



american  
institute for  
conservation

**Preserving Cultural  
Heritage**

# **American Institute for Conservation (AIC)**

***January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2021  
Strategic Plan***

**Approved by the AIC Board of Directors  
January 14, 2019**

## Introduction

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC) was incorporated in December 1972 as an organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue tax code. It is a national membership organization representing the multi-faceted conservation profession. AIC is the sole member of the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC), an affiliated organization. In November 2018, the AIC Board of Directors approved the use of American Institute for Conservation as AIC's name. The legal name remains as when incorporated.

Development of the current AIC plan was assisted in large part by the work of the AIC Board of Directors during strategic planning sessions undertaken on August 2 and 3, 2018, in part with the FAIC Board of Directors and benefiting from the perspectives of the members of both boards, AIC and FAIC staff members, and strategic planning consultant Robert Berendt.

The Situation Analysis on pages 3 and 4 is an informal forecast based on the understanding and perceptions of AIC and FAIC leadership. It underpins the organizational priorities outlined in the plan and will affect decision making in the coming years. Overarching issues that were discussed by both boards included key organizational opportunities and challenges facing both organizations that will influence strategic activities.

The AIC board was asked to consider, primarily, five key topics. These discussions played a significant role in shaping the language and focus of the strategic plan.

- Advancing equity and inclusion across the conservation profession
- Preventive conservation and the changing environment for collections care
- Marketing, branding, and identity: reinforcing the value of professional, peer-reviewed conservation
- Promoting leadership positions and strengthening the voice of conservators in their workplace and with allied professionals
- Building and sustaining greater organization capacity

The AIC Strategic Plan incorporates existing programs and services, as well as new initiatives. The board and staff confirmed the priorities that will serve as a guide in the coming years. These priorities are reflected in the AIC 2019-2021 Strategic Plan that follows.

An annual status review of activities in relation to the strategic plan will be prepared by staff and presented to the board prior to subsequent November board meetings.

## **Mission Statement**

As a national membership organization, the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC) supports conservation professionals in preserving cultural heritage by establishing and upholding professional standards, promoting research and publications, providing educational opportunities, and fostering the exchange of knowledge among conservators, allied professionals, and the public.

## **Vision Statement**

AIC envisions a time when the preservation of cultural heritage is universally recognized as a critical endeavor that is thoughtfully undertaken and fully supported.

## **Core Values**

### **Honoring Cultural Heritage**

AIC promotes the preservation of cultural heritage as a means toward a deeper understanding of our shared humanity.

### **Advocacy**

In collaboration with its affiliate FAIC, AIC is the voice for cultural heritage preservation. AIC advocates for responsible public policy founded on the enduring evidence of human creation.

### **Professionalism**

AIC supports the attainment of the knowledge and skills necessary to provide responsible conservation services while abiding by the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

### **Education and Lifelong Learning**

AIC encourages informed decision-making in conservation through an understanding of the values and contexts of our cultural heritage. We are dedicated to supporting research, sharing knowledge, and fostering life-long learning to advance the fields of preservation and conservation.

### **Service to Members**

AIC welcomes any individual, organization, or institution to become a member. We encourage education and networking for professionals, allied professionals, and individuals interested in supporting conservation. We provide and develop services that are responsive to the professional needs of our members.

### **Equity and Inclusion**

AIC is committed to the premise that the preservation of cultural heritage is inseparable from our belief that the creations and histories of all peoples must be acknowledged and honored. Through our support of all conservation and heritage professionals, we actively strive to create an inclusive and equitable environment in which all members of our community are valued and respected.

### **Governance**

AIC practices the strategic management of our organization, reflecting our responsibilities to our membership, allied professions, partners, the public, and our cultural heritage preservation mission.

## Situation Analysis

The following observations, trends, developments, and indicators are drawn from strategic planning discussions based on the AIC and FAIC boards' experiences and interactions with allied professionals and members, as well as recent events and activities. They serve to describe key considerations that are likely to influence AIC's direction and success over the next three years.

### THE ECONOMY AND SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATION

- Political and economic realities indicate threats to support for funding the arts and culture in future years. This along with the uncertain economic environment may continue to adversely affect conservation practice in all settings.
- Growing numbers of conservators and collection care professionals and shifting opportunities or priorities in institutions have led to more conservators entering private practice. Therefore, more training in business, administrative, and marketing skills will be needed.
- A limited universe of private foundations support conservation education, research, and practice, and they will continue to adjust their priorities and giving patterns based upon their individual areas of interest.

