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The purpose of the Oregon Heritage Commission, according to ORS 358, is “to assure the conservation and development of Oregon’s heritage.” It is the primary agency for coordination of heritage activities. More information about the Commission is available at <http://www.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/OHC/>



### OREGON HERITAGE COMMISSION OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Note: Photographs are from granted projects funded by the Heritage Programs of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, from nominations to the Oregon Heritage Excellence Awards, or taken by OPRD staff. Thanks to all who provided them, and also those who provided information and expertise to this report.

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## INTRODUCTION

As 2009 began and Oregon started a year-long celebration of its 150 years of statehood, heritage organizations expected the year to be a boom year. After all, the state's 100th birthday, in 1959, had resulted in new interest in the state's history.

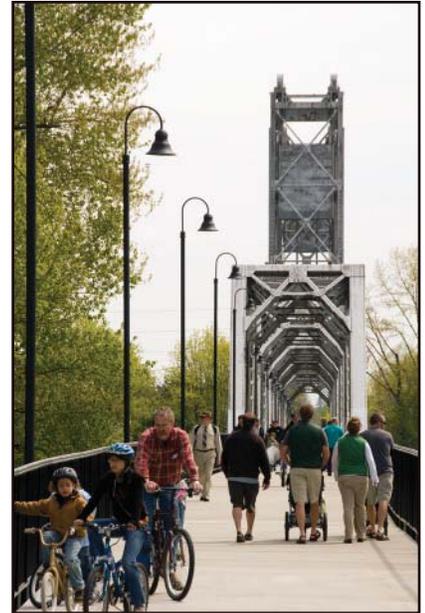
Instead, the sesquicentennial proved a continuation of recent tough years. While attendance was up at many museums, nearly two-thirds of museums surveyed reported implementing cost-saving measures in 2009 or in the previous two years, to balance budgets.

Public funding of heritage activities, such as county support for historical society operations, continued to slide. Private funds were harder to raise in the economic downturn, according to directors and fundraisers. The End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon City closed. The Oregon Historical Society in Portland reduced operations significantly and the Southern Oregon Historical Society temporarily closed its doors in Jackson County.

The Oregon Heritage Commission, whose members are appointed by the Governor and represent the state's diverse heritage, met in July in Prineville. Commissioners said they wanted to stimulate solutions to the immediate and long-term challenges. The best way to begin, they said, was to gather information about the current status of Oregon heritage and begin discussions to identify potential solutions.

In Oregon and other states, the different sectors underneath the heritage umbrella typically operate within their own self-imposed boundaries. They are aware of and use each other's resources, but typically do not co-develop programs or solve problems together. This precedent-setting report, however, looks at Oregon's heritage comprehensively, with the greatest emphasis on museums, historic preservation, historic cemeteries, historical societies, local heritage efforts, archives, and archaeology.

The report identifies individual and collective challenges and seeks comprehensive solutions. Some of the identified issues are internal challenges, while others are the result of outside factors, including national trends.



*Union Street Railroad Bridge, Salem*

### METHODOLOGY

Commission staff initially gathered published and unpublished data about state and national trends. After evaluating that information, the staff created the Heritage Assessment Survey. This survey, which also included a half-dozen sector specific surveys, enabled Oregon heritage organizations to identify their issues and describe their activities. More than 300 people responded.

More than 150 heritage activists reviewed the results at regional roundups in Jacksonville, LaGrande and Oregon City, and offered solutions. Their many suggestions became the basis of a Heritage Solutions Survey. More than 200 people participated in this survey and prioritized the solutions.

After reviewing the surveys and the staff's draft report, the Heritage Commission created and approved four recommendations it believes will begin to solve immediate and long-term challenges facing Oregon heritage. We hope the facts and concerns unearthed in this process enable more Oregonians to discover the relevance and value of heritage to their daily lives.

### APPENDICES

Many of the reports and studies identified in this report are found in the Heritage Vitality website that can be reached through **[www.oregonheritage.org](http://www.oregonheritage.org)**.

## HERITAGE SUMMARY

### OREGON'S CULTURAL HERITAGE: IT'S EVERYWHERE

Oregon's heritage is more than history, more than artifacts, more than documents in a museum. It is brick on an old downtown building, hand-hewn beams in a homestead barn, smoke rising from a powwow campfire, and sounds from a traditional community celebration. Heritage is stories about people and places, and traditions handed down by elders.

Heritage links us to the past, and it influences how we think about the future. It inspires us as Oregonians, and it represents us in the imaginations of our visitors. Oregon's heritage is rich, dramatic and sometimes tragic.

Sometimes numbers can be applied to heritage. For example, most of the 200-plus museums in the state are focused primarily on history. These museums range from small volunteer-run places, to our largest museums such as the Portland Art Museum, the High Desert Museum and others with professional staff. In rural areas, a museum may be the only heritage tourism option.

Oregon's median annual museum budget is \$25,000 -- less than the individual per capita income in the state. Most depend heavily on private fundraising, with government funding accounting on average for less than 10 percent. Demands for museum services have been increasing over the past 10 years.

Heritage is often found in built structures. There are more than 1,900 individual Oregon listings on the National Register of Historic Places, more than 105 national historic districts, 16 national historic trails, 50 covered bridges, about 1,100 designated Century Farms and Ranches, and 748 designated historic cemeteries.

Historic buildings are often the core of community revitalization. The Main Street redevelopment program exists in 73 Oregon communities and neighborhoods and re-energizes historic business areas. Places such as Astoria, Baker City and Jacksonville have successfully created local economies built around heritage tourism.

A special assessment tax program through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) provides 556 commercial building operators and



*Portland*

homeowners with a reduced tax rate that encourages restoring and renovating historic buildings. These projects involved buildings with assessed values totaling \$323 million.

Historic places are important to visitors. Twenty-nine percent of domestic travelers said historic sites and attractions were important to them, according to the most recent Oregon Tourism Commission survey (1999) to examine the topic. The Historic Columbia River Highway, Collier Memorial State Park, Sumpter Valley Dredge State Heritage Area, Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site, Shore Acres State Park, Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, and Champoeg State Heritage Area are among the major attractions, as are the state's 103 highway historical markers.

For some people, heritage is all about archives that contain unique public records, historic photographs, and special collections. Hundreds of millions of pages of public records such as land titles, budgets, reports and other official governmental documents touch each of our lives daily. In addition to the State Archives, these documents are kept in hundreds of places, some in locations that threaten their existence. Ever wonder what might happen if the public records of your property, or your ancestors, disappeared?

The state's 122-year-old flagship historical group, the Oregon Historical Society, has an archives holding approximately 25,000 maps, 30,000 books, 8.5 million feet of film and videotape, 16,000 rolls of microfilm, 12,000 linear feet of documents, and 2.5 million photographic images. Many of these are one-of-kind items that give information found nowhere else. Demand for their use is constant.

Hundreds of heritage and other organizations also preserve artifacts and archival material. Coordination among them typically does not exist, resulting in duplication of efforts and multiple copies of the same item preserved unnecessarily.

Some heritage resources are also exceptionally rare. Researchers estimate that 250 years ago, more than 30 distinct native languages existed in what is now Oregon. Today, only a handful survive.

Heritage traditions are important for every community in the state. Wineries, festivals, conventions and B-and-B's often emphasize their heritage in marketing to both visitors and locals. The heritage infrastructure enables them to have something to market. When economic times get tough, businesses point to their past or that of the community, to show they are vibrant and will survive.

