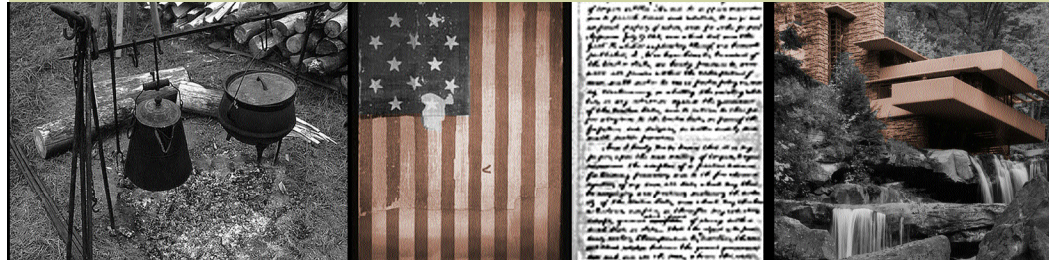


FORUM ON PRESERVATION



Peter Brink

Vice President

National Trust for Historic Preservation

James Early

Director of Cultural Heritage Policy

Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

Jack Meyers

Deputy Director, Grants Program

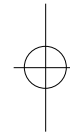
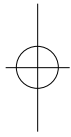
J. Paul Getty Trust

Larry Reger

President

Heritage Preservation

moderated by **Ellen McCulloch-Lovell**



FORUM ON PRESERVATION

Significant parts of our national cultural heritage – the historic sites and buildings, collections of documents and books, archives of films and tape, and the skills and techniques of artisans and folk artists – are at serious risk of being forever lost.

In April 2001 in Washington, DC, the Center for Arts and Culture convened a panel of experts to discuss major issues in preservation policy and in public perceptions of national efforts to save the rich and diverse cultural traditions of our nation. The panel was moderated by Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, a fellow at the Center and the former director of the White House Millennium Council, which originated Save America's Treasures.

The panelists:

PETER BRINK

*Vice President,
National Trust for Historic Preservation*

JAMES EARLY

*Director of Cultural Heritage Policy,
Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage,
Smithsonian Institution*

JACK MEYERS

*Deputy Director of the Grant Program,
J. Paul Getty Trust*

LARRY REGER

*President,
Heritage Preservation*

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Conservancy

INTRODUCTION

Popular interest in preservation is evident every day. It is seen in communities rallying around local historic sites, libraries, and museums campaigning to conserve their collections, volunteers surveying outdoor sculpture, and audiences appreciating traditional practices -- from classes in making adobe structures to the resurgence in mariachi music. Preservation is about more than the restoration or rehabilitation of buildings and structures; it also embraces America's cultural objects, landscapes, documents, and folklife that define and teach the nation's stories.

New thinking has emerged that links preservation, cultural conservation, and the documentation of traditional cultures. The Save America's Treasures program, created in 1999 as part of the national millennium observances, and now a continuing grants program at the National Park Service, funded projects using a broad definition of preservation. The program attracted applications from national parks, historic sites, collecting institutions and from communities that care for monuments, or want to perpetuate folk cultures. The resulting grants supported the preservation of archaeological sites, pottery, art, literature, film, sound recordings, and historical documents. The private support for Save America's Treasures, organized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, showed that a broader definition and strong leadership can engage a larger number of contributors in projects that have personal meaning to the donors.

Recently, some new studies have raised the alarm about how we are caring for our national heritage. The National Park Service, for example, estimates in its own self-study that among its vast collections, fewer than 50 percent of its structures are in good condition and just over 60 percent of its collections meet its own standards for care. The Advisory Council for Historic Preservation just published a report that describes the serious problem of federal agencies' stewardship of historic properties. A controversial book raises questions about whether libraries are caring properly for books, newspapers, and documents. Newspaper articles highlight the problems of saving dance: who owns it, and how it is documented before the last dancers who know the piece are no longer able to pass it on? Although this Forum did not deal with federal stewardship, the issue adds evidence to the overall concerns about preservation.

Preservation policy is beginning to become more integrated with other public policies. The preservation of landscapes and buildings, as well as an identifiable "sense of place," are considerations in the Smart Growth or anti-sprawl movements that are springing up around the country to fight uncontrolled development. Coalitions of arts, preservation, and transportation officials are working with community leaders to control the impact of building highways, and to use Transportation Enhancement funds for historic places and public art. Communities are more vocal about having their cultural traditions respected: to be included in local celebrations and also given access to funding. The preservation field is a dynamic one, changing as the nation ages and its demographics shift. Inevitably, people sift back over history and constantly reevaluate its meaning, leading to alter-

tions in what is remembered, what is memorialized for the rest of us.

Recognizing that preservation is integral to thinking about culture in the United States, the Center for Arts and Culture includes preservation as one of its seven areas of investigation. As reflected in the participants in the Forum on Preservation, the Center embraces a broad definition of preservation. Peter Brink has worked for many years to save historic buildings and neighborhoods and also to integrate them into the fabric of community social and economic life. Larry Reger's main concerns are art, artifacts, and documents: the things that collecting institutions care about. He also administers the Save Outdoor Sculpture project with the National Museum of American Art. James Early, with training in Latin American, Caribbean, African, and African-American history, is known as an advocate of cultural diversity and equity issues in public cultural and educational institutions. Jack Meyer speaks from the perspective of the nation's largest foundation funder of preservation, concentrating on art and archeological sites all over the world. Despite their varying perspectives, our panelists often agreed -- an indication of the potential for preservationists to see themselves as a field and begin to act in concert to have a greater impact.

