

FOLKLIFE PROGRAMS AND CULTURAL POLICY: A Study in Permeable Boundaries and Expansive Strategies

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Introduction

One organization has defined cultural policy as, “in the aggregate, the values and principles, which guide any social entity in cultural affairs.”

These values and principles may or may not be codified, may or may not be explicit. It has been recognized that in the United States, cultural policy has rarely been formally defined, except in the loosest terms. In general, what we have seen is a *de facto* cultural policy, “amounting to the ‘side-effects’ of social action taken without consideration of cultural impact.”¹

When attempts have been made to define cultural policy more explicitly, those attempts have often been formulated in the rhetoric of “cultural democracy” or “cultural equity.”

It is not accidental that when agencies of federal and state government align themselves with a populist strategy, the folk arts and folklife of the nation come to the forefront of the debate. This was evidenced during the New Deal’s WPA cultural work, as well as in the post-Contract with America reorganization of the National Endowment for the Arts under Jane Alexander – both periods of heightened “democratic” and egalitarian rhetoric.

Public sector or applied folklore work has often and naturally been seen as a tool appropriately used in service of an idealized cultural democracy. Given the field’s historical association with grassroots communities, ethnic groups, minority cultures and other disenfranchised segments of American culture, it should not be surprising that when cultural agencies look to expand their constituencies outside of their core (some say elitist) base, they enlist the aid of folklife specialists, community scholars and related culture brokers in their cause.

It has certainly been the case that in recent years, in an era of devolution and decentralization of the nation’s cultural resources, when cultural organizations have had to re-think their missions and funding strategies, many organizations have turned to models of consensus-building, community development, and interdisciplinary collaboration that folk culture workers have consciously developed over many years. Offices of folklife programs, however they’ve been configured, have long used strategies of improvisation, adaptability, and “making do,” even during flush times when their work flew “below the radar” of their executive directors and boards.

¹ www.wwcd.org; the Institute for Cultural Democracy, 2001.

Improvisation and adaptability are positively valued when political and cultural systems are in a state of flux. But when an organization is striving for stability, the fluid nature of folk cultural strategy can be felt as a burden. One of the organizations profiled for this study has, for example, felt at once proud of and frustrated by the technique they use and label “adhocracy.” However, there is a consensus that successful cultural initiatives are predicated upon the notion that cultural expression breaches political and social boundaries and that effective cultural programs and policies must be founded upon solid collaboration and an inclusive strategy.

Not all of the state folklife offices surveyed for this report are at the same stage of institutional evolution. Some have been in place for two decades or more, others are still struggling to get off the ground. Some are relatively comfortable and secure, others are laboring under state budget shortfalls where budget-analysts look hungrily at such “frills” as cultural organizations.

Folklorist Steve Zeitlin has written about the “expansive” and “delimited” strategies that are used within the domain of folklife.² Any given public folklife program will utilize one or the other of these strategies during its institutional history. At first, eager to carve out a niche, a folklife program will be “delimited” (restrictive) in the definition of its boundaries, goals, values, and cultural policy. At other stages of development, it becomes advantageous for the organization or office to open up those boundaries, to be “expansive” in the policies it develops. As a program matures, it makes sense to embrace allied initiatives and fields, while stressing the discovery of common goals and searching for “added value” and mutual benefit.

A restrictive approach jealously guards a defined domain or arena for programming and action. An expansive approach reaches out to collaborate and create new spheres of cultural influence and action while sharing policy-making power.

The organizations that have taken an expansive approach to their work are the ones that have been most successful. It is the expansive strategies, policies and programs that are most likely to yield innovative collaborations across institutional barriers, and to develop new sources of funding and other critical resources that foster stability and effect policy at the state level. In addition, it is the expansive approach that creates a climate of support for the four inter-related domains of culture that have been identified for study by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

² Zeitlin, Steve. “I’m a Folklorist and You’re Not: Expansive versus Delimited Strategies in the Practice of Folklore,” *Journal of American Folklore* 113 (447):3-19

For this study, an informal survey was conducted to examine folklife programs that have in some way effected the formation of cultural policy at the state level. Of the various programs surveyed, this report profiles five exemplary programs with widely varied histories and infrastructures. The profiled programs are:

- ACTA – The Alliance for California Traditional Arts
- The Louisiana Folklife Program, particularly its efforts in education, technology, and cultural tourism
- City Lore of New York, particularly its “Place Matters” program
- Rivers of Steel National and State Heritage Area (Rivers of Steel), a regional program involving cultural conservation, cultural tourism, and economic development
- Arizona Rural/Ethnic Arts & Culture Initiative, an initiative to support cultural work in community through economic and tourism development strategies

The **Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA)** is a network of folklorists – not an incorporated 501 (c) 3 – which has been the focus of a great deal of resource development and program activity, benefiting from local, state, regional, and national funding. **Louisiana Folklife** is a collection of innovative, collaborative programs of the Division of the Arts of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. **Rivers of Steel** is an independent non-profit with a long partnership with the National Park Service, covering several counties of Pennsylvania’s industrial western region. “**Place Matters**” is a unique community-building and boundary-defying program of City Lore, an independent 501 (c) 3 organization in New York City. **The Arizona Rural/Ethnic Arts & Culture Initiative** funded tourism development projects, such as that of the Tucson-Pima Arts Council that resulted in a guidebook and CD for tourists that showcase culture along two transportation corridors.

What all five programs have in common is that they have developed, over time and through many trials and tribulations, an institutional adaptability that has enabled them to evolve productive new partnerships and collaborations. The successes experienced by these folk cultural programmers have at times been unplanned and therefore exist as an unintended result of programming failures. Their collective experience again points out the necessity of an inclusive and ad hoc approach to cultural strategies.

Program Profiles:

ACTA – the Alliance for California Traditional Arts

During the 1992 recession, the California Arts Council (CAC) “downsized” its Traditional Folk Arts Coordinator position (though it did not eliminate the program altogether). By 1995 the CAC had entered into an agreement with the New Mexico-based Fund for Folk Culture (FFC), which contracted to administer the Traditional Folk Arts (TFA) program budget for the state. The first round of grant funds administered by the FFC totaled \$45,000. This relationship is still in place, and the most recent TFA grant budget surpassed \$100,000.

By 1997, the FFC-administered California Traditional Folk Arts Program was supporting, with individual grants of \$10,000, three folklorists’ positions. Terry Liu was the traditional arts coordinator at the Public Corporation for the Arts (PCA) in Long Beach; David Roche was the director of localcultures/Musical Traditions, Inc. (lc/MTI), an independent non-profit which had received funds from the CAC for a number of tour and festival projects; and Amy Kitchener was folk arts coordinator at the Fresno Arts Council (FAC).