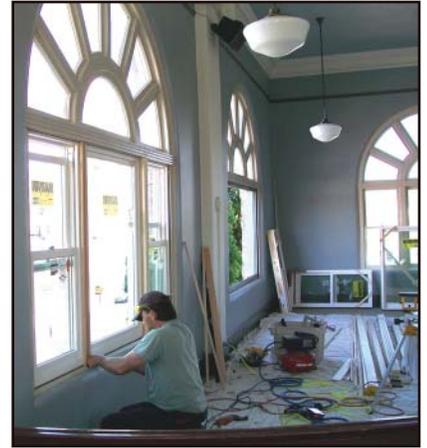


*Baker City*

At the same time, visitors can be harmful to heritage sites and activities. For example, visitors to the state's 30,000 archaeological sites could severely damage irreplaceable objects or destroy items that might be more than 10,000 years old. Unchecked numbers of visitors also can damage historic buildings that exemplify a community's character and heritage in them. Misuse of centuries-old traditions is also a threat.

Oregon's heritage benefits the state by providing work for architectural, engineering, communication and education businesses and organizations. It provides inspiration for hundreds of thousands of Oregonians, which can't be calculated in economic terms, only in the quality of life of those individuals.

Oregon's heritage is a blessing and a responsibility of the present that will inspire great deeds in the future. Yet it must address many challenges if it is to survive the test of time. This report discusses eight major issues challenging Oregon's heritage. Most importantly, it makes four recommendations for solving them.



*Baker City*



*Fort Rock*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

Oregon's heritage organizations expected the state's sesquicentennial year of 2009 to unleash an exuberant statewide celebration of Oregon heritage. However, the opposite happened. The year became a continuation of increasingly tough years that began for most state and local heritage organizations nearly 20 years ago:

- Two long-time heritage organizations closed their doors.
- Nearly two-thirds implemented additional cost-saving measures.
- Others faced futures with aging leadership, isolation and new technology they are unable to cope with.

Even those heritage sectors with clear economic value such as heritage tourism and preservation struggled to explain their economic value.

In July 2009, the Oregon Heritage Commission began to gather information about the status of heritage and to stimulate interest and support for potential solutions to its challenges. This precedent-setting report looks at all of the heritage sectors, emphasizing collections, museums, historic preservation, historic cemeteries, historical societies, local heritage efforts, and archives.

This report:

- Identifies eight major issues challenging Oregon's heritage and cites examples to address them.
- Makes four recommendations for fully solving them.
- Lists nine ways individuals and organizations can immediately address the issues.

### THE EIGHT ISSUES

Oregon's cultural heritage is a blessing and a responsibility of the present that will inspire great deeds in the future. It is a significant factor, often unmeasured, in the economic, educational and cultural vitality of Oregon's communities. It typically is a public-private partnership in communities, with no single entity responsible for its conservation and development.



*Hood River County Museum*



*Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center,  
Portland*

While these heritage efforts have survived for decades and in some cases for centuries, new challenges threaten Oregon heritage as the second decade of the 21st century begins.

**Issue One: Unstable and inadequate government and private funding.** Visitorship and requests for services by heritage organizations are increasing at a time when state and counties' funding for operations is declining and private funding is more competitive. This affects not only public places such as museums, but also activities such as law enforcement efforts to stop looting of archaeological sites.

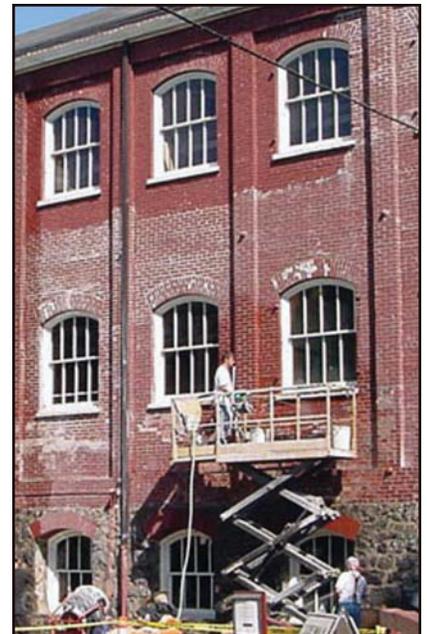
**Issue Two: Little meaningful coordination and collaboration among heritage organizations and their communities.** Heritage organizations are beginning to recognize that unless they work together and with their communities, their efforts will fail. However, there are many obstacles in developing long-term successful collaborations.

**Issue Three: The inability to measure and articulate the economic value of Oregon heritage.** Heritage generates hundreds of millions of dollars of economic value annually to the state, but statistical evidence is incomplete or missing. Calculating these numbers will help the public understand the importance of heritage to community economies and education.

**Issue Four: Changing educational requirements have reduced the time and respect given history instruction in primary, secondary and higher education.** Heritage education is lifelong. Yet heritage education in schools struggles due to national education initiatives, other demands on school spending, and the inability to convince the general public that investment in heritage education is important to the economy and the community.

**Issue Five: Shortage of people with the skills and knowledge to address issues of preservation, fund raising, leadership and technology.** Location, organizational size, financial instability, lack of leadership and the lack of interest in training has left many Oregon heritage organizations without the skills and knowledge to address their challenges.

**Issue Six: Changing demographics and expectations, including developing new leadership.** Oregon's population is comprised mostly of people who were not born in the state. Connecting its heritage to these newcomers as well as recently born natives is a challenge only a few heritage organizations have successfully undertaken.



*Thomas Kay Woolen Mill, Salem*

**Issue Seven: Limited use of 21st century communications and advocacy strategies.** With no statewide strategy or message about the characteristics and value of Oregon heritage to Oregonians, few organizations have created strategies that maximize connections with their communities or involvement in their activities.

**Issue Eight: Uneven development and use of technology.** Technology during the past 30 years has changed learning preferences, organizational operations, and communications. It has changed the dreams and expectations of many in heritage, yet disenfranchised others.

#### THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Oregon's heritage is at risk from both external and internal challenges. Some are statewide and nationwide in nature, while others are found within communities and organizations. No single solution, such as money, will solve everything.

The Oregon Heritage Commission recommends that individuals, businesses and organizations re-vitalize Oregon heritage resources by pursuing four goals:

1. *Request that the 2011 Legislature appoint an interim task force to examine state and county financial support for Oregon heritage organizations, and to develop solutions that provide adequate and stable resources.*
2. *Determine the economic and cultural value of heritage to Oregon, including its direct and secondary effects.*
3. *Strategically communicate consistent information about the value and importance of heritage to the economy and daily lives of Oregonians.*
4. *Increase the ability of heritage organizations and businesses to expand their leadership, development, preservation, community-building, communications, educational offerings, and technology.*

The Oregon Heritage Commission urges all who value the significance of heritage in their daily lives and the importance of Oregon heritage to their communities and state to work on these goals.



*Albany*

## ISSUE ONE

### UNSTABLE AND INADEQUATE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE FUNDING

During the mid-1990s, the Southern Oregon Historical Society had 40 employees and a \$2.2 million budget, principally from a voter-designated portion of the property tax. The society was viewed as one of the leading heritage institutions in the state. But as 2010 began, its doors were closed and its board was looking for new funding to again serve the public.

While the story may not be as dramatic in other communities, almost all heritage activities and organizations in Oregon are struggling to maintain funding and to gain increased support in a highly competitive funding environment. The biggest challenge facing Oregon's heritage community is the lack of stable funding, according to the 2010 Oregon Heritage Solutions Survey.

#### STATE FUNDING REDUCED

The most publicized funding challenge has been at the Oregon Historical Society (OHS). It had an unbroken stream of state appropriations from 1899 to 2003, when it dropped to zero. The Legislature renewed some funding in its 2007 and 2009 sessions, but the amounts totaled less than the historical pattern of funding 30-40 percent of OHS's total operating expenses. Multnomah County voters approved a 5-year special levy in the November 2010 elections that will provide a safety net while OHS seeks renewed state support.