The opening discussion defined the broad scope for preservation. Each panelist in his own way emphasized the importance of preservationists as educators, as part of a larger community, concerned with "those who live in or participate in and appreciate these buildings, objects and traditions," as Jack Meyers said. James Early noted that the field is becoming more

integrated with communities, more aware of “the sense-making apparatus” of practitioners of traditional culture. Early pointed out that “we’ve all been seeking new kinds of collaboration,” across all that divides us.

While all agreed that preservation organizations and programs must work long and hard to become more diverse, they saw some progress. Peter Brink attested to the work to diversify boards and staffs, and Jack Meyers made the powerful point: “As we begin to broaden our definition of what is preserved and what is possible, we will inevitably begin to diversify.”

The group explored such ideas as “intangible heritage” and “preventative conservation.” They also talked about what is urgent, what important icons, collections, and traditional communities must be recognized as worthy of preservation. Here Larry Reger posed perhaps the better question: “How do you make icons in the future?”

Several issues emerged that deserved more consideration than we had time for. Larry Reger mentioned intellectual property and how copyright legislation “will have a direct effect on what gets preserved.” Jack Meyers raised the whole issue of digital preservation: how to conserve web sites, documents, and art work that exists in electronic form. These and other issues are markers for future discussions.

The public policy question stimulated some debate, often heard in the arts, about preservation for its own sake as contrasted with other values, such as economic benefits. James Early warned preservationists should not be “hostage” to economic impact; we need a more “culturally democratic construct.” Peter Brink spoke of the “transcendent importance” of art, monuments, and places, but commented that economic

revitalization matters when “you’re talking about neighborhoods and downtowns....” Larry Reger said preservation has to be “useful” in some way, but then gave a broad meaning to useful when he said “preserving the barbed wire at the Manzanar internment camp becomes useful for the Japanese-American community....”

Near the end of the Forum, the group doubled back to stress the importance of preservationists as educators. The panelists agreed that preservation should be an issue that has appeal across the political spectrum. And they agreed that preservation causes are “making progress on public perception and support.” Much more conversation, with many more activists, needs to happen for the various branches of preservation to find their common cause. When they do, they also will strengthen their potential for collective clout.

*Ellen McCulloch-Lovell
October 2001*

FORUM ON PRESERVATION

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell

How do we think about historic preservation today?
When you say the term, what do you understand and
what do you think the public understands?

Peter Brink

National Trust for Historic Preservation

There has been a continual broadening of the term so that we are much more holistic — looking at communities, at heritage areas, at vernacular as well as architect-designed properties, at landscapes as well as structures. And there's been a much greater emphasis on community revitalization and how this all fits together, because we have learned if we don't have an economic base to save things, it's triply hard to save them.

Ellen Lovell

So you're really at the stage where you're looking at preservation of structures in their context, in their landscapes, in their surrounding areas? And the sociological context for it as well?

Peter Brink

And as part of their communities whenever possible.

Larry Reger
Heritage Preservation

My sense is that when you speak generally to the public, the term “historic preservation” is immediately recognizable. When people think in terms of their own lives, they more often think of things that they have — family photographs, wedding dresses, or furniture. They also think in terms of preserving buildings as a public good because when they drive around or hopefully *walk around* and see these things, they feel innately that buildings and sites should be taken care of. I don’t think that people generally give much consideration to the issue of preserving things in collecting institutions, such as museums, libraries, or archives.

Ellen Lovell

If the public doesn’t give much consideration to collections in libraries and museums, there’s an even greater question about things such as sound recordings and video and films and poetry archives that aren’t normally thought of as being part of museum collections. And maybe there is an even greater leap to folklife and traditions.

James Early
 Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
Smithsonian Institution

Right. The field has changed in a lot of ways, and one of the challenges is the extent to which those *de facto* changes have informed the formal, disciplinary or professional approach to preservation.

One issue involves the notion of *preserve* versus *conserve*. Some people have a very literal definition: to preserve is to keep in place. That definition does not have a dynamic sense of culture and, in that regard, is anti-cultural. The debate has been to broaden our construct — not to choose one or the other, but to get in another more anthropological notion of the conservation of processes of living communities, living traditions, which deal with folklore, indigenous communities, and plural perspectives about tradition.

So the notion of the conservation of processes has been very important. For instance, if we’re going to preserve a building, we’ve been overly concerned with its materiality and not with the idea of the craftsperson.

Ellen Lovell

Who knows how to do those crafts anymore?

James Early

Right. The craftsperson has not generally been a Ph.D. in preservation or a chemist who knows the composition of bricks. He has been “an ordinary laborer” whom we saw more in mechanical terms than in aesthetic and intellectual terms. There has been an important expansion of our understanding.

Ellen Lovell

And that’s why you see groups like Cornerstones in New Mexico trying to preserve adobe structures by teaching others how to build in adobe.

Jack Meyers
J. Paul Getty Trust

Another difference is that a lot of preservation has been going on for a long time. In intangible communities, people have been doing linguistic dictionaries to save languages for well over a hundred years. You had Bela Bartok running around Hungary with an old acoustic phonograph machine recording folk songs and Allen Lomax did it in the U.S. decades ago. Or take the example of preserving buildings. Adaptive re-use saved the Pantheon.

But what's different recently is that people are beginning to see themselves as part of a larger preservation community. The people doing the dictionaries, the people doing the folk songs, the people doing the buildings, the people doing the objects have begun to realize we're all part of the same endeavor. And that's a very powerful realization if someone could figure out how to take it forward.

James Early

It is true that we are seeing a cross-fertilization among professionals, but more importantly, the nonprofessional is taking a proactive role. It's a participatory democratic process involving these communities and with experts, so it has changed our strategies and tactics, even our philosophy. We have a new social mediation in what is regarded as *intangible* culture, problematic as that term is now.

Everyone has the capacity at some level to reflect a sensibility, a sensitivity and an active participation in what was seen heretofore as the preserve or the reserve of more specialized groups.

