

SUMMARY

*Phase III of the **Quilt Index** expands the electronic reference to create a **critical mass** of data and establish and implement long term protocols for the use of materials and the ongoing addition of new data. In this phase, the initial project partners will complete the digitization of their collections, a diverse set of new partners will add their collections to the system, Index repository programming will be designed to integrate new collections from pre-existing databases, and the partners will collaborate to develop on-line galleries contextualizing their collections. Financial incentives, technical assistance, data verification, and central coordination will ensure that new data for the Index are commensurate with the original design and structure.*

I. Project Significance: The Need for a Quilt Index

Over the course of the 20th century, investigations into the history and meaning of American quilts evolved from the stereotypical antiquarian and romanticized efforts prevalent at the turn of the century to extremely sophisticated studies meeting current academic standards. New attention to the historical, cultural, and sociological role of quilts in American society now spans many disciplines. Scholars are increasingly focusing on quilts to understand many historical and contemporary aspects of American life. Scores of grassroots state and regional quilt documentation projects--conducted in almost every state in the Union--have focused on documenting quilts' personal and community contexts, as well as capturing the history of their production, ownership, and use, and describing their physical appearance. Yet, at present, these resources remain widely dispersed and largely inaccessible to scholars and researchers. Enabling both scholars and a broad general audience to access information about these collections is central to furthering the number and scope of quilt studies and to apply these resources to increase public understanding of the history and culture of our nation and world. The **Quilt Index** is becoming a vital resource for a range of disciplines.

The **Quilt Index** is a comprehensive, trans-institutional online reference work built upon an open source digital repository. The **Quilt Index** intends to provide access for both research and public presentation of the extensive documentation on American quilts and quilting that now exists in a variety of locations and media--in museums and archives, in public and private collections, on paper survey forms and in varied electronic formats. Utilizing the benefits of a distributed repository system and a comprehensive controlled vocabulary for descriptive metadata, the **Quilt Index** is addressing the need to balance centralized information access with preservation of local variation.

The natural decentralization of the Internet corresponds precisely to the decentralization of quilt makers and quilt researchers. The Internet provides a powerful means for providing access to widely dispersed primary source materials. Computers and digital technology make it possible to share images and their metadata, and a variety of textual information about quilts. The rapid diffusion of access to the World Wide Web through terminals in schools, public libraries, and individual households permits an unprecedented opportunity to provide access to otherwise inaccessible information.

In particular, the **Quilt Index** provides wide access to information dispersed throughout the United States and, in many cases, inaccessible due to location or fragility. The raw material of a significant portion of the database is not the objects themselves, but the *information about quilts and images of quilts* found in public quilt collections and the myriad of state and regional quilt documentation projects. Most of the quilts documented in these projects will continue to be held in private hands for a long time to come but the state project database files will all be housed in institutions to which the public has ready access. Indeed, in some cases, the possibility of including a state quilt project in the Index will serve as an incentive to move the raw data from a private collection to a publicly accessible archive.

The **Quilt Index**, for the first time, makes it possible for researchers, students, quilt makers, genealogists, and a wide public audience to locate, reference, and search these quilt materials easily. Scholars from a

variety of fields, including art history and criticism, women's studies, cultural studies, folklife studies, material culture studies, textile history, racial and ethnic studies, political and religious history, American social history, and state, regional, national, and international studies are able to use this information as primary, documentary source materials. How quilts in the Quilt Index reflect, support, and explicate important aspects of our nation's heritage can be seen in just a few selections of quilts now in the Index:

- *The Graveyard Quilt* (<http://www.quiltindex.org/fulldisplay.php?pbd=kentuckytest-a0a2f6-a>), made near the end of the Civil War reflects a period of national mourning. Elizabeth Roseberry Mitchell, the maker of the quilt, designed the quilt with a series of appliquéd coffins along the border of the textile and a center "graveyard." As family members died, she moved coffins from the border to the graveyard. A book on Mitchell was authored by quilt scholar Linda Ott Lipsett (Halstead & Meadows Publishing, 1995).
- *Coat of Many Colors Quilt* (<http://www.quiltindex.org/basicdisplay.php?pbd=kentuckytest-a0a2o8-a>), made c. 1980 by members of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Quilting Bee in Gees Bend, Alabama, provides documentation of the importance of religion among some quilting groups as well as an example of quilting that can be compared to other quilts from the Gees Bend area.
- *Masonic Appliqué Quilt* (<http://www.quiltindex.org/basicdisplay.php?pbd=quiltdata-a0a0b3-b>), a quilt made sometime between 1930-1949 which includes boldly colored, appliquéd symbols used in Masonic rites.
- "Sun Sets on Sunbonnet Sue" Quilt (<http://www.quiltindex.org/basicdisplay.php?pbd=quiltdata-a0a0a2-a>), made c. 1976 by a group of women in Lawrence, Kansas not only reflects a sense of dark humor on the part of the quilters but illustrates national and international events as well as social issues that were important to that period. The quilt has been the focus of popular and academic papers, especially within feminist studies.

