

## Chapter 1

**Value and meaning  
in cultural resources**

William D. Lipe

... the things that owe their existence exclusively to men nevertheless constantly condition their human makers ...

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

The study and management of cultural resources have as their objects of concern the material *things* produced by past human activity – the artefacts, manufacturing debris, middens, structures, monuments, and the like, that have survived from some past time into the present. These may remain in actual use, as do many historic buildings and monuments, or they may consist only of partial remains and the traces of past use, as with archaeological sites.

Because humans generally modify the landscapes in which they live, and because they attach names, myths, and affective value to features of the territory they inhabit, the landscapes of past cultures may also qualify as cultural resources (cf. Newcomb 1979; Baker and Harley 1973). The point is that the environment of a human group forms one of the conditions of its life; this environment consists both of things made or acquired by the people, and of the natural surroundings. The latter may or may not be modified by human activities, but are in any case used and given cultural meanings, so that they function along with human manufactures as part of the culturally defined environment.

Furthermore, any generation of humans will ordinarily not manufacture, acquire, or bring into use all of its material environment during its own lifetime; some portion of its tools, structures,

places, etc. will have been passed down from prior generations. Cultural resource management, which is concerned with what things will be retained from the past, and with how they will be used in the present and future, thus represents the self-conscious emergence of consideration for an ordinarily implicit process that must be as old as human culture. It is only with the acceleration of the pace of manufacture and discard, and of the rate at which our landscapes are being changed, that we have become explicitly concerned with the loss of cultural continuity and contrast brought about by too rapid a change in our cultural environments, both built and natural. On a personal scale, many of us have seen the places and things that helped shape our youths disappear forever beneath a new parking lot, highway, or apartment house. As members of ethnic groups, nations, and of humanity as a whole, we fear the same fate for those surviving fragments of past cultural environments that preserve some tangible links with the past for each of these kinds of group.

This essay does not directly face the difficult issue of *how* we are to decide which of the many potential cultural resources are to be saved, and which to let be destroyed or decay. This problem is an immense one, at least for the relatively recent past. If, to use an exaggerated example, we were to declare that all cultural materials more than two years old were to be preserved, our societies would undoubtedly come rapidly to a halt, and we would soon stifle in our own refuse. Instead of tackling that problem head-on, this essay instead explores the ways in which

*William D. Lipe*

2

cultural materials from the past can function as resources – that is, be of use and benefit – in the present and future. This seems a worthwhile objective in its own right, and should also contribute to developing an appropriate framework for making choices about ‘what should be saved’.

In the section that follows, discussion is organized around types of resource value – associative/symbolic, informational, aesthetic, and economic. To the extent that value is defined in relation to some end or use, this discussion of values is intended to contribute to an understanding of how cultural materials from the past can function as resources. The final section of the essay again takes up the question of ‘resource-ness’, but from an even broader and more general perspective, returning to the universal role that the material cultural environment plays in providing cultural continuity and perspective, and hence in linking past, present and future within the experience of any given human generation. Here, it will be contended, is found the most general source of meaning and importance for cultural resources in human life; it follows by extension that the ultimate justification for cultural resource study and management lies here as well.

#### Cultural resource values

Value is not inherent in any cultural items or properties received from the past, at least not in the same sense as, say, size or colour or hardness. Value is learned about or discovered in these phenomena by humans, and thus depends on the particular cultural, intellectual, historical, and psychological frames of reference held by the particular individuals or groups involved. This is not to say that the specific qualities of a prospective cultural resource, and its authenticity as a cultural product with specific provenance, are irrelevant. Rather, these qualities alone are not sufficient to determine value; a human cognition and a context, however inexplicit or loosely defined the latter, are required as well.

All cultural materials, including cultural landscapes, that have survived from the past, are potentially cultural resources – that is, have some potential value or use in the present or future. As noted above, for practical reasons, not all can be preserved, nor can all be studied with a high level of intensity – or even a low level, if we adopt a truly comprehensive definition of potential resources. Furthermore, and philosophically more basic, not all cultural materials from the past have equally high resource potential, at least within a given context. That such contexts or frames of reference are likely and probably certain to shift, however, emphasizes the relativity of resource value. This complicates the lives of planners who must use the criteria of today to decide which cultural materials and properties to attempt to save for tomorrow; these decisions will undoubtedly be re-evaluated in the future by standards we cannot now predict. This problem has been discussed but not resolved (e.g., by Lipe 1974 and Glassow 1977), and may be insoluble. Nevertheless, because time and money for cultural resource preservation are scarce, we must make choices among cultural materials, and in so doing, must use our best current estimates of which of these are most likely to

