



# California Cultural Heritage Preservation Assessment Report



July 2021



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## Executive Summary

The California Cultural Heritage Preservation Assessment is the result of a collaboration between the California State Library and 19 partner organizations representing a subset of California's cultural heritage institutions.

The scope of the project included onsite examination of the collections of a targeted sampling of California's local and regional cultural heritage institutions, including museums, libraries, archives, and historical societies with special emphasis on small- and mid-sized cultural heritage collections -- especially those in remote/rural areas of the state and those documenting the history of indigenous people, people of color, immigrants, and other marginalized and underrepresented groups.

The goal was to:

1. Help a small number of institutions better care for California's cultural assets by identifying overall risks to their collections and developing achievable preservation strategies, including environmental management, exhibit practices, digital collections policy development, and disaster or emergency preparedness.
2. Assist the state in making better informed policy decisions relating to the care and protection of California's cultural assets.

The final outcome of the assessments was to develop this report summarizing findings and offering specific steps the state can take to improve the care and protection of California's cultural heritage.

Protecting cultural heritage throughout the state and investing in the arts and cultural "infrastructure" has a proven economic impact. There are multiple resources that discuss this effect, including a 2012 report from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment which found, among other benefits, specific and significant improvements in job creation, property value stabilization and growth, and cultural tourism<sup>1</sup>.

This report discusses trends we identified at the 19 participating sites throughout the state. While this is not a statistically selected sample, the breadth of geographic dispersion and the types of institutions represented, along with the universality of

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<sup>1</sup>[https://resources.ca.gov/CNRALegacyFiles/docs/cche/EconomicImpact\\_of\\_HistoricResourcePreservation.pdf](https://resources.ca.gov/CNRALegacyFiles/docs/cche/EconomicImpact_of_HistoricResourcePreservation.pdf)

several findings, suggest that these observations are broadly applicable to institutions across the state.

We identified six areas of major risk to the survival of the 19 collections assessed:

- Significant gaps in preservation foundations
- Need for training in best practices
- Lack of access to skilled professional labor
- Shortage of operating funds
- Missing or poorly deployed technological infrastructure
- Strained physical infrastructure

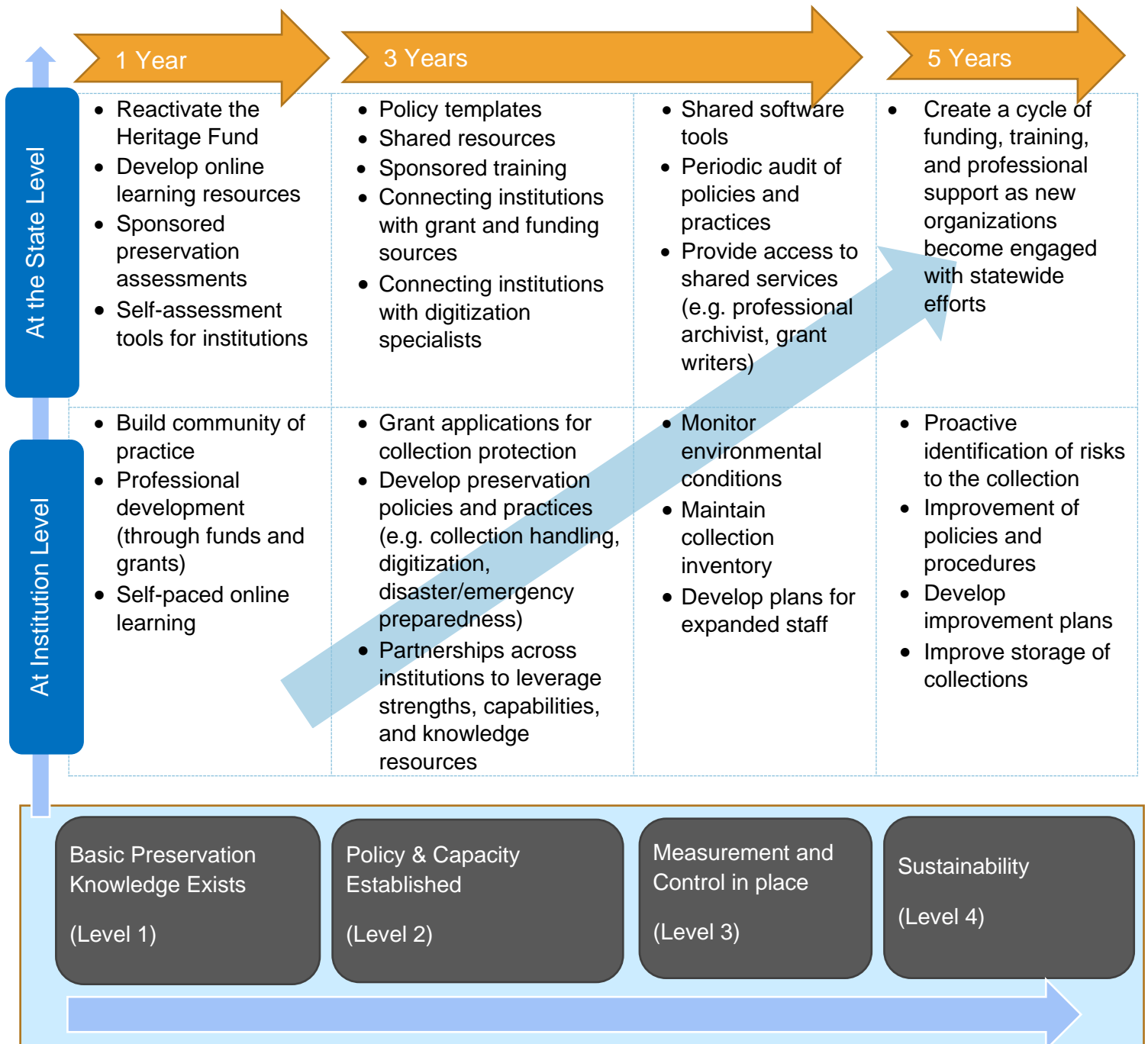
Our findings were very similar in nature to those of a separate effort, the [California Cultural Collections Protection Survey](#), which was conducted in parallel by another consulting team for the California State Library.