These three folklorists were the core of ACTA , which was organized in 1997 as a network of traditional folk artists, curators, and administrators. Funding and infrastructure support for ACTA projects and activities has been funneled through the partner organizations (FAC, PCA, and lc/MTI). Administrative assistance has been shared by the three organizations on a rotating basis. Primary project and position support has come from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Fund for Folk Culture. Informal ACTA network partners have also sought folklife grants on their own, and have worked with ACTA in an ad hoc advisory capacity.

A significant number of projects have been conducted by independent folklorists contracted by ACTA through the three host agencies. In the spring of 1999, for example, professional folklorist, Craig Miller, conducted documentary and field survey work in the San Diego metropolitan area under contract with the PCA, and was hosted by the San Diego Arts Commission (SDAC), which provided office space, clerical assistance, and other in-kind contributions. As a result, the SDAC applied for and received an NEA grant to support folk arts and cultural tourism promotion. Two other projects involving folklorists as outside contractors have been successful for ACTA in San Jose and the northern counties of the state.

ACTA’s stated mission of “building infrastructure in the state” consists of three strategic goals:

- Identify and build partnerships with existing groups and organizations serving traditional artists
- Identify and serve traditional artists
- Develop and implement a strategic plan with 5-year and 10-year milestones that will indicate stable position support and direction for ACTA traditional arts programming in the state.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council have in the past two years awarded major grants to ACTA (through the Fresno Arts Council, which is currently

acting as an institutional base and fiscal agent). The Fund for Folk Culture has also been intimately involved with developing ACTA, presumably because it sees its working relationship with the CAC as naturally coming to an end as a statewide folk arts infrastructure solidifies.

Currently, the four overarching activities of ACTA, as reported by Amy Kitchener in 2000 at a forum of the Association of Western States Folklorists, consist of:

I. California Folk & Traditional Arts Infrastructure Project. Funding: \$90,000 from NEA and CAC (1999)

Summary: This project involves the establishment of a database of traditional artists, the formation of a fieldwork plan, new fieldwork in strategic areas and a "needs and opportunities" report. At present, the central artist database includes information drawn from the regional program archives, and from NEA and CAC databases, as well as an extensive information bank on traditional arts performing groups from around the state. Presently, the new fieldwork plan of action is being developed. The priority will be to work in areas and with communities currently underserved by the field. One page proposals from colleagues interested in pursuing focused areas of folklife research will be considered. A detailed needs and opportunities report will complete this project by year's end.

II. California Folk & Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program and ACTA Website. Funding: \$125,000. NEA (\$50,000) and CAC (\$75,000)

Summary: This project supports ACTA efforts to implement the regionally coordinated state traditional arts apprenticeship program, and provides funds to develop and maintain a website featuring California folk arts and artists. Funding will support one-on-one learning for 13 Master-Apprentice pairs, website expenses and regional contractors. Efforts are underway to increase funding to support more apprenticeship pairs in this year's program.

III. ACTA 2000 Infrastructure Project: Organizing, Serving and Communicating for Folk & Traditional Arts. Funding: \$92,500. NEA (\$42,500) and CAC (\$50,000)

Summary: This project supports strategic planning efforts of ACTA partner organizations, technical assistance to traditional artists, and internal and external communications (PR, newsletters, etc.)

- Strategic Planning: Identifying and implementing an organizational model that can stimulate California's unique cultural landscape and fit its geography. ACTA is looking to a few interrelated models: creation of a new 501 (c) 3 non-profit entity to "umbrella" present and emerging regional programs; a state-sponsored constellation of regional programs housed in committed local institutions. ACTA

aims to find an organizational model that would be composed of a mixture of locally based institutions (arts councils, historical societies, colleges, museums or community service organizations) and would build upon the strength and the diversity of California traditional communities and expressions. Instead of one centralized core, California's infrastructure would link a constellation of independent locally-based programs to serve the state.

- **Technical Assistance:** The TA component involves creating four workshops for implementation in each of five regions in the state (far south, LA-Southland, Central, Bay Area, far north). These workshops will be designed to train folk artists and traditional arts presenting organizations. In the first year, two will be geared specifically for traditional and folk artists; one will stimulate interest and knowledge by presenters (LAAs, museums, schools, local venues); and another will be tailored for community-based organizations. Topics will include: grant writing and opportunities in California folk and traditional arts; crafts marketing; touring; documenting traditions with video, sound and photography; developing a promotional kit; folk arts in education models; identifying and presenting folk & traditional artists; and others.
- **Communications:** A modest 8-page newsletter containing information about important artist opportunities, gatherings, events, advocacy issues, and ACTA developments will help increase visibility and disseminate information more widely. Presently, the ACTA website has the greatest potential to reach the largest audience, though a small-scale print publication will be accessible regardless of web usage. The newsletter is a vehicle to target specific audiences, such as the local art agency network or California traditional artists.
- **A Virtual Office:** This project helps put in place an emerging "virtual" ACTA office with some new systems that will facilitate conferencing (chat and video), joint authoring, master scheduling, and project management utilizing email and/or web-based technology. For the relatively small investment for the planning, design, testing, training and troubleshooting of these new systems, ACTA will be more efficient and ready to expand its network to include more project partners. Through the implementation of this decentralized office linked by email and internet, ACTA will save great costs on transportation, lodging, telephone, and time.

IV. Fund for Folk Culture's California Folk Arts Advancement Program. Funding: \$250,000 over two years to Fund for Folk Culture from James Irvine Foundation; Project Director: Betsy Peterson

Summary: This project is the most promising for ACTA in terms of making a real impact upon cultural policy in California and in providing a lasting legacy. The project

supports the infrastructure development of a statewide network of constituents and service providers in folk and traditional arts. Activities involving ACTA include coordinating and convening a series of meetings to inform the development of ACTA and a five-year plan for the field in the state:

- San Diego: Session on local/regional program models at the meeting of Association of Western States Folklorists, April 2000
- Los Angeles: Americans for the Arts, June 2000
- Northern CA: California Association of Local Arts Agencies, September 2000
- Artist focused gathering at CAC Asilomar conference in January 2001
- Final gathering of planning group March 2001

These series of roundtables have implications for other states in terms of developing and nurturing local programs by creating supportive networks and peer allies. They have been very successful in the California case, as the state's size and cultural diversity necessitate a time set aside to share program strategies and to form collaborative partnerships.

There are today at least two immediate challenges to ACTA's efforts to build a statewide infrastructure. First, both Terry Liu at the Public Corporation for the Arts and David Roche at localcultures/Musical Traditions, Inc. have left their positions and the state. Liu has returned to the NEA, and Roche is now at the Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago. This means that the future of ACTA falls entirely on Amy Kitchener at the Fresno Arts Council, unless and until new core partners are identified. So far the Fresno Arts Council has been very understanding of the time that Kitchener has had to devote to ACTA and away from her duties at the FAC.

