HENTF MEMBERS BRIEFING – NOTES

18 February 2021 • 2:00 – 3:30 pm Eastern • via Zoom

Convened by HENTF’s co-sponsors: FEMA’s Office of Environmental Planning & Historic Preservation and the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative

https://smithsonian.zoom.us/j/83045209282?pwd=M0ZVUDgweXNYRUx4WGpxVnRndNQdz09
Meeting ID: 830 4520 9282
Passcode: HENTF

AGENDA

2:00
Welcome
Corine Wegener, Director, Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI)
Lori Foley, Coordinator, Heritage Emergency National Task Force (HENTF), FEMA

HENTF Updates
Lori Foley
1. Nana Kaneko started in January as the HENTF Specialist. Previously the Program Manager for Cultural Disaster Analysis and the Mellon/ACLS Public Fellow at SCRI. Nana will focus on building and strengthening HENTF’s interactions with FEMA programs – Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, Hazard Mitigation Assistance, and the National Flood Insurance Program – to ensure that HENTF’s services can be integrated into FEMA response and recovery efforts.
2. HENTF continues to work with states on compiling their master list of cultural institutions and arts organizations. Currently working with OR, NJ, and DE.
3. Winter weather: If you are aware of any organization that has suffered from frozen and burst pipes, direct them to the National Heritage Responders: 202-661-8068.

2:15
College closures and collections
The pandemic has had a devastating impact on cultural institutions and arts organizations across the nation and across the globe. Join us in a conversation exploring the issues surrounding college and university GLAMs (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) when their parent institution is facing a financial crisis. What might be done to protect the collections? How can HENTF members help? Come prepared with questions – and you get bonus points for coming with solutions!

Guest speaker John Wetenhall, Director of the George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum and Co-chair, with Jill Deupi, of the Task Force for the Protection of University Collections of the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries (AAMG)
Facilitator Richard Kurin, Interim Director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage and Smithsonian Distinguished Scholar & Ambassador-at-Large

Presentation Summary (see provided PowerPoint slides for more information):
Three key elements that factor into the consideration of selling collections for operations costs at the executive level:
1) Discretion
2) Board viewpoint (Are they able to see the wider field and implications?)
3) Director: Needs support and information to make a decision
Task Force for the Protection of University Collections (see slide 2 for specific organization list)

- Consortia
- Goal is to be unneeded and, if called into action, to be unnoticed
- Help people understand the ethics of the situation, how to prevent problems with deaccessioning
- AAMG plans to publish on its website a Deaccessioning Toolkit – amalgamation of policies, case studies, legal references, accounting standards and more
- Available for counsel

Reviewed the negative impacts monetizing collections has on an organization and the field

- Disincentivizes fund-raising, goes against educational mission
- Current ethics, standards, and legal restrictions exist to prevent monetization

Universities see the allure of monetization for a couple of reasons: conflicting fiduciary missions, seen as a problem solver, or a crisis solver if accreditation is threatened

University museums have changed dramatically over the years – moved from a gallery model to a museum located within the organization (cross-disciplinary)

Pandemic has presented unique problems to university collections

- One new situation involved faculty proposing selling artwork to prevent salary cuts or downsizing
- AAMD policy had a confusing impact
- Widespread confusion between deaccessioning and monetization both in the field and by the public

Reviewed the differences between strategic deaccessioning to refine collection versus monetization, which is selling artworks for cash for operations

Reviewed the misconception between quantity of objects in a collection and the dollar amount for which a collection can be monetized. Museums must better educate about this and follow proper deaccessioning protocols to remove objects that are taking up storage (and costing the organization staff time and money)

Reviewed AAM’s “Direct Care” policy (the terms care, direct, and indirect) – AAMD needs to better define what it calls direct care in order to liberate deaccessioning proceeds to improve existing collections

Advocates for the re-establishment of boundaries around field-wide deaccessioning ethics (also highlights that making your collection more ethical, such as working on repatriation efforts, makes it better)

**Discussion:**

**Question to the wider HENTF group:** What has everyone heard about this subject?

R. Kurin (Smithsonian): Reminiscent of the recession of 2008/9 where Smithsonian would get a call every week about a museum that might close and would the Smithsonian be able to take over the collection. This time, has not received any calls. Examples of Smithsonian taking over collections from closing institutions in the past include the National Museum of the American Indian and Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Smithsonian also involved with the discussions around the closing of the Corcoran College of Art and Design.

R. Kennedy (Curae Collections Care, LLC): Advocate for collections. Deaccession is no longer a bad word, as long as it’s done correctly. Institutions that are hurting have already let go or furloughed collections staff,
which causes an even bigger backlog of cataloguing data. Also note that the dispersal of collections can take years, so collections care must extend beyond just closing doors. Also need to help the staff that are going to be receiving the collection. They need help to prepare, too! At the collections level, widespread closing has the potential to be disastrous, but a great preventive measure would be to fund collections professionals who can properly account for and register collections before any deaccessioning.