Students fulfilling classroom assignments in the humanities are able to use these materials in lessons on ethnic and racial studies, by, for example, examining documentation of African-American, Native Hawaiian, and Mexican-American quilting. Contemporary quilters seeking pattern identification and technical information, and family members tracing genealogy and the social and cultural contexts of an heirloom quilt also benefit from this research tool. Local and state historical societies have reported using the Index to assist in identifying quilt patterns that citizens bring in.

Equally important, the **Quilt Index** collections form the seed of what will grow into an extensive network of digital documentation, images, and aggregate information, as well as K-12 curricula materials, online exhibits, and forums for scholarly exchange. The database format selected for this project is specifically designed to facilitate distribution of educational and exhibition materials. Maintained and preserved long-term by resources committed by Michigan State University, the **Quilt Index** will play a central role in the refinement and professionalization of American scholarship within a wide range of humanities fields. The Index will also become a model for the development of other online resources for some of the fastest growing areas of research in the humanities.

Quilts and Quilting in Humanities Scholarship

In recent years material culture or artifact-studies studies have emerged as a vibrant and expanding area of research that seeks to develop new understandings of the interfaces between people and things. Scholars of all disciplines have come to understand what archaeologist and cultural historian James Deetz has referred to as "that sector of our physical environment that we modify through culturally determined behavior" (*In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life*, 1977). In one of the landmark books on cultural geography and vernacular architecture, Henry Glassie called to task those

researchers who focused narrowly on text in their reading of history, "A method based on the document is prejudiced; fated to neglect the majority of people, for they were non-literate and, within the boundaries of literacy, to neglect the majority of people, for they did not write. Even today in societies of almost universal literacy, it is a rare soul who bequeaths to future historians a written account of his thought... How can you study a society if you attend only to the expressions of a small and deviant class within the whole?" (*Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*). Indeed, most scholars now recognize the importance of object-based study in the investigation of such issues such as identity, difference, representation, power, and cultural and historical change, and the construction of historical memory. It is within that framework that scholars are turning to quilts, perhaps one of America's most treasured and symbolic art forms, as a relatively under-tapped resource in scholarly inquiry.

Studying American quilts is both an old and a new enterprise, as historian Virginia Gunn has noted.¹ Over the past one hundred years, scholars have produced a wide variety of documentation on quilts, spanning a broad range of topics. A brief survey of this literature demonstrates both the varied applications of this scholarship for studies of American history and culture as well as the importance of making this material available for public and scholarly use. Providing access to this wealth of scholarship for research and teaching is the central aim of the **Quilt Index**.

Quilts are extremely valuable primary resources that provide a wealth of information for art historians, women's, ethnic and social historians, lay and academic researchers, family genealogists, practicing artists and craftspeople. Scholars first began to take quilt studies seriously at the turn of the 20th century. Stimulated by the Colonial revival, scholars looked to quilts in their studies of the "pioneer period" in much the same way they studied fine furniture, silver, glassware and ceramics, seeking links and divergences between early American arts and those of medieval, renaissance and early modern Europe.² Interest in quilts as part of Americana heightened with the opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1924, and by the 1930s, patterns for quilts appeared in newspapers, catalogs and magazines in astonishing numbers.

Between 1930 and 1970, a large body of literature emerged that emphasized quilt patterns and included a large number of how-to-books. Many Depression-era women began to make quilts in increasing numbers. Folk craft specialists, especially American folklorists, began to examine the relationship between English and American quilts, contributing much to the understanding of the development of a distinct American culture in North America.

Thanks in large part to an increasing emphasis after 1970 on women's and family history, material culture studies, and a growing interest in interdisciplinary pursuits, scholars began to integrate quilt studies more fully into a broad range of humanities fields. As scholars turned their attention to "new voices," and placed increasing emphasis on incorporating gender, ethnicity, and class into their work, they found that quilts provided important material for research and information about families, labor, and communities that did not exist through other oral, written, or more traditional archival records. As but one example, a quilt documented in the Michigan Quilt Project and recently donated to the MSU Museum was made, signed, and dated by K.K.K. supporters in 1926 in a rural western Michigan town. Scholars documenting the history of Klan activities in Michigan have been frustrated by the lack of available archival and other printed resources, thus the quilt is of rare and important value in providing tangible and specific evidence of Klan activity not available elsewhere. The expansion of the study of folklore and the rise in cultural

¹ Virginia Gunn, Professor, University of Akron, served as editor of *Uncoverings: Research Papers of the American Quilt Study Group* from 1994-2001.

