



# PREFACE

This book is designed to ‘train the trainers’. It contains a series of activities that teachers, facilitators and others can use to help students develop the thinking skills they will need in their future heritage practice. It can also be used outside the classroom by anyone who works with heritage and needs to engage with people in order to understand what is important to them and plan for the future. Together these activities provide a toolkit of ideas that can be adapted to the myriad different aspects of managing and caring for anything that matters to people.

The activities are designed to be used by anyone who grapples with the day-to-day complexities of managing historic things or places that are important. That includes people in professions who deal with heritage, such as conservators, museum curators, architects, archaeologists, scientists, anthropologists, surveyors, landscape specialists and historians. It also includes people with specialist cultural knowledge, including community representatives or spokespeople, tribal leaders and members of cultural groups.

It is not an introduction to the academic study of heritage – it is assumed that the users of this book will already have a good working knowledge of the basics of heritage practice, based on their own experience and specialist knowledge. Nor is it a book for university students looking for critical approaches to heritage studies – that is covered better elsewhere.

Instead the activities illustrate and involve ‘heritage practice’ – the things that organizations (and indeed individuals) do to hand on what matters to them to future generations. Heritage practice is very broad. As well as the basic physical work to care for things and places, it includes activities such as research, conservation, maintenance and repair, planning, decision-making, community engagement, interpretation, site management, designation, advocacy and organizational leadership.

Many different organizations or groups of people are involved in heritage practice. Any organization that deals with heritage, including museums, public and private sector bodies as well as voluntary groups, will deal with some or all of these issues. However, it is not just heritage organizations that are involved with heritage practice. There are many other groups and organizations who are responsible for heritage assets, even though it is not their primary purpose; they too need to include heritage practice as part of what they do.

The philosophical approach that underpins the activities can best be described as ‘values-based’ heritage practice. In short, this approach takes the view that what defines heritage is its value to people, and therefore understanding that value is central to finding ways to sustain it for the future.

Values-based practice recognizes that over the past few decades heritage policy has been changing and moving from ‘push’ to ‘pull’ – to a world where heritage specialists are facilitators and not dictators who recognize that unless they are sensitive to and engaged with people and what is important to them it is very difficult to conserve things in the long run. This does not displace the need for good technical conservation or management skills but works with them.

It is a book to be used rather than read. Each activity is designed to inspire thinking and debate. Users will want to mix and match activities in order to put together their own events, workshops or courses, tailored to specific circumstances, and drawing on their own experience and knowledge. But whilst users might select individual activities, I hope that taken together, these activities form a useful, practical toolkit that illustrates the basic tenets of values-based practice in heritage.

Over time, I hope that these activities will adapt and evolve as people find new ways to explore and tease out that delightful, frustrating, elusive complexity that is the value people place on their cultural heritage and the challenge of passing it on to the future.

