Held in Trust Fact Sheet

Held in Trust is a three-year cooperative agreement between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation (FAIC).

Mission:

The mission of Held in Trust is to evaluate the state of preservation and conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the United States. Obstacles, opportunities, and needs, along with the resources required to sustain the field, will be identified and investigated. This NEH-funded initiative will engage a broad range of conservation and allied professionals, stakeholders, and communities, in exploring the intersection and impact of urgent global challenges and their intersection with the profession, including: sustainability (environmental, financial, other); social and racial justice; equity and diversity; climate change; biodiversity, and environmental resource protection; and technological change and innovation.

Goals:

1. Consider the current state, future directions, challenges, opportunities, and resource needs for the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage in the U.S., including moveable objects (art, artifacts, decorative objects), archival materials, images, architecture, and archaeological sites.
2. Examine the intersection of cultural heritage preservation with issues of urgent importance in the world today.

The work will align with the overall goals of A More Perfect Union, including an emphasis on identifying future paths. The outcomes of the project, expected in 2023, will guide work through to 2026 and following the semiquincentennial.

Nine critical topic areas have been identified:

- Sustainability (including: financial, collecting practices, conservation practice)
- Climate change and environmental impact (including: conservation practice, operations, cultural heritage resources)
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
- Collection care and management (including: preventive conservation)
- Philosophy and ethics in conservation (including: conservation theory and practice)
- Education, training, leadership
- Outreach, communication, and storytelling
- Science and materials
- Digital research and practice
Process:

1. Individuals representing 25 organizations working in cultural heritage and allied fields form the Held in Trust Advisory Council (AC). Additional partners will be invited to join as further input becomes needed. The ACs offers guidance and expertise, and provide a conduit for dissemination of project outputs.

2. A Steering Committee (SC) comprising 17 individuals is organized around the 9 critical topic areas outlined above. Related working groups are developing project goals and outcomes.

3. The AC, SC, and working groups will provide input on the best modes for communication, dissemination of findings, and recommendations for future work.

Timeline:

February or March 2022: National Convening
May 2022: AIC Annual Meeting in Los Angeles: discussion of project findings
2022 or 2023: Final report

Outcomes:

1. Evaluate current national infrastructure, opportunities and challenges facing cultural heritage conservation; identify where data is lacking and where future work is needed.
2. Articulate a forward-looking vision for the preservation of cultural heritage in the U.S.
3. Identify future directions and resource priorities to ensure cultural heritage is available for future education and enrichment.

Deliverables:

1. Report on the findings of the Steering Committee and working groups
2. Executive summary
3. Targeted publications on specific topic areas, including, as appropriate: taxonomy, infographics, and data visualizations.

The web page for Held in Trust is www.culturalheritage.org/hit; online community public discussion forum (open to anyone who wishes to join) https://bit.ly/HITDiscussionForum; project email: hit@culturalheritage.org

Pamela Hatchfield, Project Coordinator
Katelin Lee, Outreach Coordinator