Nearly all states support state history museums, either by making them a part of state government or by funding some of their operations. In Washington, for example, the state's general fund in 2009 provided 65 percent of the operating funds of the Washington State Historical Society. In Idaho, the state provided 64 percent. In Oklahoma, 77 percent. (Legislators in those states were considering reductions in support as 2011 began.)

Oregon's SHPO has remained stable, thanks to federal funding and to lottery funds from a 1998 ballot measure benefiting the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, wherein SHPO is based. Some of these funds have then been distributed to qualified cities and counties. The lottery funds, which are also apportioned to the Oregon Heritage Commission

*"The vast, vast majority of museums closing and crediting the economy for doing it are doing so because of a loss of state and/or local funding. Otherwise, it appears history organizations for the most part are scraping by, with a few exceptions."*

- Terry Davis, president and CEO, American Association for State and Local History



*Heritage Station Museum, Pendleton*

### BUCKING THE TREND

Crook County is the lone exception to declining county support for museums. Voters in November 2010 approved a four-year levy to support the operations of the Bowman Museum. However, the Crook County Historical Society and other private donors are paying for nearly all of a \$1.6 million museum expansion project.

### PROTECTION NEEDED

More than 41 percent of the archaeological firms and organizations surveyed in Oregon said increased funding for law enforcement to pursue and prosecute looting cases is one of the most important issues of the next 10 years.

and the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries, have declined in the past several years and are expected to remain flat in the foreseeable future.

#### COUNTIES FARE WORSE

Beginning in the 1940s, citizens in a half dozen Oregon counties voted to tax themselves to support historical organizations, such as the Southern Oregon Historical Society in Jackson County. However, statewide voter passage of tax limitation Ballot Measures 5, 47 and 50 during the 1990s eliminated the tax designations, although not necessarily the taxes. The decline of federal payments to counties in lieu of property taxes on forest land also resulted in the elimination or reduction of county government support for historical societies, historic cemeteries, historic preservation planning and other heritage efforts.

As a result, heritage efforts have lost millions of dollars of government support during the past two decades. County funding for historical societies declined 10 percent from fiscal year 2009 to fiscal year 2010, with further reductions underway in fiscal year 2011. Statewide, governments provide on average less than 10 percent of total museum funding.

“I’ve been in the museum business for twenty years and this is the first museum that I’ve been associated with that has received so little support from the state or from the regional organizations or city or county,” said Janeanne Upp of the High Desert Museum, one of the largest heritage museums in the state.

#### STATE INCENTIVES DECLINE, YET PRODUCE MUCH

Oregon was the first state in the nation in 1975 to create a special tax assessment, or “property tax freeze,” to encourage the preservation of historic buildings and districts and stimulate reinvestment in them. The number of participants, according to a 2008 Legislative Task Force on Historic Property, has declined significantly since the passage of property tax reforms in the 1990s. There was an average of 82 new participants per year prior to 1995, and only 37 per year since.

While the Department of Revenue estimated the statewide cost of this program was about \$28 million per biennium in “lost” property taxes, the State Historic Preservation Office found these new participants were committed to investing an average of \$73.2 million per year in rehabilitating their historic buildings.

## EARNING THEIR OWN

With limited government support, heritage organizations in Oregon, perhaps more than in any other state, rely on grants, admission fees, memberships, and other private funds for operations.

When governments reduce or eliminate funding for heritage, officials generally encourage organizations to seek more grants. However, both private and public grant funds for operations are limited and meet only a fraction of the needs. Most often, grants are available for projects only. SHPO, the Oregon Heritage Commission and the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries typically receive requests totaling 2-4 times the amount of grant funds they have available for projects..

The Oregon Cultural Trust has been able to fund 41 percent of the grant applications it receives from heritage nonprofits, typically at amounts significantly below requests. Thirty percent more applicants requested cultural development funds in 2010, but the amount awarded increased just two percent. Fewer than ten small or mid-size foundations in Oregon regularly give major support to historic preservation and heritage statewide.

The Main Street Program, which helps communities re-develop historic commercial areas, awarded \$114,288 in facade improvement grants in 2009. Participants' matching contributions more than doubled the grant-dollar impact.

## WEAK, YET IMPORTANT PRIVATE SUPPORT

Memberships to heritage organizations also provide limited support, with annual dues often as low as \$10. Admission fees are often small amounts. More than half of the museums offer free admission or suggest a donation, according to the Heritage Assessment Survey.

Private support for heritage across the country is showing signs of distress. A 2010 national study showed that two-thirds of charities reported fewer individual donors, and two-thirds noted local donations are smaller than previously.

In Oregon, philanthropy is also transforming. Heritage organizations have relied on older generations of donors who give because they want to support a local organization. Reports now show that younger donors are increasingly giving to national and international causes.

**No, OR LOW COST**

48 percent of the Oregon museums said they charged no admission fee. Another 48 percent said they charge \$1-\$5.



*Pacific Railroad Preservation Association*

## ROOM TO GROW

Nationally, a 2008 study by the Institute of Museum and Library Services showed that in federal government grant support for museums, Oregon ranked 39th among the 50 states on a per capita basis.



*Merrill Cemetery, Merrill*

## THE MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR PARADOX

While private and public funding remains unstable and totals far less than amounts necessary for full public service, service demands on many Oregon heritage organizations are increasing. More than 55 percent of the museums reported increased attendance in the past 10 years, while 65 percent reported increased use of their archives and 73 percent had received more online inquiries. Other sectors reported increased demands as well.

Leaders of Oregon heritage organizations say attendance and service demands could be even higher. They note that many people who like quality national productions on television or sophisticated websites, most of which are free, may not be aware of their local resources, many of which require payment. The organizations want to serve those people, too, and are trying to find out how to attract them.

## ISSUE TWO

### MINIMAL AMOUNTS OF MEANINGFUL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Inter-organization collaboration, coordination, and partnering within and outside of the heritage community are essential to organizational vitality and longevity, their leaders say. This challenge is not unique to Oregon. However, the current economic downturn, existing budget constraints, and lack of leadership undermine true collaboration in which organizations band together for solutions for their own individual challenges.

The question of whether collaboration is a priority may no longer be an option. Sharing resources may be a real solution to offset operation costs. Non-traditional partners for heritage organizations are increasingly attractive. Heritage organizations are beginning to recognize that unless they work together, their individual efforts will fail. Organizations are looking for leadership on strategic ways to collaborate, coordinate, and harness partnerships to meet shared goals and optimize opportunities for success during challenging times.

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING — OR NOT HAPPENING — NOW

Among Oregon museums, historic preservationists, and historic cemetery groups, two out of the top five most important issues in the next 10 years are the need to increase “community involvement and partners” and to keep “heritage organizations viable and relevant.” However, the Heritage Assessment Survey found that many do not partner or collaborate today.

The most common reasons cited for not coordinating efforts with cities and local organizations are lack of funding, lack of time, lack of current coordination, and a perceived lack of community support.

The largest percentage of Heritage Assessment Survey respondents said they have relationships with their city, county, or the state government. Fewer said they had relationships with businesses, libraries, chambers of commerce, and educational organizations, which might share resources to meet similar goals and efforts at economic development.

### COLLABORATION NOW

When asked in what ways they collaborate among one another, heritage organizations reported:

- 51% reported participating in joint planning and marketing efforts with local organizations, businesses, government agencies
- 50% reported that they post links to other heritage organizations on their website
- 42% reported participating in joint programming efforts

*“It’s easy to just focus on your survival. We are going to have to turn our eyes outward soon to connect with each other and to make sure we are connected to our community.”*

- Janeanne Upp of The High Desert Museum in Bend

## COORDINATION NOW

When reporting on ways that they coordinate their efforts with cities and local organizations, heritage organizations indicate that only:

- 48% plan/promote coordinated heritage programming or cultural events
- 43% apply for grants and carry out grant-funded activities with local organizations
- 41% coordinate the publication and distribution of brochures
- 39% coordinate local history exhibits
- 37% work together to preserve and protect archaeological resources



*Southern Oregon Preservation Project*

Cooperation in cyberspace is also limited. Of the Oregon museum websites analyzed for this study, only 55 percent had assisted other organizations by including at least three useful links, while 45 percent of websites had no useful links to other heritage sites at all.