### NEED AND DEMAND FOR CONSERVATION SERVICES

- The need and demand for conservation services will continue to outstrip financial resources available to support the delivery of these services.
- The growing and changing impact of emerging technologies and expectations for instant access to information will continue to be an important consideration for conservators, their clients, the institutions they serve, and the public-at-large.
- University-based degree-granting programs in conservation continue to be in demand and must continue to be responsive to emerging disciplines.
- With access to quality education and training, collection care professionals can provide positive preservation outcomes for cultural materials.

### AWARENESS

- Awareness and appreciation of conservation, and its role in keeping collections accessible as core resources, is lacking among many leaders of art, science, and humanities institutions.
- Public awareness of conservation is gradually expanding, in part due to increasingly informed coverage by the press and a greater use of technology and social media showing conservation activities in labs, public spaces, and archaeological sites.
- Major international and national political and military conflicts that have destroyed, and even specifically targeted, cultural heritage are increasing awareness of the fragility of cultural heritage and the need for protection and preservation.
- Climate change and related natural disasters, now occurring with more intensity and frequency, are affecting personal and private collections as well as public collections and are increasing public awareness of cultural heritage emergency response efforts.

### INTERNAL FACTORS

- The conservation profession lacks the diversity needed to ensure multiple cultural perspectives and inclusive decision-making.
- Conservators in many specialty areas characterize the profession as having made many advances, but also claim that the profession suffers from a sense of disparity between institutional and private conservators with regard to research and advances in technology.

- Conservation departments are contributing actively to public outreach and audience development without a commensurate increase in staffing levels, which has resulted in an erosion of opportunities to advance research and scholarship.
- There is a recognized need among conservators to develop cross-disciplinary approaches through expanded relationships with allied professionals.
- An awareness of the community-based and interdisciplinary nature of conservation today is increasing, along with the need to garner buy-in from many different stakeholders.
- Climate change and concern over the loss of both national and cultural heritage highlights the need for collaborations with environmental conservation organizations as well as emergency management entities.
- While the Foundation has operated for nearly fifty years, its operations, purposes, and priorities are not well understood in the conservation community, even within the ranks of AIC.

## 2019-2021 Goals and Strategies

All the goals below reflect agreed upon priorities for AIC. The order in which they are listed in the strategic plan does not indicate a greater or lesser level of importance.

### Goal I

#### **Increase Membership and Enhance Member Services**

*As a professional membership organization defined by the tax code 501(c)(6), AIC's primary function is to serve its membership. Conservation professionals form the core of AIC and significantly influence its direction, goals, and activities. AIC members serve in specialty groups and networks, on committees and task forces, and elect AIC's board, in addition to providing ideas for AIC leadership to consider for improving AIC and advancing the field. AIC members also contribute content for workshops, the annual meeting, and publications. In support of its members, for whom AIC exists, AIC will continue to enhance membership benefits and services.*

#### **Strategies**

- *Improve equity and inclusion across the conservation profession*
  - Work to adopt recommendations as communicated in the final Equity and Inclusion Working Group report, approved by the AIC board of directors in May 2018.
  - Assess ongoing recommendations made by the Equity and Inclusion Committee, created by the AIC board of directors in June 2018.
  - Support membership outreach activities, including those focused on the K-12 audience.
  
- *Strengthen membership in the organization through improved retention, recruitment, and programming*
  - Continue outreach to early career conservators.
  - Broaden membership base through outreach to allied professionals, including collection care specialists.
  - Review, refine, and implement approved revisions of AIC membership categories (names of categories, terminology, requirements for peer-reviewed membership, application process, and requirements for professional designation maintenance) as assessed by the Membership Designations Working Group.
  - Engage and educate members on proposed revisions to membership categories.
  - Market approved revisions broadly and encourage membership to maintain and promote AIC professional designations.
  - Explore benefits programs that will aid AIC members.
  
- *Promote efficiencies across member activities*
  - Support creation of networks for new groups and from specialty groups and committees.
  - Encourage all groups to evaluate their core documents and structure in relation to other AIC groups and to aim for operational consistency.
  
- *Support effective communications both to and within the membership*
  - Improve member access to online resources.
  - Refine and enhance communications with members regarding AIC and FAIC activities by assessing each tool/method and how each can be used most effectively.
  - Support member engagement by incorporating and expanding online platforms, like Higher Logic, that foster member-to-member communication both nationally and internationally.