The changing interests of state and local arts agencies and the cultural institutions they support constitute the second challenge. The roles of several stake-holding agencies are likely to change in the next two years. As ACTA emerges on the scene, CAC and the FFC are re-considering their roles and strategies of support for the folk arts in the state. Local arts agencies are also becoming increasingly interested in the value of folk arts services for their communities. ACTA's relationship with all of these agencies – specifically how it will interface with state and local arts agencies – is open to question.

Louisiana Folklife Program

Maida Owens has been the Folklife Program Director at the Division of the Arts of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism since 1988. During her tenure she has collaborated with many state and local institutions and organizations. These collaborations have yielded unexpected successes while at times they have failed to meet the planned goals of the participating agencies. It is instructive to examine a few of these collaborations briefly, and

attempt to understand where Owens has been most successful, and where she has experienced frustration.

Two of her earliest collaborations were with the state Office of Tourism. While these initiatives were at times problematic, both had significant positive, tangible outcomes, and Owens continues to work with the tourism office in the development of new programs. Moreover, her vision and influence have informed the development of statewide tourism policies.

In the early '90s, the Folklife Program worked with the Office of Tourism to develop a Louisiana Music Trail. Tourism appointed a highly qualified and diverse advisory panel that included Owens, while the Folklife Office identified traditional music sites and venues and wrote an interpretive text. Tourism contracted with outside agencies to print a map ("trail guide") interpretive brochure, and developed a website.

By 1998, due to a series of miscommunications between the tourism office, the ad agency it had hired, and the distribution office, the interpretive brochure was not reprinted after the first run. It is instructive to note that despite the popularity of this program and its fulfillment of statewide goals, the music trail program had apparently been discontinued due to budget stresses and bureaucratic mistakes.

Looking closely at this initiative, it is apparent that one problem with the list of traditional music sites and venues was that the database was very cumbersome, and it proved costly and time-consuming to keep current. In the end, the tourism office evidently did not see enough justification to allocate the staff and resources to "maintain the trail" as required.

Despite the ultimate demise of the Louisiana Music Trail project, Owens credits the trail with significant positive results in developing tourism policies and planning that have benefited northern Louisiana:

"What the music trail definitely did was to make the tourism industry aware of the different types of music, that significant music contributions came out of north Louisiana, and that some people are actually interested in north Louisiana and its music." (Personal communication)

Similarly, Owens worked with Tourism on the state's 1990 Louisiana Open House project, a statewide promotional effort initiated by the Office of Tourism. As is unfortunately typical of many large-scale tourism development projects conceived by elected officials, the implementation of ambitious ideas was, in this case, under-funded and ill-planned. As part of the Open House program, the Folklife Office was drafted in mid-1989 to design and direct a Louisiana Storytelling Project. Owens recounts that:

“Acknowledging that this program was going to happen with me or without me and seeing an opportunity to achieve a Folklife Program goal of cultural conservation, yet aware of the potential harm . . . I cautiously agreed.

The storytelling program was intended to enhance cultural tourism by encouraging each community to present its local culture through its stories. The Office of Tourism offered two pavilions free of charge to one hundred events and promised increased publicity. In addition, communities were provided a format for presenting storytelling and technical assistance in identifying storytellers.

The state tourism office, the state folklife program, and eighty-seven organizations collaborated on the storytelling project. The Office of Tourism's objective was to have a highly visible program to increase public awareness of Louisiana tourist destinations. The Louisiana Folklife Program's goal was to assist communities to become more aware and appreciative of their unique cultural resources. Individual communities participated for both these reasons and others, including rivalry and the desire to utilize a free public program.”³

In the end, like the Music Trail, the Louisiana Storytelling Project did not last, at least not in its original form:

“The Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism and the tourism industry did not support a project that did not directly increase the number of out-of-state tourists. The Office of Tourism did see several beneficial outcomes from the program, including [the significant successes of] greater awareness of cultural resources and increased networking among communities. These benefits were not deemed sufficient to continue the program to the disappointment of many communities.”⁴

Despite this disappointment, because the storytelling sessions had been assiduously documented and the communities and storytelling traditions had been well researched, the Folklife Program was able to produce valuable collateral materials. A book, Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana was co-published by the Louisiana Division of the Arts and the University Press of Mississippi (1997), a “Swapping Stories” video produced, a website developed, and the storytelling documentation has served as the basis for a statewide curriculum resource -- “Louisiana Voices: An Educator’s Guide to Exploring Our Traditions and Communities.”

The Louisiana Voices Folklife in Education Project (www.louisianavoices.org) is an exemplary folklife project, one that is proving to be both a valuable resource and a model for collaborations in other states. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the

³ Owens, Maida. “The Louisiana Storytelling Program,” *Practising Anthropology* Vol. 14, No. 2, Spring 1992.

⁴ *ibid.*

Louisiana Division for the Arts, Louisiana Voices partners with Louisiana Public Broadcasting, the Louisiana Alliance for Arts Education and the Louisiana Center for Education and Technology.

Louisiana Voices is a set of interdisciplinary study units geared toward the state's Louisiana Content Standards (LCS), particularly those standards of English Language Arts and Social Studies. These materials have brought folklife and cultural heritage into the statewide curriculum, provided an avenue to bring communities into the schools, and impacted Louisiana's education policies for teaching state history at the fourth and eighth grade levels.

The study units help students to:

- engage families and communities as educational resources
- participate in service learning opportunities that incorporate academic goals
- promote a sense of belonging to the community
- gather local knowledge and share with the world via the Internet
- foster an understanding of others' ideals, rights and responsibilities

The Louisiana Voices program also provides professional development opportunities for educators, offering workshops focusing on folklife and technology education. Folklife and Technology Workshops are held at the Louisiana Center for Educational Technology's Teaching, Learning and Technology Centers. At present, Owens is working to have educators earn vital continuing education credits for participating in this Folklife Program initiative. At times, a failure is only the stepping stone to success in another arena.

In addition to these two cultural tourism examples, lessons may be learned from a program that has successfully met the stated goals and has impacted the thinking of state arts/humanities policy-makers. The Louisiana Folklife Program has established, in a "cooperative endeavor" with Louisiana's state universities, a Regional Folklife Program to decentralize folk cultural programs and the policies that inform them. This statewide program provides grants to five regionally dispersed state universities to house a faculty folklife position. These positions serve as a bridge to local communities in the region, spanning the town-gown divide by offering folklife programming in community and academic mentorship within the academy.

The primary goal of the program is to provide in-depth documentation of Louisiana's folk traditions and to facilitate its appropriate use by the public and cultural tourists. Through grants to the universities, the Division of the Arts provides funds for a folklorist in each section of the state. The folklorists have the following mission:

- To identify and document folk cultural traditions and artists
- To work with community groups to present their folk traditions to the public
- To provide information about folklife through media coverage, university lectures, and public presentations.