The disconnect between the perceived value of collaboration and actual acts of collaboration (such as the sharing of resources, joint programming, online cross-marketing, and joint economic development strategies) reveals concerns over limited staff time and an emphasis on short-term versus long-term results.

### TAKING ON NEW PARTNERS

Heritage community members want more coordination of their activities, more collaboration among organizations, and more understanding of how partnerships can meet their goals, according to the assessment survey. Sharing resources, knowledge, and activity experience were frequently suggested efforts in the Heritage Solutions Survey.

The furthest collaboration can go is the merger of two organizations. This rarely happens. However, after a decade of study and discussions, the Mission Mill Museum and Marion County Historical Society merged in 2010 to become the Willamette Heritage Center.

Another example of collaboration is the City of Portland Archives moving to a building on the Portland State University campus near the Portland City Hall. Additionally, it is working with other archives to build relationships to reduce common work, such as services, including a reference wiki. Cooperative marketing efforts have been attempted in communities, typically with only short-term success.

Sometimes, partnering may take unexpected twists and include non-traditional partners. “This is a very small example, but in my institution, we are offering yoga now in the museum,” says Peter Booth of the Willamette Heritage Center. “That’s a very non-traditional museum offering. However I am bringing in a new audience that does not normally come to the museum.”

### CHALLENGES TO COLLABORATION

There are numerous barriers to the creation of successful collaborations, including the willingness of organizational leaders to reach out initially even to coordinate activities and events.

The lack of coordination frustrates some leaders. “We are all working towards the same goal but there are few shared resources among historical societies. Funders should reward organizations that share resources, thereby encouraging them to do so,” says Allison Weiss of the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Studies of archival collaborations in Minnesota and Wisconsin show they often fail because of a lack of resources, a lack of administrative support, and a feeling that the endeavor itself is bound by politics. Staff reductions and turnover, including those among volunteer-led organizations, make traditional collaboration difficult. The lack of long-term commitment to collaborations also results in failure.

Solutions suggested during this study’s two surveys highlight a need for leadership, perhaps from the state, yet with approaches focused on regional and community coordination and collaboration.

#### PROVIDING LEADERSHIP

Oregon heritage organizations are not alone in their desire to see more collaboration and coordination, and by working together, they could lead the way nationally. Directors of state historical societies in California and Connecticut noted they have no statewide leadership for instigating statewide collaboration.

Idaho, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Washington can provide examples of strategies to create more opportunities for inter-organizational collaboration. But as the director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Bob Blackburn, said “collaboration takes long range planning and persistence. Turnover in leadership and laziness are the biggest problems.”

*“What the unification has done is that it has allowed Mission Mill to concentrate on what it does best, programming and exhibitory, and let what is now the research library at the Heritage Center, the Marion County Historical Society, concentrate on what it does best and that’s archival and collection care”*

- Peter Booth, executive director,  
Willamette Heritage Center



*Old Scotch Cemetery, Hillsboro*

## ISSUE THREE

### THE INABILITY TO MEASURE AND ARTICULATE THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF OREGON HERITAGE

Many people assume heritage provides hundreds of millions of dollars of economic value to the state, but evidence is incomplete or missing. From tourists visiting the Pittock Mansion in Portland or Bohemia Mining Days in Cottage Grove, or the tribal powwows around the state, or the Pendleton Round-Up, cultural heritage tourism is clearly important.

Heritage is also essential to the redevelopment of downtown commercial districts in Astoria and Jacksonville, or the establishment of the University of Oregon's center in Portland at the White Stag block. It's vital for printers, building trades, website developers, hardware store owners, traditional craftspeople, and numerous other businesses.

While no comprehensive study has been done on heritage economic impacts in Oregon, various national and statewide reports give a glimpse of how large it might be.

#### BRINGING TOURIST DOLLARS TO THE STATE

A 2009 study for the U.S. Travel Association showed that 78 percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities. These 118.3 million adults:

- Spend an average of \$994 per trip.
- Contribute more than \$192 billion annually to the national economy.
- Typically stay 53 percent longer.
- Spend 36 percent more money than other kinds of tourists.

"We discovered that an impressive number of U.S. travelers seek out cultural and heritage experiences," said Helen Marano, director of the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries in the U.S. Department of Commerce. "...Their expenditures confirm that this is a strong market, and they are contributing significantly to our communities during these challenging economic times."

The most recent cultural heritage tourism statistics for Oregon are more than a decade old, but evidence shows that heritage tourism is equally important to Oregon. Pendleton estimates its annual Round-Up, which promotes western rodeo heritage, has a \$50 million impact on the



*Champoeg State Park*

*"Cultural and heritage travelers as a whole are more frequent travelers, reporting an average of 5.01 leisure trips in the past 12 months."*

- U.S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Marketing Council

community. In Bend, heritage tourism has been key to its surviving the current tough economy.

“This community has been hit really hard by this economic downturn,” says Janeanne Upp of the High Desert Museum. “Deschutes County has 160,000 people; we bring in 150,000 people a year, 75 percent from outside the community. So that is awe-inspiring.”

“In the summer months, 65 percent of the people who walk through the Oregon Historical Society door are from outside Oregon which told us that we are a major player in the tourist economy in Portland and that is a statistic that has resonated with a number of public officials,” said George Vogt, its executive director.

Runners flock to Coos Bay and Eugene every year to learn about distance running legend Steve Prefontaine and run on Prefontaine heritage trails. In other communities, tourists climb the stairs at historic lighthouses, drive through covered bridges and walk along national historic trails, helping local economies as they do.

#### INVESTMENT IN BUILDINGS

The 2008 report by the Legislative Task Force on Historic Property found that historic preservation is one of the highest job-generating economic development engines available. Among the many positive results it reported, the Task Force found evidence that every \$1 million spent in historic rehabilitation creates 36.1 jobs, compared to the 24.5 jobs generated by that same \$1 million in production by the average Oregon manufacturing firm.

Construction work associated with historic preservation projects stimulates local economies. Jobs generated by historic rehabilitation require higher skill levels and pay better wages than those generated by new construction, according to a recent report by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. About 75 percent of the federal historic tax credit’s economic effects stay local.

A total of \$323 million worth of projects were underway in 2009 using Oregon’s special assessment program for historic buildings. Similar projects have been critical to many communities, including the redevelopment of Portland neighborhoods such as the Pearl District and Irvington.

*“One of the things that distinguishes the small rural towns that are turning the economic corner is an aesthetic, which beckons newcomers. A town’s history is very much part of that aesthetic. Unlike the strip mall culture, which seems to have emerged from a television set, places like Astoria and Pendleton have an architectural flavor and a natural setting that makes them magnetic.”*

- Steve Forrester, *Daily Astorian*,  
Sept. 10, 2010



*White Stag Block, Portland*

Hundreds of people choose to live in and invest in historic homes or neighborhoods, thereby conserving existing city infrastructure and services. Restored historic homes help raise property values, which increases local tax revenues. Stopping to see these historic homes may be the only reason some people stop in more rural areas of the state.

#### INVESTMENTS IN LAND AND BUSINESS

Other aspects of heritage's economic value are harder to measure. How does one measure the economic contributions of the more than 1,000 designated Century Farms and Ranches in the state? They have been the homes and jobs of the same families for more than 100 years and are the backbone of sustainable rural communities and the agricultural industry. Agricultural products lead all Oregon exports by volume and rank second by value.

