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A M E R I C A N
I N S T I T U T E F O R
C O N S E R V A T I O N
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A R T I S T I C W O R K S

**AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION OF
HISTORIC & ARTISTIC WORKS (AIC)**

***JANUARY 1, 2016 – DECEMBER 31, 2018
STRATEGIC PLAN***

**Approved by the AIC Board of Directors
13 November 2015**

Introduction

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC) was incorporated in December 1972 as an organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue tax code. It is a national membership organization representing the multi-faceted conservation profession. AIC is the sole member of the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (FAIC).

Development of the current AIC plan was assisted in large part by the work of the AIC Board of Directors during strategic planning sessions undertaken on August 10, 2015, in part with the FAIC Board of Directors and benefiting from the perspectives of the members of both boards, AIC and FAIC staff members, and strategic planning consultant Robert Berendt.

Overarching issues that were discussed by both boards included identifying key, emerging trends along with opportunities and challenges facing AIC, FAIC, and the conservation profession. Some of the comments focused on socio-economic issues and opportunities to reach diverse constituencies. One such issue, advocating for conservation professionals to assume leadership positions, is addressed in the FAIC strategic plan.

The AIC board was asked to consider, primarily, membership categories and requirements, the incorporation of collection care professionals into AIC's structure, and the growth and support of networks. These topics have been raised and discussed in particular by board members, members of the Membership and Education & Training Committees, and staff over the past year and are in response to issues raised by members. The direction taken in these areas will have far-reaching consequences for the organization and, prior to making board-level decisions, members will be called on to participate in discussions and provide advice.

The AIC Strategic Plan incorporates both existing programs and services and new initiatives. The board and staff confirmed the priorities that will serve as a guide in the coming years. These priorities are reflected in the AIC 2016-2018 Strategic Plan that follows.

An annual status review of activities in relation to the strategic plan will be prepared by staff and presented to the board prior to the November board meeting.

Mission Statement (currently under review)

As a national membership organization, the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC) supports conservation professionals in preserving cultural heritage by establishing and upholding professional standards, promoting research and publications, providing educational opportunities, and fostering the exchange of knowledge among conservators, allied professionals, and the public.

Vision Statement (currently under review)

AIC envisions a time when the preservation of cultural material is universally recognized as a critical endeavor that is thoughtfully undertaken and fully supported in order that we may learn from our shared historic and artistic heritage.

Core Values (currently under review)

Honoring Cultural Heritage

AIC promotes the preservation of cultural heritage as a means toward a deeper understanding of our shared humanity—the need to express ourselves through achievement in all disciplines. We honor these achievements by preserving them for current and future generations.

Advocacy

AIC is the voice for cultural heritage preservation. We advocate for responsible public policy founded on the enduring evidence of human imagination, creativity, and achievement.

Professionalism

AIC supports the provision of conservation services by professionally qualified individuals who adhere to a code of ethics and guidelines for practice.

Education and Lifelong Learning

AIC promotes the understanding of the values and contexts of our cultural heritage and encourages informed decision-making in conservation. We advance the attainment of knowledge of materials and technologies and mastery of conservation techniques. We are dedicated to service to the fields of preservation and conservation, research, sharing knowledge with others, and professional development.

Service to Members

AIC welcomes any individual, organization, or institution to become a member. We encourage education and networking for professionals, allied professionals, and individuals interested in supporting conservation. We provide and develop services that are responsive to the professional needs of our members.

Governance

AIC practices the strategic management of our organization, reflecting our responsibilities to our membership, allied professions, partners, the public, and our cultural heritage preservation mission.

Situation Analysis

The following observations, trends, developments, and indicators drawn from strategic planning discussions and recent events and activities serve to describe key considerations that are likely to influence AIC's direction and success over the next three years.

THE ECONOMY AND SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATION

- Political and economic realities indicate little support for funding the arts and culture in future years. This along with the uneven economic recovery will continue to adversely affect conservation practice in all settings.
- Growing numbers of conservators and shifting opportunities in institutions have led to more conservators entering private practice, thus more training in business, administrative, and marketing skills will be needed.
- A limited universe of private foundations support conservation education, research, and practice, and they will continue to adjust their priorities and giving patterns based upon their individual areas of interest.

