

DRAFT PROGRAM PROSPECTUS

NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR A NETWORKED CULTURAL HERITAGE

The National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage is a coalition to assure the fullest possible participation of the arts and humanities on the information highways.

In this endeavor we want to encourage the development of the National Information Infrastructure (NII) as a means to preserve, access, and creatively build upon our cultural legacy, and we want to do so in a manner which embraces the fullest understanding of the nation's cultural heritage-- the totality of human work, creative effort and thought manifest in the United States, today and in the past.

The initiative began in 1993 as a collaborative project of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) and the Getty Art History Information Program (AHIP). We published *Humanities and Arts on the Information Highways: A Profile*, which outlines the case for providing all Americans with electronic access to the nation's cultural heritage and identifies the issues and challenges in making this possible. We are now broadening the base of support and moving to a program of concerted action.

In July, 1994, over twenty nationally prominent organizations that support the cultural heritage--including representatives from museums, the creative arts, scholars, libraries, higher education, private foundations, and the federal government--convened in Washington, DC. The group identified both immediate and longer term goals. Our immediate goals are these:

- to create an environment (intellectual, political, and fiscal) in which the importance of the cultural heritage is recognized as a priority in development of the national information infrastructure (NII).
- to facilitate the organization of constituencies (educators, artists, scholars, policymakers, potential users, agencies, and corporations) to assure that the networked American cultural heritage--as manifested in text, image, sound, and moving images--is of highest possible fidelity, accessible from a broad range of intellectual perspectives and ages, and affordable to all.

Longer term goals, which will require significant financial resources and participatory support include these:

- to foster the creation of an infrastructure (technical capabilities, public policy, information content standards, and organizational structure) which will enable sustained and productive development of digital resources as part of the networked cultural heritage.
- to implement collaborative projects. In partnership with other organizations, to mount demonstration projects which show the promise or further the development of a networked cultural heritage, and to disseminate information about important projects both to producers and users.

To achieve these goals we are developing a structured program of collaboration, mobilization, and globalization.

Collaboration

Chief among our current goals is to expand the constituency for a stronger and more representative coalition. The breadth of the cultural heritage and the promise a digital environment holds for the public good require that we have as wide a variety of organizations as possible in the initiative's supporting constituency. While the inclusion of the humanities and arts are fundamental to the mission of the initiative, the sciences, social sciences, all levels of education, museums, libraries, archives, private foundations, and government agencies are also critical to successfully network and maintain the cultural legacy on-line.

Sponsors and Supporters.

The Initiative is organized by two participatory groups, Sponsors and Supporters, and is actively seeking new members in both categories.

A Sponsoring organization agrees to commit resources to the Initiative for three years, with an annual contribution to the Initiative's programs. Sponsors are generally large, prominent, and representative organizations drawn from education, the arts, humanities, museums, and foundations. Representatives from Sponsoring organizations are expected to meet annually to review projects and proposals developed by the Initiative and, when appropriate, to help support those projects with financial and in kind contributions. Sponsors will be asked to contribute [\$25,000?] in support of the Initiative's goals.

Supporting organizations are generally smaller institutions and representative bodies which can contribute intellectual support and talent to the Initiative's work. Supporting organizations are not required to make annual financial contributions to the Initiative, but are asked to help promulgate and when possible implement Initiative programs with available resources.

Organizations interested in becoming Sponsoring or Supporting members of the National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage should contact:

Stanley Katz, President American Council of
Learned Societies 228 East 45th Street New York,
NY 10017-3398 (212) 697-1505 x123

Mobilization

A Washington, DC Office. The Initiative will open an office in Washington, DC to provide a catalytic presence and a point of coordination for individuals and organization representatives involved with the development of the NII and a networked cultural heritage. The activities of this office will include:

- advocating the need for a networked cultural heritage in policymaking circles;
- communicating the plans and activities of the initiative to its constituencies and serving as a clearinghouse for activities regarding the NII;
- developing projects that promote the initiative's goals;
- fundraising; and
- actively building coalitions in support of a networked cultural heritage.

Public Presentations, Discussions and Publications.

We also want to arrange conference presentations, workshops, and invitational addresses covering a variety of topics and themes, often in partnership with other organizations and agencies. Articles, addresses, and book length studies are planned to explore the implications, technical requirements, and policies associated with networking the cultural heritage.

Globalization

A salient goal of this Initiative is to facilitate international cooperation for the preservation, access, and creative use of the cultural heritage of all nations. Cultural heritage is a universal phenomenon: all societies possess it, and each is enriched by the others. The long and complex history of humanity has led to much dispersal of the heritage from its provenance. The global reach of current and proposed information networks offers an extraordinary opportunity to link the cultural legacy of societies past and present.

Many countries have begun initiatives of their own to create information networks of their cultural heritage. Policies have been established to exclude cultural information from restrictions. Our National Initiative will have the greatest utility as a part of, and contributor to, this global network.

In addition to the benefits of transborder linkages, the harmonization of policy and standards, as well as the maintenance and care of the global information infrastructure, is of critical importance. NINCH expects to participate actively in the formulation of these policies and standards, promoting the highest quality of

technical and linguistic interoperability to encourage creative engagement with the world's cultural legacy.

We will examine related programs and projects around the globe, promote cooperative international ventures where possible, and facilitate the widest possible connectivity now and for those who will inherit this invaluable networked resource.