Heritage investment is also found in the travel roadsigns that are used by businesses to lure visitors, and in the care and interest given to heritage trees. The economic impact is also seen in bicyclists riding the Historic Columbia River Highway, or for local residents using it for their travel.

Book publishers, such as the East Oregonian Publishing Co. or Ooligan Press, know that books about local or state heritage to be steady sellers. Book publishing provides jobs and stimulates new interest in the state's heritage. Hardware stores are daily beneficiaries of purchases made by people restoring or maintaining the historic character of neighborhoods and communities. Hull-Oakes Lumber Co. near Monroe is the last steam-powered commercial saw mill in the country, and is one of the few mills able to cut large timbers.

Oregon communities participating in the Main Street program find new economic value in their traditional commercial districts by using their heritage as a development value. In 2010 alone, just seven of the participating communities upgraded 100 historic buildings, stimulated more than \$9 million in private re-investment, and generated net gains of more than 200 jobs and 65 new businesses.

#### SENDING A CONSISTENT MESSAGE

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents to the Heritage Solutions Survey said providing a consistent message to the public about the importance of heritage to the economy, education and daily living would be the most



*McNary*

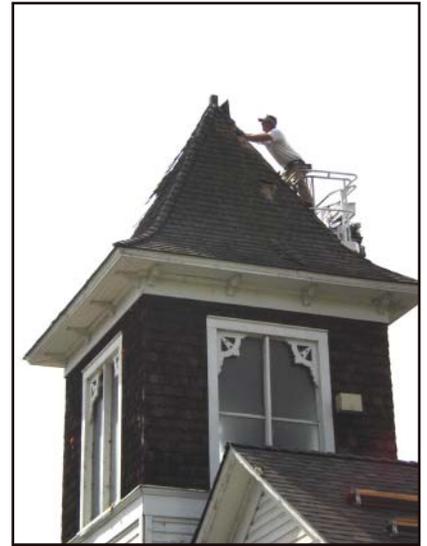
### HERITAGE MARKETING

Companies such as Nike, Pendleton Woolen Mills, Wells Fargo and others highlight their heritage in some marketing efforts. Local food producers and local breweries often use local heritage to give perceived value to their products. However, no research has been found that attempts to place a dollar amount on the economic impact of this perceived value in Oregon.

effective way to raise awareness about the issue of the lack of stable and adequate funding for heritage.

Half the respondents to the Heritage Assessment Survey said educating the public about the economic, social and educational benefits of historic preservation is how the state government could best assist them.

The full economic impact of heritage in Oregon, which is likely more than a billion dollars annually, has not been measured. It will be difficult to fully calculate, but there is no doubt of its large positive value.



*Spray Historical Museum, Spray*

*“... just a five percent increase in Arkansas’ heritage tourism visits would result in 1,100 new jobs, \$16 million in new household income annually, and \$3.7 million in new state and local tax revenue each year.”*

- National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Public Policy Weekly Bulletin, Feb. 5, 2010.

## ISSUE FOUR

CHANGING EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS HAVE REDUCED THE TIME AND RESPECT GIVEN HISTORY INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Heritage education is lifelong. It takes place in classrooms, in homes and on the streets. It helps children and adults build critical thinking skills and understanding that enables them to contribute to their community and their state.

But over the past century, heritage’s presence in Oregon schools, in every grade, has slowly eroded. Today, heritage education struggles due to national education initiatives, other demands on school spending, and the inability to convince the general public that investment in heritage education is important to the economy and the community.

### THE HISTORY OF HERITAGE EDUCATION IN OREGON

Since the 1960s, Oregon schools have taught Oregon or Pacific Northwest history in the fourth grade. This was part of the “Expanding Horizons” curriculum that was based on the premise that children best understand the world around them if they study topics from a personal, then community, then state, then national, and finally, world perspective.

History education requirements, which are included in larger social science criteria, have changed repeatedly since 1997 to accommodate standards-based education and legislative requirements for Oregon studies in economics, government, history and geography in grades K-12.

According to the National Council for Social Studies, the federal No Child Left Behind Act requirements for reading, mathematics and science assessment resulted in less instructional time for non-assessed content areas such as history and social studies. The Center on Education Policy reported in 2008, as part of a study of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act, that instructional time for social studies dropped in all grade levels. The drop was most dramatic at the elementary school level, where the average decrease was 76 minutes per week, or a decrease of 32 percent.

*“The public schools are graduating students who are historically ignorant about their own state and nation. This is a dangerous situation for heritage organizations which will be increasingly marginalized by adults without a known historical identity or sense of place.”*

- Bob Hart, executive director, Lane County Historical Society.



Paulina Cemetery

### THE SCENE TODAY

Heritage organizations, especially museums, frequently pay to transport students to their sites and charge them less than the cost of the programs they present. Schools report that with the increased emphasis on national testing, less time is spent on history and social studies instruction, including site visits. Further cuts are likely in the 2011-13 biennium, because of the statewide revenue shortfall.

Because the Southern Oregon Historical Society lacked staff, resources and volunteers to support a four-week-long Oregon history program that brought fourth grade students to their museums, it eliminated the longtime effort.

According to the Heritage Assessment Survey, many heritage organizations see educational value in their efforts, yet only 25 percent have created partnerships with school districts and even fewer with community colleges and universities. Regional partnerships to support teaching Oregon heritage and history, similar to the federal Teaching American History initiative, have rarely formed.

### CHANGING WAYS

With schools undergoing major changes, some museums use new techniques and technology to meet educational goals.

“[I]t has really become incumbent upon us to give every way of learning possible so that the visitor can choose that, whether its a single or multiple way, and then they have something to take away with them,” says Janeanne Upp of The High Desert Museum in Bend. “We work very hard here at layered learning so that it’s not one-dimensional; we really work hard at attaching many ways for you to grasp it.”

The Gorge Discovery Center began a distance learning program five years ago to engage students and teachers unable to travel to The Dalles. “We offer video-conferencing and most schools have video conferencing equipment so they can interface with our education staff even if they can’t afford to come here,” says center director Carolyn Purcell. “They can get a lesson or learn something about what we interpret here. It’s cheap, around \$100 to do that. So we’ve been able to connect with schools all across the country. That’s been good for us; we were well positioned when no one could afford to travel anymore.”

### ASKING TO HELP

58 percent of the Heritage Solutions Survey respondents said training heritage organizations how to approach educational organizations to co-create heritage curriculum that works across many disciplines would be one of the most effective ways to change heritage education.



*Dayville Historical Society*

## TEACHING TEACHERS

53 percent of the Heritage Solutions Survey respondents said working with teacher training programs at universities to teach future teachers how to develop heritage curriculum would be an effective way to change education.



Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area

*“Where area residents maintain a direct link or connection to local history, archaeological sites are more apt to be preserved. Education remains our biggest tool in maintaining the protection of prehistoric sites.”*

- Dennis Griffin, state archaeologist.

## HIGHER EDUCATION: WHAT IS THE FUTURE?

The history teachers of the future are in Oregon’s universities today. However, according to statistics from the Oregon University System, history-related study areas count for only four percent of major study areas for undergraduate degrees and just two percent of major study areas for master’s degrees. None of the teacher-education programs require coursework in Oregon heritage or history.

Some people do not perceive a degree in history or a heritage field to be as valuable in the workplace as a business degree. However, others, such as Katherine Brooks at the University of Texas-Austin, say it provides equally good communication, thinking and other skills valued in the workplace.

## EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Thousands of Oregonians learn about their heritage every year through walking tours, living history actors, plaques, and heritage events such as the Pendleton Round-Up or the Astoria Regatta. Much of this instruction is done by non-professional educators and avocational historians.