² Two key works from this period include Eliza Calvert Hall's romanticized account of quilting in *Aunt Jane of Kentucky* (1898) and Marie Webster's 1915 publication of *Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them*. Hall's work received a large public audience because it fit well with late-19th century Americans' growing disenchantment with the socially disruptive and unsettling aspects of industrialization and urbanization. Webster's work marks one of the first attempts to apply art historical methodology to American quilting by tracing the history of American quilted bed coverings through the medieval, renaissance and early modern periods.

geography also stimulated more interest in quilts as source material. Among the few treasured belongings carried by pioneers in the great Western expansion were often quilts; these quilts and the stories associated with them provide invaluable sources of data on cultural, ethnic, and family networks and practices as well as the hardships of those journeys of migration and resettlement.

Despite scholars' ongoing and growing interest in such materials, access to information about American quilts, however, has remained limited and widely dispersed. Development of an Internet-accessible **Quilt Index**, and related tools, is playing a central role in beginning to make these materials widely available to humanities scholars and a broad public. This project is very timely because of the growing scholarly interest--across the humanities--in quilts as windows into American history and culture. As literary critics Cheryl B. Torsney and Judy Elsley write in *Quilt Culture* (1994):

Once quilting was redis- "covered," as it were, by the art community and shortly thereafter, by historians, it took nearly fifteen more years for literary scholars to recognize the relationship of quilting to women's writing and usefulness of the quilt as a metaphor for textuality. When Elaine Showalter first noted in 1986 that "the strongly marked American women's tradition of piecing, patchwork, and quilting has consequences for the structures, genres, themes, and meanings of American women's writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," many scholars and students found a new tactic to employ in their readings of women's texts. At last, the intimate connection between quilting and writing had been made by a noted literary theorist and critic.³

Humanities scholars have used quilts to explore women's attitudes about phases of their lives as well as what their lives were like. Films such as *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women and Quilts on American Society* (1987) are shown in college classes across the country as a source of women's history and a way of recalling women's voices. From sibling rivalry of sisters to swapping 19th century abortion "receipts," major events in women's lives are represented and preserved through the squares of a sampler quilt displayed at the end of the film. Already we know the Index is serving as a tool for scholars in education; a recent informal survey of Index users revealed that it is being used in literature classes to explore genre, creativity within a genre and voice. One person even reported using quilts to illustrate Aristotle's discussion of reality as a composite of matter and idea.⁴

Archaeologist James Deetz was among the first American scholars to foster interest in the importance of examining the minutiae of household goods to understand our nation's ethnic, economic, religious, social, and cultural history. Today, women's and economic historians are increasingly turning to quilts as important examples of women's home production, and keys to family economies. Historians of early America, such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, have shown how handmade objects such as quilts and the narratives that develop around their production and value evidence the development of American cultural identity.⁵ Scholars interested in women's role as producers have used quilt contests run by such early 20th century farming magazines as *Farm and Fireside* or *Capper's Farmer* to learn more about rural home economies. Works such as Eleanor Arnold's edited collection, *Voices of American Homemakers*, a collection of oral histories from Home Demonstration Club members, have documented quilting as central to women's household work. Scholars interested in technology have emphasized how the history of quilting is inextricably bound to the history of technology.⁶ Others have used quilts as a case study in the relationship between gender and aesthetics.⁷ Marxist scholars such as Ruth Roberts have examined the quilting tradition in the context of the American economic system.⁸ Still other scholars including

³ Cheryl B. Torsney and Judy Elsley, *Quilt Culture*, 1994, p.3.

⁴ Gaye Ingram in Quilt Index Feedback Summary, unpublished report, March, 2004.

⁵ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun*, (New York: Random House, Inc, 2001)

⁶ See Susan Behuniak-Long, "Preserving the Social Fabric: Quilting in a Technological World."

⁷ See Susan Bernick, "A Quilt is an Art Object when It Stands up like a Man."

⁸ Ruth Roberts, "Quilt Value and the Marxist Theory of Value."

Elaine Hedges, one of the first scholars of quilt culture, have moved beyond a sentimentalized relationship between women and their quilts to reveal the oppression and ambivalence of nineteenth century quilters.⁹

