

Jay Krueger
Personal Essay on Heritage Preservation

I served on the American Institute for Conservation board for seven years in the 1990s and came to know Heritage Preservation and their long time president Larry Reger through many meetings, conferences, and the occasional overlapping project between the two organizations. For many years, it was customary for the AIC president to serve on the Heritage Preservation board (and its' precursor organizations the National Conservation Advisory Council and the National Institute for Conservation), and in my last two years with AIC and for two additional years, I served on the Heritage Preservation board. It was a noticeably different environment than AIC, one that I thought I understood more than I actually did when I first arrived. Unlike a membership organization focused on the needs of conservators, Heritage Preservation aimed higher, and endeavored to see conservation and preservation issues as part of a larger world. Larry knew that effectively giving a voice to the field of conservation necessitated moving beyond conversations with other conservators. They were big, strategic thinkers, and understood that moving the preservation field forward meant talking to other constituencies and building broad-based support for the field.

Perhaps the most important and longest lasting contribution to the preservation of our cultural patrimony rests in their sustained and effective advocacy. Collections care programs such as the Conservation Assessment for Preservation surveys, the Save Outdoor Sculpture and Rescue Public Murals inventories, and the emergency preparedness and response initiatives, programs that we assume have been around forever, are all the direct result of Larry's vision and Heritage Preservation's capacity to develop and carry out this important work. The *Heritage Health Index* is an underappreciated example of this innate understanding that clearly identifying issues and drawing attention to the broader needs of the museum and library field can build consensus and ultimately strengthen the case funding solutions. Heritage Preservation brought an awareness and deeper connection to the conservation field to smaller museums, libraries, historic sites, and most importantly, to government agencies. In bringing together so many different constituencies and facilitating effective, sustained, multi-disciplinary programs, Heritage Preservation made our communities and institutions stronger.