Ellen Lovell

Let's talk about the term *intangible community* or *intangible heritage*. When I hear that, I think what you mean is preserving the things that aren't buildings or things or artifacts. I think you mean folkways, performing arts. Things that happen but only happen in time and space and then they're gone.

James Early

Religious expressions, rituals, agricultural practices in terms of the level of knowledge, scientific practices, ethno-science perspectives. Those have been seen as intangible.

While the term is a functional, it has contradictions. Some cultures, for example, do not talk about the material and the immaterial. In fact, the term *immaterial* is seen by some as a pejorative. But progress has been made. We are now documenting and preserving or conserving these dimensions of people's expressions. We didn't before. We had limited our inquiry to archeological sites and fixed property, so to speak.

Ellen Lovell

I think the idea is useful. I hope that we don't adopt the term *intangible heritage*, because a dance performance or a poetry reading or the passing on of a tradition to me is very tangible. And the term suggests somehow that the work is not substantial. I want to ask Jack whether he wanted to amplify or talk about in what sense he used the term *intangible*.

Jack Meyers

Most people understand intangible in the kind of traditional sense, although I have to say the whole issue of digital preservation has begun to feel very

intangible, too, and I am sure this is something we might want to come back to. There is a way in which the whole digital environment is beginning to make the tangible intangible and this poses another kind of preservation problem.

The whole digital environment is beginning to make the tangible intangible, and this poses another kind of preservation problem.

Ellen Lovell

Well, let's jump then to the question of what the public thinks when it hears the term *historic preservation*? Is the public thinking as broadly as you are?

Peter Brink

The preservation movement has become much more holistic and community-focused, yet our reputation and the way people think of preservation is lagging decades behind. We still have the problem that people view us, number one, as only caring about dead white men's houses. The problem is that people think we want to freeze a neighborhood, make it a museum. We work all the time through public positions on issues such as smart growth and sprawl. We hope we will change public perception to a much more community-oriented, broad, dynamic picture of historic preservation.

James Early

This goes back to us, the professionals. We now are looking at our areas of work in a much more variable way, looking at the common thread that runs across

very distinct perspectives and environments and situations. And I want to stress that fact not as a semantic one but one that leads us to a different kind of strategy of engaging these "publics." They are concerned about what we are concerned with, but they don't have our language. They do it in different kinds of ways, and if we recognize that, then we are looking at not only a mediation between the multiple perspectives but how do we get to a collaboration.

Ellen Lovell

So how do the neighborhood person who is trying to save an historic theater, the museum person who is trying to save an important early American painting, and the volunteer who is trying to save an outdoor sculpture, view themselves as all part of the same enterprise?

James Early

If you went around the table, each of us would give different new instrumentations to advertise to the public who we are, how we can work with you, not just on you, or about you. We just need to foreground it a lot more in the public media. Take newspapers. Larry has a number of wonderful examples of small town newspapers carrying what had been a kind of highfalutin' specialized discussion twenty years ago.

Larry Reger

If you mention conservation or preservation, the public thinks in terms of the environment, endangered species. I really don't think they understand it. If you start talking about taking care of things or preserving things, then they understand that.

Jack Meyers

I agree with Larry. In some respects, the preservation community isn't in the same place as the public, and it finds itself frequently in a kind of educational role where it feels it has to tell the public why something should be preserved or why that thing isn't different from material "coming up from a community." It's an odd situation in a way. It's not the extreme of English heritage telling you, "You have to do it this way." But the process is one of education: "This is why you the public, you the community, should really value this."

Ellen Lovell

I want to toss out another big picture question: how would you describe the state or health of preservation in your various fields right now? Jack, why don't I start with you this time?

Jack Meyers

It's probably better than it ever has been, but it's not what it could be or should be, specifically in preservation of objects and preservation of buildings. But there is a new consciousness about this, and we're much further ahead than we were a few decades ago. But we're nowhere near where we should be in the larger sense of how to make this happen. What are the financial mechanisms for making this happen? We don't have good ones in this country. We haven't thought it through. What are the communities of interest that can be brought together on certain issues? A lot of these questions just haven't been dealt with with the seriousness with which they should.

Peter Brink

Over the past couple of decades we have shifted from fighting for superb landmarks like a Penn Station in

New York City to focusing much more on good things that can happen in the future, such as revitalization of whole communities. We have also shifted from "last minute stop the bulldozers" to being much more integrated in the planning processes and into governmental work. And so we have slowly won a place at many tables, even though we often don't get our way or what we think the outcome should be.

Larry Reger

Preservation has made enormous progress over the last two or three decades and there's still a lot more to do.

James Early

Everybody would second that. In this whole arena of the traditional, the indigenous, the grassroots, as Jack said earlier, people like Allen Lomax were running around many years ago recording folk music and folk songs, but now we are considering the *agency* of the producers themselves. These are not genetic or spontaneous developments. They have a clear consciousness about aesthetics, about design, form, use and spiritual meaning.

Ellen Lovell

You mean we are acknowledging the practitioners?

James Early

The practitioners pass it on from generation to generation very consciously. They have their own apprentice programs, so there is a sense-making apparatus that we generally juxtapose against the perspective of the professionals. That's a new development for us, working with practitioners to develop from their conscious perspectives these processes, these styles.

Ellen Lovell

Part of what I have observed is how preservation is very much people-driven. Our traditions, our language, our culture, our memories are important, conveying a kind of urgency for preservation. We used the Star Spangled Banner and the Charters of Freedom to illustrate a sense of urgency to get Save America's Treasures funded. But the real urgency from my experience was coming from Native Americans, Asian-Americans, and African-Americans, working very hard to save sites, documents and monuments important to them.

