

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
January 23 – 26, 2013  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Cultural Property Working Group:  
Recommendation for Name Change  
(Prepared by Co-Chairs Jennifer O’Neal and Kelvin White)**

The SAA Cultural Property Working Group met on August, 8, 2012, at the annual SAA meeting in San Diego, California. Attendees included Liz Banks, Robert Leopold, Donna McCrea (Council liaison), Jennifer O’ Neal, Lisa Nguyen, Marisol Ramos (Chair), Sharon Thibodeau, and Kelvin White.

**BACKGROUND**

At the SAA Annual Meeting members of the CPWG expressed concern about the limiting implications of the word “property” in the title of the Working Group. Thus, the members explored alternate possibilities for the Working Group’s name. In the end, there was unanimous support for changing the name of the group to Cultural Heritage Working Group (CHWG).

**DISCUSSION**

The term “cultural property” can often be limiting and can often exclude intangible property, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. The Working Group seeks to use the term “cultural heritage” to be more inclusive of all these issues, as this term is a better fit to represent the issues the group is addressing. The name change does not alter the initial charge for the Working Group and does not require updating. The change more accurately reflects the Working Group’s current charge.

The international legal community organizations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), have spent considerable time defining and describing cultural heritage and are devoting a significant amount of time to its research and protection. Accordingly, the Working Group seeks to use similar terminology as other national organizations to ensure a better understanding of cultural heritage represented in archives across the United States. Rather than simply referring to tangible archives, the Working Group seeks to also focus on intangible cultural heritage, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, knowledge and practices concerning nature and

the universe, or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.<sup>1</sup> Thus, both tangible and intangible cultural heritage will be considered in major initiatives and measurable activities for the Working Group.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the SAA Council approve changing this Working Group's name from Cultural Property Working Group to Cultural Heritage Working Group.**

**Support Statement:** This change ensures that the group considers all forms of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and complies with a more universal definition.

**Fiscal Impact:** None.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO website, "What is Intangible Cultural Heritage," <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002>; In addition, see this report by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), [http://cif.icomos.org/pdf\\_docs/Documents%20on%20line/Heritage%20definitions.pdf](http://cif.icomos.org/pdf_docs/Documents%20on%20line/Heritage%20definitions.pdf). This is a succinct report of various definitions regarding Cultural Heritage from ICCROM and UNESCO; accessed December 20, 2012.