By last year, three of the positions had been funded by the state. The position in Region I, the Upper Louisiana Delta and North Central Hill Country, is hosted by Louisiana Tech University in Ruston; Region II, the Red River Valley and the Neutral Strip, is hosted by Natchitoches State University; and Region III, Greater New Orleans, at University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs.

As of this writing, the remaining two regional posts have also been funded. These are Region 4, Western Acadiana, to be hosted by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette; and Region 4, Louisiana's Florida Parishes, Mississippi River Road, and Eastern Acadiana which will be hosted by Louisiana State University, Department of Geography and Anthropology.

One of the greatest benefits of the regional folklife program is its emphasis on traditional folklore work – fieldwork, archiving, and teaching – and its corresponding de-emphasis of programming and presentation in the first years. It is a tribute to the Louisiana Folklife Program and Maida Owens that the state legislature has funded a network of collaborating offices to preserve and present the state's cultural heritage.

Rivers of Steel National and State Heritage Area

The institutional history of the Rivers of Steel National and State Heritage Area (Rivers of Steel) is instructive for many reasons. This initiative is one of several heritage areas across the country that are fostering economic development and community revitalization through cultural programming on many levels. Rivers of Steel has a strong and central folklife component that is shaping the programming and policies of the heritage area and the region.

By the mid-1980s, the folklorists at the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission, Shalom Staub and Amy Skillman, began collaborating with other state agencies to develop state heritage parks in various regions. Their strategy for building a statewide infrastructure for folk arts and traditional culture was already geared toward establishing regional centers or outposts, with the Heritage Affairs Commission as a central facilitator. The program profile of Rivers of Steel most clearly exhibits the inter-related nature of folklife, humanities and historic preservation.

Doris Dyen, now the Director of Cultural Conservation at Rivers of Steel, was in the employ of the Heritage Affairs Commission, charged with overseeing folklife projects in the western region which would become the Rivers of Steel area. Dyen credits the involvement of the state Heritage Affairs Commission at the start of the state and national heritage park development for the centrality of folklife in the scheme.

The following chronology is taken from correspondence with Dyen:

In 1988, Congress established a Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission charged with carrying out an "Action Plan – America's Industrial Heritage Project" (dated Aug.

1987). In addition, Congress created a steel heritage “study area” which focused on steel-related communities along the Monongahela Valley, in Allegheny and Washington Counties. The Steel Industry Heritage Task Force (SIHTF), a Pittsburgh/Mon Valley-based citizens’ coalition, formed to work with the National Park Service to carry out the study. The fiscal agent was the Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

In 1990, Congress expanded the steel heritage study area to include steel-related towns along the Ohio and Beaver rivers in Allegheny and Beaver counties (P.L. 101-121). The Commonwealth of PA allocated State Heritage Park “feasibility study” funds for a Mon Valley Steel Heritage Concept Plan/Feasibility Study and Action Plan, to be undertaken cooperatively by the SIHTF, the City of Pittsburgh, six of the counties formerly included in the “Pittsburgh Industrial District” (Allegheny, Beaver Fayette, Greene, Washington, Westmoreland), and several regional organizations, under the supervision of the PA Historical and Museum Commission, the PA Heritage Affairs Commission, and the PA Department of Community Affairs, with participation of the National Park Service-Mid-Atlantic Region. The Mon Valley Initiative became the fiscal agent for SIHTF, hired a new staff member to coordinate SIHTF work, and engaged a planning consultant team headed by the Rhodeside & Harwell firm from Virginia. Congress provided initial funding for the project at \$350,000.

In 1991, the Steel Industry Heritage Task Force incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization under the name Steel Industry Heritage Corporation (SIHC), headed by an executive director. Congress provided \$875,000 more in planning funds.

In 1992, the draft Steel Heritage Concept/Feasibility Plan was circulated for official comment. SIHC expanded its staff by hiring a director of Cultural Conservation (Doris Dyen). The Cultural Conservation division was the first and, for several years, the only programmatic division within the Heritage Area. Following the guidelines of the state Heritage Parks Program the division’s scope includes both the living cultural traditions (folklife) and the historic sites and artifacts of the region, as well as educational activities related to both. This work with living cultural traditions has a dual aim: to encourage cultural continuity and to promote inter-cultural awareness and respect within the region.

Also in 1992, SIHC served as fiscal conduit for funds to carry out projects commemorating the centennial of the Homestead Strike and Battle of 1892. Congress provided \$1.25 million to continue the project. Other funds from private foundations and the Commonwealth of PA were also secured.

In 1993 through 1994, the final version of the Steel Heritage Concept/Feasibility Plan was accepted by the Commonwealth of PA and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Work began on developing a Management Action Plan for the national and state heritage area, with a planning consultant team headed by Urban Design Associates, Inc., of Pittsburgh. Congress provided an additional \$700,000 for planning.

During the years 1991-93 and 1997 the Cultural Conservation division carried out broad surveys of folklife traditions and historic sites in all seven Rivers of Steel counties, funded by Congressional appropriation and the state heritage parks program (ca. \$100,000 total). These surveys provided a base-line planning tool for designing heritage development initiatives. It has not been necessary to do further full surveys of the region, but rather, there have been several follow-up field studies that have been targeted to individual projects.

In 1995, SIHC completed the Management Action Plan, including a recommendation to adopt the name “Rivers of Steel” for the heritage area. Congress provided \$500,000 for planning. General staff expanded to include a fiscal officer, while the Cultural Conservation division hired a Folklife and Education Specialist with grant funding from the PA Council on the Arts. More resources have been raised, beginning in this year from the NEA Folk Arts Program and local

public and private sources. Projects have included technical assistance to traditional artists and cultural organizations, folklife events, school residencies and teacher-training, and a newsletter of regional folklife. The purpose of the programming is not only to document and interpret traditions but also to help tradition-bearers and cultural organizations use their skills to increase their incomes. (Recent funding has averaged \$35,000 to \$40,000 per year)

Also in 1995, the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission was dissolved. Shalom Staub and Amy Skillman incorporated the independent, non-profit Institute for Cultural Partnerships, which, under contract with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, administered the state's folklife activities.

In 1996, Rivers of Steel was designated a national heritage area by President Bill Clinton and a state heritage area by Governor Tom Ridge, making the region eligible for Congressionally appropriated funds for heritage area operations and PA Heritage Parks Program funds for implementing heritage development programs and projects. Additional funding for historic preservation and cultural conservation began to come from grant proposals to federal agencies such as Health & Human Services (HHS), state agencies such as the PA Council on the Arts and the PA Historical and Museum Commission, and local private donors such as the Heinz Endowments and the McCune Foundation. SIHC served as fiscal conduit for locally initiated historic preservation projects throughout the heritage area. Congress appropriated first year of heritage development implementation funding at \$1 million.