James Early

This has motivated the development of many professional fields. I sit on the board of the Filipino-American Historical Society that started out with people with no college degrees. Now, it's a national historical movement all over the country. Universities started to find students who had interests in wanting to become involved.

Until 20 years ago, there was one only Chinese-American historian, but no Chinese-American Ph.D.s in Chinese-American history. Now there are a number of them because the community had an interest, and someone in one or another scholarly field or an emerging college student decided that she or he would pursue this. There is a developmental linkage, if you will, between publics and professionals that has been quite important.

Ellen Lovell

Yet I think the public perception of preservation as a field is that it's not very diverse. When you go to meetings and you look around, you don't see that

kind of diversity, right?

James Early

Just as in every other thing that goes on in our society, we have improved. But not nearly enough. One of our new challenges is to find those in diverse communities who are dealing with the essence of what we're dealing with, but perhaps not in the same structured way and to find where the legitimate intersection is. We have to be guarded and not romantic, and not thin out the substantive things that all of us have learned over the years simply to get a more diverse but less substantive picture. Whether it's an issue of color or class or rural versus urban, we've all been seeking new kinds of collaboration.

Ellen Lovell

Larry, what do you think?

Larry Reger

If I could just ask a question and then I'll answer you. Has there been improvement in the historic preservation field in diversity? Because there really has not been much improvement in the traditional field of preserving *things*, and I think I know why.

Peter Brink

Certainly, we were a very non-diverse field over the past several decades. Now there is increased emphasis on community revitalization, especially as we get into inner-city neighborhoods. There we are working as partners as opposed to protecting the dominant culture. Secondly, we are working hard at diversifying our boards of trustees and our staffs and have made some breakthroughs.

We're just beginning to figure out and get better at the collaborations, because I think that in many ways collaborations provide us with the potential to jump forward, as opposed to just working on the slow diversifying of our staffs and so on.

Larry Reger

First of all, just a couple of facts. The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Artifacts did a program for two years to attract minority students, or students of other backgrounds, and they were successful, as far as they know, in getting *one*. The National Park Service has a program which is going into its third year of summer internships for students. They are also developing a course for historically black colleges. Hopefully they will adopt it.

Preservation is about persistence; however we, as a profession, seem to not really persist in so many ways. To address this issue, if you're talking about getting people of diverse backgrounds involved as professionals who earn their livelihoods in preservation, it will take decades; you need an ongoing commitment to do this. People are going to come into this field not because of money but because of passion, because of interest, because it is a way of having a satisfying, fulfilling life. They are not going to earn millions of dollars.

Preservation is about persistence; however, we, as a profession, seem to not really persist in so many ways.

Jack Meyers

As we begin to broaden our definition of what is preserved and what is possible, we will inevitably begin to diversify. If all we are talking about is the conservation of old master paintings, we've got some very limited definitions.

James Early

But Larry's point, I think, goes somewhat deeper. As we broaden our constructs about what we consider to be in this field, the products or things that we focus on will get diversified. But the change-resistant sociology of the profession itself may be Larry's deeper point.

We could take a page out of corporate America, notwithstanding the fact that corporate America is still very segregated at the top. If you go to a school like Florida A&M University, which has one of the renowned business schools on the globe, the tuition's only \$6,000 a year. But when the president sees your SAT scores, he shows up at your house and says "I have a \$90,000 scholarship for you," because some corporation is going to take you during Christmas break and Spring break and all four summers. With this kind of program, one has a professional at the end of the four-year period, notwithstanding the glass ceiling at the top. The business community is a lot more diversified and integrated in that regard. Of course, they have a lot more money, but it still doesn't take us away from our responsibility.

Ellen Lovell

So we have a changing public perception. We have training. We have making it a profession that's open to all. And then Jack's very powerful point, which is that we include more of us in thinking about our history

and what's important to continue to have with us. If we do that, we are going to attract more Americans of all different backgrounds. And we certainly noticed this in some of the projects that we were able to do under Save America's Treasures.

Peter Brink

Just a couple of quick footnotes on this. One, the Park Service has really moved well in the last few years on this, and they do have an internship program. We'll have three interns this summer at the National Trust. We've had an Emerging Preservation Leaders program for folks to come to our annual conference for eight years now. The program helps 80 to 100 local people participate. One has to keep doing these things, but it's also got to get beyond that.

Jack Meyers

It's a slow process, and as Larry pointed out, the sort of formalized training structures work against it somewhat. The basic issue is: how do you establish the passion for this, because that's what pulls people into it. We've tried a summer internship program where we introduce college students to this concept. We pay for institutions to pay these kids so they can see what conservation is, see what the whole process is like, become more interested in it, we hope, and go on to study it. But it's a hard and slow process.

Ellen Lovell

You can certainly feel it, though, when you're in a field or with a group of people and saying we value your contribution to the American story. You can feel it when you talk to Japanese-Americans about saving Manzanar, the former Japanese-American internment camp, even though it's a sorrowful part of our history.

We could feel it when Mrs. Clinton and Bob Stanton, the former Park Service Director, and Dick Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, went to the African Meeting House. I felt like the ancestors were sitting there telling us this is what we are meant to do because it is such a sacred place to so many people.

You could feel it with the labor union people at Kate Mulaney's house in Troy, New York, in a very modest neighborhood, valuing that 19 year old Irish-American immigrant woman who started the first lasting women's labor union in America.

So there is clearly the passion there. What you seem to be saying is that the structures need to come along with that basic interest.

Jack Meyers

As we broaden our definition of how conservation is accomplished, this whole notion of preventative conservation makes it much easier for whole communities to understand how they can become involved in the process of conservation. It doesn't take a trained professional walking in that door with years of training at Winterthur or at the University of Delaware to say this is how you do it; in fact there are a lot of conservation processes that all kinds of communities can be involved in.