Through collaboration with the participants themselves, as well as a workshop with the State Library project team, we developed six remediation strategies to address the major risks identified:

- Reactivate the Heritage Fund
- Expand training opportunities
- Provide professional assistance
- Maintain online learning resources and templates
- License shared software tools
- Create shared physical storage solutions or certification

The final outcome of this project is a roadmap displaying options for mitigating major risks to the collections over time. The top row indicates steps California can take to support smaller cultural heritage institutions across the state, while the lower row incorporates the improvements that can be made at individual institutions.

## Roadmap for Long-Term Protection of Cultural Heritage Assets



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## Introduction

The California Cultural Heritage Preservation Assessment project is the result of a collaboration between the California State Library and 19 partner organizations representing a subset of California's cultural heritage institutions, stewarding diverse and significant historical collections.

We appreciate the contributions of all those involved in the project in building a better understanding and shared commitment to protect California's vital cultural heritage assets.

### **California State Library**

Greg Lucas, State Librarian

Rebecca Wendt, Deputy State Librarian

Jamie Romas, Special Assistant to the State Librarian

### **Participating Institutions:**

Bakersfield Museum of Art

Brea Museum & Historical Society

Calaveras County Archives

California Institute of Arts

Chapman University

Charles F. Lummis Home

Chew Kee Store Museum

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

City of San Clemente

Corita Arts Center

Educational Communications

Fresno County Historical Society

GLBT Historical Society

Labor Archives Research Center at San Francisco State University

Little Tokyo Historical Society

Novato History Museum

Ostrow Library at American Jewish University

Santa Monica Public Library

Anonymous – (One institution chose to remain anonymous)

## Consultant Team

Sepideh Amrei, Lume Consulting Group

Frances Harrell, Myriad Consulting

The purpose of this project was to:

1. Help a select number of institutions better care for California's cultural assets by identifying overall risks to their collections and developing achievable preservation strategies, including environmental management, exhibit practices, digital collections policy development and disaster or emergency preparedness.
2. Aid the state in making better informed policy decisions relating to the care and protection of California's cultural assets.

## Project Background

The purpose of the project was to conduct assessments of the collections of a targeted sampling of California's local and regional cultural heritage institutions, including museums, libraries, archives, and historical societies. Special emphasis was placed on small- and mid-sized cultural heritage institutions, especially those in remote/rural areas of the state and those documenting the history of indigenous people, people of color, immigrants and other marginalized and underrepresented groups.

The final outcome of the assessments is this final report summarizing findings and providing strategies the state can adopt to better care and protect California's cultural heritage.

Site selection was developed in coordination with the California State Library. Following a series of in-depth discussions and workshops, a regional selection approach was used. Priority for selection was based on the following criteria:

- Risk of disaster exposure, such as fire and flood
- Socioeconomic conditions
- Racial diversity
- Urban and Rural representation
- Variety of Institutions

Based upon that criteria, the State Library selected four regional clusters of counties in California to focus on for selecting cultural heritage sites for sponsored assessments with five assessments to be conducted in each cluster.

<p>Cluster 1 – Southern California</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Los Angeles</li> <li>• Orange</li> </ul>	<p>Cluster 3 – Bay Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Francisco</li> <li>• Marin</li> <li>• San Mateo</li> </ul>
<p>Cluster 2 – Central California</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kern</li> <li>• Tulare</li> <li>• Fresno</li> </ul>	<p>Cluster 4 – Gold Rush</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yuba</li> <li>• Nevada</li> <li>• Placer</li> <li>• El Dorado</li> <li>• Amador</li> <li>• Calaveras</li> <li>• Tuolumne</li> <li>• Mariposa</li> </ul>

These clusters allowed for a mix of urban and rural sites, ethnic diversity, and a range of institutions -- libraries, archives, museums, community archives and historic sites or societies.

Regional selection resulted in 20 sites chosen based upon applications received. One site was unable to proceed.