In 1997, following SIHC's completion of an additional resource inventory and feasibility plan, Armstrong County was added to the Rivers of Steel Heritage Area, bringing the total number of participating counties to seven. Folklife education projects were initiated with local school districts; teacher-training institutes were held with intermediate units in the region; and technical assistance continued to folk artists. Congress appropriated \$1 million in heritage development funds.

In 1998, with continued federal and state funding for operations and project grants from other public and private sources, SIHC expanded its staff to include a director of heritage development, a communications/marketing manager, and a folklife/education specialist. The Cultural Conservation division began a community-based Rivers of Steel heritage tour program with the development of bus tours of Pittsburgh and Mon Valley steel towns. These tours recruit guides from the communities and train them in presentation techniques. The guides help to shape the itinerary and content of each tour, reflecting their personal experiences and ensuring authenticity and sensitivity to community. At the same time, other historic preservation and cultural conservation programs continued, including preparation of historic landmark nominations for significant steel-industry sites, and development of a regional hiking-biking trail system began. Congress appropriated \$1 million in heritage development funds.

In 1999, SIHC staff expansion continued with the addition of an archivist and a coordinator of recreation/natural resources planning. SIHC was restructured into a departmentally configured organization, headed by a President/CEO and a Vice President/COO. Historic preservation, folk arts, education, recreational trails and other projects continued. The Rivers of Steel heritage tour program development continued with a senior tourism initiative that included folklife programming. Congress appropriates \$1 million in heritage development funds.

In 2000, the Rivers of Steel heritage tour program expanded, adding a Monongahela River boat tour and curriculum-based student bus tours. The Cultural Conservation division's work on living cultural traditions continued to expand with the designation of Rivers of Steel as one of four Regional Folklife Centers within the statewide Folk Arts Infrastructure Initiative coordinated by the

Institute for Cultural Partnerships in Harrisburg. A Regional Folklife Outreach Project to enhance folklife programming and technical assistance in the Rivers of Steel region was created, and a folklife field survey was conducted. Legislation was introduced into Congress to establish the Homestead Works National Park to include the Carrie Furnaces and Battle of Homestead sites. SIHC inaugurated a capital campaign. Congress appropriated \$1 million in heritage development funds.

As of June 2001, there is continued expansion of the student component of the heritage tour program, and work has begun on a 3-year business plan for the whole tour program. New cultural conservation initiatives include planning and fieldwork for a folklife heritage trails guidebook and planning for the construction of a Regional Folklife Center facility near the proposed National Park site. Historic preservation and other heritage area activities continue. Congressional and Commonwealth of PA budgets are still moving through their committees.

Because of the comparative immensity of the Rivers of Steel National and State Heritage Area, and the complexity of multidimensional mission, the “folklife” strand within the Cultural Conservation division is somewhat more complex in comparison to other statewide folklife initiatives. Moreover, it would be misleading to declare the whole project a “folklife initiative.” While folklife has been a central *organizing* principle to Rivers of Steel, its acknowledged central *operating* principle, its *raison d’etre*, is economic development. Fortuitously, the folklife component has been enriched by a true collaboration with historic preservation efforts, as well as historical/humanities programming. Dyen points out that the cultural and economic development goals of the project are inextricably linked and complement each other: “People’s views of their own and others’ cultures are colored by their economic circumstances; their ability to continue or pass along traditional skills is often directly related to their families’ or communities’ economic viability.”

The Steel Industry Heritage Corporation is a non-profit organization chartered under the laws of the Commonwealth of PA and established by an act of Congress to coordinate the Rivers of Steel National and State Heritage Area. Rivers of Steel’s mission is to conserve, interpret, promote and manage the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of steel and related industries in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and to develop uses for these resources so they may contribute to the economic revitalization of the region.

Beyond the Rivers of Steel program, this working paper survey included other NPS heritage initiatives. Looking at these broadly, important concerns of research and interpretation have been, and will remain, sites of negotiation and dialogue. The National Park Service (NPS) has in recent years shown a willingness to acknowledge differing points of view in the interpretation of controversial historic and cultural events and movements. The labor struggle is a case in point, and the NPS’s work in Lowell, MA is a good example. The challenge in heritage areas is to balance the voices of the mill and factory owners with the voices of the workers, and to address fairly those arenas in which the two sides may have differing interpretations.

According to folklorist Mike Luster, a rift in the America’s Industrial Heritage Project in Johnstown over just such issues of “hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourse” has led to an open clash between parties with conflicting agendas. On one side of the argument is the “Paths of Progress” organization, a coalition of National Park Service staff, local businesses, political

leaders, and economic development planners, and on the other is the “Open Hearth” project, a organization of workers and organized labor.⁵ It should be noted that neither the Open Hearth project, nor Jim Abrams, are connected with Rivers of Steel, however, this project is another example of a regional heritage area initiative that has had to negotiate presentation and policy. Without analyzing the problem in Johnstown, or ceding justification to either side, the rift remains instructive – Jim Abrams has concluded that cultural conservation is ultimately a process of “cultural negotiation.”⁶

Doris Dyen has a different perspective and experience from some of the other heritage areas surveyed above. Perhaps the success of Rivers of Steel is, in part, attributable to the project staff’s concern for consensus. Dyen says: “. . . we promote the process of bringing people with disparate views together to search for common ground and to build consensus on how to present fairly the many truths of experience in our region.”

Structurally speaking, there is a strong parallel between the Cultural Conservation division at Rivers of Steel and regional folklife offices in other states. In a very real sense, the folklorists at Rivers of Steel are a regional folklife office within a larger regional organization, and have historical and institutional ties to a central organization, in this case the Institute for Cultural Partnerships. In this regard, the strategy is the same – like ACTA in California, or like the Regional Folklife Programs in Louisiana – Rivers of Steel, with the Philadelphia Folklife Project and the Northern Tier Cultural Alliance, is one of a series of regional folklife centers envisioned by the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission years ago.

From that perspective, the Rivers of Steel Cultural Conservation division is not very different from any other regional folklife program. It works with the schools to establish folklife-in-education programs; it provides services to artists and cultural or ethnic organizations (as well as local heritage conservation organizations); and it conducts important fieldwork and cultural surveys over a sustained period of time. Being placed within an organization with a focus on historic preservation and heritage sites creates a contrast to statewide programs placed within an arts agency. The mission and goals of a heritage area are quite different from an arts council, yet both offer fertile ground for folklife programming.

Dyen feels that, because of the groundwork laid by the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission (and later the Institute for Cultural Partnerships), her division has had substantial latitude to be creative in its response to emerging situations, and to develop programs based on immediate needs of her constituency.

Dyen, like most public folklorists, faces a challenge in that she must continually work to educate her collaborators and colleagues about the unique needs and concerns of folklife, and of the

⁵ This interpretation is from conversations with folklorist Mike Luster, who recently conducted a survey of folk cultural tourism initiatives for the Missouri Arts Council.