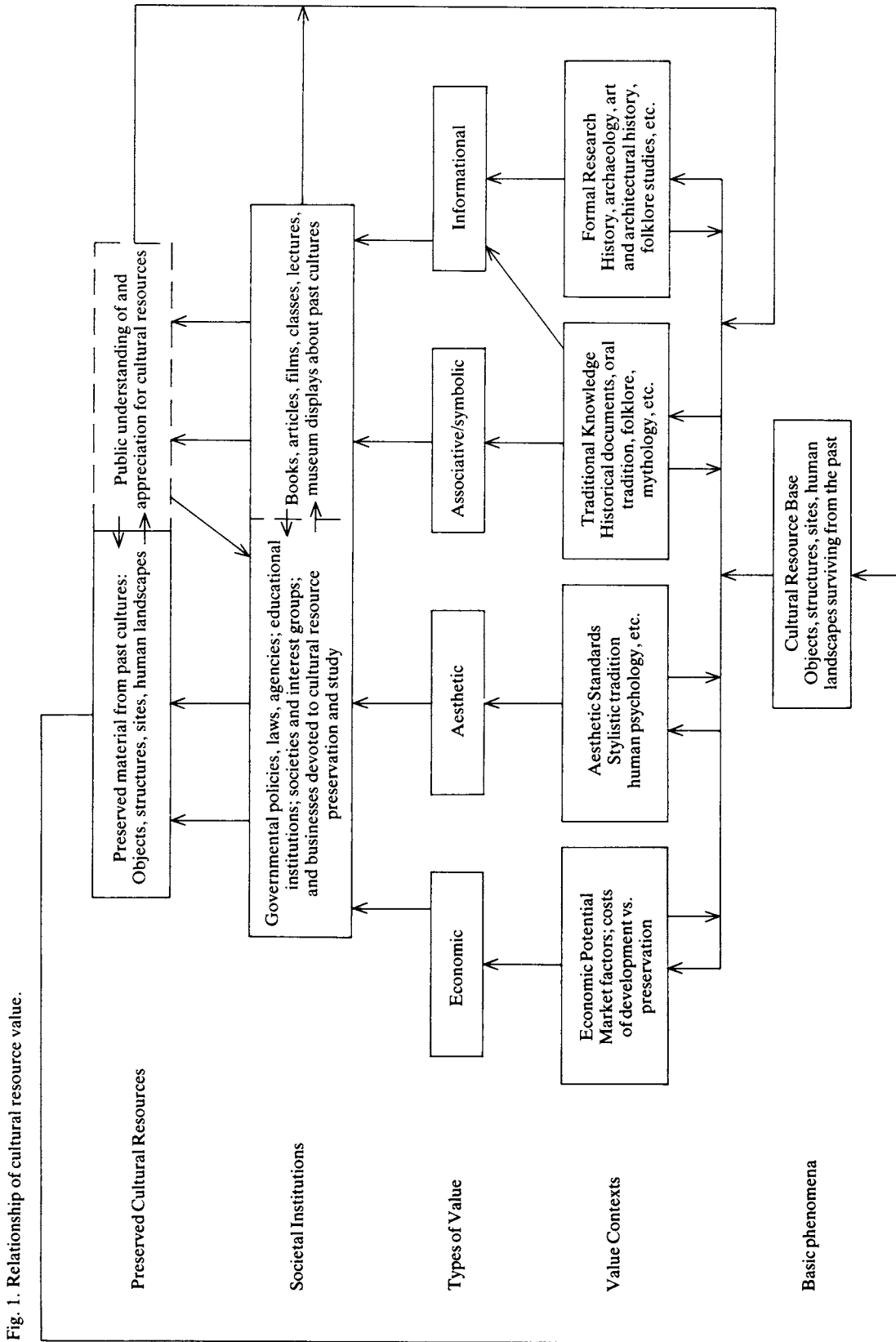
yield resource values in both the near and long-term future (Chesler and King 1977).

It also seems apparent that the resource value of a cultural item in a present, let alone a future, context, may not be identical or even similar to its resource value in its original context. Thus, a barn may become a boutique; an earthen temple mound and plaza may be used as a golf course; arrowheads may be chosen by size or colour and arranged to form the picture of an Indian chief, a bison, or a cartoon character. Probably no cultural item or property of any antiquity ever functions in today’s context in the same way that it did in the past. Yet I think it is important (and this argument will be further developed later in the essay) that some relationship to the original context be retained and communicated, whatever other functions may be added.

Figure 1 displays some relationships among cultural resources, instrumental social arrangements, resource values, and the contexts from which these values emerge. Reading the diagram from bottom to top, one starts with the cultural resource base, i.e., the material remains of past cultures that have survived into the present time. All these are *potential* cultural resources, but their actual resource value to the society or groups within can only be established within particular contexts. These contexts are provided by the society’s economy, its aesthetic standards, its traditional or common knowledge, and the kinds of formal research it supports or has access to. These contexts can interact among themselves – for example, archaeological research may establish that a North American structure, which in the traditional wisdom was thought to represent early Norse colonization of the New World, was actually built by much later English colonists. Or, a shift in popular knowledge about and appreciation of the Victorian era may lead to a higher aesthetic evaluation of Victorian architecture, and to greater economic value for structures built during this period; conversely, the popularity of the structures might increase first and the interest in the period follow. Obviously, cultural factors outside these specific contexts and having little directly to do with cultural resources may also affect the system. A world-wide economic depression, for example, may lower the society’s capacity to rehabilitate historic structures, no matter how well they are understood and how greatly they are appreciated by the populace.

When potential cultural resources are considered within these contexts, evaluations are made of these material remains of the past. These evaluations establish the degree to which these materials are considered to be resources by the society or by groups within it. Several types of value, and their relationships to contexts, are discussed more fully below.

Societies have the ability to preserve cultural resources actively, by establishing monuments, reserves, museums, registers or listings, and so forth, but they may also protect them passively, by simply refraining from destroying identified or potential resources. As Figure 1 indicates, however, this ability depends on the existence and effectiveness of certain societal institutions. The first group consists of governmental policies, laws, and agencies, as well as organized historical or archaeologi-



William D. Lipe

4

cal societies, other interest or avocational groups, educational institutions, or businesses, that have as explicit objectives to accomplish or promote the preservation or study of cultural resources. Another essential kind of social institution or instrumentality is formed by materials such as books, TV and movie films, classes, lectures, and museum displays that provide both technical and non-technical information about cultural resources, their historic contexts, and how they can come to or can continue to serve as resources if they are preserved.