Ellen Lovell

I want to ask Jack about another term he used, *preventative conservation*.

Jack Meyers

It's not a term I've ever liked. It seems somehow oxymoronic. But it is a term that is around, and basically it's how you can change the environment in which objects exist in order to try to stabilize them and keep more elaborate conservation work from needing to be done on that object at a later stage. The term has gained currency over the last ten years in the field and has become a kind of catchword for everything from new HVAC systems in your museum to putting things in mylar.

Ellen Lovell

Let's go back to this very interesting idea of the amateur who values the place or the thing or the tradition. You all seem to be saying there's a very important role for that person and you can't discount it. We can't make this just an enterprise of experts.

James Early

There may be two ways of looking at the amateur. One is the amateur who is interested in trying to figure out "what can I do?" But then there is the notion of the amateur as master. If you're dealing with the kind of traditions that I deal with, you have people who may not have finished high school but who are the best at what they do. Are we really then privileging the folklorist or the anthropologist or the ethnologist as the real knowledgeable person here rather than that person?

We want these things to be around or to continue so that large numbers of people are engaged. Ultimately this is where our new audiences come from.

Ellen Lovell

The destruction of New York City's Pennsylvania Station has been cited often as the impetus for landmark preservation legislation in 1966. But similar to Penn Station, Save America's Treasures picked a few icons: the Star Spangled Banner, the Charters of Freedoms, Thomas Edison's laboratory, Mesa Verde — some things that people do care about and readily acknowledge enrich our experience and shouldn't disappear.

Are there other such icons that would be so missed and that would so inflame the public if they knew they were going to be taken away forever — much the way the destruction of the Buddhas in Afghanistan has inflamed the public? Are there still those important icons out there, or are we much more about process and community?

Question number two is: in your fields, what is really urgent? Are there, for example, categories of objects or things or practices that are going to disappear from the scene? Just to give you one example: there are people working night and day on making sure that certain Native American languages get recorded as they are presently spoken because the last speakers aren't going to be with us very long. Is there still that kind of urgency in each of your fields?

Peter Brink

We focus on this a lot with our "11 Most Endangered Historic Places" each year. One of the listings that really seems to resonate is historic neighborhood schools. We are involved in publications, public policy stuff, but also in communities where people are trying to save buildings that have value aesthetically and

in terms of tradition. If neighborhood schools are stopped as schools, it means the whole school function will move from the neighborhood into a large 100-acre site outside of the community. We found historic neighborhood schools provide a real intersection for a whole lot of things, including the smallness of neighborhood schools as opposed to the hugeness of consolidated schools.

Then you get into a big one such as the potential for a lot of development to overwhelm the history of Pearl Harbor. This shows where some of the preservation battles are now. We are heavily engaged in a process with the Navy to try to convince them to finish their survey of cultural resources on Ford Island and to enter into a preservation agreement. You've got the whole government bureaucracy: the Navy, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the National Park Service. So you work all those processes, but underlying this work is the incredible question of what should be preserved at the site of one of the huge cataclysmic events in our country's history.

Ellen Lovell

And that's interesting because that's World War II. So now we are looking back 60 years and saying of this society-changing event, how do we keep that memory alive?

Jack Meyers

Speaking from my field, at least broadly defined, many major dramatic things and objects are in the care of major institutions that are, in fact, looking after them. If you want to take a class of objects where much remains to be done, it's what we call "works on paper." Whether we're talking about documents or

drawings or whatever, there are vast, vast quantities and the scale is gigantic. Preserving an architecture firm's archives can be just an unimaginably expensive undertaking, and as a result it doesn't happen or it often doesn't happen well or easily, or only part of it gets done. The scale of what institutions are facing is frightening to them.

If I can skip ahead to something that probably not too many people care about, but which they should, it is the whole issue of digital preservation. This is something that we all sit around and shake our heads and say, yeah, this is a serious issue. And nobody goes anywhere with it.

Ellen Lovell

You mean things that only exist in digital form?

Jack Meyers

Websites or documents that exist digitally. There's digital artwork that's becoming a much more important part of that scene. It's hard to figure out.

James Early

The philosophy and the categorization change dramatically for people involved in folklore, folklife and grassroots cultural documentation, and indigenous communities — from the sort of iconic and masterpiece orientation to how it is integrated into their daily lives.

We are dealing with communities on the margins in one way or another. Their culture or their aesthetic perspectives or their knowledge systems or their languages are not seen as valuable. Since their material circumstance is less advantageous than others, they

are less in a position to figure out how to have a kind of praise and appreciation perspective.

In that regard, you mentioned native languages in the United States not only for how they are spoken by recent speakers but how they are indices to different perspectives about life that might become part of our status quo, although they have an origin in the “others.” The recent work about the use of native languages and codes in World War II is an example, where something peculiar of the “other” became something that identified all of us and had a contemporary context beyond its own historical trajectory.

Ellen Lovell

In the kinds of traditional communities you’re talking about, it doesn’t fit to say let’s have an icon or a poster child for that culture.

James Early

Which is not to say that in some other perspectives that is not useful. An either/or construct is always problematic.

Larry Reger

We would all be well served to try to find a way to make icons out of things that we generally don’t think of. I’ll give you an example.

We’ve tossed around for a long time trying to do a special using Ken Burns and how the photographs and the letters that he used in *Civil War* and *Baseball* were preserved. And I think this can be done in other communities, grassroots communities. We have to get better at telling people in a compelling way why these things are important. It can be done in anthropology,

with works of art, works on paper, and works of art on paper, and certainly in the digital field with historical objects, with natural science collections. The question is not so much what icons are left to preserve, but how do you make icons in the future?

The question is not so much what icons are left to preserve, but how do you make icons?