Institution types participating in the assessment:

- 4 Academic Institutions
- 2 Municipal Archives
- 1 Art Center
- 1 Art Museum
- 1 Community Broadcaster/Educational organization
- 2 Historic properties
- 6 Historical societies
- 1 Public library
- 1 Tribal Archives and Museum

Cultural Heritage collections represented by participating institutions include:

- 1 Japanese-American site
- 2 Chinese-American sites
- 1 Jewish site
- 1 Tribal site
- 1 GLBT site



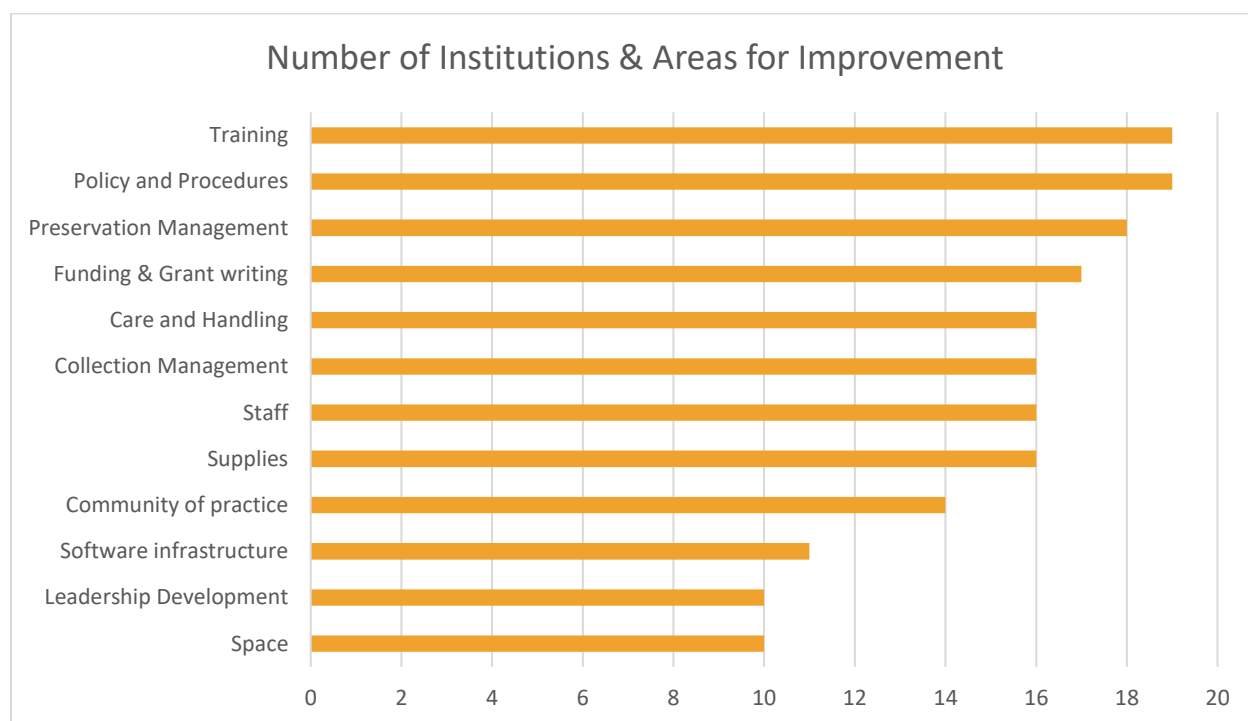
Upon completion of the assessment, each institution was provided a comprehensive report indicating findings as well as practical recommendations for improvement. In addition, institutions were provided with resources, references, and sample documents where applicable and available.

Upon submission of the assessment reports to the participating institutions, a follow up conference call was conducted with the State Library and participating institutions to discuss findings, gaps in cultural heritage protection and preservation practices, and remediation strategies to support cultural heritage institutions' protection needs.

The project team further met with the State Library to summarize all findings and to discuss practical remediation strategies to support creation of a protection and sharing program for cultural heritage institutions at the state level.

