Guidelines for the Recording of Heritage Buildings

A statement of principles for recording and documenting historic buildings is necessary before standards can be established. The following are principles under development by ICOMOS Canada.

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This document summarizes discussions which took place during the course of workshops conducted by the Recording and Documentation Committee of ICOMOS Canada between 1985 and 1988. It is still in draft form and comments and suggestions are welcome.

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Recognizing the intrinsic value which heritage buildings play in the understanding and appreciation of our cultural identity, ICOMOS Canada has made a firm commitment to architectural conservation. To assist with this endeavour, the Recording and Documentation Committee recommends the following recording principles and procedures to help architectural conservationists with designing specific recording practices.

1.2. By definition, a properly executed heritage record comprised of measured drawings and photographs provides a lasting and objective image of the heritage building. Such permanent records are crucial to the planning of effective maintenance, restoration, and renovation programs. In the event of an unplanned intervention such as fire, the archival record will provide evidence for the planning of the building’s restoration, thus reducing the potential for conjectural alteration. It is, therefore, very important that the highest possible heritage recording standards be implemented within the conservation process for heritage resources.

1.3. The Recording and Documentation Committee of ICOMOS Canada subscribes to the philosophical statement developed by the Doctrine Committee at its annual meeting in 1986:

It is understood that the National Estate has been entrusted to us by previous generations. It is our shared responsibility to identify and preserve those resources for the benefit of present and future generations. To this end, it is essential that permanent records be made of all significant historic resources.
Respecting this philosophical initiative, a Code of Ethics has been designed which outlines responsibilities, obligations, and levels of performance expected of the heritage recorder.

1.4. If these recommended Guidelines are to be applied in the workplace, they must be respected not only by the heritage recorder but also honoured by the other professions, by the government departments and those cultural resource managers who are responsible for the safekeeping of heritage buildings.

1.5. The procedures contained herein are to be regarded as a component of the Conservation Process which facilitates efficient and wise conservation management. The scope of this general document does not detail "what, when, and how to record" every possible type of building from light-house to post office. This document provides broad guidelines so that agencies involved in historic conservation can develop detailed procedures to suit the specific historic resource. With a strong ethical base such as the proposed Code of Ethics and with cooperative team work, practical recording procedures can be successfully incorporated into the policy of all architectural conservation programmes.

1.6. To assist with the implementation of these Guidelines, a sample Recording Matrix is included. This graphic matrix provides a checklist of "what" is to be recorded depending on the level (or the intensity) of the recording activity. (See Appendix 3.)

2.0. Definitions

The Heritage Recorder is a technical expert trained to apply special recording techniques (such as hand recording, record photography, rectified photography, stereophotogrammetry, and so on) to undertake Technical Analysis and to produce Heritage Records that meet the needs of the conservation professional for research, analysis, design, and maintenance and archival storage requirements.

Heritage Recording is the activity of producing precise and reliable technical records of historic resources that meet the Historic Resource Conservation standards.

Conservationists are the specialists (heritage recorders, historians, archaeologists, architects, engineers, landscape architects, conservators, interpreters, planners, and so forth) involved in the conservation process of historic resources.

Technical Analysis is the specific responsibility of the heritage recorder and consists of providing conservationists and the Public Archives of Canada with accurate and objective descriptions of the design, construction, materials, and condition of historic resources.

Histories, media, and archival specimens, through documents and antiques to buildings and large tracts of land. All are in some measure creations of the human mind and hands, illustrations from the past which, if preserved, will benefit present and future generations. These are easily destroyed and, once gone, can never be replaced.'

2.1. Additional Definitions. At an APT Conference held in Toronto in 1986, all speakers and chairpersons of the Documentation Session adopted the following definitions to clarify incompatibilities in recording and documentation terminology, and to resolve differences in perceptions related to the conservation process.

Archaeology is a discipline that deals with the science of the past community, through the study of artifacts, including records of man's past. Archaeology is often practiced in a research context, but it is also active in museums and other public agencies.

Architectural Conservation is the practice of the conservation of architectural resources, through the identification, documentation, and preservation of historic buildings and structures.

Historic Resources, as defined by Parks Canada Policy, are . . . scarce, often unique, nonrenewable, tangible relics of man's past. They range from archaeological evidence of man's earliest presence on this continent to recent architecture and technology from archaeological and ethnographic specimens, through documents and antiques to buildings and large tracts of land. All are in some measure creations of the human mind and hands, illustrations from the past which, if preserved, will benefit present and future generations. These are easily destroyed and, once gone, can never be replaced.'