Together, these two types of institution promote the preservation of cultural resources, and the creation of a favourable public understanding, appreciation, and use of them. These public attitudes feed back directly to the institutions that support cultural resource preservation, as well as more generally into the cultural contexts from which resource values emerge. Likewise, the state of the cultural resource base is affected by the society's actions in protecting certain resources and in letting others disappear through destruction or decay.

This diagram is, of course, overly mechanistic and overly simplified; it neglects, for example, to show a feedback relationship from the 'societal institutions' box to the 'formal research' box. On the other hand, it is already sufficiently complicated to risk having the casual reader take it for part of a television repair manual and bypass it entirely. The purpose of the figure is to suggest a conceptual scheme within which the complex relationships among cultural materials, their resource values, and the societal decisions that affect them may be comprehended and discussed.

#### *Associative/symbolic value*

At the heart of the value of cultural resources is their ability to serve as tangible links to the past from which they have survived, in a way that written or narrated histories cannot. I am not arguing that the kind of understanding of the cultural past that can be imparted by cultural resources is superior to, or even independent of, oral or written history (or prehistory), just that the direct access to the past that these resources provide cannot be duplicated by other means. Any incident, episode, or period of the past can never be truly recaptured; the words that were spoken, the actions taken, the exact cultural and environmental context, the people themselves – these can be described or discussed, but as real entities they no longer exist and can never be brought back. But cultural resources are composed of the very *things* that were made, used, and discarded by, or that provided shelter or settings for, those human lives and actions of long ago. Physically, cultural resources participate in both the past and the present. Their authenticity is the basis for creating in the contemporary viewer the subjective knowledge that he has experienced a contact with the past that is direct and real, however incomplete that experience may be.

This quality of cultural resources makes them powerful as symbols of, or mnemonics for, the past. When one encounters a cultural resource, however, the vision of the past that it evokes and the affect associated with the experience is highly conditioned, if not determined, by the other knowledge about the

past that the participant brings to the encounter or that he is provided with on the spot. For example, consider the earliest human stone tools. For some of these, even experienced archaeologists might question their human manufacture had the tools not been found in an indubitable primary archaeological context with other evidences of human use. To a lay person, they would be mere lumps of stone, no different in kind from ones tossed out of the garden the day before. Yet for either observer, what a difference it makes to know confidently the provenance of the stones. Then, to hold in one's hand the piece of stone establishes a direct sensory connection with the hand that shaped and used it a million or more years ago. Then, a consideration of the lives of those ancestral humans becomes more than a purely intellectual exercise. Thus the quality and meaningfulness of the encounter is shaped by knowledge gained elsewhere than from the thing itself. The thing, however, remains central to the encounter; the subjective experience of seeing and holding the authentic tool also enhances the participant's ability to receive new information about the way of life in which the artefact once participated.

I think archaeologists are particularly sensitive to the dynamic role that knowledge plays when cultural resources are used to commemorate, evoke, or symbolize a past culture or event. We deal with items, structures, etc., that are usually only partly preserved, and that often are kinds of things that we have never seen functioning in living cultures. Even the kinds of cultures themselves are often remote from our own personal experiences. Consequently, what we know about these archaeological finds has to be built up explicitly, a clue at a time, by means of painstaking research. On the other hand, an historic church or residence that commemorates an important period or event in our own culture may be familiar to us through accounts heard since childhood, and through our own actual experience of attending a church or of living in a house of a type generally similar to the historic structure. Here, the knowledge needed to envision and to understand the past that is represented by the cultural resource is provided by common or traditional knowledge, rather than by formal research.

In Figure 1, the inclusion of historical documents as part of the context labelled 'traditional knowledge' stems from the assumption that most historical documents incorporate popularly held perspectives or biases derived from the cultural tradition of the writer at the time the document was penned, and that a somewhat different perspective might be held by an historian using these sources to reconstruct and to analyse the historical context of a cultural resource. The distinction is between perspectives (and perceptions) stemming from the culture in general versus those stemming from the subculture of scholars, which includes rules of evidence and the like. In any case, traditional or common understandings of the past, and of the role of particular structures, places, etc. in it, can be the subject of formal research, and the understandings that result from the latter enterprise may return to influence popular conceptions, usually after a considerable time-lag. Because these conceptions are embedded in a larger cultural context, however, the findings of formal scholarship will not be the only thing that causes them to change.



Though cultural resource materials and properties can be imitated, faked, or 'reconstructed' using new materials, as physical entities, they cannot otherwise be falsified, nor can their actual trajectories through the past be changed in the present. These trajectories can be misunderstood or misrepresented, however, as can the past cultural contexts from which the material objects have emerged. As noted above, this is because our present-day understandings of these cultural resources are conditioned by information extrinsic to the resources themselves. This information can change through scholars' discovery of additional or different evidence about the resource, through the popularization of new 'folk' interpretations, and by manipulation for political ends. Because of their value as tangible and believable symbols of the cultural past, cultural resources may be sought out to further political ends. They can be caught up in the manipulation of history, that is, in distortion of information about the past events or conditions of which the resource stands as a tangible present-day reminder. This relationship can cut both ways, of course; attempts to deny or change history can founder against the stubborn physical evidence from the past.