## Data

### Improvement Categories

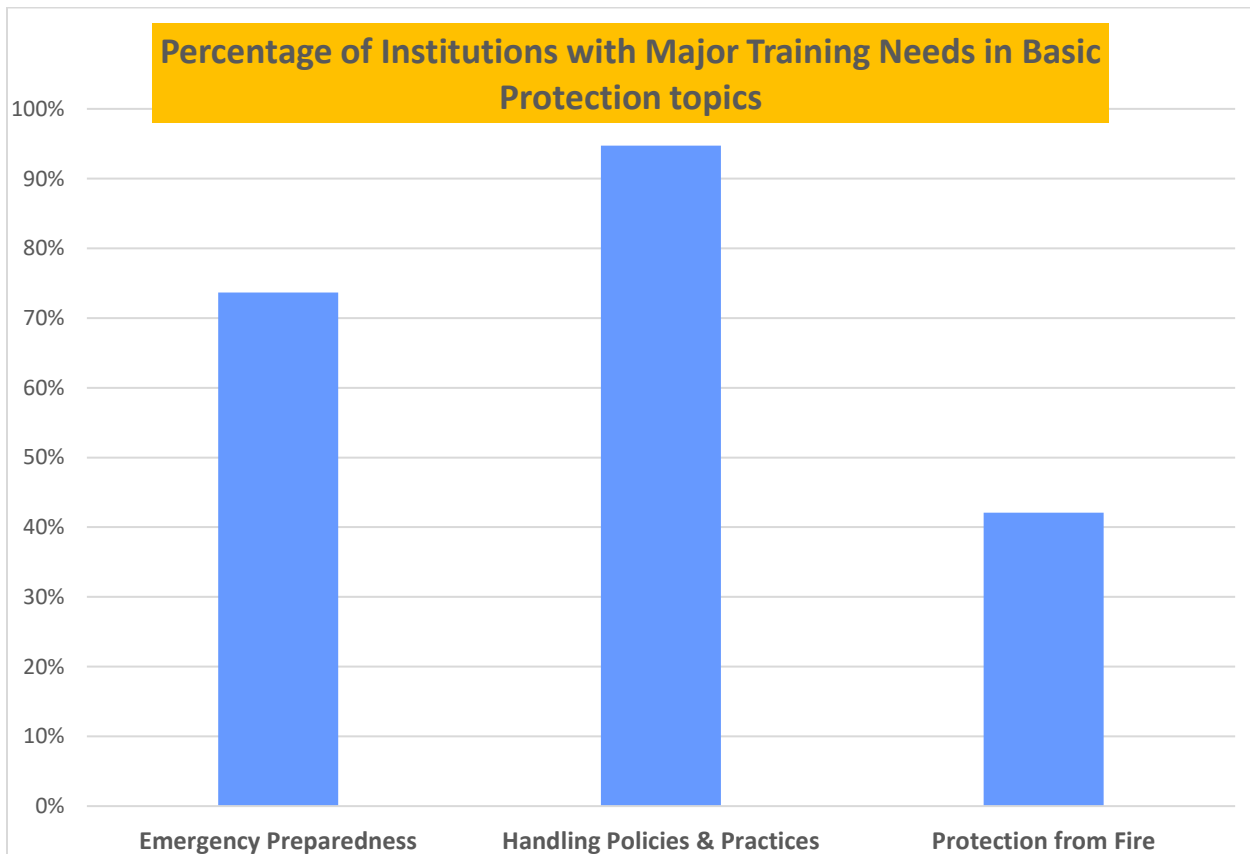


### Summary of findings:

- All institutions have at least five areas in which to improve.
- Out of 19 assessed, 10 institutions have at least 10 areas identified for improvement.

- All institutions require improvement in policy and procedure
- All institutions need training related to collection protection and preservation
- Many institutions lack training in basic collection protection subjects, such as:
  - Emergency Preparedness
  - Handling Policies and Practices
  - Protection From Fire

### Major Training Gaps/Needs



## Preservation Practice Gap Analysis

### Findings

Based upon analysis of the preservation site reports, we have determined the following areas of need are the most widespread among our case study sites and pose the greatest threats to these collections in the future. While we are unable to extrapolate beyond this group of institutions, we believe that the representative nature of the

selected participants supports a level of inference from these particular cases to the larger body of cultural heritage institutions throughout California.

### **Significant Gaps in Preservation Foundations**

The foundations of collection stewardship, upon which all preservation activities are layered, are lacking at many participant institutions. Insufficient collections management – the basic tasks of physically organizing collections and recording descriptive information about them, acquiring new collections, and disposing of collections that do not fit the organization’s mission – has led to significant backlogs of unprocessed materials, a common problem for collecting institutions.

The portions of collections that are not documented in any way are functionally non-existent. Several of the smallest institutions in the participant cohort mentioned not knowing the full extent of their collections and being unable to describe what exists and where it is located.

This issue is even more significant when it comes to digital collections. Digital objects are often distributed over several storage devices and separated from their descriptive metadata, which lives in various formats, such as databases and spreadsheets. This makes them inherently more difficult to track and locate from digitization/acquisition to storage.

The lack of knowledge of what is in the collections is both an outcome of a lack of policy development and a leading barrier to creating a sufficient policy infrastructure. Organizational policies are derived both from an investigation of mission and vision and reckoning with the legacy of the collection and what has been valued in the past.

Many participating organizations lack basic policy documents: collection development, preservation plans, digitization selection, access and security policies. While procedures that address some of these are in place, it is in an ad-hoc manner, subject to change with staff and volunteer turnover, and inconsistently applied.

While there are general resources and guides available to support policy writing, they are generally not templates that can be adopted quickly, meaning that these policies and procedures take time and research to develop in a local context.

Consider the industry standard documentation for how to digitize cultural heritage materials, the Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) Guidelines. The technical guidance for just still images, not including audiovisual materials, is a 99-page document, left to each institution or consortium to interpret to their own local needs. It is a technical challenge that most institutions outside of the very largest cannot take on themselves.

Preservation management also incorporates regular environmental monitoring, cleaning, and pest monitoring, as well as systematic migration of at-risk formats (such as audiovisual collections) through digitization. These are the daily and weekly functions that contribute more than anything else to the longevity of collections. This involves in-house condition assessments, environmental management informed by data collection, and prioritization of fragile collections for preservation intervention.

Many of the cohort participants do not have these foundational programs in place and lack the expertise to get them up and running on their own.

### **Need for Training in Best Practices**

A universal need for all participants, regardless of size or type, is training in a range of preservation and administrative activities. For physical collections, best practices in environmental monitoring and management, basic handling and storage procedures, and policy writing -- including emergency planning -- are areas that show the most need for training and responsive resource guides.

Training is also needed for digital preservation management, from basic computer skills to a higher-level understanding of the special loss risks associated with digital objects and how to reduce the risk of such loss. While some of this gap can be filled with practical technical training to understand hardware and software tools, a large part would overlap with the training in policy writing needed for all collections, physical and digital.

While some institutions had funding for professional development, the majority of participants did not have a budget for building these skills over time. While the COVID-19 pandemic has limited the opportunities for workshop and conference attendance, many participating institutions did not have a history of attending before the crisis.