Ellen Lovell

How do you make an icon?

Larry Reger

An icon comes from a whole panoply of things and why it’s important to save them. I think the *Civil War* series was just one of the very best examples of how to use the media to make a case for battlefield preservation. And that whole series is now something that people view in classrooms.

Ellen Lovell

Maybe the legal battles over Martha Graham’s dances and choreography will turn the preservation of dance into an icon as well.

James Early

How do we get the public ahead of the curve through this notion of engagement? How can we ensure these things are being valued from the beginning? The problem is: these are things that have been around a long time and we have not paid attention to them. We need to foster a preservation that includes the social valuing and processing that gets manifested in languages or certain kinds of artifacts, tangible or intangible.

Ellen Lovell

Some of you have mentioned some policy issues: community revitalization, sprawl, the continuity of heritage even as it changes in a modern society. So let's talk a little bit about what is the role of preservation in public policies. Or, conversely, how are public policies affecting preservation?

Peter Brink

Certainly in the public policy arena one of our major goals is various incentives for private owners to rehab and take care of buildings primarily but also property. So you have something like the Historic Preservation Tax Credit that had its first iteration in 1976. It is still there with a 20 percent tax credit if somebody rehabs in a way that preserves the architectural character of an income-producing building. One of our goals is to protect that. The tax credit has generated over \$2 billion of private investment in this past year.

Another goal is to have a parallel system that would provide a similar tax credit for homeowners of historic houses when they rehab in a way that again protects the character of that house and they live in it. The goal is to do this in a way that's available for moderate income folks as well as the middle class. We have been fighting for the homeowners' tax credit in Congress for six years.

Ellen Lovell

Any other policy issues?

Peter Brink

Certainly the Smart Growth area involves policy issues. That's where we team up with environmental groups and groups involved in public transportation

in relation to highways (how you shift the way you travel so that it's more supportive of existing communities). We try to restructure incentives so that there's more reason to vitalize existing communities as opposed to the centrifugal force of going out into the countryside and building anew.

Larry Reger

There is a public policy regarding preservation. No one has researched it, but it exists. It is what we are doing. It's pretty clear that the public, in the broadest context, values preservation. Look at how the collecting institutions invest a lot of money. There are funds at the local level, at the state level, at the private level, from foundations. This is a measure of how these things are valued. There is a growing awareness of the importance of preservation. The term *preventative conservation* developed out of the field and is something that people can understand. You know, for example, you don't put newspaper in sunlight. It's very simple.

For a number of years the library people crumbled brittle books in front of the Congressional Appropriations Committee, and eventually the point got through that you needed preservation or we are going to lose the heritage.

Now, as far as preservation affecting other public policy, again, we need to better convey to people that you can't develop public policies if you don't understand what's gone on in the past. Things are what contain the memory and people unleash that memory.

Ellen Lovell

You seem to be saying that we have public policies on preservation —

Larry Reger

Oh, clearly we do.

Ellen Lovell

— but we haven't articulated them. We have practice that hasn't been described as policy.

Larry Reger

Having been a lawyer, I use an analogy to the law. In our country, we tend to develop public policy by the case law method. Whatever we do over a period of time becomes policy. Whereas in Europe and especially the Scandinavian countries, they actually come up with a public policy first, and then test it over time. In our country we don't tend to see what is in fact our public policy at the moment. There is one. I mean, there is just no question in my mind. There is a public policy about arts. There is a public policy about culture. There is a public policy about preservation. But these policies are not very well articulated.

In our country, we tend to develop public policy by the case law method.

Another policy area is the whole issue of intellectual property. That's the thing that's begun to make collecting institutions see their collections as assets. And as intellectual property law evolves, it will have a direct effect on what gets preserved — what gets attention within a collection and what doesn't. Because if an object or artifact can be seen as an asset, it's going to have more attention paid to it. It's the story of the Hollywood studios. Suddenly they became more preservation conscious once their film libraries became assets, because now they have rights

to them for 70 years. They're going to put money into preservation if they can make money off it. Libraries and museums are no different.

Ellen Lovell

So that seems to suggest a different framing of what of our country's assets — our public goods — are. We should conserve so that these assets continue to be used and produce more intellectual property or more products.

James Early

We need to be very careful of the overuse of economic analogies and frameworks, which tend to downplay the intrinsic issues in favor of a kind of instrumentalist approach. Will somebody pay for it? Can you make money off of it? Now, we can't dismiss that. That's a fundamental part of the culture we live in. But it seems to me that our community of interest is now in tow to that kind of ideology, and very few are putting on the brakes to say, whoa, this thing is being pulled the wrong way. So we look for private partnerships, and we have ourselves sort of hostage to —

Ellen Lovell

Economic impact?

James Early

As a policy orientation, our major challenge at this moment — around culture, preservation, conservation — is to reverse that framework.

In fragile or marginalized groupings, one of the issues is: what are those normative values and practices in the community that the more formal public sector structure should pay attention to? Right now we

regard policy as what the professional top, mostly government, should be doing for, about, and with the people, rather than a more dialogical construct of how the two feed one another. That's a more culturally democratic construct. At the same time, we cannot ignore the particularity of government's unique vantage point that no other sector has. Government has a commensurate responsibility and a difficulty of executing policies as well.

Ellen Lovell

Do the rest of you agree with James that economic impact or instrumental arguments are driving public policy vis-à-vis preservation? Where are some of the other places where preservation can have common cause with another sector to affect public policy?

Jack Meyers

Those factors are driving public policy. This is certainly so if you think of the whole cultural tourism angle — which is the way a lot of preservation of buildings is done — or the argument that whole communities think of preservation as an economic engine. I'd like to believe that there are ways to think outside that economic box. But one has to be conscious of it as you're thinking through policy.