NEED AND DEMAND FOR CONSERVATION SERVICES

- The need and demand for conservation services will continue to outstrip financial resources available to support the delivery of these services.
- The growing and changing impact of emerging technologies and expectations for instant access to information will continue to be an important consideration for conservators, their clients, the institutions they serve, and the public-at-large.
- University-based degree-granting programs in conservation continue to be in demand and are responsive to emerging disciplines.

AWARENESS

- Awareness and appreciation of conservation, and its role in keeping collections accessible as core resources, is lacking among many leaders of art, science, and humanities institutions.
- A perception by the general public that conservation practice is limited to major art museums is only beginning to change.
- Public awareness of conservation is gradually expanding, in part due to increasingly informed coverage by the press and a greater use of technology and social media showing conservation activities in labs, public spaces, and archaeological sites.
- Major international and national political and military conflicts that have destroyed, and even specifically targeted, cultural heritage is increasing awareness of the fragility of cultural heritage and the need for protection and preservation.

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Conservators in many specialty areas characterize the profession as having made many advances (principally as the result of the application of new and emerging technologies), but also claim that the profession suffers from a sense of disparity between institutional and private conservators and from a range of traditions and practices in conservation internationally.
- Conservation departments are being pressured by institutions focusing on public outreach to increase production, without a commensurate increase in staff levels, rather than to engage in research and study.
- There is a recognized need among conservators for a cross-disciplinary approach and recognition of the importance of expanding relationships with allied professionals.
- An awareness of the community-based and interdisciplinary nature of conservation today is increasing, along with the need to have buy-in from many different stakeholders.
- Climate change and concern over the loss of both national and cultural heritage highlights the need for collaborations with environmental conservation organizations.
- While the Foundation has operated for more than forty years, its operations, purposes, and priorities are not particularly well understood in the conservation community, even within the ranks of AIC.

2016-2018 Goals and Strategies

All the goals below reflect agreed on priorities for AIC, and the order in which they are listed in the strategic plan does not indicate a greater or lesser level of importance.

Goal I

Enhance Member Services

As a professional membership organization defined by the tax code 501(c)(6), AIC's primary function is to serve its membership. Conservation professionals form the core of AIC and significantly influence its direction, goals, and activities. AIC members serve in specialty groups and networks, on committees and task forces, and elect AIC's board, in addition to providing ideas for AIC leadership to consider for improving AIC and advancing the field. AIC members also contribute content for workshops, the annual meeting, and publications. In support of its members, for whom AIC exists, AIC will continue to enhance membership benefits and services.

Strategies

- Continue to increase membership through pro-active retention and recruitment efforts and broadening AIC's membership base, with the knowledge that outreach to young conservators and related professionals is increasingly important as the profession matures and changes, and as the needs of cultural heritage also change.
- Review and revise membership categories, names of categories, and requirements for peer-reviewed membership.
 - Create a working group to assess options, engage in discussions with members, and make recommendations to the AIC board of directors.
 - Create and introduce the use of a mark with an accompanying licensing agreement (a legal document laying out terms and conditions for use) and member use policy and procedures documents.
 - Once the categories and requirements are member approved and implemented, evaluate and refine new requirements.
- Determine how to incorporate collection care specialists into AIC's structure.
 - Create a working group to assess options, engage in discussions with members, and make recommendations to the AIC board of directors.
 - Coordinate recommendations with the working group charged with peer-review requirements.
 - Once the categories and requirements are member approved and implemented, evaluate and refine new requirements.
- Develop guidelines for creating and supporting AIC networks and assess proposals from either specialty groups or committees to become networks.
- Encourage a progression in membership through Fellow, with incentives for maintaining peer-reviewed status.
- Continue to refine and enhance communications with members regarding AIC and FAIC activities by assessing each tool/method and how each can be used most effectively.
- Continue to explore benefits programs that will aid AIC members, including online platforms that foster member-to-member communication both nationally and internationally.

Goal II

Advocate for the Field

With no indication that federal and state support will be increasing in the coming years, AIC will continue to devote as many additional resources as possible to strategic legislative advocacy and outreach efforts. The goal is to support the work of AIC members as well as to ensure the long-term care of the world's cultural heritage.