### **Lack of Access to Skilled Professional Labor**

An appropriate level of staffing is critical to every preservation function, from the administrative to the practitioner level. In order to create and update strategic plans and administrative policies – the backbone of a healthy collections care program – institutions need the time to research, collaborate, and engage in institution-wide decision-making.

For certain tasks, specifically experienced staff members are necessary to meet collection-care goals. Formally trained archivists and preservation specialists, such as those conducting the assessments, can set priorities based upon best practices and set an organization on a path of improvement. Experienced grant writers can shape effective applications for project-based or supplemental funding.

Only one of the 19 sites assessed – a library within an academic institution – is adequately staffed for its size and collection-care duties. Most institutions do not have a professionally trained staff member, and many rely heavily on volunteer labor.

The gap in raw staff hours uncovered at the other 18 participating sites is the relevant context for the following findings:

Without enough time to effectively manage a collection, it grows more neglected and damaged over time. From policy writing to foldering and boxing collections, staff time is the largest barrier facing the vast majority of these institutions.

Another area of professional expertise missing in most institutions is adequate IT support. For units within academic institutions or other larger umbrella organizations, IT support was available to some extent, although in many cases it was focused on workstation maintenance and still inadequate for supporting digital preservation needs.

In the independent institutions participating in these assessments, there is no dedicated IT support. Volunteers provide what they can in the form of donations of hardware and software subscriptions on occasion, but these institutions are largely unsupported in any meaningful way. This leaves them vulnerable to ever more common cyberattacks and virus infection. It also limits their core functions of collections management and digital preservation.

### **Shortage of Operating Funds**

A lack of grant writing expertise, a key competency for securing even occasional infusions of funding, was specifically identified as a challenge in the participant feedback workshop. Identifying appropriate grants, shaping projects to be attractive to funders, drafting applications, and submitting them all require deep and broad knowledge of the non-profit funding world as well as the technical knowledge and experience to create a winning package.

For the small and largely volunteer-run organizations we assessed, this kind of expertise is not readily available. Many participant organizations were encouraged in their assessment reports to recruit professionals with this experience, and other relevant skills, to their boards and committee structures.

Beyond an inability to apply for and be awarded grant funding, many participating organizations have budgets at or close to zero for anything other than their very small staffs. In the volunteer-run organizations, a formal budget process with regularly expected revenue and expenditures was generally lacking.

Simply put: Without securing additional funding for supplies, equipment, and maintenance, collections cannot be protected from damage over time.

## Missing or Poorly Deployed Technological Infrastructure

Digital preservation, and to some extent physical preservation, requires the appropriate hardware and software to manage information about collections and keep them accessible over time. The risk of loss of digital collections is extremely high if minimum standards for reliable storage hardware and redundancy are not met. The risk of loss is also extremely high if software systems are not implemented in order to track and access the collections that are stored.

A common thread among participants who are building and stewarding digital collections is a lack of software to meet accepted preservation standards. Most of the institutions assessed in this effort rely on built-in computing tools, such as regular file systems, to store digital collections.

Very few institutions assessed have access to a storage server, and instead use on-board hard drives, external storage drives, or optical storage media, none of which are appropriate for digital preservation storage. They also lack appropriate software for managing metadata, file migration, regular backups, and discovery and access – which limits user access to them right now, as well as in the future.

Participation in statewide consortia, such as California Preservation can bridge some of the gap in digital preservation functions and is a valuable response to economies of scale in digital preservation – but none of these programs are designed to provide a full digital preservation service. They were conceived and designed to promote access for the public, not preservation for participating institutions.

Basic collections management tasks are also failing to be accomplished because of missing or insufficient software deployment. Several participants do not use database software to hold information about collections (physical and digital), relying instead on spreadsheets and word documents.

For institutions that do employ collections management software, many are not able to set up the tools to fulfill their needs and do not understand how to use them. This reflects an earlier finding -- an almost universal lack of technical support services at independent institutions, particularly smaller organizations.

While several participants use PastPerfect (<https://www.museumsoftware.com/>), a proprietary software for manage information about collections targeted to smaller institutions, there is a dearth of software options that are affordable and easily deployed by a small team without sophisticated technical skills.

For institutions with library, archives, and museum material (and often, digital versions of these), there is no one-size-fits-all software solution. Often, the set of tools each institution needs is different, and requires either a significant subscription purchase

amount or an equally large technical support budget, which most institutions – particularly small ones – lack.

### **Strained Physical Infrastructure**

Many of the participating sites are facing strains on the physical infrastructure housing their collections: aging buildings and roofs, aging HVAC systems, overstuffed storage rooms with collections piled on the floor or in other inappropriate places such as attics. Regular inspection and maintenance are vital activities for supporting the integrity of building structures and systems over time and are also less expensive than emergent problems later.

Regular monitoring and maintenance take time and training to implement, as well as equipment purchases and maintenance contracts. For very small organizations these large purchases are out of reach, and vetted vendors are difficult to identify and negotiate with. Deferred maintenance and replacement of buildings and operating systems poses a significant risk for disaster – whether through a system failure or catastrophic loss from a natural disaster.

Storage space at many participating institutions doesn't meet basic preservation requirements. In many cases, square footage simply isn't large enough. An appropriate storage space should provide a stable (if not perfectly controlled) environment, protection from leaks and floods, and enough space for various pieces of furniture supporting the full collection.