Larry Reger

It's a big factor, but I also think that there's another issue — the only term I think of right now is *use*. It has to be useful in some way. For example, preserving the barbed wire fence at the Manzanar internment camp becomes useful for the Japanese-American community, they speak out and then it's saved.

Another very interesting example is the Smithsonian's

Center for Materials Research and education – the old Conservation Analytical Lab – that is proposed for elimination. Also threatened are the Conservation Center for the Zoo in Front Royal and apparently some museum libraries. The idea is that these resources need to be redirected toward public education.

That is our fault because we don't tell people that historic preservation is an exception. We don't tell people how and why these things are useful and why we have the perfect economic model: you invest in preserving things because over a period of time they appreciate in value. Both monetarily, but more importantly, their value aesthetically, socially, historically increases. We have one of the few appreciating capital assets and we don't play on that.

Peter Brink

I disagree in some regard, although I certainly agree when we're talking about art, monuments, and places that are of such transcendent importance that private philanthropy or other mechanisms should support them and make them viable. But when you get out into communities and you're talking about neighborhoods and downtowns, economics in real estate are central to succeeding. The whole game is the dynamic relationship, so that you don't end up with a sellout to tourism, losing the real qualities you cared about because everything is now a t-shirt shop and a quick bus tour. On the other hand, if you don't address public needs, you end up with a ghost town or everything torn down for some big development.

James Early

I think we need to recalibrate the discussion. It's

overdetermined by the instrumental ends of economic development rather than by the intrinsic value, defined in the belly, in the heart. We need to recalibrate what is the leading edge.

Since the Smithsonian has been put on the record, let me further put it on the record. Because of the instrumentalist drive, you hardly hear the mandate of the institution anymore, which is the increase and diffusion of knowledge. We have to raise money. We don't want to look at interpretation. We don't value these esoteric, isolated, insular research components that ultimately get manifested in public good. Therefore, in a climate where money, economics, and that kind of value predominates in the discussion, it's easy to lop off something like the conservation laboratory because you won't hear any outcry.

In a climate where money, economics, and the kind of value predominates in the discussion, it's easy to lop off something like the conservation laboratory, because you won't hear any outcry.

Ellen Lovell

Where should preservation be making common cause with other sectors? And with what other policy arenas?

James Early

In my arena, it's with communities. There are cultural indices and studies that look at factors such as what you're losing that you're no longer doing. Or how other communities value what you've been producing. And you get a different calibration at both ends of a lateral policy structure rather than a notion of a vertical policy structure just from the top down.

Peter Brink

I would agree very much that one fulcrum for partnerships is the welding of communities and neighborhoods, and that gets us into the Community Reinvestment Act and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. The flip side of that is sprawl, and that gets us into partnerships with land conservation and environmental groups. The third is the cultural/artistic value — especially in historic sites that need to be looked at holistically so that the collections, the diaries, the letters, the human dimension — are both conserved and brought to light in a way that it is shared with the people visiting there. I am talking about the whole story and the whole experience.

Jack Meyers

One of the areas to become connected with is the educational world. In a sense, if an institution is making a tradeoff between its educational programming and its conservation programming, that's a sign that we're not making our message clear to the educational community as to why they need something to interpret. It won't be useful educationally if it isn't in good shape.

As you begin long range conservation of an historic or archeological site, what's the point if you can't also interpret that for your audience and your community and get the educational community involved. Conservation and preservation are important, even down to the business of just explaining what conservators do. There are very few exhibitions about conservation, but whenever we have one —

Ellen Lovell

They're popular.

Jack Meyers

— they're jammed. In Britain, the National Trust funded the Unified Conservation Center for the museums around Liverpool, and they decided to also open a public exhibition space where people could watch the conservators at work. That's been incredibly popular. It won the ICOM Museum of the Year Award. It's a story we're not making.

Ellen Lovell

When you say "education," you mean good curricular materials, information for teachers, the whole range of bringing teachers and students into understanding why preservation is important.

Jack Meyers

That's part of it, but I also mean tying into the whole education policy world and education policy. Who is getting educated about what, and when they're learning it, and how they're learning it.

James Early

It's fusing it in the educational system, but it will be the rare pre-collegiate institution that offers a course in preservation or conservation. These things should come in the literary arts, as well in history and civics. Fusing those concepts so that every lay person should be generally familiar with conservation would set a better basis for merger.

Ellen Lovell

As we look out there on the horizon what I see is preservation and land preservation making common cause together in some very important ways. The beginning of the Lands Legacy funding in the last Congress was probably the first time I know of that

the preservation and land conservation constituencies got together and realized that they both could benefit.

Peter Brink

This happened 50 years ago in England with the establishment of the National Trust, which is about land and buildings together.

Ellen Lovell

We have more to learn internationally than this discussion is going to allow us.

Larry Reger

Let's not forget the visitors. We mentioned exhibits and the media generally as education tools.

Ellen Lovell

So you've actually led to my last question. Are we targeting the money where we're getting the most results? What is the state of research and publication? And then finally that question we started with: how can we enrich public understanding and create bigger constituencies?

Peter Brink

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is, of course, going through a transition off of federal appropriations. We're in our third year of not receiving an appropriation, and we're finding it challenging but also invigorating and we're clear that that's what we should do.

The short-term problem for preservation is that current budget proposals from the Bush Administration would cut back from this year about \$100 million in key funding. This includes Save America's Treasures.

[Editor's Note: On May 7, 2001, the Administration amended its budget request to Congress by requesting an additional \$30 million in Historic Preservation Funding, specifically for Save America's Treasures.] The short-term problem also includes going back to lower levels for the State Historic Preservation Officers, cutting out the historically black colleges and communities, and cutting out the shared pool for preservation and land conservationists.