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Documenting (or documentation) consists of compiling all available past and present records (written, graphic, photographic, and the like) about an historic resource.

A Project Dossier is a common reference file containing the original documentation from all specialists involved in the conservation process of an historic resource.

3.0. The Goals and Objectives of ICOMOS Canada’s Recording and Documentation Committee

3.1. Goals. The Recording and Documentation Committee has for its goal increasing Canadian awareness regarding the importance of Article 16 of the Venice Charter, which states that:

in all works of preservation or excavation, there should always be precise documentation in the form of analytical and critical reports, illustrated with drawings and photographs. Every stage of the work of cleaning, consolidation, rearrangement and integration, as well as technical and formal features identified during the course of the work, should be included. This record should be placed in the archives of a public institution and made available to research workers. It is recommended that the report should be published.

3.2. Objectives.

3.2.1. Foster the importance of accurate recording and precise documentation in historic conservation work.

3.2.2. Share information on effective recording techniques and documentation systems.

3.2.3. Define guidelines.

3.2.4. Organize conferences and workshops.

3.2.5. Encourage sharing of records and documentation.

4.0. Principles

In October 1986, the Recording and Documentation Committee of ICOMOS Canada developed the following principles for the recording of historic resources.

4.1. Consideration. A primary consideration of historic conservation in Canada is that permanent records should be made of all significant historic resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

4.2. Standards. Each record should be to a standard which provides true and permanent insurance against the possible loss of that significant historic resource by unplanned intervention (such as fire or dereliction) or could aid in the management of the conservation of that resource.

4.3. Establishing Priorities. The management of recording activities must include a set of priorities which define the resources that are most “significant” and must be recorded. The definition of “significant” historic resources may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, but it must be objectively and clearly established.

4.4. Early Implementation. Recording standards and methods must be implemented at the planning and management stage of the conservation process.

4.5. Record Suited to Project Mandate. The cultural resource manager must ensure that the recording activity is suited to the mandate of the specific conservation project.

4.6. Recording as Critical to Conservation. All members of the conservation community must understand that recording is a tool which leads to good management of historic resources and see recording as a critical activity within the Conservation Process.

4.7. Record “before, during, and after.” A complete heritage recording exercise should take place “before, during, and after” any intervention. (See Appendix 1.)

4.8. Recording Activity. The recording activity should be accomplished using the most thorough, accurate and non-destructive means possible.

4.9. Advancement of Professional Standards. All recording should contribute to the advancement of professional standards.

4.10. Archival Storage. Architectural conservationists should promote and ensure the proper archival storage of heritage records.

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4.11. Responsibility to the Conservation Community. Increasing awareness of the importance of heritage recording practices within the conservation community should be promoted by all persons involved in the architectural conservation process.

5.0. Professional Ethics in Heritage Recording

The philosophy and behavior implicit in the following points should be accepted and honoured by not only the heritage recorder but also by the client and conservationist or cultural resource managers. This Code of Ethics defines the individual responsibilities and obligations of the heritage recorder as well as the mutual relationship of heritage recorders as a professional group.

5.1. Safeguard the Heritage Building. The heritage recorder shall not damage the property during the recording activity and shall leave the property and site in the same condition as when the recording activity began.

5.2. Maintain Objectivity. Regardless of the level of proposed recording activity, methodology, or remuneration expected, the heritage recorder shall maintain an objective approach to the particular recording activity.

5.3. Uphold High Standards. The recorder shall endeavor to maintain the highest levels of performance, regardless of the limitations of the site or financial restrictions. The heritage recorder shall strive to achieve the highest degree of accuracy and precision in the execution of the recording activity and in the preparation of the recording document.

5.4 Advocate Completeness and Thoroughness. The recorder shall fulfill the assigned tasks with absolute thoroughness and completeness. Any quantitative adjustments to the planned work schedule shall not reduce or impair the quality of the remaining recording activities.

5.5. Limitations of the Heritage Recorder. The recorder shall not undertake any recording assignment which is beyond his or her professional competence. The recorder shall only recommend other recorders when he/she has sufficient knowledge of the experience and abilities of the other recorders.

5.6. Training and Education. The recorders shall endeavour to expand their recording expertise, keep current with developing recording technology/methodology, and maintain an active communication with others in the recording profession. Whenever possible, the recorder shall promote the awareness and understanding of the recording profession to other related professional disciplines and to members of the public.