At many sites, storage spaces are overly full, and objects are stored on inappropriate furniture. Increasing collection management activities, specifically weeding parts of the collections that do not fit the institution's mission, will alleviate space shortages but may not fully address the issue.

## Remediation Strategies

The site assessment reports contain practical recommendations for each site to address identified risks and overall conditions. However, it is critical that the state of California develop strategies to remediate risks to the collections at the state level.

There is a strong collaborative impulse at the State Library and many statewide organizations that could be valuable partners in the future. Many of the ideas that follow are large undertakings, while others overlap with services already offered at the statewide level through agencies, consortia, and affiliation groups.

As California adopts its priority goals for the short, medium, and long-term strategic plans, these are the entities that should be included in order to prevent duplication and broaden the impact of the eventual actions taken:

California State Library

California State Archives

California Historical Records Advisory Board (a program of the California State Archives)

California Preservation Foundation

California Revealed (a program of the California State Library)

California Native American Heritage Commission

California Historical Society

Office of Historic Preservation, California Parks Department

The following strategies were gathered at a facilities feedback session from the 19 entities that underwent on-site assessments. Based on our experience in other states and jurisdictions, we have refined and, in some cases, broadened those initial suggestions to create the following suggested strategies.

### Outreach

A powerful and effective role for the State Library is to serve as a vocal advocate for the preservation of cultural heritage across all types of institutions in California.

An idea that the project team has raised throughout the project is collecting data on cultural heritage institutions throughout the state, in order to effectively illustrate preservation need across the state. This assessment project and the parallel survey project are significant steps in creating a body of information that can communicate the need for enhancing protection efforts.



## Economic Values:

A valuable underpinning for California's efforts is the proven economic impact of investment in arts and culture infrastructure. There are several resources that support this messaging:

- Bureau of Economic Analysis (US Department of Commerce) data on arts and culture impact: <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/arts-and-culture>
- Report "The Economic Impact of Historic Resource Preservation," California cultural and Historical Endowment, November 2012: [https://resources.ca.gov/CNRALegacyFiles/docs/cche/EconomicImpact\\_of\\_HistoricResourcePreservation.pdf](https://resources.ca.gov/CNRALegacyFiles/docs/cche/EconomicImpact_of_HistoricResourcePreservation.pdf)
- Report "Museums as Economic Engines," compiled by Oxford Economics and sponsored by the American Association of Museums: <https://www.aam-us.org/2018/01/19/museums-as-economic-engines/>
- "Measuring the Economic Contribution of Cultural Industries," UNESCO: [http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/measuring-the-economic-contribution-of-cultural-industries-a-review-and-assessment-of-current-methodological-approaches-en\\_1.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/measuring-the-economic-contribution-of-cultural-industries-a-review-and-assessment-of-current-methodological-approaches-en_1.pdf)

## Data Collections & Analysis:

- Work with DataArts to build a data set for outreach: <https://www.culturaldata.org/>.
  - DataArts is a project that gathers data on museums and other arts organizations to support better understanding of their needs and to create powerful visualizations for outreach efforts. The state could approach them to collaboratively collect data on California institutions and provide analysis and visualizations.
- The RepoData Project is a research project funded by the Society of American Archivists that compiles basic identifying information about archives holding institutions across the United States. Their data may provide another important resource for California to build upon or incorporate: <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=6cc5e9301e28453cba9737f7e8d284df>.
- Use a union catalog or collections management system to gather information about participating institutions.
  - As discussed below, a newly developed or negotiated collections management system provided by California's combined cultural heritage agencies would help many institutions meet their needs; it could also provide a pool of data about collections across the state from which to draw analysis.

- Continue to run the survey developed in 2020 on an annual or bi-annual basis to build longitudinal data about small institutions.

### **Revitalization of the Heritage Fund:**

The California Public Resources Code includes the following declaration, creating the Heritage Fund within the Department of Parks & Recreation:

*“5079. Heritage Fund; legislative declaration.*

*The Legislature hereby finds and declares all of the following:*

*(a)The preservation of California’s historical resources is a responsibility of all citizens, and deserving of continued support through private contributions and efforts and through the use of public funds.*

*(b)Peoples of many cultures, backgrounds, and abilities have contributed to the economic and social diversity of the state.*

*(c)Increasing pressures for development, increasing public use, and deterioration through age and exposure continue to place California’s historical resources at risk.*

*(d)Preservation of historical resources stimulates the economy, promotes energy conservation, contributes to the tourism industry, and enhances the quality of life in California.*

*(e)The stewardship of historical resources will further educational goals, deepen cultural and historical awareness, and advance the public’s understanding of the existing human environment and institutions.*

*(f)Therefore, it is the policy of the state to encourage the stewardship and preservation of California’s historical resources.*

The Heritage Fund currently contains \$53,000. It has not had more than this emergency minimum in at least 10 years. No funds have been disbursed for any projects in that time. It is administered by the Office of Historic Preservation at the Department of Parks & Recreation Department. Given the fund’s lack of activity, this may not be the ideal place for this fund to be located.

This fund can be grown by budget allocation from the Legislature, or through outside grants and funders. It is available for implementation of laws to support preservation, and also for grants to public agencies and non-profits to improve stewardship.