The Oregon Experience series produced by Oregon Public Broadcasting reaches tens of thousands of television viewers, and more than 25 episodes are available on its website. Southern Oregon Public Television, Jefferson Public Radio and privately owned television stations have also developed heritage programming. Numerous private and public websites contain historical information.

However, planning commissions, business developers and government decision makers may not have the history, the Oregon civics instruction or have the critical thinking skills that enable them to use heritage and history to make the best decisions possible.

## ISSUE FIVE

SHORTAGE OF PEOPLE WITH THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF PRESERVATION, FUND RAISING, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

Volunteers and staff need training in many topics: preservation, technology, fund raising, and leadership. Location, organizational size, financial instability, lack of leadership, and the lack of interest in training have left many Oregon heritage organizations without the necessary tools to solve problems.

### PRESERVATION

Disasters come in many forms, from fires to storms to insect infestations. The 2006 Heritage Health Index Report, a national project of Heritage Preservation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, found that 92 percent of historical societies, 70 percent of archives, and 78 percent of museums did not have an emergency response plan with staff trained to carry it out. Eighty percent of institutions did not have paid staff dedicated to collections care and 71 percent needed additional training and expertise for collections staff.

The majority of city and county landmarks commissions lack formal training in preservation. Planners who coordinate their efforts get little or no training because budgets are tight and preservation is only one of many issues they must be knowledgeable about.

### TRAINING ISSUES

Technical training issues include preservation, fundraising, leadership and board development, and embracing technological change.

Fifteen years after many businesses began using websites, county historical societies in Oregon have web presence. A December 2009 survey of 50 county historical society and museums revealed that 22 percent did not have websites and a third of those that did had not registered their own domain name.

Heritage Assessment Survey respondents frequently cited “keeping current with changing technology and other technical changes” as



*Cottage Grove*



Claypool Cemetery, Linn County

*“... there are fewer people from around the state taking advantage of things like the Oregon Museums Association as a resource to help build professionalism and so on. And we haven’t quite figured out a way to get resources more effectively in those people’s hands,”*

- David Porter, former director of the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon City.

major issues. Many said state government ought to increase technical and other professional training opportunities, including technical advice about building rehabilitation codes and techniques, digital transfer, archaeological permitting, collections care, and gravemarker repair.

#### MAKING ORGANIZATIONS SUCCESSFUL

The Nonprofit Fundraising Trends report showed that in 2009 those organizations doing well were not necessarily those with the biggest budgets or the ones with the best fundraising in 2008.

Instead, hallmarks of these successful organizations included:

- Funds from many sources and with a variety of ways to give.
- Proactive planning by leadership prepared to address changes in the coming year.
- More effort in donor outreach and cultivating relationships.
- Investment in development.

Janet Gallimore, the director of the Idaho State Historical Society, and Bob Blackburn, the director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, both say that the biggest challenges facing them during the next few years includes transforming tradition-bound organizations into ones with an entrepreneurial culture.

“We work really hard to make sure everyone gets some educational programming for their job here; we put it into the budget every year. Unfortunately, that’s the first thing that gets cut. This staff isn’t going to grow unless I throw them out and they get to see what other organizations are doing. Connecting with like-kind organizations is critical to not just our success but our existence,” says Janeanne Upp, president of The High Desert Museum in Bend.

#### GETTING TRAINING DELIVERED

Staff and volunteers can obtain training in many ways, often in quarterly or annual meetings. The Association of Oregon Archaeologists, the Northwest Archivists, the Oregon Library Association, and the Oregon Museums Association offer trainings. The State Historic Preservation Office and the Oregon Heritage Commission have also provided training through workshops and conferences, as well as with technical assistance programs in northeast and southern Oregon.

While the mechanisms for training are growing, many organizations are not taking advantage of them. Online training is an option for some; inadequate Internet availability in some regions precludes participation. Travel costs challenge some. Informal training in some regions is thwarted because there are no trained professionals there who can train others.

In 2010, the Oregon Museums Association, the Oregon Library Association, the Northwest Archivists, the Oregon Heritage Commission, and others began using a grant from the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services to create a possible model for coordinating preservation training.

### HELP WANTED

Seventy-two percent of the Heritage Solutions Survey respondents said providing technical assistance would be the most effective way to develop boards and businesses with the skills and knowledge to address issues of preservation, fund raising, leadership and technology.



*Rogue Valley Genealogical Society*

## ISSUE SIX

THE CHANGING POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS AND GENERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS, INCLUDING DEVELOPING NEW LEADERSHIP



*Volunteer Management Training*

Keeping organizations “viable and relevant” is challenging heritage leaders. With changing population demographics and expectations, organizations wanting to shift with them have moving targets that may stretch beyond their current capacities and resources. New leadership may be needed.

Fifty-four percent of the historic preservation respondents, 24 percent of certified local governments, and 39 percent of museum respondents to the Heritage Assessment Survey agreed that keeping themselves “viable and relevant” was a major challenge. Many said they needed new leadership and supporters to be viable.

### DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Oregon’s demographics are changing. According to the 2000 census, more than half of Oregon’s population had moved to the state from elsewhere. By 2010, the number of Latino Oregonians had risen to 11 percent of the population and is predicted to grow. Nationally, the country’s population is one-third minority, but only nine percent of core museum visitors are minorities. Statistics for Oregon museums have not been collected, but they are likely to be similar.

### REACHING THE NEW OREGONIANS

The consequences of changing demographics are many. Some people move here knowing little about the state. “There is a role for history institutions to play in helping people plug in and understand how their stories fit into the continuing story of in-migration of Oregon,” says Oregon Historical Society director George Vogt.

In contrast, some people migrate to this state because of their understanding of Oregon’s heritage and culture. In communities such as Astoria, Jacksonville and Bend, retired newcomers have become active supporters and volunteers for heritage, arts and cultural organizations.

*“For most adults over the age of 30, ‘narrative’ is a passive experience.....*

*For Americans under 30, there’s an emerging structural shift in which consumers increasingly drive narrative.”*

- from “Museums and Society 2034: Trends and Potential Futures,” an initiative of the American Association of Museums

These people bring time, skills and enthusiasm that can be harnessed to strengthen the expression and preservation of Oregon's heritage.

Involving newcomers begins by reaching out to them. In an era when technology drives both the structure and content of information, traditional organizations must reach out to younger audiences in more creative ways.

“There is an increasing segment of the younger population that doesn't see how they connect with heritage stories at all,” says David Porter, the former executive director of the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon City. “Making that connection between individual history and heritage while using contemporary communication and social technologies is critical to capturing the imagination and interest of Oregon's future leaders and patrons of the heritage community.”

#### CREATING NEW LEADERSHIP

Assessment Survey participants cited “developing new organization leadership and management” as one of their top five concerns for the next decade.

“Despite our efforts to recruit new and younger members we haven't solved the problem,” says Gary Fugate, curator of the Rinehart Stone House Museum in Vale. “What tends to happen is that fewer and fewer aging members keep the organization going.”

Regional roundup participants said diversity training at regional and organizational levels would support the transition to newer and younger Oregonians.

Survey respondents repeatedly noted the need for statewide leadership and advocacy. Potential candidates to fill this role include the Oregon Heritage Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, elected officials, and formal or informal networks that support the work of heritage and attest to the value it brings to communities.

### BOOM TIMES AHEAD?

As the Baby Boomers age, their sheer numbers tell a story of future change in U.S. society. Today, 1 in 8 Americans are older than 65. In 2034, the ratio will jump to 1 in 5. – from *Museums and Society 2034: Trends and Potential Futures*, an initiative of the American Association of Museum



*Marshfield Cemetery, Coos Bay*

## ISSUE SEVEN

### LIMITED USE OF 21ST CENTURY MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Some Oregon heritage organizations are using 21st century marketing strategies that have revolutionized public relations, marketing and advocacy during the past decade. However, until significantly more adopt those strategies, engaging a growing population will be difficult.