5.7. Observe Safety. The recorder shall take necessary measures to avoid personal injury and shall not employ materials or equipment that may cause injury to other persons or that may damage the building or cause harm to the environment.

5.8. Respect Fellow Heritage Recorders. The recorder shall respect the professional integrity of fellow recorders and shall not attempt to obtain business from the established clients of another recorder. The recorder shall not participate in malicious or unfounded criticism of fellow recorders.

5.9. Equipment and Materials. The recorder shall use the best quality equipment and materials suitable to the specific recording activity. All equipment shall be regularly maintained to the highest standards. The final product shall consist of materials which are permanent and archivally stable.

5.10. Confidentiality and Privacy. The recorder shall respect the confidential nature of any information to which he/she is privileged during the recording exercise. The recorder shall also respect the privacy of the client or owner’s property.

6.0. Procedures for Recording in the Conservation Process

6.1. Initiating the Project. The conservation project manager should review the project dossier and consult with the heritage recorder and other heritage specialists involved in the conservation process at the first stage of planning the recording activity. The early involvement of a heritage recorder will assist the manager in the assessment of the background information contained in the project dossier and in the formulation of the project recording priorities.

6.2. Project Definition. The clear understanding of the recording project is the professional responsibility of the heritage recorder. The formulation of the heritage recording requirements will be established by a process of

6.2.1. identifying the heritage resource;
6.2.2. preliminary site visit;
6.2.3. identifying the purpose of the project and the scope of the recording exercise;
6.2.4. identifying the level of recording to be undertaken;
6.2.5. identifying recording techniques;

6.2.6. using the Matrix as a guide, to determine “what” to record (Appendix 3);

6.2.7. preparing a project schedule;

6.2.8. implementing the recording exercise.

6.3. Selection of Qualified Recorders. It is the responsibility of the conservation project manager to select a qualified heritage recorder and recording team. The team should comprise an adequate number of recorders for the scope and level of work. Each team should

6.3.1. have a senior recorder as project captain;

6.3.2. have an in-depth understanding of the type of resource to be recorded;

6.3.3. have appropriate levels of technical skill and experience;

6.3.4. have thorough knowledge of professional standards and heritage recording practices;

6.3.5. understand the extent of the recording assignment.

6.4. Recording On-site. This information gathering activity, that is, the procedure of recording on a low, medium, or high level, is outlined in the Recording Matrix (Appendix 3). Crucial to this stage is the organization of the recording activity, to include the consideration of

6.4.1. recording techniques (what tools and how to record);

6.4.2. conventions of measurement (increments of measurement and degrees of accuracy);

6.4.3. fieldnote format;

6.4.4. the sequence of recording operations;

6.4.5. site safety.

6.5. Production of Heritage Record and Project Report.

6.5.1. Coordination of the production of the heritage record with the Project Manager will include a review of

- a list of all required drawings and photographs
- drawing/photograph format issues (such as size and material)
- drawing/photographic conventions (such as line, weight, consistent representation of similar elements, and level of detail to be represented)

6.5.2. The Project Manager will establish a work plan for the preparation of the heritage record.

6.5.3. The Project Manager will ensure that the preparation of the record is undertaken in a manner in keeping with accepted professional practices with consideration of

- adequate work area
- the use of proper equipment
- the employment of stable materials

6.5.4. The project report forms a valuable part of the project dossier and will provide other recorders and managers with information which will assist them to plan future projects. A project report should briefly

- summarize initial purpose
- relate intended scope to final scope of record
- examine how the final record fulfills the initial goals and flag areas of notable deterioration in the building
- indicate project schedule through pre-recording to final documentation stages

A standard project index for such a report is shown in Appendix 2.

6.6. Transmitting and Storing. The following must be implemented before the heritage records are complete:

6.6.1. Complete a project index (Appendix 2).

6.6.2. Complete a drawing index/photographic index (Appendix 2).

6.6.3. Store heritage record with project dossier according to designated archival practices.

6.6.4. Transmit copies of the heritage record to appropriate institutions or individuals.

In addition, the following should be considered:

6.6.5. Notify appropriate archives of any addition of material to the building dossier (for example, Inventory and Location of Original Records [ILORSI and Canadian Built Heritage]).

