

# BOSTON ARCHITECTURAL COLLEGE

SINCE 1889

## **Information Literacy Core Competencies for Historic Preservation**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Historic Preservation is the conservation of built and natural heritage sites, within both urban and rural communities. Historic Preservationists must be strong communicators and problem solvers, demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of cultural landscapes and heritage value systems, community populations and needs, visual literacy, design thinking, and be comfortable and confident in their understanding and adherence to laws, codes, and industry standards in their designs. Considering the scope of their information needs, Historic Preservationists must be comfortable navigating and evaluating information sources from a wide range, including both quantitative and qualitative data, graphs, charts, maps, plans, details, sections, models, professional practice, and an ever-growing field of digital tools. Students and professionals must become critical users of information with sound research skills, demonstrating both conceptual and analytical thinking.

It is important for learners to be aware of the undergraduate and graduate-level historic preservation programs certified through the National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE) and NCPE's membership standards, which all member institutions offering certified historic preservation programs must meet. These requirements require that all member programs offer coursework in the history of the design environment, the history and theory of preservation, research and documentation techniques, a significant practice component, and at least one program specialty in adjacent and relevant fields such as technology, planning, design, or law.

Professionals within the field of Historic Preservation can benefit from a number of professional organizations which provide research, publications, awards, resources, and guidelines. Among these are the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the American Cultural Resource Association (ACRA), the National Conference of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO), the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO), and many additional international, national, state, regional, and local organizations. These organizations are among those which can provide ongoing support to those working in the field of Historic Preservation.

## NOVICE

### **Learners are able to:**

- Develop a working knowledge of the history and current issues within the field of Historic Preservation through current scholarly and professional publications
- Seek out Historic Preservation-specific information, through databases and digital libraries (e.g. Avery Index to Architecture periodicals, the Digital Public Library of America, Internet Archive, Library of Congress), government resources (e.g. deeds, land records, census data, National Parks Service preservation briefs, National Trust for Historic Preservation reports) national, regional and local historical societies, historic maps (e.g., United States Geological Survey Historical Topographic Map Explorer, Fire Insurance Maps Online), and periodicals (e.g. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, *Preservation: the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*, *Journal of the Society for Architecture Historians*) through building iterative search strategies
- Identify interdisciplinary resources and authorities outside of Historic Preservation that address a problem or research question related to their work
- Identify and critically evaluate historical and contemporary resources relating to environmental psychology, sustainability and adaptive reuse
- Search library catalogs, databases, and web-based resources effectively using thesauri, controlled vocabularies, call numbers, and subject headings
- Format a thesis question and generate an actionable research plan
- Locate local, national, and international codes, laws, and standards and use them to inform original plans and designs
- Locate meaningful images and create image groups and collections. Synthesize and distill data and research through visual communication techniques
- Demonstrate their underlying research and design process through annotations
- Develop an information organization strategy for documenting notes, research, and observations both visually and non-visually, through sketchbooks, bibliographies, annotations, etc.
- Cite and attribute the ideas of others in both scholarly written work and visual presentations according to the Chicago Manual of Style

### **Learners are aware of:**

- The importance of understanding, listening to, and appropriately represent the interests of cultural heritage groups, BIPOC communities, and broader perspectives
- Language and terminology used to describe Historic Preservation and affiliated design professions, such as adaptive reuse, cultural heritage systems, place attachment, restoration, environmental psychology, built environment, sustainability, architecture, engineering, construction, and urbanism
- Library of Congress subject classification numbers that cover Historic Preservation and related fields including landscape preservation, history of architecture, architecture,

interior architecture, urban planning, engineering, construction, photography, and the visual arts

- The value of both formal and informal sources of information within Historic Preservation research
- The basic drawing, pictorial, and representational conventions, which include plans, sections, elevations, and details, and how they are used to represent architecture, planning, and design concepts
- Historic Preservation as an interdisciplinary field combining the humanities, social sciences, community activism, sciences, arts, and design fields, requiring interdisciplinary research strategies
- Image, map and data repositories for both historical and contemporary city, regional, and urban planning resources
- The collaborative peer review process of scholarly publications
- Professional publications dealing with Historic Preservation, planning, and related fields and the types and usefulness of content each provides
- Methods of idea generation and design thinking
- The influences affecting historical changes in design of the built environment

## **EXPERT**

### ***Learners are able to:***

- Break down complex problems and research inquiries into smaller tasks in order to prioritize and achieve desired outcomes
- Cultivate a personal perspective that will enrich and inform how they engage with and consider Historic Preservation in their own research and participation in the broader academic and professional discourse
- Frame a project in a way that communicates an understanding of the project's significance and value to the wider professional community
- Present alternative theories, solutions, and lines of critical inquiry
- Conduct original research and synthesize new information with secondary research and preexisting knowledge
- Conduct an original interview according to best practice standards and be able to document, cite, and interpret findings ethically, appropriately, and academically
- Seek out and evaluate the usefulness of qualitative and quantitative data, such as case studies, surveys, observations, peer-reviewed literature, and demographic data
- Identify and question canonical beliefs and standards within the field of Historic Preservation in order to move in new directions
- Participate in productive peer review of research and design documentation and presentation by offering and accepting constructive critique of the logic and meaning, research methodology, underlying assumptions, and value of a project's message
- Exhibit a sophisticated understanding of ethics and intellectual property rights, including their own as creative practitioners

- Understand theories of human-centered design and identify, analyze, and apply information from a variety of sources to develop a successful response to user needs
- Demonstrate proficient and masterful use of visual communication methods and technologies
- Identify and collect data, and utilize evidence-based, scientific resources
- Create and design research and design documents with detailed attention to how their choices impact the overall message, purpose and impact
- Identify legal factors involved in a project and be able to seek appropriate resources in order to address these factors
- Develop a range of presentation skills to communicate ideas both verbally and visually to a variety of audiences including laypersons, peers, instructors, and invited review critics in a variety of contexts and situations
- Seek out and think critically about resources relating to economic development, capacity building, urban planning, and public policy and their role in Historic Preservation

***Learners are aware of:***

- Current trends and technologies within the Historic Preservation discipline, including ongoing developments in the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and in the visualization and presentation of projects and plans
- The social responsibility of Historic Preservation and the social, cultural, psychological, political, and physical impact of design
- Historic Preservation's role within communities and neighborhoods as collaborative practice built upon shared resources and heritage
- Methodologies and professional standards recommended by the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service for documenting, treating, and determining significance of a site in its broader cultural, vernacular, and ethnographic landscapes
- The benefits and best practices of archival research, including academic and public library special collections, museum collections, and municipal/state archives to find historic planning documents and information
- The origins and intent of laws, codes, and standards
- Current trends and technologies in affiliated disciplines (e.g., architecture, community activism, landscape architecture, construction, and engineering)
- The requirements for professional certification in their respective city, county, state, and country
- The basic concepts of intellectual property rights including licensing, copyright, and fair use
- The need for professionals within Historic Preservation to embrace a lifelong learning mentality as well as intellectual humility and flexibility
- The need for professionals within Historic Preservation to actively seek out, listen to, and prioritize the input and needs of indigenous communities and BIPOC voices The need of Historic Preservation as a field to continue to embrace and promote gender, socio-economic, and ethnic diversity within the profession and with communities of practice