While quiltmaking has only recently become an important subject of discussion within literary criticism, it has long been key to subjects within American literary works. References to quiltmaking or quilts have appeared in the work of such late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century women writers as Louisa May Alcott ("Patty's Patchwork," in *Aunt Jo's Scrap Bag*, 1872), Susan Glaspell (*A Jury of One's Peers*, 1917), and Harriet Beecher Stowe ("The Minister's Wooing"). Twentieth-century writers used quiltmaking as the premise for larger social commentary, such as Margaret Atwood (*Alias Grace*, New York: Doubleday, 1996), Bobbie Ann Mason in "Love Life" (*The New Yorker*, October 29, 1984), Sherman Alexie in "A Good Story" (*The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven*. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993) and Alice Walker in *Everyday Use* and *The Color Purple*. Quiltmaking as a literary trope becomes for them an "interpretive window on vernacular dimension of lived creative experiences in the United States."¹⁰ Patricia Bell-Scott and Beverly Guy Sheftall underscore their view of the quilt as a metaphor for exploring relations between African-American women in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters* (1993). "Fashioned from the materials of everyday life and associated with love and family, quilts in all their various textures and splendid beauty have been a central part of African-American material culture for generations, especially the womenfolk," they write. "As an essential element of women's culture, quilts offer a framework for conceptualizing mother-daughter relations."¹¹ Our current work with teachers is helping us identify how to bring the QI and literature together to create an enriched experience for readers. As literature finds its way into digital libraries and becomes ready for connections to web based objects, a cohesive QI will permit images and metadata to supplement texts and bring readers closer to history. In time, the quilts, the metadata, and the QI community will become integrated into the online works. The presence of the QI will permit quilts a virtual presence in the literary context where they are referenced.

The field of art history has recently embraced quilt research. For instance, Yale art historian Jules D. Prown's *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture* (2000) includes a study of the cultural continuity in Amish life as expressed in Amish quilts. The recent art world sensation of the Quilts of Gee's Bend has led to an interesting development in the field of art history, reevaluating both quiltmaking and modern art. As argued in the *New York Times*, "What we can say for certain is only that an ethos that permits us to appreciate the work of modernist painters also lets us recognize the virtues of Gee's Bend quilts, which another era might not have seen. Esthetics are contextual. New art constantly readjusts our taste, but not until we are already conditioned to accept it."¹²

These are just a few examples of the ways in which quilts and quiltmaking are being used by a wide range of humanities scholars. Cultural geographers, such as Henry Glassie, have examined the dispersion and distribution of quilt patterns, quilting techniques and other traditions. Religious historians such as Mary Cross, have studied Methodist quilts as a tool for understanding traditions within this community. Other scholars have centralized quilts in their studies of ethnic communities. Robert Ferris Thompson has analyzed the African characteristics in the work of African-American quilts. Marsha MacDowell has focused on the history, characteristics, and meaning of North American Indian and Native Hawaiian quiltmaking. Scholars have examined quilts and quilt-related materials in order to understand better their production, type, use, marketing, and distribution. Quilts also have provided researchers with cultural

⁹ Elaine Hedges, "The Needle of the Pen: The Literary Rediscovery of Women's Textile Work" from *Quilt Culture*, edited by Cheryl B. Torsney and Judy Elsley (1994).

¹⁰ Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Charlotte Pierce-Baker, "Patches: Quilts and community in Alice Walker's 'Everyday Use' in *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and k.A. Appiah, eds., (New York: Amistad, 1993)

¹¹ Patricia Bell-Scott and Beverly Guy Sheftall, eds. *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993).

¹² Michael Kimmelman, "Jazzy Geometry, Cool Quilters" Art Review, *The New York Times*, November 29, 2002.

information on such diverse topics as social activist movements and protest causes (i.e., temperance quilts, “green” quilts, the Boise Peace Quilt Groups, the NAMES Project quilt, the Ribbon Quilt, etc.), indigenous ceremonies (i.e., Sioux honoring and Hopi baby naming ceremonies), cultural identity, or personal and community responses to local, national, and international disasters (such as the quilt made to commemorate those lost in the Oklahoma bombing or the thousands of quilts made in response to the 9/11 disaster). Indeed, Elaine Showalter suggests that, “The patchwork quilt [has come] to replace the melting-pot as the central metaphor of American cultural identity. In a very unusual pattern, it transcended the stigma of its sources in women’s culture and has been remade as a universal sign of American identity.”¹³

Documentation Projects and Organizations

In part as a response to this growing interest across a wide range of humanities fields, the past 25 years have seen a range of efforts--both nationally and locally--to formalize and increase access to American quilts. In November 1980, a series of research papers on aspects of American quilting were presented at the first meeting of the American Quilt Study Group held in Mill Valley, California. This landmark occasion constituted the beginning of the first organization in the world devoted to the study of quilting. Today, the organization has over 1200 members drawn from around the world, issues a quarterly newsletter, subsidizes research and paper presentations, has served as the model for quilt research organizations in Canada and Great Britain, and continues to hold an annual seminar which now attracts over three hundred attendees.