Only a few heritage organizations use new media (or social media as it is sometimes incompletely called) and marketing through other organizations. Some reach out to the public rather than creating programs in a vacuum. However, few have made a full operations shift that demonstrates and communicates their value to local, regional and international constituents through their marketing and communications.

Most significantly, there is no statewide strategy or message about the characteristics and value of Oregon heritage to Oregonians.

#### NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

Museum leaders across the country are searching for ways to demonstrate their value to their audience. “In some cases, that means engaging with people where they are already congregating and sharing information online,” says Allison Lazar, formerly with the Western Museums Association. “In other cases, it means offering activities that are important to people but would normally not occur in a museum space. Marketing and special promotions also play a role in this new approach, offering people a free or an inexpensive refuge from the trials of economic hardship or unemployment.”

#### FEW EMBRACE ONLINE POTENTIAL

A 2008 Institute of Museum and Library Services study estimated the number of online museum visits at 542 million, a number that far exceeds in-person visits. The museums’ goals with these virtual visits, according to one communications expert, should be “increasing dialogue between the community and the museum itself.”



Warm Springs

*“There is a dire need for appreciation, awareness and support (fiscal and manpower) from citizens of all ages, and more importantly, from the policy makers in city, county and state government - a bottom to top state-wide advocacy blitz!”*

- Peggy Sigler, Oregon field representative of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Oregon heritage organizations use more traditional and outdated methods for marketing and outreach. Some do not even use the Internet.

In fact, a December 2009 survey of 50 historical society and museum websites in Oregon showed few museums embracing 21st century online marketing strategies. Only 78 percent of the museums and historical societies had a website and most of those had few ways to engage visitors. Of those sites:

- 76 percent had no e-commerce features.
- Only 55 percent had at least three useful links to other heritage organizations and resources.
- Only 11 percent used a form of new media (RSS feeds, Facebook, My Space, Twitter, etc. This percentage has increased since the study was completed.)
- Only 18 percent featured interactive resources for the user
- Only 18 percent provided opportunities to donate online to their respective organizations.
- Only 18 percent possessed online member services (for e.g., ability to purchase memberships, event tickets.

While 11 percent of responding museums said they intend to launch a new website or online presence in the next three years, cross marketing opportunities with other museums and historical societies are just beginning.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW APPROACHES

Many involved in heritage see opportunities to engage the public. Among 11 states of similar population size to Oregon, the second most identified opportunity within state historic preservation plans is a growing public interest in historic preservation and planning. Educating the public about the economic, social and educational benefits of historic preservation is the most desired form of state assistance for encouraging public interest, according to the Heritage Assessment Survey.

As one survey respondent said, “museums and heritage tourism sites need to be more interactive and diverse for a public that does not have as long an attention span as in years past.”

Yet the surveys showed heritage organizations are looking more to traditional partners such as government agencies and newspapers than to new relationships with other museums, cultural organizations, businesses, tourism organizations, or others. And with budgetary challenges



*Media in action*

#### **SPREADING THE WORD**

Respondents to the Heritage Assessment Survey said they favor press releases (15%), newsletters and mailings (14%), and direct communication with city, county and state government representatives (12%) over interactive websites (8%), joint marketing with other heritage organizations (6%), and working with the local tourism commission to develop cultural tourism programs (4%).

*“If I just market myself, we won’t be any more or less significant. However if I am able to raise the image of heritage, it will raise the prominence of all the heritage sites, including my own.”*

- Peter Booth, executive director, Willamette Heritage Center.



*Pacific Railroad Preservation Association*

affecting most heritage organizations, 21 percent reported reducing their community outreach and marketing in the last three years as a cost-saving measure.

“Outreach is critical. That is one area where we have really had to cut back; it takes so much staff time to do outreach. And that’s an area where we’ve had to put it on the backburner until we get stronger funding,” said Janeanne Upp at The High Desert Museum in Bend.

#### THE BENEFITS OF A NEW REALITY

Some heritage organizations are employing contemporary marketing and communication tools. The City of Portland Archives, according to archivist Diana Banning, is “working to try and meet more contemporary needs...we now have a Twitter account, we have a blog, and our web pages have been revamped to be more user-friendly. We are trying to find reasonable and useful ways to get our information out there.”

She added that archives need to “send the message that archives are not just for scholars and are institutions that everyone can use. We are working to introduce more people to the archives, using fun events like the Archives Crawl, so we can convey to them that these are their records and demonstrate ways in which they can use them.”

## ISSUE EIGHT

### UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY.

Technology is changing how people work. It's changing their expectations. It's changing audiences. It's bringing steady but rapid change.

The advent of personal computers and the Internet has been nothing short of revolutionary. Technology has changed learning preferences, organizational operations, communications, and expectations. In parts of the state, access to technology is limited. Its uneven development in heritage work has left many – old and young, rural and urban – feeling disenfranchised.

#### TECHNOLOGY CHANGES FUNDAMENTALS

Research for the Institute of Museum and Library Services in 2008 estimated that nearly half of museum visits were remote, predominantly via websites. At a conference that year, museum and exhibit planners discussed how some aspects of the museum experience would be delivered entirely in digital format, if only to reach different audiences.

The conference report concluded there is a structural shift where technology “is fundamentally establishing and wiring expectations differently, particularly among younger audiences, this time when it comes to the concept of the narrative.”

Because data storage and distribution costs are low, Google, YouTube and Flickr have emerged as dominant repositories for digital assets and perhaps will redefine the idea of curating content, the report said. With more than 70 percent of adults using the Internet and that percentage rising, these changes might affect nearly everybody, directly or indirectly, including museums and communities.

#### CHANGE JUST BEGINNING

For many Oregon heritage organizations, the journey into technology is just beginning. Most heritage organizations have adopted or created collections management software, but many do not fully understand or use its capacity. Some have not had the time and money resources to



Warm Springs

*“As the internet explodes, and more and more information is readily out there for searching, people are able to do what we professionals have done traditionally. So what is our role in this changing landscape? What is the value that we are adding to the process?”*

- Diana Banning, City of Portland Archives

## THE DIGITAL ERA

64 percent of the archival organizations responding to the Heritage Assessment Survey said using digital technologies to expand awareness, support and effectiveness would be one of their most important issues during the next 10 years. 50 percent also said keeping current with changing technology would be one of their most important issues.



*Benton County Historical Society*

transfer written records into the new format, using resources that could be used for other efforts.

“People expect museums to be as technologically proficient as other aspects of their lives, said Allison Weiss of the Southern Oregon Historical Society. “That’s really challenging; we don’t have the staff or the money to put that kind of infrastructure in place but I think it’s an absolute necessity that organizations have their archives available online so that people don’t have to visit their institution in order for them to access the materials. Without access it’s nearly impossible to convey the value of our collections.”

Museums and archives responded in the Heritage Assessment Survey that keeping current with changes in technology is one of their top challenges during the next 10 years.

Not only is technology changing, but so are people’s expectations. More are requesting documents to be available online. Many people expect access to be free. Yet, others live in places where there is insufficient bandwidth to use the sites, or they are unable to afford Internet service, computers or software training. For example, more than 25 percent of the attendees at a Regional Heritage Roundup in April 2010 in LaGrande said they can access the Internet only through dial-up phone connections.

### THE FUTURE IS NOW

The people working in Oregon heritage are excited about the marriage of technology and heritage. Historic photographs, databases, newspapers and more electronic records are being created daily. Building, artifact and document preservationists are constantly finding new ways to use software in their work.

At the University of Oregon Libraries, the home of the state’s historic newspaper collections, a grant-supported effort to create searchable, digitized online images of those newspapers is under way. People are now able to sit in their offices or in their pajamas at home and in just minutes conduct research that previously would have taken weeks.