⁶ From Luster’s draft report, quoting Jim Abrahms of the Open Hearth project.

essential role played by folklife documentation and interpretation. Issues of interpretation and authenticity are subject to constant and on-going negotiation. Dyen cites the pressure by some tourism developers to utilize “costumed re-enactors” rather than local community members to interpret and represent the region. In this case, the authentic voices of the community would be replaced by an imagined and staged historical drama. This is but one example of differing standards and approaches to interpretation that need to be negotiated when folklife, historic preservation, tourism and economic development forces collide and attempt to collaborate.

Another example Dyen cites has real impact on a fundamental component of any folklife project. State funding policies decree that an agency may only conduct an “inventory survey” once. In the eighteen years that Dyen has worked as a public folklorist in southwestern Pennsylvania, she has grappled often with the issue of survey fieldwork. Survey fieldwork has been an area of policy ambiguity and ambivalence among both funding agencies and public folklore practitioners. Dyen notes that: “At Rivers of Steel, we do ongoing fieldwork, both broad-scope and narrow-scope, targeted to specific projects – but we only did one full baseline survey and see no need to repeat it.” Targeted fieldwork has generated “updates to the files as we find that certain tradition-bearers have died or moved, that certain organizations no longer exist, or that population demographics have shifted.”

Drawing upon her own extensive experience and in regards to this survey, cultural policies that Dyen would like to see instituted are:

- Stable staffing and programming commitment that includes ongoing fieldwork
- Elimination of arbitrary distinctions between arts and humanities in regard to defining folklife
- Elimination of arbitrary distinctions between folklife and history/historic preservation
- Institution of multi-year project funding and, where possible, fund operational support in lieu of specific projects
- Collaboration among agencies and organizations
- Support and facilitate broad evaluation of the impact of folklife work in its region

City Lore: Place Matters

Since it was established in 1985, the Folk Arts Program of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) has emphasized the regional distribution of folk arts activities throughout the state, creating a network of folklorist-staffed programs.⁷ The state Folk Arts Program acts in close partnership with the New York Folklore Society, which was founded in 1944, but was staffed with a paid director only in 1989 with grant support from NYSCA. Since then, the New York Folklore Society has provided much of the advocacy, technical assistance and professional development needs of the state’s folklife network. It has also been instrumental in

⁷ Baron, Robert, in a report to the Association of Western Folklorists, 2000.

the development of an archival program of statewide scope. City Lore is one organization within this state network of folklife programs.

City Lore: The New York Center for Urban Folk Culture is an independent non-profit organization founded in New York City by folklorist Steve Zeitlin in 1986. City Lore has a current program budget of \$1,300,000, almost as much as the state arts council's folk arts budget of \$1,392,719 in FY 2000. Place Matters is a project that is co-sponsored by City Lore and the Municipal Art Society of New York.

City Lore staff includes folklorists, historians, anthropologists, and ethnomusicologists. In addition to staff projects, affiliated individuals and organizations work through City Lore to produce independent films, exhibits, and other media projects. City Lore is governed by a 14-member board of directors which includes independent artists, members of New York-based non-profits, and business and legal professionals.

City Lore projects include:

The People's Poetry Gathering — www.peoplespoetry.org — City Lore and Poets House sponsor this biennial poetry festival in downtown Manhattan that shines a spotlight on this nation's and the world's literary and folk poetry traditions, paying special attention to the spoken word, to poetry's oral roots.

CARTS: Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students — www.carts.org — City Lore specializes in building connections between local, regional, and national cultural resources and K-12 classrooms. In New York City, City Lore offers in-school programs - staff development workshops, technology seminars, artist residencies and instructional materials that help teachers integrate folklife and community resources across the curriculum; and a Teacher's Resource Center, located in City Lore's downtown Manhattan office, stocked with books, photographs, and videos on folklore, history, culture, and the arts. City Lore's national offerings are accomplished in partnership with the National Task Force on Folk Arts in Education, and they include the interactive CARTS Website; the annual CARTS Newsletter, reporting on model programs around the country in folk arts in education; Local Learning, a pilot project creating summertime sessions for teachers in the use of folklife and community resources in the classroom; and the CARTS Education Network - a folk arts-in-education community linking teachers, folk arts educators and folk artists through virtual and print communications.

The Culture Catalog — www.citylore.org and www.carts.org — A mail order and online catalog featuring over 150 multimedia resources in folklore, history, culture, and the arts. Specially designed for K-12 educators, the Catalog is also used by parents, scout troops, community centers, and other members of the public.

People's Hall of Fame — City Lore mounts an annual awards ceremony honoring grassroots contributions to New York's cultural life. A permanent multimedia exhibit about Hall of Fame winners and other cultural heroes is on display at the Museum of the City of New York, located on 5th Avenue between 103rd-104th Streets.

Music Programs — In schools and in community settings, City Lore brings master performers to the public. One recent program, *Dos Alas/Two Wings*, featured traditional artists from Cuba and Puerto Rico, and offered music and dance performances and workshops.

Media Programs — City Lore produces films and videos such as “How I Got Over” (on a local mother/son gospel ministry) and “Bomba: Dancing the Drum” (on Puerto Rico's leading family of traditional music and dance); and sponsors media programs produced by others, such as “Coney Island” and the New York series for PBS by Ric Burns. City Lore produces the “American Talkers” radio series with noted NPR producer Dave Isay; museum exhibits, such as New York's Ethnic Festivals and Parades; and an annual cable-TV series on Channel 75 called the “City Lore Hour”, featuring great films and videos on urban culture.

Publications — City Lore produces pamphlets, educational curricula, discussion guides, and books on cultural and historical topics. Celebration City is a resource listing of New York's cultural festivals and parades. Toward A More Perfect Union in an Age of Diversity is a community discussion guide about issues of diversity.

City Lore receives funding from many private foundations and public agencies. Principal funders for 1999-2000 include: Booth Ferris Foundation, Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, New York Community Trust, New York Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Rockefeller Foundation.⁸

“Place Matters,” write project directors Steve Zeitlin, Marci Reaven, and Laura Hansen, in a recent NEH grant proposal, “ is a citywide humanities initiative that takes shape through public research and programming, led by two well-established sponsoring organizations, informed by humanities advisors, and conducted in partnership with a multitude of organizations. Place Matters is not located in a museum, library, historic site, arts organization, university department, or community development corporation, but collaborates with all of these entities and more.”

The project directors continue:

The research and outreach core of our initiative – the fount of all our public programs – is the Census of Places that Matter. The Census is a cultural resource survey that solicits nominations from diverse New Yorkers about places they value for their associations to history, tradition, and collective memory, and for contributions to community life.