## **Goal II**

### **Advocate for the Field**

*With no indication that federal and state support will increase in the coming years, AIC will continue to devote as many additional resources as possible to strategic legislative advocacy and outreach efforts. The goal is to support the work of AIC members as well as to ensure the long-term care of the world's cultural heritage.*

### **Strategies**

- *Advocate for cultural heritage conservation at national and international levels*
  - Position AIC and FAIC in national and international emergency response efforts for cultural heritage.
  - Collaborate with other international, national, and state emergency response organizations and funding agencies to address emergency preparedness and response.
  - Participate in national efforts to shape policy and programs that strengthen the conservation of cultural heritage.
  - Build on collaborative relationships with allied organizations.
  - In conjunction with FAIC, advocate for the field in the private sector.
  
- *Strengthen messaging and outreach to allied organizations and the public*
  - Promote the name, logo, and tagline approved in late 2018.
  - Promote the value of AIC peer-reviewed membership by articulating and disseminating what it means to be a conservation professional.
  - Develop outreach activities for allied professionals and the public of all ages, as funding allows, through K-12 programming and other means.
  
- *Support members in outreach and advocacy*
  - Inform members of congressional actions that threaten funding for the arts and culture and provide alerts for action to be taken on a variety of platforms.
  - Encourage members to attend American Alliance for Museums, National Humanities Alliance, and Americans for Arts Advocacy Days and provide support as needed.
  - Provide AIC members with materials and messaging to conduct outreach as part of a campaign about what it means to be a professional conservator.

## **Goal III**

### **Promote Professional Standards and Advance the Skills of Conservation Professionals**

*The AIC, working with the FAIC Professional Development program, will review the educational opportunities available within the field and work toward developing, expanding, and supporting them to serve AIC members and to attract other professionals involved in the care of cultural heritage. Key to this will be to anchor all learning within standards and guidelines that both define and guide the field of conservation, encourage professional growth, and assure a major role for conservators in efforts to preserve cultural material. Also see separate FAIC Strategic Plan for Professional Development.*

### **Strategies**

- *Critically assess current continuing educational opportunities*
  - Review current activities and evaluate needs for additional programs.
  - Ensure members stay informed of recent advances in the field through adequate professional development opportunities.

- Expand access to high-quality courses and training through cost-effective distribution such through webinars, to communicate new conservation ideas and techniques.
- *Find appropriate partners to maximize reach*
  - Work with FAIC to provide quality conservation education opportunities nationally with an emphasis on mid-level professional development programming.
  - Create a plan to expand member leadership initiatives in collaboration with FAIC. Identify and provide leadership training to members, build resources to encourage career advancement, and train new leaders to promote the importance of conservation in the arts and humanities communities.
  - Leverage connections and resources to achieve maximum impact of education programming through collaborations with other organizations and institutions.
- *Review and update existing standards for practice to reflect current realities*
  - Create a task force to review and provide to the AIC board recommendations for revisions to the *Guidelines for Practice* and *Commentaries*, including responses to the recommendations made in the “Charting the Digital Landscape” initiative.
  - Heighten awareness of environmental sustainability in all conservation practices.

## **Goal IV**

### **Increase AIC Information Resources**

*High quality AIC print and electronic resources are critical to effectively serve AIC's membership, in addition to the broader conservation community, allied professionals, and the general public. AIC will continue to improve its information resources through regular review that will provide consistency, assure quality, and maintain standards.*

### **Strategies**

- *Create, enhance, and maintain electronic and print information resources*
  - Collaborate with FAIC to continue to improve the *Connecting to Collections Care (C2C Care) Online Community*.
  - Support FAIC efforts to move CoOL and related open-access resources into a sustainable format.
  - Support the publishing efforts of the specialty groups with advice and coordination.
- *Promote the Journal of the American Institute for Conservation (JAIC)*
  - Encourage members to publish in JAIC and create tools to sustain them through the submission and publication process.
  - Promote JAIC to a greater international audience by translating JAIC abstracts into a wider variety of languages.
  - Promote language publishing services and/or mentor matching for international scholars who wish to publish in JAIC.
- *Utilize Higher Logic to improve access to and awareness of existing AIC and FAIC resources and publications*

## **Goal V**

### **Maintain the Fiscal Health of the Organization**

*AIC needs a robust financial base to effectively serve its membership and will continue to collaborate with FAIC to ensure continued fiscal stability and growth.*

### **Strategies**

- Develop and promote additional AIC revenue sources, including through additional sponsorships, advertising, and publication sales. These steps will be coordinated with the FAIC sponsorship development initiative.
- Review effectiveness of the annual meeting structure and costs as the financial environment changes. Assess options to be considered for meetings four to ten years in the future, including how to capitalize on AIC's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting (2022).
- Develop tools and marketing methodologies that will aid in the retention and increase of members.
- Update and expand the Fiscal Policies and Procedures Manual to comply with all financial reporting and documentation requirements.