Ellen Lovell

That's the Lands Legacy program?

Peter Brink

About \$60 million in that appropriation was open to preservation, and that could greatly increase the vigor of the public side especially for preservation.

The reasoning is that it's more important to have a major tax cut now than it is to fund many things and at a more robust level. So the Historic Preservation Fund is one among many things that is being cut back in order to support the big tax cut.

Ellen Lovell

And remember that fiscal '99 and '00 and '01 provided the first significant increases in historic preservation in at least 20 years.

Peter Brink

Since the Carter Administration.

Larry Reger

I understand why there is not as much bipartisan support at the national level, and state and local levels, for the performing arts. But I don't understand why in

preservation this is the case, because frankly we are more conservative than we are liberal, if you want to use those terms. And in all the years I've been here, it's just totally baffling to me why this is the case.

Ellen Lovell

May I also observe that sometimes things are cut when the constituency is viewed to be less than powerful?

Peter Brink

It is a great enigma. Our survey shows that a majority of our 250,000 members are Republican. Where the traditional support by conservatives for preservation has broken down for us is when you get into regulatory issues, local historic preservation commissions, and other land use controls. And that's where many conservatives part company even though in their own lives they may be wonderful preservationists.

Larry Reger

Right. But that's not the case outside of the land issue. I mean there is really no argument that I can see in other areas.

Peter Brink

Outside of land and local historic districts, national register listings —

Ellen Lovell

But Peter did bring up part of the argument, earlier. And that was the fear that if you enter into covenants or you get a tax credit or you're part of the regulatory part of this, that somehow everything is frozen in place and it takes away your American freedom to do what you want to do.

James Early

It's in a much more amorphous and difficult area when you think about American identity and progress. There's always something new to be made, if not sold. I don't know who does it better. In a broad public sense there has been a fostering of appreciation for identity and national outlooks in the built environment, in the folkways, and in other kinds of national perspectives.

But here we speak in broad, rather thin ideological terms about being an American, and we're very unsettled in that conversation about locating it more concretely. Every country has a mythology. It is a fundamental challenge for us is to pierce that mythology, not in a dismissive way, but in a way of turning the soil to say, "let's really get down more to what it is that gives us some value through preservation and conservation." That's a philosophical argument which we have been too tender to have because we are concerned that the politicians will turn off the economic faucets.

Ellen Lovell

We have some unresolved conflict between those of you who say public understanding is better, or we're doing better as field, and those of you say basically that the public doesn't understand and isn't aware of preservation. I don't know that we can resolve that, but perhaps we could add some more reflections or nuance to it.

Our measurement and ideal is the environmental movement, and that is where we would like eventually to be, where preservation is built into the way people think.

Peter Brink

Very briefly, I think we are making strong progress on public perception and support. Our measurement and ideal is the environmental movement, and that is where we would like eventually to be, where preservation is built into the way people think. It goes back to what James said of making preservation a part of one's daily life so that it really touches people in their normal lives.

Jack Meyers

With exceptions here and there, we're still stuck in the "highlights" mentality, and we're not really able to think systemically. There's a basic American aversion to that in the cultural area because of the fears of imposition and control. But systemic thinking is so important for our whole community: to think about how can we make this more a part of the way we go about building communities, saving communities, and the ways we go about funding the various institutions.

And if I can just take a quick detour to funding for a second, here I'll speak from my role as a private funder. I've seen very little increase in the private foundation world in interest in preservation and conservation. The J. Paul Getty Trust didn't exist 20 years ago, and we've certainly put a great deal of support into this area. But I see just remarkably little interest among my colleagues in other foundations in this topic. There is an audience right there that we should

be making a case to very strongly.

Ellen Lovell

You all seem to be saying that if we can make preservation a part of how we think about our daily lives, we can also have preservation take a seat at the policy table for all these other issues.

James Early

But I think we've got to have more than one strategy. One is how to fuse preservation through other things without losing its integrity, because preservation is a highly specialized field. If we can emphasize its own integrity, again, trying to avoid the instrumentalist approach, if foundations did come together and put some emphasis on this, that would be a major factor. Local newspaper articles can make preservation issues more readily understood in a smaller township, more so than in a large metropolitan area where the subject gets swallowed up in the Style or the Cultural section and it doesn't get fused in people's mind in the sense that, "Wow, I could be involved in this."

Ellen Lovell

As I've listened to this conversation I've seen so many parallels to the arts that we could have taken the word "preservation" out and put "arts" in and heard the same things about enriching public perception, knowing that there is an intrinsic interest to be tapped out there. It does bring us back to those conversations about media and how few information outlets there are now and how they are or aren't being tapped for this part of human life that is so rich. But I think that's a question we can't solve today, but I hope that the Center will take it up in another discussion.

CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

The Center for Arts and Culture is an independent think tank which seeks to broaden and deepen the national conversation on culture. Founded in 1994, the Center began its work by establishing the Cultural Policy Network, a confederation of scholars working on cultural policy research at 28 colleges and universities.

Through its cultural policy reader, *The Politics of Culture* (The New Press, 2000), the Center set out to provide the foundation for a national conversation on issues in cultural policy. The Center's second full-length set of essays, *Crossroads: Art and Religion* (The New Press, 2001), provides the context for understanding the relation of religion and the arts in the United States of America.

A public series, *Calling the Question*, examines the intersection of cultural and other national public policy areas. The Center has also sponsored critical inquiry into arts and cultural policy through its support of the annual Social Theory, Politics and the Arts conference and a 2001 grants program to individual scholars and graduate students.

We welcome your comments on this symposium on preservation and have set up a discussion area on our web site at www.culturalpolicy.org for your comments. Through its web site and listserv, the Center provides news, information, and ideas about art and culture to a wide public.

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