We invite nominations to the Census through community workshops and study projects, meetings with historians and other humanities scholars, mailings, exhibits, and collaborations with other organizations. The 300 nominations received to date reflect a broad spectrum of the city's history and culture. Public parks, community centers, dance halls, factories, social and recreational clubs, union halls, cemeteries, train stations, artist studios, candy stores, general stores, houses of diverse faiths, features in the landscape (walls, clocks. . .), and many other places have been nominated.

While we put no restrictions on the type of places that people nominate, we have interestingly received no nominations for places of solely private meaning to the contributor; all places have had a public dimension. From this superset of nominated places, the Place Matters team, its advisors and community partners, selects places for a rigorous research process including archival, oral, and social histories as well as collection of photographic, video, and audio recordings.

When the research is substantially complete, a Place Matters editor reviews the materials and synthesizes it for entry into our database. The editor also provides an initial coding of the entry according to an evolving conceptual system of humanities discipline-specific keywords. Our process

⁸ Condensed and paraphrased from City Lore's website (www.citylore.org).

culminates, in a necessarily limited number of cases, in special projects around individual places or communities, and put at the center of public programming.

Like Place Matters itself, the Census of Places That Matter is both novel and traditional. Many conservation programs rely on inventories, some even begin with them. The Municipal Art Society itself, in the 1940s, spearheaded the architectural inventory that demonstrated the need for New York's Landmark Law.

On one level, Place Matters is updating that list. On another, the Census represents an important innovation. Not only is it a cultural resource survey on a larger scale than has ever been assembled in New York City, but also -- unlike most such surveys -- it is being built from the bottom up. We are asking people what they care about and why, and they are directing us to places that conservation professionals using more traditional techniques might overlook.

Since our start in 1998, we have accomplished a great deal in the arenas of public programs and audience development, media and public information, preservation work, and education. Highlights include three successful nominations to the State and National Registers for Historic Places 2; launch of a pilot Web site; collection of over 300 Census nominations and creation of a database; production of 20 public programs plus community study projects in East Harlem, the Garment Center, and the South Bronx; two photo/text exhibits; four major articles in the New York Times; and creation of a Latin music-themed heritage tour in the South Bronx.

In another publication Zeitlin identifies the roots of "Place Matters" in an early City Lore program called "Endangered Spaces" that dated from the late-1980s. The key elements and approach had already been forged, as City Lore set out to "document and advocate for cherished establishments and cultural landmarks endangered in the ebb and flow of New York's rapidly changing cultural landscape." While historic preservationists had worked to "preserve historic landmarks," City Lore was "concerned with the culture that brings those buildings to life."

In 1992, the Municipal Arts Society had submitted a grant proposal to the Folk Arts Office of the New York State Council on the Arts for a forum on "Endangered Spaces," in collaboration with City Lore. Eventually the conference was held in late 1996. "More than three hundred preservationists, educators, folklorists, and community activists attended, bringing many different agendas to the table. Endangered Spaces and community-based sites were a central component of the program, highlighted alongside ethnic and labor history and a wide range of grassroots preservation issues."

Zeitlin credits City Lore's "expansive strategy" of creating partnerships with diverse organizations, disciplines and voices -- rather than solely focusing on folklife narrowly defined -- for the organization's successes in establishing innovative cultural policy. An examination of the wide array of funding sources for any of City Lore's programs is testimony to the productiveness of an "expansive strategy" for developing new funding resources. Finally, expansiveness is a prerequisite for achieving City Lore's mission of cultural equity. The Place Matters initiative has directly impacted New York City's cultural conservation policies by broadening the definition of historic preservation to include a dimension of cultural intangibility.

Arizona Rural/Ethnic Arts & Culture Initiative

In 1999 the Arizona Community Foundation (ACF) initiated a public/private partnership with the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the Arizona Humanities Council to promote cultural tourism in Arizona's unique rural and ethnic communities. This collaboration was born under the dynamic leadership of Carla Roberts at the ACF, along with Shelly Cohn and Rudy Guglielmo at the Arizona Commission on the Arts, and Dan Shilling at the Arizona Humanities Council. By pooling resources, the collaborators were able to fund a series of planning grants and five implementation projects with a focus on local economic development through community collaboration. The planning phase has been completed and implementation has just begun. In order to assess effectiveness, a professional evaluator has been retained to conduct a comprehensive evaluation component for the implementation projects that will examine the impact on communities, visitors, and cultural resources engaged in each project.

Among the projects funded in the first implementation grant cycle in 2000 is the Pima County Cultural Corridor, a project of the Tucson-Pima Arts Council in Tucson, Arizona. This project encompasses two cultural corridors extending south and west from the Tucson city limits: the Ajo Highway Corridor and the Old Nogales Highway Corridor.

These two highway corridors include cultural and historic sites in small rural and American Indian communities as well as public monuments, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas. The cultural corridors are intended to enrich Pima County's quality of life by increasing cultural tourism and economic development, enhancing appreciation for the cultures and communities within the corridors, recognizing and honoring community tradition-bearers, while preserving and exchanging folk cultural knowledge. Partners for the projects include local arts agencies in Ajo, Arivaca, and Green Valley as well as chambers of commerce, the Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the national public land offices.

Project development began with research, documentation, and interpretation of the folk traditions and cultural resources of communities within the designated corridors. As the project is implemented, each community's sense of place and cultural heritage will be highlighted through their culture, arts, and folklife in a cultural tourism guidebook and audio CD.

Folklorist Elaine Thatcher and oral historian Jack Loeffler have worked with the communities to interview and record community members and folk artists, including a Tohono O'odham basketweaver; an old-time fiddler; and a Yaqui poet. From a broad range of interviews, local voices will be chosen to interpret their own communities, their heritage and the cultural significance of rural Arizona lifestyles in modern society. Thatcher and Loeffler will utilize these resources to author the publication and to produce the CD.

Community participation includes the development and training of *community scholars* – interested individuals trained to assist with recording and interviewing. The communities will maintain control of how they are presented by establishing local committees to review drafts

with the opportunity to revise, correct or delete material that is inaccurate or culturally sensitive. Folklorist Jim Griffith will also review these drafts and serve as a project advisor.

In addition to these interpretive materials, an annual calendar of cultural events will be produced along with local contact information and a list of recommended readings. The publication and CD will be available for purchase by the public through chambers of commerce, gift shops, and bookstores.

The Arizona Rural/Ethnic Arts & Culture Initiative is an example of creative collaboration, initiated by the Arizona Community Foundation, involving the state arts and humanities councils, local arts agencies and other community-based cultural organizations to maximize resources and to bring a statewide oversight to a series of projects that should have a positive impact on rural communities throughout the state.

Analysis

Attempting to profile folklife initiatives that have had a direct effect upon statewide cultural policy has been enlightening and somewhat frustrating. As befits a cultural domain that is community based and grounded in generational continuity, folklife programs have had their greatest success and lasting impact in local and regional settings. Statewide impact has been more elusive, though not impossible.

