple educational opportunities will be needed to reach a broad audience with different timetables for addressing their preservation issues. Growing a culture of preservation management will take time; a decade of training will be required before today's front line managers assigned responsibility for preservation become tomorrow's administrative and budgetary decision-makers. Slow though it may be, the strategy of growing a culture of preservation management works; many institutions that began with a staff member participating in a workshop or a seed project to preserve a single object now have staff with ongoing assignments to manage the preservation functions.