The Mill Valley meeting also sparked a widespread effort to collect and document quilts on a state and regional level.¹⁴ The first of these pioneering endeavors, the *Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc.* (1981), has been a partner in the initial development and deployment phases of the **Quilt Index**. The Kentucky project motivated individuals across the state to bring quilts from closets, beds, and trunks to schools, museums, and other public places where quilts were photographed, quilt owners told stories about these quilts, and detailed information on the quilt’s maker, history, fabric, style, and construction was recorded on research inventory forms (See Appendix A – Sample Quilt Documentation Forms). The Kentucky model for quilt documentation quickly spread across the country and, by 1995, a survey conducted by the Museum of the American Quilters’ Society found that 47 states had one or more documentation projects underway. Some of these projects were led by individuals based in museums, historical societies, or arts councils; others were led wholly by groups established for the specific purpose of conducting the documentation project, many of which incorporated as non-profit groups. In all cases, the projects relied on hundreds of volunteers and, by 1995, the projects collectively had resulted in massive amounts of collected data on more than 165,000 quilts. Since 1995 there has been another resurgence of documentation efforts. For example, the Wyoming Quilt Project, a proposed contributing partner for the Part III phase of the Index, has inventoried over 2600 quilts since its inception in 1995. This group has found quilts in Wyoming dating as early as the 1830s; and more than seventy percent of the quilts recorded date from the 1920s and 30s. Many other groups have revised their inventory forms and are continuing to hold documentation days with new volunteers in areas undocumented during the first years of their projects. The Alliance for American Quilts has begun a process to collect information on the status of all documentation projects to date.

Documentation Project Outcomes to Date

Many books, exhibitions, seminars and conferences have resulted from these documentation efforts. (See Appendix B -- Bibliography) Publications have normally focused on a selection of the quilts inventoried

¹³ Showalter, “Common Threads,” *Sisters Choice*, p. 169

¹⁴ The 1930s W.P.A.-era Index of American Design, a national state-by-state survey of crafts, did include some documentation of quilts but the inclusion of quilts was only done sporadically and often with many errors.

by the projects and an initial survey and analysis of the information gathered. The documentation data contains an abundance of information to support new studies, however. As one example of the depth in the data, the Michigan Quilt Project produced an initial book and exhibit that surveyed the kinds of quilts and quilting traditions that existed in Michigan. Another analysis of the same data supported a substantive study focused on African American quilting in the region and resulted in a publication, exhibition, and collection of oral histories, ethnographic photographs, documents, and quilts.

Little cross-state or regional study has, however, occurred. New analysis of previous data studies, as well as comparison with other states and across regions and the nation as a whole, are vital to understanding the cultural, historical and social issues revealed through quilts. Through access to the multiple and searchable repositories of data within the Index, scholars will be able to investigate and analyze localized trends within specific time frames as well as those across the country and over time.

Status of Access to Documentation Project Collections and Quilt Study Resources

Comprehensive data on the history, regional distribution, artistic variation, and cultural variety of quilting in America are a rich and essential source for comparative studies, access to the full collections of images and text, as well as the oral histories of the quilts collected through these local and regional endeavors remains extremely limited. The photography, media and documentation data are not centralized. In most situations, copies of the project data are now housed in local archives, libraries, or museums, which, though public, often lack funding and collection focus to process these records for public use. In a few cases the data remain only in the hands of the volunteer project directors or documentation group. Regardless of placement, the records remain largely unavailable for on-site public use and few are organized or available in electronic form. Even those materials that are computerized encompass a variety of incompatible formats (See Appendix C – State Quilt Projects).

Various museums and libraries around the country devote some or all of their resources to specific aspects of quilts and quilting. Yet, until the **Quilt Index** began, no one entity or center actively drew together all of the available information. Many important quilts are stored in public collections, often in small local historical agencies, where limited exhibition space, research facilities, or staffing means that very few individuals can gain access to viewing or using the collections. Most current quilt-related websites provide only limited access to knowledge about selected museum collections and exhibitions, quilt history publications, and related resources. Further, despite the burgeoning bibliography on American quilts, quiltmakers, and quilting, few standard texts exist to provide a common base of widely shared knowledge on the subject. While listservs such as Quilters' Heritage List (QHL@cuenet.com) and H-Quilts (<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~quilt/>) have provided forums for online sharing of common quilt-related interests, existing electronic resources remain few and are severely limited in the data they contain and their usefulness for scholarship.

Several landmark books have served as finding aids for information on significant quilt collections. A national survey (*Quilt Collections: A Directory for the United States and Canada*, American Folklife Center/The Library of Congress, 1987), revealed for the first time the range and location of quilts and quilt documentation in North American institutions. Subsequently Shelly Zegart, *American Quilt Collections/American Quilt Masterpieces*, (1996), provides additional data on outstanding public and private collections on a national basis. Steven Berg, *A Guide to Michigan Quilt Collections*, (1994), provides information on collections within a state, and, most recently, Kyra Hicks, *Black Threads: An African American Quilting Sourcebook*, (2003) provides information on the few existing African American quilt collections. Individual museums have also published on their own collections, as well as showcased private collections. As useful to scholars as these volumes are, they all have inherent limitations: they are limited to their specific collections, they are not comprehensive, and they do not always provide the contextual data on each of the thousands of quilts in these collections.