S. Snell and W. Tompkins (Smithsonian, National Collections Program): Have heard minimal things. National Museum of Natural History has received some inquires, but this often happens with scientific collections, which are usually not centrally managed. Seen cases where they have even been left in the dumpster, even though there are repositories willing to take them. Have had conversations with some SI units to prepare for the “knock on the door.”

A. Hitchcock (National Park Service): NPS would only accept items that came from Park Service land. Has seen an example of a loan that been somewhere else for decades and is now back. Hear discussion of closing collections, but not on a grand scale.

L. Zierer (Pennsylvania Humanities Council): Has not heard anything, currently, but interested. In Philadelphia, there has been a lot of moves, but heard nothing at this point. Ear to the ground.

C. Reich (Institute of Museum and Library Services): IMLS has seen an increase in grant applications for improved storage, digitization support, not with a threat of sale, but highlighting the lack of collections funding.

R. Kurin: Asset has value not in its monetary value, but in its research value. Gave example of how a collection of historic stuffed birds can act as an archive of DNA and be important to genomics research.

C. Reich: IMLS has seen some success with increasing numbers of consortia. Gave an example in the herbarium community, which highlighted important type specimens. To what degree can NSF support this funding?

A. Matijkiw (Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts): A college has reached out asking what to do with archival collections. Know of one museum that is closing; have been working with the State of NY on what happens with their collections. New York museums are chartered through the state office, which complicates things. There have been some mergers but less privy to that.

R. Kurin: Good point about discretion. Politics are engaged when dealing with different government departments.

T. Ausema (National Endowment for the Humanities): NEH has seen the same thing as IMLS: increase in applications for long-term storage and upgrades. One thing heard is that colleges and universities are not going to reach out until a decision is made (any hint of closing is a death spiral), and staff are likely to be the last ones to hear anything. Extremely sensitive matter. A rumor of closure can accelerate a decline.

R. Kurin: A clever thing I have seen is where students and faculty put price tags on art in the gallery, which turned it into an exhibit in and of itself. Faculty understand it’s different from selling some equipment or acreage; they feel a duty to the collection. That’s where it hits with us at HENTF: there may be institutional jockeying and counter values and it’s tough. Violate the museum mission in order to fulfill the educational mission. Much harder to recover from devaluation of a collection.
Partner Updates
Alejandro Contreras, Small Business Administration – Shuttered Venue Operators Grant

- Economic Aid Act enacted on 12/27/2020 as part of the Consolidated Supplemental Appropriations Act (most recent COVID-19 relief package)
- Included in the Economic Aid Act was a new program that SBA is administering called the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant Program. Originally started as the Save Our Stages Act, it made its way through Congress and expanded its scope of eligible applicants to include not only live venue operators but also promoters, theatrical producers, live performing arts organization operators, museum operators, motion picture theater operators, and talent representatives.
- Entities of these types that are owned by state or local governments such as museums or historic homes are eligible to apply if the government-owned entity also acts solely as a venue operator, museum, etc.
- Releasing details about potentially eligible applicants on SBA website. Program details about who can apply, grant amount, application process, allowable use of funds, updated FAQs, video tutorials: https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options/shuttered-venue-operators-grant
- Or also sba.gov/svogrant (leads to same page)
- Program has not launched yet; still several weeks away from application period
- Program was initially funded with $15 billion to make grants up to a max of $10 million
- Working to keep a fair and level playing field, making sure no group gets a competitive advantage. All currently available info is only on the website.
- Link available under “Program details” section to sign up for email alerts about this program; best way to learn when application period opens. Releasing weekly updates about the program.

Question: Is an organization ineligible if they’ve received a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan?

If they already received the paycheck protection loan in the first draw, they’re ok. PPP was re-authorized along with the Economic Aid Act in December, so if they applied for PPP after 12/27/2020, then they would not be eligible for the SVOG. PPP is open now, funds are depleting, and that program closes on 3/31 unless there’s some type of extension in a future COVID package. Working to get SVOG open as soon as possible but will be coming up very close to when the PPP is scheduled to close or if funds run out before that. PPP has done $650 billion in forgivable loans. Interested organizations should consult with their business advisor, bank, lender, or local SBA district office to see which one is best for them.

Question: Are only state and local government museums eligible versus private nonprofit museums?

Could be governmental entities, private nonprofits, and for-profit applicants. Eligibility criteria matters more than the activity of the entity itself.