- Revitalize the Heritage Fund.
  - Use the findings of the statewide survey as well this report to support legislative allocation into the fund.
  - Identify and apply for private foundation and federal grant monies to support the fund
- Either support the Office of Historic Preservation in the Parks and Recreation Department to launch appropriate grant funds for institutions throughout the state, or move management of this fund elsewhere
- The State Library could apply for funding through the Heritage Fund to support the costs of some of the recommendations outlined in this report – such as a roving archivist or building maintenance fund.

**Statewide Outreach campaigns:**

The state can act as a supporter of local heritage events and programming to raise the profile of California History in communities throughout the state.

- California Heritage Month.
  - Launch a campaign to celebrate California Heritage using social media to provide a framework for local organizations to participate in the statewide campaign.
- Financial support for local cultural festivals and events
  - Create specific grants or funds for local festivals and events that celebrate the depth and breadth of historically significant sites and collections to the public. Support for local digitization days would help grow the digital heritage of the state.

**Model program: Cambridge Open Archives**

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/researchaids/openarchives>

Cambridge Open Archives is a two-evening event every spring where the public can visit area archives and get behind-the-scenes tours of storage areas, ask questions of the staff, and see selected objects to learn about the collections.

**Model program: National Endowment for the Humanities Common Heritage Grant**

<https://www.neh.gov/news/press-release/2015-04-20>

The Common Heritage Grant was awarded for several years and supported local communities in creating and executing digitization days, on the model of the DC Public Library's "Memory Lab" or University of Massachusetts, Boston's "Mass Memories" programs.

## Expansion of Training Opportunities

The State Library has recently sponsored a set of trainings specifically for emergency preparedness for selected regions in the state. Continuing to fund this kind of training in a broad range of competency areas is one way to support the professional development needs identified during this assessment project. These include:

- Providing a scholarship fund for already existing training opportunities and conference attendance.
- Creating an intensive cultural heritage stewardship training course
  - A short management training focused on the areas identified as high need in this assessment project and the statewide survey would have the best impact.
  - A certificate of completion could be required for other opportunities, creating an incentive to engage.
  - Course could be offered in person, online, or in a hybrid format.
- Partnering with organizations who teach relevant pre-existing curricula and sponsor them in California, such as Digital POWRR (<https://digitalpowrr.niu.edu/>), the Archives Leadership Institute (<https://www.archivesleadershipinstitute.org/>), or the Tribal Digital Stewardship Cohort Program (<https://cdsc.libraries.wsu.edu/tribal-digital-stewardship-cohort-program/>)

## **Model Program: Digital Preservation Education and Outreach Network**

<https://www.dpoe.network/>

DPOE-N provides individual grants for trainings in Digital Preservation through an application process. Funds can be used for workshop or conference attendance, or online learning opportunities.

## **Provision of Professional Assistance**

In order to meet the professional assistance needs of many small institutions, the State Library could provide support in several ways.

- Fund the hiring of several professionals to provide these services for free to smaller institutions. Other services identified as high need are:
  - Grant writers
  - Professional archivists (to support policy writing and also to process collections and set up collection management procedures)
  - IT Support

These services can be delivered using “circuit riders,” with professionals physically visiting organizations, through a staffed hotline for collections questions, or a hybrid of the two.

- Create mentor/mentee pairings between institutions.
  - Create incentives for larger, more professionalized institutions to aid smaller institutions with professional assistance.
  - Launch a mutual site visit day annually to encourage sharing practices and relationship building among cultural heritage organizations and the public.
- Launch a Cultural Conservation Corps program, modeled on the Works Progress Administration program or the more modern AmeriCorps program.
  - A large number of public records were transcribed by WPA employees during its existence. Mass digitization projects, cataloging and indexing, and metadata creation/clean-up are all similarly labor-intensive projects for which large numbers of on-the-ground workers would make a large impact.

### **Model program: Vermont's Roving Archivist**

<https://sos.vermont.gov/vsara/partner/roving-archivist/>

The roving archivist program in Vermont is funded and administered by the Secretary of State's office through the state archives. The roving archivist is available for professional consultation at small institutions throughout the state by request. She assists with preservation assessments and planning, emergency preparedness, and other collections care issues.

### **Maintenance of Online Learning Resources and Templates**

Guidelines for collections management and technical information abound online, but tends to overwhelm rather than simplify the self-guided learning process for staff at smaller institutions. California could develop a learning hub for smaller institutions to support their professional development needs. This might include:

- Simple templates for central policies and procedures tailored to the needs of small institutions in California
  - A full handbook with fillable templates would be very useful to the institutions this assessment project was focused on. The STEPS program, a version for local history organizations, is featured below. It can be adapted or sponsored for wider adoption throughout California
  - Create tutorials for implementing and updating the template policies
  - Devise a minimum set of policies and practices for a certification or accreditation of cultural heritage sites.
- An online learning portal for small institutions with selected guides and trainings produced by respected service providers.
  - Many leading providers of training, such as LYRASIS and NEDCC, post their trainings as freely available videos
  - Training providers can also create on-demand trainings for specific topics

### **Model Program: California Libraries Learn (CALL)**

<https://callacademy.org/>

CALL is an online learning portal provided for California public library staff to continue their professional development with free trainings. Opportunities are available for all levels of staff.

### **Model Program: American Association of State and Local Historians STEPS program**

<https://aaslh.org/professional-development/steps/>

The STEPS (Standards and Excellence Program for History Organization) handbook and curriculum walks small organizations through the creation of key policies and procedures to support success.