The five program examples that are given in this report are varied in their infrastructures, histories and missions, yet they share commonalities that are typical of successful and exemplary folklife programs:

- They have had the benefit of a dynamic leader with a vision that goes beyond the local and the parochial.
- They have had continuity of leadership over several years (institutional memory)
- Their successful projects depend on current and on-going fieldwork and documentation – this documentation, whether a broad survey or a focused fieldwork for a specific project – has no end
- They have a funding base that includes public and private sources, and a multi-year commitment from funders
- They have been able to forge lasting partnerships with cultural, social service and economic development agencies for specific projects and initiatives
- They are working with other folklife organizations in a network to accomplish work at the state level
- They share many goals and strategies with the other three cultural domains being studied by the Pew Charitable Trusts, often blurring the lines between these divisions, yet they have a distinct role to play that is critical to authenticity of presentation and community participation

The above characteristics are, in many ways, the defining strengths of the folklife perspective. They also illustrate the unique strategies that have been employed by folklorists over the past 30 years to create statewide initiatives. So, what sets the folklife domain apart and what can be learned from this difference? Moreover, how has this perspective informed cultural policies developed at the state level?

The domain of folklife and folklore is a marriage of aesthetics and anthropology. This has created a true merging of the arts, humanities and social sciences within folklife programs. Most folklorists use an anthropological definition of “culture” as a working model, which is much broader than the definition adopted by colleagues in the fine arts world. This ecological model (culture with a small “c”) defines culture not as the province of the “cognoscenti” or the professional elite, but of all people. This egalitarian definition sets folklorists apart from (sometimes at odds with) their collaborators and colleagues within arts organizations. The ability of folklorists and their brethren in the fine arts to work together productively has often been a measure of flexibility, open-mindedness, and adaptability on both sides.

In a similar vein, those folklorists who have created programs within historic preservation and/or humanities agencies have also been charged with expanding institutional definitions. The term “cultural conservation” was coined following a national conference to look at the intangible products of culture and the necessity for their preservation. Folktales, mountain ballads, folk remedies, religious customs, and oral histories are just a few of the manifestations of folklife that fall under the umbrella of “cultural intangibles.” The broadening of preservation rhetoric to include these folklife elements has had a profound effect upon cultural conservation. Oral traditions and traditional rites of passage are now joining historic buildings and artifacts in defining our cultural heritage and legacy.

The discipline of folklore, especially public and applied folklore, has long been associated with populist politics. A substantial number of the current generation of public folklorists who established their positions in arts councils in the late 1970s have a background in grassroots activism, community or labor organizing. The rhetoric of cultural equity, and the ideology of cultural democracy are consonant with an important strain of folklore theory and practice. This ideology infuses the work of state folklife programs and creates a pre-disposition to outreach and collaboration with social service, education, and preservation organizations.

Ideology and praxis require folklorists to keep their goals and aspirations as close to the ground as possible. This means that folklife programs are evaluated (by other folklorists, at least) by how “practical” they are, and by how they are valued by the primary constituency -- the folk communities themselves. This translates into a need to demonstrate real benefit (economic, social, educational) on the communities and the artists who are participants in the cultural programs that folklorists develop and administer.

A central measure of the value of any folklife infrastructure development effort is the extent to which the effort results in increased fieldwork in traditional communities. Bess Lomax Hawes

(formerly the director of the National Endowment for the Arts' Office of Folklife Programs) argued forcefully and repeatedly that fieldwork "remains the absolute *sine qua non* of the folklore profession."⁹ The highest quality folklife programming – at the national, regional, state or local level – cannot take place without a firm grounding in solid fieldwork. Therefore, a criterion of evaluation for a state-level folklife organization or agency should ultimately be the level and quality of the ethnographic fieldwork taking place in its domain and with its assistance. All five of the profiled programs demonstrate this commitment.

Additionally, all five programs profiled here have in common the development, over time and through dead ends and detours, a characteristic ability to evolve productive new partnerships and collaborations. These folklife programs have been adept at bringing to the table new faces and voices. This activity has demanded a willingness to share power and to strategize "outside the box."

More than one state folk arts coordinator in the country has found his/her department collaborating with community arts, arts-in-education, and expansion arts programs, if not subsuming them altogether. At least one folklorist directed all three departments when budget cuts demanded a "reduction in force" at his arts council. Another became Director of Programs for a regional arts federation. These cases bear out the reputation that folklorists have developed over the years as effective liaisons to grassroots constituencies and perhaps are an indication that the expansive, anthropological approach to culture is most adaptable within state cultural agencies with multiple agendas and limited resources.

Policies (strategies) employed by the state-level folklife programs examined for this report have yielded new sources of funding for cultural programming and arts-related activities. In part this has been accomplished, as we have seen, by broadening the definition of "arts-based activities" or "historic preservation" to include functions and forms that would have been unheard-of in an earlier, more "delimited" era of arts and cultural policy and practice. These functions have included community organizing, outreach to underserved audiences and arts communities, healthcare ("arts-in-medicine"), education ("folklife-in-education") and environmental advocacy. For example, when existing environmental policy has endangered the traditional way of life and expression of a community, folklorists have acted with community groups to change public policy, zoning regulations, land use policy. Folklorists have also acted as advocates for artists and their communities when they are in conflict with immigration policy. Although these activities have taken place on the local and regional level, their replicability and expansion to the state arena is a possibility for the Pew agenda.

The model programs that have been profiled in this report have not directly created new statewide cultural policies, however, they are instructive for defining future action and provide a guide to the Pew Charitable Trusts in terms of promising directions. The willingness to embrace multiple agendas under the folklife umbrella has meant that more sources of funding have been

⁹ Cited in Zeitlin, 2000.

utilized for cultural agendas within each of the five programs. Opportunities for effecting cultural policy present themselves as we look closely at the successful initiatives that are in place. There are clear implications for progress if we are able to address the missions and goals of state policy makers and institutions whose priorities are focused toward such issues as at-risk youth, cultural tourism, economic development, transportation, urban renewal, or stewardship of the environment.

What has been discovered from this brief survey and profiling of the folklife domain is that folk cultural advocacy and action require both the institutional credibility and resources of a state-level organization, and the flexibility, mobility and grassroots support of regional and local folklife organizations. The truism of “think globally, but act locally” fits the folklife model perfectly.

The ability to form a strong central office with a network of relatively autonomous regional centers has varied from state to state, depending on variables ranging in kind from personal charisma to state politics. However, the most promising programs and successes to date in the folklife domain have been founded upon the premise that a statewide program demands regional and local autonomy within a strong federation for coordinated political action, the sharing of resources, and discovery of more universal truths. Effecting cultural policy at the state level will therefore require a marshaling of the local voices that share a common goal, along with a leader (or organization) who can coordinate those voices and bring a universal vision to the effort.