So far, I have talked of the power of cultural resources to evoke the past, and of the interdependence of the resources themselves and the knowledge that people have about them. There remains the question of *why* individuals, groups, and nations use cultural resources to evoke, symbolize, or commemorate the past. That material items do function in these ways is so commonplace that studies of the phenomenon as such are rare. (A welcome exception is a recent work by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981).)

Any consideration of the nature of human behaviour and of human adaptation, at either the individual or the group level, focuses on the role of learning and of cultural transmission of information among contemporaries and between generations. Human learning and communication are, of course, symbolically mediated. Symbols permit us to go beyond learning by our own trial and error and by directly imitating others. With symbols, we can be told what has or will happen, or we can imagine it; in other words, we can experience vicariously. Furthermore, we can create and manipulate abstract concepts. When the plasticity of behaviour created by a dependence on learning is joined by an ease in communication made possible by symbols, we have the potential to create within a society a pool of information that is far larger than the information that can be held by a single individual. When material objects are called into service as symbols, cultural information need no longer be stored entirely in human brains, and the pool of information available to a group can expand even more. The cultures thus created by the parcelling out of information among individuals, groups, and things outlive their individual participants and provide continuity through time for ways of life, so that each new individual and generation does not have to start over to acquire a fund of information, though within limits each may add to or otherwise modify what has been transmitted from the past.

If one's well-being and even one's life depend on learning and maintaining a store of information, forgetting can be a prob-

lem; learned information is not biologically built-in as is genetically transmitted information. Because they are durable, material items are the most stable kinds of symbols; and because they once participated in and generally were shaped by the past states they stand for, their meanings are not attached to them entirely by convention, and will tend to stay fixed around a cultural nexus. Material things, be they artefacts, structures, or landscapes, thus lend themselves well to society's need for continuity in the transmission of cultural information through time.

Arendt (1957) puts it well:

It is this durability which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and use them . . . From this viewpoint, the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that – in contradiction to the Heraclitean saying that the same man can never enter the same stream – men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world . . . (Arendt 1958, 137)

Eliade (1973) offers an extreme case of the symbolic use of the material world (here, a cultural landscape) to foster continuity. Among the Australian aborigines, he writes, the landscape

is charged with awe: every rock, spring, and water hole represents a concrete trace of a sacred drama carried out in the mythical times . . . (Eliade 1973, 57)

The young initiate believes that he can be a reincarnation of one of the mythical ancestors; consequently, as he learns of the deeds of this ancestor, from their inscription on the landscape, he is also learning about

his own glorious pre-existence. Ultimately, he is taught to repeat himself such as he was *ab origine*; that is to say, he is to imitate his own exemplary model. (Eliade 1973, 58)

Effective communication and devices for integration are also essential to a culturally defined way of life. The differentiation of society both is made possible by and facilitates the expansion of the store of cultural information beyond the capacities of single individuals. This then requires that information to be easily and rapidly communicable so that it can be shared when need be, and that means be found to integrate the differentiated subgroups within the society so that they will not disperse or continually be at cross purposes. Cultural resources that are both public and visible serve well to communicate certain kinds of information rapidly and repeatedly. Furthermore, because the messages are generalized and not verbal, they can be received by individuals and groups that are socially and culturally heterogeneous. In western societies, cultural resources such as historic churches, preserved battlefields, and statues or residences of 'founding fathers' often are used to send broadly integrative messages, reminding the populace of long-held belief systems, or historical events that evoke the common origins or common experiences of what may be an internally rather heterogeneous society. Such historical statements may serve as a kind of

*William D. Lipe*

6

charter for a group or nation. With the aid of appropriate cultural resources, such messages give the society's members a subjective sense of the group's permanence and authenticity by demonstrating that it existed long before they, or perhaps even their great-grandparents, were born.

But what of the arrowheads in the picture frame? The barn that becomes a 'boutique mall'? The monument that has come to stand only for a history created as propaganda? Despite the fact that cultural resources have, as participants in them, an intrinsic relationship with past contexts, and despite the fact that their forms may well have been unalterably shaped by that past, they can, as material objects, acquire new utilitarian functions, and as symbols, they can acquire additional meanings, or even be made to lie. Even a superficial look at antiquity will show us that 'adaptive re-use' has not emerged just in the modern age. In my own research into the prehistory of Southwestern American Indians, I have come on pueblos built of the stones from earlier structures, and on rooms remodelled from ceremonial to habitation use and back again. And, if historic structures are to be preserved in the midst of contemporary towns and cities, it is almost essential that they have more than a symbolic role, and that their utilitarian roles be to some extent different than they were in the past.

While recognizing this, I think that we as cultural resource advocates must attempt to see that whatever functions or symbolic content are added to a resource, the thread of association with its actual historic context is not broken, falsified, or entirely submerged in its new fabric. The arrowheads in the picture frame evoke nothing of their original cultural context; they are merely objects of the right size, shape, and colour to fill out the picture conceived by the collector; if they symbolize anything as arrowheads, it is their owner's skill and persistence in finding or trading for a certain class of rare things. Here, the association with a cultural past has been entirely severed. And, if we know that the history is false for which, e.g., a monument, building, or battleground is made to stand, we have the obligation to speak out about it. To do less is to declare that the associations of historic things and their meanings are, after all, only conventional, and that any information whatsoever can be attached to these things, for whatever purpose, if only enough of us agree to do so. This violates Arendt's (1958, 137) vision of the way in which 'the objectivity of the man-made world' can stand against and hence stabilize the subjectivity and ever-changing nature of human life. If even historic things can mean anything whatsoever, then not only continuity but also predictability in human affairs can ultimately be lost.

