REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

June 1, 1999

INTRODUCTION

The National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH) is undertaking a project to review and evaluate current practice in the digital networking of cultural heritage resources in order to publish a *Guide to Good Practice in the Digital Representation and Management of Cultural Heritage Materials.* The Guide will be published in print and electronic form.

A NINCH Working Group on Best Practices has outlined the scope and purpose of the Guide. It will divide into two sections: one on the capture and creation of digital cultural heritage resources; the other on the management and maintenance of that digital data. The Guide will encompass all genres. To encourage broadest use of digital resources, the Guide will focus on object-types (e.g. manuscripts, paintings, performance documentations, etc.,) going beyond the limited perspectives of institution types or disciplines (e.g. museums or history). The primary audience will be institutions or researchers preparing to create and manage digital cultural heritage resources with little extensive knowledge of current technical and information standards, metadata and best practices. Funders will be an important secondary audience, for whom the Guide could provide a set of key criteria for assessing the fundability of digital projects.

The Working Group will proceed by commissioning a survey of the field to discover and define exemplary practice. The survey will include interviews with practitioners and reviews of published guidelines and projects that demonstrate good practice; it should also reveal areas for which good practice still needs to be developed and documented. The Working Group will announce a call for nominations of practitioners and projects to be considered by the survey.

As a starting point, the Working Group has created an initial definition of good practice consisting of six principles each of which has a set of evaluative criteria, by which to judge current practice. The Working Group has built into the process a stage in which it may refine and extend these criteria as a result of the survey. The survey is not intended to be a comprehensive review of current practice; its purpose is to gather material, experiences and opinions for the writing of the Guide.

The Working Group proposes to hire a consultant or consultants to conduct the Survey and write the Guide in close consultation with the Working Group. Those responding may address one or both parts of this project: the Survey (Phase 1) and the Guide (Phase 2).

CONTENTS OF GUIDE

The following prospectus outlines the intended contents of the Guide:

GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

Table of Contents

1. PREFACE:

Establishes the scope and context of the Guide and summarily discusses contingent issues not covered in detail.

2. GUIDE TO THE CREATION AND CAPTURE OF DIGITAL RESOURCES AND METADATA.

This section will include but not be limited to the following:

- an overview of principles and general issues common to all formats;
- a detailed discussion of the issues and techniques pertaining to digitizing specific types of original formats and creating appropriate metadata;
- a discussion of the different strategies to be considered with particular digital materials for particular uses and audiences.

3. GUIDE TO THE MANAGEMENT OF DIGITAL DATA & METADATA

A discussion of general issues in the management and maintenance of digital cultural heritage materials. These will include but not be limited to:

- intellectual property and access management;

- strategies for the storage, archiving, and long-term maintenance of large collections of digital data in accordance with newly-developed standards and technologies;
- the documentation of all practice.

The discussion will include links to web pages and projects that exemplify model practice and its documentation. The guide will also indicate the areas that need to develop good practice that is also well documented.

4. AFTERWORD

The Afterword will concentrate on the range of potential uses of digital material. Focusing on model projects that exemplify best practice, as determined by the Working Group's evaluative criteria, it would examine the power of the medium to connect and re-combine material, and use digital objects in often unforeseen ways.

SCHEDULE OF WORK

An outline schedule of work would include:

1. Initial survey

The consultant will commence by interviewing practitioners and reviewing projects drawn from an initial small pool of approximately ten practitioners and projects from diverse cultural communities, applying the criteria for evaluating practice established by the Working Group.

2. Submission of Report 1.

The consultant will present initial findings in written form to the Working Group.

3. Working group review and project evaluation.

The Working Group will discuss its response to the findings and make modifications to the evaluative criteria and survey method, as appropriate, with the consultant.

4. Main survey

The consultant will proceed, interviewing practitioners, reviewing existing statements and guidelines on good practice, and investigating exemplary projects nominated by an open call to the community, issued by the Working Group.

5. Submission of Report 2.

The consultant will write a report on the survey findings, including a bibliography and/or other compilation of useful resources gathered through the survey, and present it to the Working Group for its review.

6. Working group review and project evaluation.

The Working Group will review and evaluate the survey report. On the basis of the survey report, the Working Group will then review and make modifications to the proposed form and content of the Guide, as appropriate.

This will complete Phase 1 of the project. If the Consultant has proposed to work only on Phase 1, his or her work will then be complete. If the Consultant has proposed to work on both Phase 1 and 2, his or her work may continue uninterrupted. If a Consultant has proposed to work only on Phase 2, his or her work will now commence.

7. Writing of the Guide

A consultant will proceed to write the Guide, according to a timetable mutually agreed to by consultant and Working Group.

8. First Draft of Guide manuscript due.

9. Working group review and evaluation of guide manuscript draft 1.

Consultant and Working Group will discuss a first draft of the Guide, after which the consultant will revise the Guide as needed.

10. Final Draft of Manuscript due.

11. Publication

The Working Group will then proceed with making arrangements for the electronic and print publication of the Guide.

SCHEDULE

The Working Group expects to be able to hire a consultant in the Summer of 1999. Deadline for completion of the Guide manuscript will be by the Spring/Summer of 2000.

QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications for a consultant include:

- a working and/or practical knowledge of networking cultural heritage material and of the range of issues entailed;
- proven research and analytic skills;
- proven writing skills; in particular an ability to write about complex issues in a clear style;
- a diplomatic manner;
- the ability to work closely with a team;
- the ability to post material to the project's website.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

A grant is expected to be available in the range of $60,000-$100,000 for the completion of the consultant's portion of this work. The deadline for receipt of proposals is 5pm (EST) **Monday June 21, 1999.**

Electronic proposals must be available at a URL; print proposals must be in ten copies.

Components of a proposal shall include:

1. a narrative (maximum 5 pages) explaining how the project would be accomplished, including
   1. detailed work plan (including, if more than one person will be working, the specific role of each);
   2. details of resources for completing the project;
2. your qualifications for the project (including qualifications of others who would work with you);
3. budget (applicants are invited to submit variant budgets for variant levels of work);
4. resume (including resumes for others who would work with you);
5. names and telephone numbers of references (minimum of 3);
6. references to relevant writings by you and/or others who would work with you.

URLs or paper proposals should be sent to: David Green, Executive Director, National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage, 21 Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036;