Strategies

- Position AIC and FAIC, according to our strengths, in national and international emergency response efforts for cultural heritage. Continue to work in cooperation with other international, national, and state emergency response organizations and funding agencies to address emergency preparedness and response issues.
- Continue to strengthen collaborative relationships with allied organizations to increase stature in the arts and humanities community.
- Participate in national efforts to shape policy and programs that strengthen conservation of cultural heritage.
- Continue to inform members of congressional actions that threaten funding for the arts and culture and provide alerts (templates for letters, etc.) for action to be taken.
- Continue to encourage members to attend American Alliance for Museums, National Humanities Alliance, and Americans for Arts Advocacy Days and provide support as needed.
- Promote the value of AIC peer-reviewed membership internally and externally by articulating and disseminating what it means to be a conservation professional.
- Continue to develop outreach activities for allied professionals and the public of all ages, through K-12 programming and other means, and encourage and support member participation in outreach activities.
- Provide AIC members with additional materials to conduct outreach as part of a “branding” campaign about what it means to be a professional conservator.
- In conjunction with FAIC, advocate for the field with the goal of garnering increased awareness and support in the private sector.

Goal III

Provide Educational Opportunities to Advance the Field of Conservation

The AIC, working with the FAIC Professional Development program, will review the educational opportunities available within the field and work toward developing, expanding, and supporting such opportunities. The AIC and FAIC will continue to refine and expand their professional development programs to serve AIC members and to attract other professionals involved in the care of cultural heritage. Also see separate FAIC Strategic Plan for Professional Development.

Strategies

- Continue ongoing evaluation of current continuing educational opportunities, such as the AIC Annual Meeting; evaluate needs for additional programs; and develop, implement, and support programs that enable members to remain informed of recent advances in the care of cultural heritage.
- Work with FAIC to provide quality conservation education opportunities nationally with an emphasis on mid-level professional development.
- Develop and support high quality training methods utilizing advanced educational tools and pedagogy to broaden accessibility to participants in a cost-effective manner, such as webinars to communicate new conservation ideas and techniques.
- Continue to develop partnerships, leveraging resources to achieve maximum impact of education programming through collaborations with other organizations and institutions.

Goal IV

Develop and Promote Professional Standards for Members

As the profession of conservation evolves, the AIC Code of Ethics, Guidelines for Practice, and Commentaries to the Guidelines for Practice become increasingly important documents for the profession of conservation and the broader cultural community. Establishing standards that both define and guide the field of conservation encourages professional growth and assures a major role for conservators in efforts to preserve cultural material.

Strategies

- Create a task force to review and provide to the AIC board recommendations for revisions to the *Guidelines for Practice* and *Commentaries*.
- Heighten awareness of environmental sustainability in all conservation practices.
- Develop position statements, as necessary, to reinforce AIC's mission and goals as they relate to issues impacting the field and provide these position statements to the public, allied professionals, and decision-makers.

Goal V

Increase AIC Information Resources

High quality AIC print and electronic resources are critical to effectively serve AIC's membership, in addition to the broader conservation community, allied professionals, and the general public. AIC will continue to improve its information resources through regular review and adherence to policies that provide consistency, assure quality, and maintain standards.

Strategies

- Continue to create, enhance, and maintain electronic and print information resources to serve an international conservation community, allied professionals, and the public.
- Collaborate with FAIC to continue to improve the Connecting to Collections Care (C2C Care) Online Community to provide collection care programming for allied professionals and to increase networking opportunities among conservators and allied professionals.
- Support the publishing efforts of the specialty groups with advice and coordination as requested.
- Promote AIC activities through development and outreach resources, including social media, and in conjunction with FAIC.
- Support FAIC efforts to develop and maintain CoOL.

Goal VI

Maintain the Fiscal Health of the Organization

AIC needs a robust financial base to effectively serve its membership and will continue to collaborate with FAIC to ensure continued fiscal stability and growth.

Strategies

- Continue to develop additional AIC revenue sources, including through marketing activities for additional sponsorships, advertising, and publication sales.
- Continue to review effectiveness of annual meeting structure and costs as the external and internal environment changes. Create a task force to develop options to be considered for meetings four to ten years in the future.
- Develop tools and marketing methodologies that will aid in the retention and/or increase of the membership base.
- Continue to update the Fiscal Policies and Procedures Manual as necessary.