#### *Informational value*

As discussed in the previous section, what is known about cultural materials conditions their symbolic/associative use as resources. The materials themselves, and the network of spatial associations among them, are sources of information about that past that we are only beginning to learn how to exploit. All past cultural materials, large and small, grand and commonplace, have at least some power to inform us about the past, if only we

have the wit to ask the right questions and the methods with which to extract the appropriate answers.

Informational value emerges most clearly from formal research; the fields of archaeology, art history, architectural history, and historical geography, at the minimum, have well-developed approaches for making inferences about the past from the direct study of cultural resources themselves, including their spatial patterning with respect to one another and to features of the natural environment. These fields have important inter-relationships with another group of disciplines, which include ethnology, history, folklore, cultural geography, architectural design, and the psychology of art. These fields provide observations or accounts of living individuals, groups, or societies that can be used to build a fuller cultural context for the material things that are the focus of study. The critical link between the two groups of fields is the behaviour surrounding the making, use, and disposition of material things. Despite the complexity of the inferences required, progress continues to be made in integrating information from both groups of fields to produce increasingly credible and detailed accounts of the lifeways of past cultures, the structure and function of institutions within these societies, and the processes that governed both stability and change; it appears that the informational potential of cultural resources has only begun to be tapped.

Because historical documentation is lacking for so much of the record of the human past, the cultural resources of these periods constitute the primary sources of information. Even for periods which have documentation, however, studies of archaeological remains (e.g., Deetz 1977) or of artefacts and structures still in use (e.g., Glassie 1975) have demonstrated the wealth of new information that can be obtained to supplement, or to provide a new perspective on, the inferences derived from documents.

Methods for direct study of cultural resources may be destructive of artefacts (e.g., some kinds of physical and chemical analyses) or of spatial associations and fragile in-place structures and features (e.g., excavation). This poses the problem that gathering information by these techniques precludes re-study of the phenomena in question, either by the same or by new techniques. Because the cultural resources of any given period are non-renewable and under continual attack by both human and natural agencies, this poses a problem, particularly for the rarer types of evidence. In archaeology, awareness of this problem has increasingly led archaeologists to adopt a 'conservation ethic' in their research, and to emphasize sampling; careful selection of data and documentation of work; and consideration of the data needs of other workers (Lipe 1974; for a much earlier statement see Petrie 1972 (1904), 178–82).

A more pervasive and even less tractable problem derives from the dynamic nature of the fields that study cultural resources and from the unknown and largely untapped information potential of the resource materials themselves. The problem has previously been pointed out – for practical reasons of expense and interference with new developments, not all cultural resources

*Value and meaning in cultural resources*

7

can be preserved – in this case, for future study. Yet we know that as our research disciplines evolve, new questions and new methods will enable us to achieve understandings of the past that will be of a quality now unattainable. Because we do not know the directions these new developments will take, we cannot use them to set priorities for what should be preserved for future study; on the other hand, priorities set on the basis of current research aims and approaches are almost certain not to provide fully for future needs.

This problem also exists, at least theoretically, with respect to our future needs for resources having symbolic/associative value; that is, these needs are likely to change in the future also, as common knowledge and interests change in response to new information derived from research or to developments in other areas of the culture. However, it is the nature of symbols that one or a few can stand for the whole, while it has been the trend in recent informational research to deal with large aggregates or samples of artefacts, sites, or whatever, and also to emphasize areal distributions of both cultural and natural phenomena. Furthermore, though food wastes and manufacturing debris could conceivably assume symbolic or associative value, they rarely do. Yet they have become the stock-in-trade of some kinds of informational study. In general, then, it seems fair to say that the demands for preservation of cultural resources for future informational value are both greater and more difficult to prioritize than are demands for the preservation of symbolically useful resources.

There seems no clear-cut solution to this problem, but it is one that must be faced by any programme responsible for managing the cultural resources of an area. An awareness of the problem is at least a start.

Success in saving resources important primarily for their informational value is further hampered by the fact that the protagonists for these kinds of resources are primarily researchers and the more dedicated amateurs and aficionados, while resources valued for their symbolic functions can usually command a larger following. Because informational resource value is so dependent on an intellectual context and hence so multi-dimensional and variable, proponents of these resources may be tempted to try to 'save everything' and hence to risk an eventually self-defeating public or governmental backlash. Despite the unknowability of all future information needs, these proponents must make their case on the basis of their best understandings of today's needs, plus their best projections and guesses of what kinds of resource will be most useful in tomorrow's studies.

The importance of preserving a supply of cultural resources adequate to permit a variety of informational studies to be carried out cannot be overstated. Nor can the importance of maintaining such programmes of continuing study. Because of the dynamic nature of the relationship between knowledge about cultural resources and their symbolic, commemorative, and educative values, cultural resource management programmes must be concerned with research that produces new information, as well as with the preservation and presentation of resources of known

public interest. To do otherwise is not only to deny that information about the past has value for its own sake, and to refuse the implied responsibility to manage resources valuable for their information content, but also to doom the public aspect of the programme to eventual stagnation.

