

PRESS RELEASE

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New Orleans Preservation Coalition Receives \$15,000 LYRASIS Grant to Launch Preservation Education and Disaster Response Initiative

March 5, 2018, New Orleans, LA - LYRASIS recently awarded a coalition of cultural heritage and performing arts institutions a \$15,000 Performing Arts Readiness (PAR) New Network Grant to establish the New Orleans Preservation Coalition (NOPC). The coalition seeks to provide opportunities for preservation education, disaster response, and related activities in order to sustain and protect the area's arts and cultural heritage.

New Orleans is an area that is very familiar with the need for disaster preparedness and response. The effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the failure of the federal levee system in 2005 were drastic reminders of the vulnerability of the city's arts, cultural, and documentary heritage. Yet, these are not the only instances in the last few years. Southern Louisiana has felt the effects of five additional major storms since that time, and the August 2016 floods remind cultural heritage institutions that the Gulf Coast stands at the forefront of discussions involving the environment and climate change. New Orleans' celebration of its tricentennial in 2018 is an opportune time to recognize the need to protect and sustain the city's history and culture.

The New Orleans Preservation Coalition developed from planning meetings and town hall forums undertaken by staff from various cultural heritage institutions (archives, libraries, and museums) in 2014. Since that time, a core team representing the Amistad Research Center, the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Loyola University New Orleans, the Museum Studies Program at Southern University New Orleans, the National Performance Network, the National World War II Museum, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, the New Orleans Jazz Museum, the New Orleans Public Library, the New Orleans Video Access Center, and Tulane University, has held community workshops on protecting personal, family, and organizational records.

The one-year grant, administered jointly by the Amistad Research Center and the New Orleans Jazz Museum, will allow for the formal establishment of the New Orleans Preservation Coalition into a larger membership organization open not only to cultural heritage institutions, but to representatives from performing arts organizations, local and state agencies, first responders, and the general public. NOPC will also serve as the sponsor of the New Orleans Alliance for Response (NOAR), which will provide emergency-related support and communications between the emergency response sector and cultural heritage institutions and performing arts organizations in the event of disaster and recovery needs.

Toward these goals, NOPC will sponsor a formal launch of the NOPC and NOAR on June 5, 2018. This forum will serve as a means of informing the public of the importance of the preservation of New Orleans' cultural, documentary, and performing arts history; information on how to participate in NOPC and NOAR; and formal presentations by individuals in the emergency response sector, leaders in the area of disaster preparedness and recovery, and members of the NOPC core team. Workshops related to these topics will also be held on surrounding days. Event location and details to follow.

“Leading arts and cultural organizations in New Orleans have been researching and planning collaborative preservation and disaster preparedness initiatives for a number of years, and the Performing Arts Readiness project is pleased that our first New Network grant is going to such a historical and deserving location,” said Tom Claeson, Director of the PAR Project and Senior Consultant for Digital & Preservation Services at LYRASIS.

After the forum is complete, NOPC plans a series of community workshops on topics ranging from business continuity following disaster, care of photographs and audiovisual materials, disaster preparedness for performing arts organizations, how to house and maintain scrapbooks and rare books, textile care, and related topics.

About the New Orleans Preservation Coalition (NOPC)

The New Orleans Preservation Coalition serves as an alliance of concerned organizations, agencies, and individuals who recognize the need to sustain and protect the area’s cultural heritage. The coalition’s mission is to provide opportunities for preservation education, disaster response, and related activities within the New Orleans area.

About LYRASIS

LYRASIS is a non-profit membership organization that supports enduring access to shared academic, scientific and cultural heritage through leadership in open technologies, content services, digital solutions and collaboration with archives, libraries, museums and knowledge communities worldwide. More information is available at www.lyrasis.org.

About the Performing Arts Readiness (PAR) project

Performing arts organizations can be especially vulnerable to disasters and emergencies of all kinds, resulting in destabilizing or catastrophic loss of income and assets. As important community centers, places of business, and cultural anchors, the Performing Arts Readiness project helps performing arts organizations nationwide learn how to protect their assets, sustain operations, and be prepared for emergencies. The PAR project is made possible by generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. More information is available at www.performingartsreadiness.org.