

## AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE FOR HERITAGE WORK

The concept of cultural heritage today has expanded considerably over the last half century and today encompasses much more than historic monuments and museum objects. Now heritage includes historic and archaeological objects and sites, ethnographic materials, cultural landscapes, whole cities or parts of them. It also encompasses intangible elements, which UNESCO defines as “traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.”<sup>i</sup> In short, anything, tangible and intangible to which a group or groups of stakeholders attribute cultural significance. *Many of these competences can be applied to the safeguard of the intangible heritage. However, there are other specialized competences specific to the protection of this kind of heritage that have not been included here. The focus of this paper is mainly on the tangible cultural heritage, both mobile and immobile.*

Cultural heritage preservation has evolved to be a collaborative effort involving different professionals as well as communities and the general public. Aside from the discipline-based knowledge and skills traditionally required of heritage professionals, managerial skills and knowledge have become requisites of most heritage jobs. Moreover, as heritage preservation has evolved from a concern of experts to a social process it has attracted professionals from other areas such as public relations experts, fund-raisers, information technologists, marketing specialists, among others.

Although people often refer to “the heritage industry” it is more accurate to speak of “the heritage world,” where heritage is the central concern with many contributing knowledge and skills to its preservation and appreciation. In this world where primary objective of all efforts is to sustain the cultural significance, authenticity and integrity of the historic asset for present and future generations, many disciplines with their expertise are involved in the work, and they have different responsibilities and undertake different tasks.

This OAS project is intended to increase capacity in the region to take care of the heritage professionally and efficiently. As has been pointed out, capacity-building must strengthen “the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes of people with direct or indirect responsibilities for heritage conservation and management”, but also must improve “institutional structures and processes by empowering decision-makers and policy-makers, as well as introducing a more dynamic relationship between heritage and its socio-economic context. It involves an inclusive approach, so that the relevant missions and goals are met in a sustainable way.”<sup>ii</sup> **[Do you want to include something about other parts of the project that address those issues?]**

Protection of the heritage requires involvement of professionals but also the society. Appreciation of the value and significance of the heritage by the public is essential for the sustainability of preservation efforts. As more groups with different values, interests and expertise become an integral part of the heritage preservation processes, it has become important to identify the role of the participants as well as the knowledge and skills expected of each of them. Given the complexity of the field in which architects, scientists, archaeologists, administrators, historians, curators and conservators, engineers and ecologists must collaborate, many organizations have identified

competences that are relevant to their particular audiences. <sup>iii</sup>

One of the main questions has been whether there is a body of **knowledge** that should be held in common by everyone involved in heritage work, its care and presentation, regardless of his or her specialized discipline. This would be a core of common knowledge that allows professionals from various fields to work together ethically and with a unified understanding of their ultimate goal. The lists below present a general overview of competences that are necessary in the cultural heritage field. This does not imply that everyone working with cultural heritage should be competent in all the topics listed. In fact, topics I through VIII present competences applicable to the cultural heritage field. Topics I, II, III and VIII should be seen as core competences for all professionals trained in other disciplines (such as archaeology, architecture, marketing, public relations, etc.) who work, regularly or as consultants, with cultural heritage.

The purpose of this document is to help to identify competences relevant to cultural heritage work in the Caribbean region and any gaps that exist among current professionals or training opportunities in the region. It should be clear that this document does not attempt to list the specific competences, skills or knowledge required in each of the various positions in heritage preservation and management; it is not meant either to identify the level of knowledge or competence required for a particular job or position. These are tasks that are best left to university programs, professional organizations and employers.

#### **I. HISTORY & PHILOSOPHY**

The cultural heritage field today is the result of a long and well-documented evolution of concepts and practices. In order to understand them what and why of current beliefs and protection approaches it is essential to be familiar with this evolution.