*Aesthetic value*

I am willing to grant that some forms, textures, and qualities of cultural materials are more intrinsically appealing to the observer's aesthetic sense than are others, i.e., that there is some component in this relationship that stems directly from the human psyche. In any particular case, however, aesthetic appreciation is conditioned and mediated by preferences and standards specific to the observer, which in turn are highly influenced by preferences and standards specific to the observer's culture. Consequently, the context from which the aesthetic value of a cultural resource emerges is likely to be an exceedingly complex one, influenced by traditional standards of style and beauty; by critical writings stemming from art history research; by conceptions of what aesthetic standards were held by the culture that produced the item; and by standards deriving from the existence of a market for the type of cultural resource in question.

The power of aesthetic stimulus to create interest and affect is one that can effectively be coupled with the power of cultural resources to symbolize and to commemorate a past culture, event, person, etc. The result can mutually enhance both types of value.

Cultural resources can also acquire aesthetic use without being linked through associative value to knowledge about their past contexts. Consequently, there is a possibility that they will be used in ways that contradict or trivialize their actual origins in the past. I will argue here, as previously, that even though aesthetically valuable resources come to have functions in today's cultures quite different from those they had in their original context, it is important that the resource be displayed, presented, or otherwise used in a context or in ways that allow some links to an authentic past to be apparent.

The aesthetic value of cultural resources, when coupled with a market in ancient or primitive art, can lead to the wholesale despoliation of archaeological sites and historic monuments, and thus preclude their use as informational or symbolic resources. When this happens, it implies that aesthetic resource value takes precedence over the two other kinds of value. I argue that it does not and that it is at most equal to the others. Those in charge of the management and disposition of cultural resources have the responsibility, I think, to attempt to preserve, and to conserve through economy of consumption, all three of these kinds of value.

*Economic value*

Cultural resources exist as part of today's cultural context and human environment, both of which are continually being modified, and at what appears to be an accelerating pace. For a place in the world, cultural resources must continually compete



*William D. Lipe*

8

with alternative uses for the space, energy, and human time and attention they require. Cultural resources are not exempt from the modern world's tendency to reduce all costs and benefits to monetary terms, even when dealing with values that are difficult if not impossible to quantify and compare, and with properties that are irreplaceable, because they were created within a cultural context that is gone forever. Consequently, individual and societal decisions that affect cultural resources – decisions to preserve, study, restore, display, neglect, or destroy – will have an economic dimension.

Cultural resources may enter the market place through several pathways. One is by their utilitarian value, which derives not from a property's connection to a past cultural context, but from its ability to serve a present-day material need, e.g., for shelter. The more fundamental cultural resource values – associative and aesthetic – can also be translated into economic value for a property or item, provided consumers are willing to pay to visit, own, invest in, or preserve it by virtue of its having these cultural resource qualities. Finally, informational value, though not often translated directly into market value, can also affect and be affected by decisions made on economic grounds. Below, I briefly discuss each of these sources of economic value for cultural resources.

Utilitarian value stems from the ability of a cultural resource to serve a material end as well, or as cheaply, as a modern alternative. For example, a historic building can often provide shelter for families, businesses, or organizations as satisfactorily as could a modern replacement. Adaptive reuse (Weinberg 1979, 167–212) has saved many historic buildings and districts. Strictly utilitarian decisions, however, may lead to conflicts between the proposed use of a property and the values that led to its becoming a cultural resource in the first place. For example, aesthetic and informational values may be destroyed by physical modifications designed to adapt the property to its intended economic use.

More difficult to grapple with are conflicts between utilitarian ends and symbolic/associative values. The associative value of a structure, artefact, site, or location depends on its ability to evoke in the visitor a remembrance or understanding of a past cultural context in which that property participated. Some present-day economic uses may be so divorced from that past context as to effectively sever the associative links that give the property its cultural resource value. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that *any* contemporary use of a historic property will to a greater or lesser extent be different from the use to which the property was originally put. What planners and preservationists must deal with are the difficult questions about the degree to which alternative uses will enhance or detract from associative and aesthetic values, and the degree to which these alternatives are economically feasible.

Some utilitarian choices which may be in conflict with associative or aesthetic values may not entirely prevent the preservation of informational value. A structure may have its facade altered, but the basic structure may still be able to inform us about past engineering and building practices. So long as its

cultural deposits remain intact, an archaeological site may still have the potential for yielding information about past lifeways, even though it has become incorporated into a farm or recreational park. Furthermore, excavation of archaeological sites and the detailed recording of structures can preserve a sample of information even if the properties themselves are destroyed in favour of more financially rewarding uses of a location.

The interaction between the symbolic/associative or aesthetic values of cultural resources, on the one hand, and their economic values, on the other, has been remarked upon several times in this essay, and is the subject of much attention in the literature on historic preservation. In many parts of the world, cultural tourism (UNESCO 1970) is a major economic force. The widespread interest in the associative and aesthetic properties of portable cultural resources is expressed in the rapid growth of markets in antiques and antiquities; one frequently reads of new (and astronomically high) record prices being set at the major auctions. In many areas, historic buildings and districts are increasingly in demand as residences or business locations. In this case, both utilitarian and more abstract cultural resource values contribute to the property's economic value, sometimes with the added incentive of tax advantages established by the government in order to further historic preservation.

In a world that tends to relate many if not all values to a monetary standard, these developments can be seen as evidence of a broadening public interest in cultural resources. In this sense, money is an instrument being used by the public to obtain access to the symbolic, aesthetic, and informational values of cultural resources.

