


# Preserving Heritage Preservation: A website exploring the organization’s history

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## A Brief History of Heritage Preservation

National  
Conservation  
Advisory  
Council


1973



NIC

The National Institute for Conservation

1982



Heritage Preservation

1997

Created in 1973 with funding from the National Museum Act, National Conservation Advisory Council, renamed the National Institute for Conservation in 1982, and Heritage Preservation in 1997, sought to develop a national strategy for the preservation of collections throughout the United States.

Throughout its over-forty-year history, Heritage Preservation spearheaded many programs and initiatives that shaped modern conservation practice.

The Board voted to officially dissolve the organization on June 30, 2015 in the fall out of the Great Recession of 2008. When the organization was dissolved, several key programs were transferred to AIC/FAIC.

## Preserving Heritage Preservation



Sensing that the rise and demise of Heritage Preservation offered many lessons for the field of art conservation, the last Board members commissioned a history of the organization, with the University of Delaware overseeing the project. Debra Hess Norris brought Dr. Maria Gonzalez onboard to write that history. Unfortunately, due to health concerns, Gonzalez was unable to finish the project and Rebecca Rushfield who had been assisting her with research took over.

Maddie Cooper (WUDPAC 2021) and Maddie Hagerman were brought in to write a history of HP’s emergency programs. It became clear that a single document or book would be unable to contain everything about the organization’s history. The “Maddies” set about creating a website that would preserve Heritage Preservation’s legacy and educate the public about it.

## Heritage Preservation’s Legacy

From creating programs such as the Heritage Emergency National Task Force to help institutions and individuals recover from disasters, to initiatives aimed at preserving public art and taking stock of the state of museums and other collecting institutions, Heritage Preservation’s influence on the history of cultural heritage preservation cannot be understated.

Programs

- Alliance for Response - 2003
- Connecting to Collections (C2C) - 2010
- Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) - 1988
- Heritage Emergency National Task Force - 1995
- Heritage Health Index – 2004 and 2014
- Rescue Public Murals - 2006
- Save Outdoor Sculptures! (SOS!) - 1989



Key Publications

- Caring for Your Collections (1992)
- Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel (1997), translated into ten languages
- Caring for Your Historic House (1998)
- Caring for Your Family Treasures (2000)
- Field Guide to Emergency Response (2006)



## HeritagePreservation.Info

In the summer of 2019, the website, HeritagePreservation.info went live. The website takes the form of a memory repository, an archive of the people, publications, and programs that were part of Heritage Preservation running for those many years. It also includes financial records and information on donors.

The people who worked for and with Heritage Preservation remain at the heart of the website. The site contains a list of 170 former employees, volunteers, and board members and their contributions. Many of these “key players” have contributed personal essays reflecting on their involvement with the organization as a whole or with specific programs. Visitors can also find excerpts from FAIC Oral History interviews. Students, researchers, and leading conservators also contributed essays about the early history of the NCAC/NIC, the end of Heritage Preservation, and many of its programs.

Publications, journal articles, media, such as podcasts and Youtube videos, and many other materials about the organization are readily accessible on the website. Some of this information lived on AIC’s former website but was not brought along when it transferred to its current format. We hope that by gathering it into one place, the legacy of Heritage Preservation will be discovered by future researchers.

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“I'd been called in by a lawyer to help to solve a problem of a mural in the Mission that disappeared, it was painted over at the corner of 17th and Harrison...the lawyers came and said 'What usually happens in this case? What do you do when a mural disappears?' What I found out during the course of this particular situation was that there was no usual.”

Excerpt from FAIC Oral History Interview with Will Shank, cofounder of Rescue Public Murals, conducted by Kendall George on August 27, 2009 in San Francisco, CA

## Share your memories about Heritage Preservation! Email us!

Anyone who had a connection to the organization--employee, board member, volunteer, funder, recipient of its services--is invited to contribute their photographs, documents, and memories to the website!



This poster is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Maria Elena Gonzalez, who started working on the history of Heritage Preservation in 2015. A special thanks to Larry Reger for his invaluable help and for sharing his unparalleled knowledge of the organization, Madeline Cooper for the original designs, Debra Hess Norris and the University of Delaware, and everyone who has contributed essays, memories, and photos.

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