- Knowledge of the evolution of concept of cultural heritage and preservation, nationally and internationally
- Identification of values and significance of heritage sites, buildings or objects
- Familiarity with the history of technology relevant to the heritage under consideration
- Familiarity with criteria for choice of preservation/conservation methods applicable to the heritage under consideration

#### **II. ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

As cultural heritage work

- Familiarity with the local, regional, national and international professional standards and guidelines, and their application to local heritage resources
- Understanding of professional codes of conduct
- Familiarity with the professional terminology in the individual's area of heritage work
- Familiarity with national and international professional organizations, their aims and roles in heritage practice
- Understanding of the political, economic, social and cultural contexts of heritage in local, national and international arenas; implication of issues such as globalization, environmentalism, sustainable development, biodiversity and cultural diversity

#### **III. LAWS, REGULATION AND GOVERNANCE**

- Knowledge of relevant cultural resource legislation and regulations
- Familiarity with cultural resource management (CRM) policies and guidelines
- Political, economic, social and cultural contexts of heritage in local, national and

international arenas (considering elements such as globalization, environmentalism, sustainable development, biodiversity and cultural diversity)

- Understanding of the mission and objectives of the organization where the individual works
- Familiarity with intellectual property laws and their implications for cultural heritage

#### **IV. RESEARCH & DOCUMENTATION**

The competences under this heading are associated specific specializations or institutional positions in the curatorial, interpretation, inventories and cataloguing areas. Nevertheless, all heritage workers should have a basic understanding of the areas listed below.

- Knowledge of methods of identification, assessment, documentation and registration of cultural resources, and ability to implement them.
- Ability to undertake research for tangible and intangible heritage utilizing accepted professional methodologies
- Ability to communicate clearly in writing
- Knowledge of the purpose of inventories and methods of creation, and ability to implement them
- Understanding of the importance of provenance of objects (museums) & ability to undertake research in this area
- Understanding, creating and using collection catalogues

#### **V. ACCESS AND USE**

The competences under this heading are associated specific specializations or institutional positions in the curatorial, interpretation, exhibition specialists, educators, etc. Nevertheless, all heritage workers should have a basic understanding of the areas listed below.

- Conceptualization, organization, design and evaluation of exhibitions
- Creation of interpretation for various audiences based on needs assessments
- Creation of outreach programs and events for various audiences, including on-line
- Ability to work with communities and assure their access (physical, intellectual and emotional) to the heritage
- Design, implementation and evaluation of education programs
- Organization of income producing activities
- Marketing of heritage programs and events

#### **VI. HERITAGE MANAGEMENT**

The competences under this heading are associated specific specializations or institutional positions such as museum registrars and heritage managers. Nevertheless, all heritage workers should have a basic understanding of the areas listed below.

- Familiarity with collections management methods
- Knowledge of heritage management approaches such as integrated management & values-based management
- Ability to develop and implement clear heritage management plans

#### **VII. PRESERVATION, TREATMENT & MAINTENANCE**

The competences under this heading are associated specific specializations or institutional positions such as conservators, preservation architects, conservation scientists, and archaeologists. Nevertheless, all heritage workers should have a basic

understanding of the areas listed below.

- Familiarity with scientific principles and examination methods
- Knowledge of causes of decay & deterioration of materials used in heritage
- Ability to design appropriate maintenance programs for the heritage
- Ability to create preventive care programs for collections
- Understanding of treatment methods and criteria for selection
- Familiarity with natural resource management issues and concerns as they affect or interface with cultural resources

### **VIII. HUMAN RESOURCES & GENERAL MANAGEMENT**

None of the competencies under this heading are particular to the heritage field. They are included here because it is considered that they are required for effective and professional work.

- Ability to prioritize activities and assignments; adjust priorities as required
- Allocation of appropriate time and resources for completing work
- Monitoring of tasks and activities
- Ability to speak and write clearly and effectively as required by various audiences
- Identification of specialists and their roles
- Ability to work collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals
- Ability to work with communities, integrating their needs and concerns in heritage activities
- Familiarity with information technology
- Ability to undertake financial planning and budgeting
- Ability to do fundraising and write grants

### **IX. HERITAGE AND TOURISM<sup>iv</sup>**

- Ability to develop, implement and monitor strategies and actions for the protection of sites from the excesses of tourist pressures
- Ability to plan for forms of tourism which are sustainable, appropriate, relevant and able to engage the local community and local cultures
- Ability to evaluate and monitor the processes of environmental, social and cultural change as they affect and are affected by tourism and the behaviors of tourists

The survey carried out in Phase I of this project indicated that heritage professionals in the region considered that the funding available does not allow for the creation of many new positions.<sup>v</sup> Given this perception, it is perhaps best to focus the educational efforts of this project on increasing capacity of those people currently employed or entering positions that already exist, and on professionals from other fields who can contribute to the preservation of the heritage. This focus would eliminate any significant efforts to create new academic degree programs unless 1.) it is demonstrated that there is a demand for the professionals that would emerge from these programs, or 2.) an academic institution expresses interest in creating a new program.