The Oregon State University Libraries is testing a new system in which historic photographs from numerous repositories are scanned in a standard format, and then made available on a single coordinated website. The Lincoln County Historical Society in Newport and the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center in The Dalles are among the first participants.

Archaeologists are able to use computerized techniques for evaluating potential heritage sites, as well as for the analysis and identification of artifacts.

No matter the idea, obstacles exist. For technology to benefit an organization or business, it must be thoughtful, planned and tied to an entity's mission, audiences and goals. No matter who uses technology, they need training to be able to maximize its productivity. Slightly more than half of the respondents in the Heritage Solutions Survey said the most effective method in solving technology issues would be by providing technical assistance to create strategic technology plans.

Some questions remain. Even electronic records must be preserved and need storage space. How will these newer preservation needs affect the knowledge and roles of archivists? Will older people, who are often the strongest advocates of heritage issues, take advantage of technological advances? How will those with poor computer and Internet access fare? Oregonians, not technology, will need to answer these questions.

### THE VIRTUAL MUSEUMS

Of 50 Oregon county historical societies and other museums surveyed in late 2009, only 78 percent had websites. Of those websites:

- 68 percent had 10 or more pages
- 28 percent provided some kind of access to their collections
- 18 percent had interactive resources
- 24 percent had a history of their respective county
- 24 percent had e-commerce features, including a printable membership form.



*Lane County Historical Museum*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Oregon's heritage is at risk from both external and internal challenges. Some are statewide and nationwide in nature, while others are found in communities and organizations. There is no single solution such as money that will solve them.

The Oregon Heritage Commission recommends that individuals, businesses and organizations focus their efforts to re-vitalize Oregon heritage resources by focusing on four goals:

1. *Request that the 2011 Legislature appoint an interim task force to examine state and county financial support for Oregon heritage organizations, and to develop solutions to the challenges.*
2. *Determine the economic and cultural value of heritage to Oregon, including its direct and secondary impacts.*
3. *Strategically communicate consistent information about the value and importance of heritage to the economy and daily lives of Oregonians.*
4. *Increase the capacity of heritage organizations and businesses to collaboratively expand their leadership, development, preservation, community-building, communications, educational offerings and technology.*

The Oregon Heritage Commission urges all Oregonians who value the significance of heritage in their daily lives and the importance of heritage to their communities and state to support these four goals and work on their behalf.



*Aurora Colony Music Project*

## SHORT-TERM STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

Despite the sobering challenges the heritage community faces, there are practical ways to advance heritage's cause, even before some of this report's big-picture recommendations are implemented. "Doing something" is therapeutic in itself, and some of the pragmatic suggestions below could actually generate some very positive results.

- Focus your organization on key purposes. Shed unsuccessful ones.
- Partner with other organizations, including arts, cultural, educational, tourism, humanities and economic development groups. Find ways to jointly solve challenges and promote heritage.
- Deliver history in a more compelling way that resonates with more people.
- Take better advantage of grants and other support programs that already exist.
- Develop short- and long-term goals to focus energy and follow through to generate a sense of accomplishment and motivation.
- Create a strong cadre of volunteers committed and trained for your organization's key purposes and needs.
- Gather the latest demographic information about your audience, city and county. Determine if your organization reflects that community and how you can meet your community's needs.
- Create a communications plan that effectively uses the print, electronic and digital media in your community.
- Enjoy what you do and celebrate your successes, large or small.

## OREGON HERITAGE WALKING THE TALK

Oregonians throughout the state are passionate about their heritage. That is demonstrated convincingly by the case studies highlighted below. These successes are an inspiration to all of us. They remind us that good things can be achieved even in bad times.

**Astoria Bicentennial:** The city chose early to do more than just have a party for its bicentennial in 2011. The city designated an organization to coordinate the effort, then provided financial support. The Astoria School District conducted an all-day teacher in-service about the community's history, created an Astoria history curriculum, and organized a high school class focused on its civic history. Businesses created special products, including new books and videos. Events include a preservation fair, a heritage fair, a lecture series, a fur trade encampment at nearby Fort Stevens, and more.

**Cottage Grove:** Cottage Grove organizations are embracing and enhancing the community's heritage in several ways. Building off its All-American city designation in 2004, the city has taken the lead in documenting public, private and nonprofit historic properties. It is working to list the local Armory on the National Register of Historic Places. The community has also secured out-of-town funding for preservation, including the state's oldest covered railroad bridge. Arts and history organizations jointly promote local events including the All Species Parade, Bohemia Mining Days and commemorations of the major films produced in the area.

**Crook County Historical Society:** Although the county had one of the highest unemployment rates in the state in November 2010, 81 percent of the voters approved a four-year property tax levy to support the Bowman Museum, which is operated by the historical society. At the same time, the non-profit historical society was nearing completion of a \$1.6 million capital campaign to expand. Factors cited for this success include the museum consciously serving the community and its location along a main highway. Also, voters had approved similar levies in three previous elections going back to 1996.

**Lane County Historical Society and Museum:** This Eugene-based organization has focused its efforts on several projects. A major conservation and scanning project initiated in December 2007 with grants enabled the museum to safely deal with dangerous nitrate



*Liberty Theatre, Astoria*

cellulose negatives, preserve the images, and make them available online. Additionally, the society became a partner with the Lane Educational Service District's Teaching American History grant, which opened new partnerships with schools and other local historical societies. The project is ongoing and expected to be completed in October 2012.

**Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center:** This center and museum in northeast Oregon celebrates the multi-ethnic culture of the railroad and timber industries of Maxville and similar communities. The center located in Enterprise has raised the visibility of local African-American history, hosted an annual gathering, conducted meetings telephonically with board members scattered around the country, and created connections with regional, state and national organizations.

**Oregon Digital Newspaper Project:** For decades, the University of Oregon has been the designated repository for the state's newspapers. With interest in online historical resources growing exponentially, the UO approached the Oregon State Library, the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association and the Oregon Heritage Commission to determine if there was support for digitizing the state's newspapers. The effort, guided by historians and archivists from around the state, gained steam with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Now, more than 180,000 pages of historic Oregon newspapers can be searched online using keywords.

**Oregon Main Street Program:** The Oregon Main Street Program provides assistance, training, technical services, and grants to communities who want to preserve, revitalize, and establish their historic downtown commercial districts. Seventy-three communities, distributed among three performance level tiers, have each formed groups to spearhead their local revitalization. They have achieved significant results. In 2010 alone, the seven top tier communities upgraded 100 historic buildings, stimulated \$9.78 million in private re-investment, and generated net gains of 218 new jobs and 65 new businesses.

**Portland Archives Crawl:** Archivists from around the Portland area created this event in October 2010. Four facilities served as "crawl to" sites in downtown Portland, while 20 other participating archives mounted table displays. As people made their way from site to site, they listened to oral histories, watched film footage and listened to speakers describe how they've used archives. In addition to the usual media promotion, planners used blogs and tweets to interest people. Surveys showed that approximately 35-40 percent of the attendees had never visited an archive before.



*UO Special Collections*

**Southern Oregon Historical Cemeteries Lunch Bunch:** Once a quarter, the leaders of the area's historic cemeteries gather for a brownbag lunch to share challenges and solutions. These leaders, most of whom are volunteers, share tips about planning, programming, maintenance, and vandalism. Even a law enforcement official will regularly join in to gather and seek information about the cemeteries' issues.

**Washington County Museum and Historical Society:** When membership and the economy dropped off in 2008, it asked people to help re-define its mission. Deciding to increase its emphasis on education and art, the museum invited Print Arts Northwest, to share the museum building and programming. It also increased its online presence, including expanded use of new media. Since changing its mission, the museum has increased membership, found local partners, and increased grants and other funding.



*Komemma Canoe Project*