6.6.6. Ensure that the heritage record is accessible to the public for education and research purposes.

6.6.7. Encourage the publication of the heritage record.

Note
Appendix 1: The Conservation Process for Historic Resources

Step I. Project Identification and Commitment

Step II. Initial Studies

A. Establish project dossier, an activity during which recording and/or documentation are required.

B. Preliminary recording and documentation, an activity during which recording and/or documentation are required.

C. Interim stabilization and/or maintenance.

D. Theme and objectives.

Step III. Property Research and Concept Studies

A. Detailed recording, an activity during which systematic recording and/or documentation are required.

B. Research and investigation reports by the historian, archaeologist, restoration architect, restoration engineer, period landscape architect, conservator, planner, and so forth.

C. Development concept report.

D. “Class D” cost estimates.

Step IV. Project Development Plan

A. “After-stripping” recording, an activity during which systematic recording and/or documentation are required.

B. Conservation and operations project brief.

C. “Class C” cost estimates.

Step V. Project Design and Construction Documents

A. Preliminary and final plans and specifications, an activity during which systematic recording and/or documentation are required.

B. “Class B and A” cost estimates.

Step VI. Project Implementation

A. Construction and progress documentation.

B. “As-built” record after construction, an activity during which systematic recording and/or documentation are required.

C. Project dossier transmitted to appropriate document centre/archives.

Step VII. Site Operation and Maintenance

A. Retrieve and update project dossier as required.

B. Operation and maintenance.

C. “Maintenance” recording activities during which systematic recording and/or documentation are required.

This appendix was prepared by Robin Letellier, Parks Canada, 1985.

Appendix 2: Heritage Record Indices

1.0. Project Index

- Name of Project
- Location
- Original Architect and Builders
- Date of Construction
- Dates of Subsequent Alterations
- Purpose of Recording
- Date of Recording (field work)
- Extent of Measured Drawing Work
- Project Team
- Name of Client
- Owner of Building

2.0. Drawing Index

- All Drawing Titles
- Scale
- Date of Recording Exercise
- Location of Original Drawings
- Type of Drawing Medium
- Location of Fieldnotes
- Other Available Documentation (such as Archaeological/Historical/Report/Survey, Photographic Record, and so on)

3.0. Photographic Index

- All Photographic Titles listed and keyed with numbers to the photograph and negative
- Type of Camera
- Type of Film and Developing
- Date of Recording Exercise
- Location of Negatives
- Location of Photographic Key Plan
- Other Available Documentation (such as Archaeological/Historical Report/Survey/Drawing Record, and so on)
Appendix 3: Heritage Recording Matrix

Matrix Definitions

The Matrix is a table or schedule outlining what and when to record, depending on the chosen level of recording (Low, Medium, or High).

The techniques of recording or process of production of the record are not specified in this Matrix. It is expected that such decisions will be made by the cultural resource manager in cooperation with the heritage recorder. The selection of Low, Medium, or High level of recording will depend on the purpose and budget of the recording activity and the cultural/historical value of the resource.

Low Level recording represents the minimum acceptable standard of a heritage record. This level is suggested for emergency recording or preliminary investigations such as inventory and survey activity to complement historical research, prior to a higher level of recording. This level of recording is referred to as “Preliminary Recording” in the Conservation Process for Historic Resources (see Appendix 1). It is suggested that this level may require 2-8 person days.

Medium Level recording is required where budgets and time permit a more in-depth investigative record. Such instances would include recording before alterations. This level of recording is referred to as “after stripping” or “as-built” recording in the Conservation Process for Historic Resources (see Appendix 1). It is suggested that this level may require 6-30 person days.

High Level recording is the standard applied for a complete heritage record. This would apply to the most significant historic resources as an “insurance against loss.” It would also apply when proposed alterations would significantly alter the existing

| HERITAGE RECORDING GUIDELINE MATRIX FOR THE RECORDING OF A TWO STORY HOUSE |
| SCOPE OF RECORD | DRAWN PHOTO LOW | DRAWN PHOTO MEDIUM | DRAWN PHOTO HIGH |
| PROJECT IDENTIFICATION | R | R | R |
| PHOTO INDEX | R | R | R |
| OTHER as needed |  |  |  |

| CONTEXT | LOCATION PLAN | STREETSCAPE | DRAWN PHOTO LOW | DRAWN PHOTO MEDIUM | DRAWN PHOTO HIGH |
| LOCATION PLAN | R | S | R | R |
| STREETSCAPE | R | R | R |