A capacity-building strategy for the region should be based on an assessment of needs and existing resources. It must be developed within the socio-economic and cultural environment of the region. It must take into consideration existing educational and training opportunities that already exist, and employment possibilities. These are issues that will be explored in the April seminar in Barbados.

As educational opportunities are developed trainers and educators who have assessed the needs of their own museum community or the institution will make decisions about

levels of competence needed by the targeted audiences. That decision should be made at the time of designing educational or training opportunities and based on the existing level of knowledge of the intended audience and specific learning objectives.

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- <sup>i</sup> Unesco, “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?” at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002> accessed 2/10/2015
- <sup>ii</sup> ICOMOS International Training Committee, Draft “Guidelines for Education and Training – Practical Instructions for Practitioners”, October 2012 at [http://cif.icomos.org/pdf\\_docs/CIF%20Meetings/Guidelines/ICOMOS\\_CIF\\_UK\\_DRAFT\\_Guidelines\\_Practitioners.pdf](http://cif.icomos.org/pdf_docs/CIF%20Meetings/Guidelines/ICOMOS_CIF_UK_DRAFT_Guidelines_Practitioners.pdf) last accessed 3/12/2015
- <sup>iii</sup> See, for example,  
American Association of Museums “Committee on Museum Professional Training Standards and Best Practices Guidelines at <http://www.compt-aam.org/resources/standardsguidelines.html> last accessed 3/7/2015  
American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), “Defining the Conservator: Essential Competencies”, 2003 at <http://www.conservation-us.org/docs/default-source/governance/defining-the-conservator-essential-competencies.pdf> last accessed 3/12/2015  
European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers’ Organizations (E.C.C.O.), “E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines III”, 2004 at <http://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e.c.c.o./professional-guidelines.html> last accessed 3/12/2015  
International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) International Training Committee, Draft “Principles for Capacity Building through Education and Training in Safeguarding and Integrated Conservation of Cultural Heritage”, 30 September 2013 at [http://cif.icomos.org/pdf\\_docs/CIF%20Meetings/Guidelines/ICOMOS\\_CIF\\_PrinciplesCapacity\\_EN\\_20130930.pdf](http://cif.icomos.org/pdf_docs/CIF%20Meetings/Guidelines/ICOMOS_CIF_PrinciplesCapacity_EN_20130930.pdf) last accessed 3/12/2015  
International Council of Museums (ICOM) International Committee for the Training of Personnel, “ICOM Curricula Guidelines for Museum Professional Development” at <http://museumstudies.si.edu/ICOM-ICTOP/> last accessed 3/12/15  
National Parks Service, “Cultural Resource Specialist – Essential Competencies” at <http://www.nps.gov/training/npsonly/RSC/crmspec.htm> last accessed 3/12/15  
Reynolds, T. R., “Training for Entry-Level Museum Professionals A Report Prepared for the Committee on Museum Professional Training, American Association of Museum April, 2000” at [www.compt-aam.org/images/Reynolds\\_Survey.doc](http://www.compt-aam.org/images/Reynolds_Survey.doc) last accessed 3/8/2015
- <sup>iv</sup> Adapted from the Unesco-Unitwin network “Culture Tourism Sustainable Development” at <http://www.unesco.org/en/university-twinning-and-networking/access-by-region/europe-and-north-america/france/international-network-culture-tourism-and-development-594/> last accessed 3/12/2015. For more detailed information see Cultural Tourism Site Management A Training Manual for Trainers in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations, 2008
- <sup>v</sup> Organization of American States (OAS), Expanding the Socio-Economic Potential of Cultural Heritage in the Caribbean. Phase I: Needs assessment and project theme

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selection Final Phase I Project Report