The other side of the coin, however, is that cultural resources can also be used merely as instruments for obtaining strictly economic goals, and that their use in this sense may have results damaging to the resources themselves or to their non-economic values. I have already mentioned the extent to which the market in antiquities has led to the destruction of informational, and frequently, of other values at countless archaeological sites, as well as at historic monuments and structures. Also, if false claims of authenticity, antiquity, or historical associations are made in order to raise the economic value of properties or objects, public confidence in genuine cultural resource values may be weakened. Furthermore, the economic development and changes in property values and land use that often accompany successful historic districts or cultural tourism projects may have unforeseen and sometimes negative effects on the fabric of local society (Lewis 1975) and even on the non-economic values of the cultural resources themselves.

The informational values of cultural resources, which are realized most directly through formal study, are the least likely to be directly translatable into economic values. Resources important primarily for their information content are usually the most likely to be sacrificed to 'cost-benefit' decisions made strictly on economic terms. Furthermore, the types of study required to extract new information from the resources may themselves be expensive. Yet the continuing provision of new information about the past from such studies is essential if our appreciation for



and understanding of the associative and even aesthetic values of cultural resources are to continue to both deepen and broaden.

In some cases (particularly archaeological excavation), research can be funded by the donated labour of amateurs or students, or even by fees paid by interested members of the public in exchange for a chance to participate in the research. Such participatory efforts may play an increasing role in funding informational studies in the future. Most of the funding for needed research will undoubtedly continue to come, however, from institutions and governments, rather than from the market place. It is encouraging to note that in many countries, laws have been passed requiring that non-economic values be given weight along with economic values in land-use or other decisions affecting cultural resources. The development of governmentally sanctioned efforts in salvage or rescue archaeology, and in recording of historic buildings, is beginning to provide funds for preservation of information, even when the cultural resource itself is to be destroyed. By these means, the informational and other non-economic values of cultural resources can receive at least a rough comparability with economic values, when decisions regarding the survival of cultural resources are made.

In conclusion, though economic value can be one indicator of public support for cultural resources and one tool for preservation of and public access to these resources, it cannot be our only criterion for what should be saved and managed for public enjoyment and education. As Lewis (1975) points out, if we 'sell' cultural resource preservation entirely on the grounds of its monetary benefits, we risk having to accept the corollary that resources are unworthy if they cannot generate direct monetary returns or if they fall out of economic fashion. Responsible cultural resource management requires some restraint on the market's ability to promote damage to cultural resources, and some infusion of funds from interest groups, private philanthropy, or the state, so that important resources lacking direct income-generating potential are nonetheless preserved and properly managed. The proponents of cultural resources likewise have the responsibility to help generate these funds, by making the case strongly and widely that the associative, informational, and aesthetic values of cultural resources are in fact essential values for society to preserve, even if they cannot always 'pay for themselves' directly, in monetary returns.

#### **The importance of cultural resources**

In 1904, W.M. Flinders Petrie wrote:

A work that has cost days, weeks, or years of toil has a right to existence. To murder a man a week before his time we call a crime; what are we to call the murder of years of his labour? . . . Every tablet, every little scarab, is a portion of life solidified; – so much will, so much labour, so much living reality . . . The work of the archaeologist is to save lives; to go to some senseless mound of earth . . . and thence bring into the comradeship of man some portions of the lives of this sculptor, or that artist, of the other scribe . . .

(Petrie 1972 (1904), 177–8)

These thoughts can contribute, I think, to the development

of a set of values and attitudes about the continuity of human life and culture that will be essential if we are to continue to survive in an age where nuclear warfare is a possibility. Flinders Petrie is telling us that cultural things enter that cultural 'common world' (Arendt 1958, 22–78) that exists *among* individuals and that hence can survive the deaths of individuals. Because the thoughts and work of the maker can be perceived in a cultural thing, a kind of partial immortality is conferred on that maker. The thing continues to exert a claim on our attentions and emotions, as would the maker himself, were he still present to confront us.

To the extent that our lives are made meaningful by culture, it is by this ability of acts, works, and a way of life to persist, carried on through time in the memories of humans, and also in the cultural things and landscapes humans create. Furthermore, it is essential that we know and *believe* that culture will persist, a belief also made possible through culturally created symbols and communication. Again, Flinders Petrie:

I give my life to do so much work in it, and if I were to know today that every night the work of the day would be annihilated, I had rather be relieved of the trouble of living.

(Petrie 1972 (1904), 177)

Thus, we believe that what we do today can be known by and have an effect on our children, on others in our circle, and possibly even on unborn generations, no matter if we die tomorrow. When this belief in continuity with the future is threatened, so is the meaningfulness and hence the vitality of our actions today.

The possibility of disease, of war, of forced cultural change, has of course introduced such threats to the continuity of many cultures in both the distant and the more recent past, but the possibility of nuclear holocaust now raises this threat on a scale and in a way never before confronted by humanity. What are the implications for our lives today of not only the death of our group or nation, but of the extinction of the species? What are the implications of the knowledge that at any time, a nuclear holocaust could not only erase all our individual lives, which after all will soon end in any case, but also remove all possibility that anything we, or our group, or our ancestors have ever done will be remembered by or have an effect on anyone in the future, since there will be no 'anyone' at all? That even should one of our 'little scarabs' survive, there would never be anyone to discover and bring back to life the thoughts and work that reside in it? As Schell (1982) writes

We have always been able to send people to their deaths, but only now has it become possible to prevent all birth and so doom all future human beings to uncreation . . . this threat assails everything that people hold in common, for it is the ability of our species to produce new generations which assures the continuation of the world in which all our common enterprises occur and have their meaning . . . by threatening all of this, nuclear weapons threaten a part of our humanity.