| ARCHITECTURAL PLANS | ALL FLOOR PLANS | ATTIC | BASEMENT | DRAWN PHOTO LOW | DRAWN PHOTO MEDIUM | DRAWN PHOTO HIGH |
| ALL FLOOR PLANS | R | R | R | R | R |
| ATTIC | R | R | R |
| BASEMENT | R | R | R |
| OTHER | R | R | R |

| SYSTEMS | MECHANICAL | ELECTRICAL | WATER AND SANITARY | DRAWN PHOTO LOW | DRAWN PHOTO MEDIUM | DRAWN PHOTO HIGH |
| MECHANICAL | S | S | R | R |
| ELECTRICAL | S | S | R | R |
| WATER AND SANITARY | S | S | R | R |

| ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS | DOORS | WINDOWS | STAIRS | MOULDINGS | FIREPLACES AND CHIMNEYS | HARDWARE | PORCHES, Verandahs | LANDSCAPE FEATURES | DRAWN PHOTO LOW | DRAWN PHOTO MEDIUM | DRAWN PHOTO HIGH |
| DOORS | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| WINDOWS | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| STAIRS | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| MOULDINGS | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| FIREPLACES AND CHIMNEYS | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| HARDWARE | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| PORCHES, Verandahs | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| LANDSCAPE FEATURES | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R | R |

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architectural integrity of the building. This level of recording is referred to as “detailed” recording in the Conservation Process for Historic Resources (see Appendix 1). It is suggested that this level may require 20-80 person days.

Elevations refer to the exterior sides or facades of a building. The principal elevation is the entire facade from ground to roof ridge as seen from the street. More often than not, this elevation includes the main entrance.

Secondary elevations are those facades to the sides and rear. Elevations can also refer to details such as a ground floor window or main entrance elevation. It is also common practice to refer to the different facades according to the compass directions which they face, for example, the North elevation or facade.

Interior elevations refer to the walls, a fireplace elevation, or staircase elevation of specific rooms or details within these rooms, Interior rooms and spaces are given numbers or referred to by their location or traditional use, such as the East wall of the North-East parlour or Room #4.

Context illustrates the building’s plan and elevation in association with the as found surrounding environment.

Streetscape refers to the building’s elevation in association with the immediate buildings or spaces to either side along the street.

A landscape plan depicts the building’s foot print or roof plan in relation to its surrounding natural environment. It includes built elements such as out-buildings, walks, driveways, garden plots, trees, shrubs, and natural topographical elements.

A section is an architectural drawing which represents a vertical plane cut through the building and depicts the interior elevations and internal structure of the building through its full height. The principal section of a building will be the cross-section or longitudinal section which most fully depicts the character of the building interior and structure.

The systems of a building include its system of construction (such as balloon frame, solid masonry, or heavy timber). In recording these systems, consideration should be given to materials, detailing, and the inter-relationship of elements.

Environmental service systems in a building include its plumbing (sewage, water supply, water piping, fire sprinklers), its heating, ventilating, air conditioning, and its electrical system.

Other important mechanical systems may occur in an historic resource such as fire alarms, communication (door bells, intercom, telephone), or conveying (pneumatic tubes, elevators). The building systems may also extend over the building site (such as drainage or irrigation).

The architectural floor plan is a two-dimensional cross-section taken horizontally through the building. A building is usually recorded with one floor plan for each storey of the building, and the level at which that cross-section is measured is often at approximately 4'6" above the finish floor level so as to include windows and other important openings.

The architectural details are those elements of the building construction which show at an enlarged scale the most significant parts of the whole building. These drawings or photographs may be recorded in plan, section, or elevation as best suits the particular detail. The detailed record should indicate how the various pieces of its structure are fitted together and how the element is finished.

In determining which details should be recorded, the Matrix indicates that some details are “significant,” meaning that they are singular or special among all other of those elements (such as a fan-light over a front door) or are “typi-Cal,” that is, they are of a standard design which is repeated throughout parts of the building (such as a six-panel door).

The Project Index, Drawing Index, and Photographic Index are referred to Appendix 2 of this document.

The Drawing Key Plan is a drawing which includes coded symbols which designate the view or location from which each of the drawings included in the record are taken. Each “drawing indicator” will include the drawing number and the sheet number on which the drawing will be found.

The Photographic Key Plan is a drawing which indicates the location from which each photograph was taken. Each “photographic indicator” will describe the photograph number as it relates to the photographic index.

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