## **Creation or Licensing of Shared Software Tools**

As much of the technical infrastructure required for collections management and digital preservation moves towards cloud computing, there is an opportunity for the creation or adaptation of software tools that can be accessed and used by small institutions with no local computing requirements beyond an Internet connection and basic workstation.

Collection management software like Collective Access (free and open source), ArchivesSpace (open source), or Proficio (proprietary) could be adapted by developers for the requirements of California. Pre-existing vendors for preservation software, such as Chronopolis or Digital Bedrock, could develop standard procedures and fee structures through a state procurement arrangement.

By acting as an intermediary for these software implementations, or by designing a public technology solution, the state and individual institutions will both benefit from the economies of scale. There would also be a significant advantage in this arrangement when offering trainings: A single, shared technology environment is much easier to develop training for than multiple heterogeneous systems.

- There are several cloud-based software tools that already manage collections information and provide digital preservation services. The state could expand their usage in several ways:

- Guidance for choosing and implementing specific tools or a single recommended technology environment for small organizations with documentation
- Negotiating licensing rates for software
- Purchasing one shared license for an implementation of a technology environment that small institutions can use
- Develop a California preservation cloud storage solution for small organizations.
  - Collaborate with Chronopolis, a preservation platform developed and managed by UC San Diego, to provide infrastructure
  - Negotiate discounted prices for commercial cloud storage

### **Creation of shared storage solutions or certification**

The assessment project found significant gaps in the size and condition of storage spaces at the participating institutions. There are not many options for outsourcing this part of preservation management for very small sites with smaller collections; however, larger institutions have perfected workflows for off-site storage over several decades. California should assist in developing off-site preservation storage options for smaller institutions.

- Support the creation or expansion of preservation quality commercial storage locations.
  - Provide start-up funding for a new venture or funds to support existing locations
  - Negotiate discounted rates for appropriate storage for small institutions – for services such as Iron Mountain, discounted rates are critical for smaller institutions to be able to secure contracts.
  - Design a certification or accreditation for commercial storage vendors that meets minimum preservation requirements
- Open a network of high-density storage locations to provide service to smaller institutions.
  - An area of focus could be only fragile media that need cool to cold storage: color photography, magnetic tape media, and motion picture film.
  - Use these sites as “open storage” exhibit opportunities to drive tourism and awareness among the public.



**Model Program: Brooklyn Museum Visible Storage Exhibit**

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/luce>

The Luce Center for American Art at the Brooklyn Museum installed a visible storage exhibit that creates an engaging learning experience about both the objects and their preservation needs.

**Model Program: Research Collections and Preservation Consortium**

<https://recap.princeton.edu/>

ReCAP is a high-density storage location that stores and preserves a selection of the research collections of Princeton University, New York Public Library, Columbia University, and Harvard University.

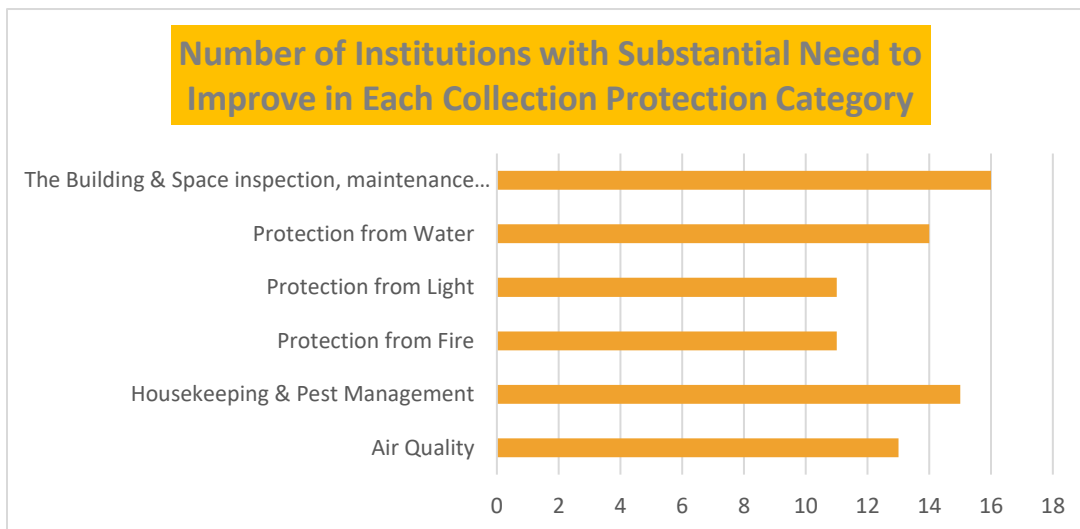
# Roadmap for Long-Term Protection of Cultural Assets

## Levels of Preservation Practice



In order to frame the preservation practice at the participating institutions, we have developed a four-level framework to describe the advancement of local practice in various areas of preservation.

Assessment of this sample set shows that a significant number of small institutions lack basic preservation knowledge in at least some areas, and do not have policy or capacity established in many or most areas. The chart below illustrates collection protection categories with a significant number of recommendations for improvement.



This indicates that a majority of the small institutions are achieving preservation practice Level 1 for only some facets and have a long way to improve to the sustainability level to be able to protect their collection in the long term.

## Roadmap for Long-Term Protection of Cultural Heritage Assets

In order to improve preservation practice in the state and develop and sustain a mature preservation practice in the long-term, the following best practices are recommended.