HENTF Working Groups Updates
Nana Kaneko, HENTF Specialist, FEMA

Asset Mapping
Co-chairs: Andrew Robb, Library of Congress, and Deidre McCarthy, National Park Service
Brief-out: Josh Kelly, Community Support and Disaster Recovery Section, Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA)

- DE impacted by Tropical Storm Isaias in 8/2020, and DEMA realized that they didn’t have a full contact list for cultural institutions. Through Paige Fitzgerald at DEMA, DE eagerly volunteered to be the guinea pig for the AMWG.
- DEMA successfully utilized GIS for storm response in the past, building damage maps to track storm paths, debris, and damage to individual homes and public and commercial buildings. DEMA used this digital map to collaborate with FEMA in the first-ever virtual joint damage assessment last year. That process allows states to access federal recovery funds and is the vital first step of the recovery process.
- Before COVID, DEMA started to look at pre-disaster recovery planning and quickly realized that many of their natural and cultural resources in the State had no idea DEMA existed, and DEMA really didn’t know that they existed. The issue with this knowledge gap is that post-disaster, DEMA shares information about how to access recovery funding opportunities with their partners, so many of these groups would be missing out on help when they need it most. COVID derailed DEMA’s relationship-building plans, but the AMWG’s idea to digitally map these very types of assets appealed to our State.
- So far, the DEMA Natural Hazards Section (which handles mitigation and recovery) has worked with HENTF and the AMWG to hold a kick-off meeting for DE cultural agencies. DEMA’s list of contacts from RSF 6 from their initial pre-disaster recovery planning efforts were paired with contacts that HENTF already had within the State.
- During the meeting, DEMA explained the importance of mapping these assets before a disaster hits and laid the groundwork for how that could happen. HENTF provided a data-gathering template that organizations could use to report their resources in a standard manner. We’re still waiting on many responses, but participants seemed excited about the prospect of having better access to recovery resources and seemed willing to provide the requested information. We also invited the State Technology Agency to ensure that the data could be stored and thus managed within the State, and FEMA GIS experts to ensure we could easily share the data between levels of governments as a disaster grows in scope.
- There are still many moving parts and pieces to figure out. What process do we tie the updates too? Annual Recovery Plan updates, 5-year mitigation plan updates, something else entirely? The work we achieve should lay the groundwork for a White Paper being produced by the AMWG that should share lessons learned from this project so it can be replicated (more efficiently) in other States.

Resource Development
Tatiana Ausema, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Elaina Gregg, Foundation for Advancement in Conservation

- Going to be working with the Resources for Emergencies Affecting Cultural Heritage (REACH) project group, a Smithsonian-led effort. REACH is compiling a comprehensive list of resources for cultural heritage emergencies and has established a timeline to both gather resources and review them by Fall 2021.
- RDWG adjusting approach a bit since we’re also interested in these same materials but also want to avoid duplicating efforts
- Our plan is to pull from the larger set of resources and then align them with our timeline.
- Also using results from our poll questions included in the November HENTF Briefing to inform what types of resources HENTF members need most
- One of the RDWG goals is to strategically target resources to cultural organizations, and to make sure that the right people are getting the right information at the right time,
• We identified state-level guidance as a need for state cultural organizations. In collaboration with the Dept. of the Interior, Lori put together some guidance for state historic preservation officers (SHPOs) and tribal historic preservation officers (THPOs). RDWG will review this information and use it as a starting point for a checklist and general guidance: What is the disaster lifecycle? Who do you need to reach out to? When? Develop standardized materials for state cultural agencies, state humanities groups, and state arts organizations to prepare them for any disasters that may come.

• RDWG will also work with Nana on taking a look at the FEMA Public Assistance (PA) guidance and support the development of interpretive materials for PA that will be targeted for cultural organizations.

Communications
Samantha Snell, Smithsonian Institution National Collections Program, and Sid Caesar, iTEMA

• Will be sending out additional poll questions to the HENTF membership
• Thank you to Sid Caesar for stepping up to be co-chair
• Our focus for you is getting the right information at the right time to constituents
• How can we come up with better ways for HENTF to communicate out information? What is appropriate timing? What is too much and what is too little? What is a format that can work best?
• We want to focus on improving all of our communications with each other for our respective professions as well as for HENTF
• We would like your input on someone that we can bring in for the May HENTF Annual Meeting who is a communications specialist to help us learn communication skills, to communicate more effectively as HENTF, and out to our constituents. Everyone could benefit from some helpful suggestions to communicate more effectively so you’re not inundated with so much info that you can’t even sift through it, or you’re not getting enough, or you just can’t find it.
• If you have someone you’ve heard, a speaker, a presentation that you think was really valuable and gave you some tips and tricks and lessons learned that you can take away and bring into HENTF, please contact Sam Snell (snells@si.edu).
• We’d appreciate your feedback. We’ll continue to work on improving HENTF’s outgoing communications to help them be streamlined to what we all need together.

All 3 WGs are still open to additional members. If you’re interested in joining a group, please don’t hesitate to contact Nana Kaneko (nana.kaneko@fema.dhs.gov) or any of the WG co-chairs.

3:25 Other Business

Next HENTF briefing will be our Annual Meeting, May 20, 2:00 – 3:30 pm Eastern

3:30 Adjourn