

Heritage Science Archives – Exposing the Hidden

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The Heritage Science Archives Initiative (HSAI) <https://www.iccrom.org/projects/heritage-samples-archives-initiative> grew out of a recognition that there are many heritage material sample collections that comprise samples that have collected from heritage objects and sites, as well as extensive reference materials that replicate the types of materials found in Archives, Libraries Museums and Galleries. These materials allow us to undertake destructive and predictive testing on non-collection items so we can better understand and preserve collections. Many of these collections are not recognized as highly valuable, have not been well catalogues and often are at risk of loss. Several heritage colleagues recognized these challenges and through the launching of this initiative by ICCROM started to develop the scope and needs for creating baseline requirements and to date, more than 20 institutions have joined ICCROM as partners in the initiative. There are five working groups in the initiative that are working to develop the structure with a low barrier to entry to encourage these archives to be preserved, and also to standardize requirements for sharing while supporting FAIR data principles for open and sustainable access. These five critical areas for the initiative include; values and significance, cataloguing and archival management, access and use, connecting data across collections, and lastly, encouraging the recognition of value through research opportunities. This presentation will focus on the necessity for structured and standardized cataloguing and archival management where we have focused on providing guidelines and tools that establish the minimum baseline requirements for cataloguing and sample archives management, while establishing a hierarchy of mandatory and recommended fields, and levels of entry from participants with different backgrounds and knowledge. This presentation will outline the two years of work to date (most virtually) and the importance of these often overlooked and frequently discarded unique heritage collections.

About the author:

Fenella G. France, PhD MBA, Chief of the Preservation Research and Testing Division, Library of Congress, is an international specialist on environmental deterioration to cultural objects. She focuses on non-invasive spectral imaging and other complementary analytical techniques. Additionally, she has developed a research infrastructure that integrates heritage and scientific data to advance linked open data (LOD) and make data FAIR and accessible to a diverse range of users. Dr. France has worked on projects including World Trade Centre Artifacts, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, 1507 Waldseemüller World Map. She collaborates with academic, cultural, forensic and federal institutions. Currently PI on a project to scientifically assess the condition of print materials in USA research libraries. Other international collaborations: Collections Demography, SEAHA doctoral training, Beast2Craft Biocodicology project, and CHaNGE – Cultural Heritage Analysis for New Generations.