Despite some significant steps in recent years toward rectifying these problems, these efforts have not adequately addressed the needs of researchers. The **Quilt Index**, as a centralized, searchable and widely accessible database and research tool, is a major step towards making both detailed and missing data available to researchers, educators, and the general public.

With a centralized research tool, the data on the hundreds of thousands of historical and contemporary quilts represented in the documentation projects' collections, when supplemented through access to the data on the thousands of quilts held in public and private collections, will provide a truly comprehensive national profile of quilting traditions from the 18th century through today. Making data about quilts and quilt history more accessible through the **Quilt Index** greatly enhances researchers' ability to increase the number and scope of studies, and fits squarely with current curricular emphasis on social history, gender studies, and cultural heritage studying primary materials at both K-12 and post-secondary levels. Thus, the **Quilt Index** serves as a critical catalyst for future research on American quilts and quilt makers, accomplishing three primary objectives:

- To organize and disseminate widely the quilt information that has previously been inaccessible to most researchers
- To spur the development of a standard nomenclature for identifying and describing quilts
- To encourage the preservation and public availability of documentary materials about quilts and quilting

This project will make these rich resources widely available and cross-searchable, and will make an important contribution to how scholars and a broad general audience understand the history and culture of our nation and world.

II. Project History, Scope, and Duration

Institutional Context: The Quilt Index Partnerships

The impetus to build the **Quilt Index** began during a series of celebrations, exhibitions, lectures, events, and conferences organized by The Kentucky Quilt Project in 1992 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the landmark Whitney Museum quilt exhibit. The meeting led to the founding of **The Alliance for American Quilts** in 1993. The Alliance has worked since then to meet the field's need for an accessible, independent, expanding resource of quilt documentation. The **Quilt Index** was conceived by The Alliance for American Quilts as a direct outgrowth of its mission. Alliance Board of Directors is now comprised of 26 individual industry leaders, scholars, and quilt makers (see Appendix D for board list). In 1997, the Alliance issued a call for institutional partners and a formal partnership was established with two entities at Michigan State University (MATRIX: The Center for Humane Arts, Letters and Social Sciences OnLine and Michigan State University Museum) to serve as institutional project leaders.

Michigan State University: Michigan State University was established in 1855 as the pioneer land-grant university in the United States. The university serves as the fiscal agent and administrative home of the **Quilt Index**, providing technical expertise, financial accountability, project management, and substantial cost share. Two key Index partners (MATRIX and the MSU Museum) housed within the University have each had extensive experience conceiving and implementing complex humanities projects--working together, independently, as well as in partnership with many other organizations both locally and globally. Central to their projects is a commitment to build unique, effective, cordial, and enduring cooperation and dialogue among scholars and teachers from across the United States and around the globe. Together, MSU Museum and MATRIX are two of the five cornerstone units of the Center for Great Lakes Culture (a regional humanities center) and are currently partnering on major humanities curriculum projects for Michigan (in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Humanities Council, and Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs) and a series of projects in partnership with a

consortium of leading universities, museums, archives, and libraries in South Africa. Of particular interest to MATRIX and the MSU Museum has been the challenge of integrating resources with partnering institutions, overcoming the physical limitations of access to individual collections for research and public use, and meeting both locally and globally-based needs regarding collections. The **Quilt Index** is just such a project.

MATRIX: The Center for Humane Arts, Letters and Social Sciences Online: is devoted to the application of new technologies in humanities and social science teaching and research. MATRIX creates and maintains online resources, provides training in computing and new teaching technologies, and creates forums for the exchange of ideas and expertise in new teaching and research technologies in addition to serving as the computing home for H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences OnLine. Currently, MATRIX is involved in a number of collaborative endeavors to digitize and make widely available archival materials, journals, artwork, artifacts, oral histories, and spoken recordings for use by both an academic and public audience. The largest of these projects are the Historical Voices Digital Library, which grew from the National Science Foundation funded "National Gallery of the Spoken Word" (NGSW), and subsequently "The Spoken Word Project" which builds upon the sound in the digital library to implement and test use of audio resources in undergraduate teaching and learning. Other collaborative endeavors include a range of internationally collaborative efforts to develop new publishing and distribution models to increase access to humanities scholarly publications, primary materials and oral histories in Western and Southern Africa. MATRIX provides technological and project management expertise in developing and maintaining the **Quilt Index**. The Index is housed on MATRIX servers at MSU. MATRIX has made the commitment to maintaining the Index permanently as a freely available online resource. MATRIX also hosts the Center for the Quilt Online (<http://www.centerforthequilt.org>), an initiative of The Alliance for the American Quilts. The Center features a variety of interactive resources related to quilt studies, for scholars, teachers, and the general public.