(Schell 1982, 62–3)

Thus our generation is the first to have pressed on it a responsibility that from now on will be borne by all future generations – the explicit responsibility to avoid the extinction that is now possible, and hence the responsibility to provide explicitly

William D. Lipe

10

for the continuity of human life and culture. If we are to carry out this responsibility, we must develop social structures and cultural forms that can prevent the escalation of conflicts among nations into a nuclear holocaust that devastates the earth and destroys human life.

But if our problem is a threat that lies in the future, what does a concern for things that are old and times that are past have to offer us? The nuclear genie is out of the bottle, and a desire to return to the 'good old days' would seem at best irrelevant, and at worst to foster a kind of escapism into nostalgia that could cause us to avoid confronting the issue. How can a concern for 'saving the lives' of generations past – to use Petrie's metaphor – possibly help us ensure the beginning of life for all those generations yet to come?

Surely a concern for cultural resources can provide only part of a solution to this problem, and perhaps not a large part. But, as I noted at the outset, it can help foster a set of values and attitudes that can contribute to a solution.

In the first place, one cannot seriously confront the past without being caused to reflect on the continuity of life and culture. If we give past lives and works the respect of our attention, does it not cause us to reflect on what treatment will be given our thoughts and works by someone who in the future will examine the product of our generation, even as we today examine the work of a previous one? The general point is that any serious consideration of the past removes us from the immediate concerns with the here and now of our private, individual wants and needs, and the demands of our immediate circle of kin and associates. It plunges us directly into the larger common world which exists in the stream of time and hence bridges the mortality of generations. If the pursuit of our present-day interests is not to destroy the continuance of that common world, with which the continuity of the species is inextricably bound, we must keep it in our thoughts; a respect for the rights of the past to exist is philosophically continuous with a respect for the rights of the future. The role of cultural resources in all of this is that they, as previously remarked, provide a tangible and direct link with the past, and can help focus our attention upon its reality and upon its contribution to our present condition.

*Ideas* and *conceptions* we have of the past are truly formed and disposed of by us within the confines of our own individual awareness, even though we may be attempting to copy the conceptions of another. But cultural *material* has a concreteness that exists *apart* from ourselves, thus forcing us to consider its origin and disposition outside our own minds. With material received from the past, we are obliged to notice that it has somehow been preserved from the time of its origin down to the time we encounter it, and we are obliged to consider the future consequences of what we do with it. If we destroy it, we have consumed it for our private benefit, have taken it out of the public sphere, and so have removed the possibility that others will encounter it as we have done. If, as archaeologists, we destroy to study and develop information and interpretations from it, we are faced with the choice of whether to keep that information private and let it die with us or to publicize it in some way so that it can

continue to circulate in human awareness. In all cases, then, the encounter forces us to choose, to take responsibility for either denying or providing the future with access to this resource or to information about it. If we can promote in our society a spirit favouring the preservation of things from and information about the past, we will surely promote a more generalized awareness of our responsibility to create a livable future.

But is not the pursuit of national interests through war the chief threat in the nuclear age, and by my own earlier arguments have I not placed cultural resources in the service of nationalist ends? In their roles as symbols, cultural resources can certainly contribute to the feelings of heightened national pride, common interest, and power that are essential if a nation is to risk property and the lives of its citizens to press national ends in war with another nation.

Yet, if we survey the whole scope of cultural resources – the entirety of the cultural production of humanity that has survived to the present – we see that national and ethnic identity drop away very rapidly as we proceed back in time. We cannot assign most cultural properties to present-day nations, ethnic groups or language groups if these properties are more than a few hundred to, at the outside, a few thousand years old. In the context of our discussion here, this failure is in fact a success, for it records the transience of such groupings, and it means that few of the accomplishments of humanity, as documented and commemorated in the cultural resource record, can be assigned to the specific political entities in the world today. Consequently, they are related equally to them all.

Thus, to the extent that we can travel in the past, we can escape the bounds of competing nations and interest groups as no present-day traveller can. We *must* then view the evidence of the past as a record of *human*, rather than of *national*, accomplishment. Hence, if we wish to foster an awareness of the degree to which the fortunes of all human groups are intertwined, and to gain a broad and even dispassionate perspective of the various ethnocentric and nationalist claims of today, there can be no better road to recommend than one that leads back in time. Since much, and for the earlier periods, all, that we can find out about the past is encoded in cultural resource materials, they are vital to our ability to understand the past. And, to the extent that we can preserve actual cultural resources from the distant past, these fragments can serve as symbols not of nations, but of the common human interest, and of the continuity of past, present, and future life that we must recognize and act upon if we are to fulfil our responsibility to generations both past and future.

#### References

- Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Baker, A.R.H., and Harley, J.B. (eds.) (1973) *Man Made the Land. Essays in English Historical Geography*. Newton Abbot, David and Charles.
- Chesler, O., and King, T.F. (1977) ASCA's 'Proceedings': a semi-federal perspective. *American Society for Conservation Archaeology Newsletter* 4 (3): 5–12.