The Michigan State University Museum was established in 1857 as a collections-holding unit primarily for academic research and teaching purposes. Beginning in the 1970s the museum has aggressively sought ways to make its collections accessible to a much wider public and to engage the non-campus public in all phases of museum research, collection development and care, exhibition, and education and is now one of Michigan's top peer-ranked anchor cultural organizations. Since the early 1980s, the MSU Museum has also been known for its various quilt collection development, research, exhibitions, publications, and educational activities, now consolidated under the Great Lakes Quilt Center, a unit of the museum. The museum's own quilt collection numbers more than 500 and includes historical and contemporary examples from around the world, with special emphasis on African-American quilts, Native American quilts, and quilts with special ties to Michigan. It also houses the Mary Schafer Quilt Collection (the collection of a nationally-renowned quilt historian), the Deborah Harding Redwork Collection (the research collections on a particular quilting style) as well as quilt blocks, sewing equipment, historic fabric, quilt-related ephemera, and a library of over 2000 quilt-related titles. Quilt research projects on North American Indian, African-American, and general Michigan quilting have generated over 100 tape-recorded interviews with quilters, photographs of quilters and quilting activities, field notes, and ephemera.

Shortly after the Kentucky Quilt Project was started, the MSU Museum initiated the Michigan Quilt Project, an effort that involved individual and organizational volunteers around the state to document, preserve, and present Michigan's quilting heritage, and has documented over 9,100 quilts as of July 2005. The data from the Michigan Quilt Project inventory files have been computerized, but without the inclusion of the quilt images that are also available for each documented quilt. The **Quilt Index** deployment phase made possible the digitization of the MSU Museum's collection of quilts registered in the Michigan Quilt Project. Faculty and staff of the museum's Great Lakes Quilt Center provide a key role in developing, piloting, and evaluating the **Quilt Index**. The MSU Museum curatorial and collection

management staff (which includes quilt studies scholars, archivists, and textile collection specialists some of whom are incidentally also quiltmakers and quilt instructors) have played key roles in the development of the Index to date by providing coordination of intellectual oversight of content, assisting in overall project management, and serving as an alpha testing site prior to testing at other pilot sites. With MATRIX, the MSU Museum provides technological and project management expertise in developing and maintaining the **Quilt Index**.

Quilt Index Scope

The vision of the fully developed **Index** includes a variety of information, realized through a standard thesaurus, and readily accessible and searchable through a World Wide Web site. When fully developed, the **Index** will offer researchers, quiltmakers, educators, students, and the general public:

- Images of and contextual documentation concerning quilts in public and private collections compiled by state and regional quilt documentation projects.
- Digitized images and documentary information concerning quilts in public collections (museums, historic houses, and historical societies) as well as in private holdings.
- Oral histories (transcribed and/or audio) and documentary materials collected through field research and documentation projects such as The Alliance's Quilters' S.O.S.--Save Our Stories, Quilt Treasures and Boxes Under The Bed® (manuscripts, motion picture film and videotape, sound recordings, still photographs).
- Images of and biographical sketches of quilt makers.
- Full texts of selected books and periodicals.
- Bibliographies and indexes of secondary materials relevant to quilt study.
- Finding aids to assist with locating quilt-related primary documents and hard-to-find secondary materials housed in public collections (museums, historical societies, and archives).

Quilt Index Phases of Planning and Development

To achieve the vision of the Index, the collaborators developed a four-phase plan for the Quilt Index as outlined below; Phase I is successfully completed and Phase II was completed in December 2004. **The third phase of this project, for which we are apply for funding support from the NEH Preservation and Access grants for Reference Materials, will greatly expand the content accessible through the Index, creating the baseline critical mass necessary to be a viable research tool.** [NOTE: Funding for subsequent phases will be pursued from other sources; No further funding will be requested from NEH Preservation and Access Program]

Phase I: Design and Planning. This phase of the project set the groundwork for the **Index**. It called for planning and designing a matrix for systematic presentation of quilts and quilting documentation on the World Wide Web, and for securing partnerships and financial support to make continued Index development possible.

In Phase I, the following was completed: partners secured and completed an NEH consultation grant, established an initial controlled vocabulary, designed the scope of the overall project, established a Project Task Force, and sought partners to pilot the deployment phase of the online project (**The Quilt Index**). The selection process was specifically aimed to locate partners that were in possession of state quilt project documentation--the grassroots efforts to locate and document quilts not already found in organized collections and which did not have the institutional support to be made accessible to the public. The process also identified partner institutions that would both provide a solid representation of the types and range of distinct quilts and quilt-related collections, and whose collections would demonstrate unique problems and opportunities for use that are associated with many different kinds of quilt documentation and quilt collections. As a result of this process, three partners joined to pilot the development of the

Quilt Index: Tennessee State Library and Archives with the Quilts of Tennessee collection; University of Louisville Archive and Records Center with the Kentucky Quilts Project, Inc. collection; the Illinois State Museum with its own quilt collection; and the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center with a collection of oral histories, photographs, and fieldnotes.

Collectively, this selection of **Quilt Index** partner institutions comprises a reliable range of various types of holdings including quilts, audio recorded interviews with quiltmakers, videotaped quilting activities, state quilt inventory records, quilt ephemera, photographs, field notes, and libraries. These institutions also support scholarly and public uses of these materials through publications, exhibitions, festival programs, and educational programs. Each of these participating institutions devoted key staff to the **Quilt Index** project, brought in matching financial support; sent representatives to and hosted periodic planning and advisory meetings, and serves as a publicly accessible repository of quilts and quilt documentation.

Phase II: Development and Deployment of Index. The second phase of the project, which is currently being completed, focused on the development and deployment of the **Index**, based on the digitization of the collections and documentation at four pilot sites. These endeavors can be broken down into three parts:

- 1) Construction of a web-based interface and databases to make the collections easily used and searchable for a wide variety of research and educational purposes
- 2) Launching of digitization efforts to put the collections, related textual and support material, and documentation from the project partners into compatible electronic forms.
- 3) Feedback from the partners, modification and finalization of the **Quilt Index** and interfaces.

The specific content of the *Index development and deployment phase* (Phase II) included documentation and images from subsets of the following state quilt projects: Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee; and documentation and images of quilts in the public collections of the Michigan State University Museum, Illinois State Museum, and American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress (part of the American Memory Project and is linked from the **Quilt Index**).

Phase III: National Expansion and Data Integration

The primary components of Phase III are: a) Phase II project partners move beyond the test bed collections that they digitized under phase II and complete the digitization of their entire collections; b) a diverse set of new partners add their collections to the Index; c) Index repository programming is researched and designed to integrate new collections with pre-existing databases; d) initiate development of fields, then digitize and make accessible and searchable key journals; and e) MSU and partner institutions work together to generate ideas for the development of on-line exhibits, additional resources and educational materials and add them to the web site (for instance more contextual information concerning field names and linking field descriptions where additional information is possible, for instance images and biographical or background information on quiltmakers or quilting groups; both descriptive and analytical essays on style, techniques, historical periods, and the varying purpose or functions of quilts; identification of thematic and historical groupings of quilts across collections. Financial incentives, technical assistance, and central coordination will ensure that new data for the Index is structured to be commensurate with the original design and structure.

At the end of Phase III, the goal is to have established a critical mass of quilt records in the Index (REPOS), in order to fulfill the Index's cross-project research and presentation potential. The project will add 30,000 quilts and corresponding images to the Index, representing a range of holding conditions, a variety of large quilt datasets and detailed collections, and a sampling of collection themes. This critical mass of quilt materials, never before linked together, will provide expansive opportunities for new scholarship, public exhibition, virtual exhibition, and education in both directed and undirected ways at

school and in public life-long learning situations. The **critical mass of Index data** will also provide a magnet attracting other institutions to invest resources in order to be included in Phase IV.

Phase III was initiated in October 2004 with a national leadership grant from the Institute for Museums and Library Services “to develop the Index as a model for repositories--of any size and anywhere in the world--to make thematic collections of any kind more accessible for education and research.” The IMLS funding is supporting the completion of Phase II project collections, the addition of four new well-researched and documented collections representing specific regions, and scales and types of collections: (Winedale Center for American History at University of Texas at Austin along with the Texas Quilt Documentation Project; Daughters of the American Revolution Museum in Washington, D.C.; Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum in Golden, Colorado; Museum of American Quilter’s Society in Paducah, Kentucky); creation of national leadership documents and protocols, including the Editorial Board, which codify the long term expansion and maintenance capabilities; and to produce evaluation methods through the development and application of tools to collect and analyze user feedback from targeted researcher and educator user groups. NEH funding is sought to complete Phase III, specifically to obtain the targeted critical data mass goal and to expand the searching and sorting capabilities. This work will lay the groundwork for future phases.

The specific Phase III partners to be supported by this NEH request are:

- Six new collections of state documentation data which have not been entered into databases or for which entered data is not retrievable: North Carolina Quilt Documentation Project at the North Carolina Museum of History; Heritage Quilt Project of New Jersey at the Rutgers University Library/Archives; Wyoming Quilt Project, Inc.; Iowa Quilt Research Project at State Historical Society of Iowa; Rhode Island Quilt Documentation Project Archives at the University of Rhode Island; and Mountain Heritage Center at Western North Carolina University (the latter is a small but well researched collection which will dovetail with both the North Carolina Documentation records and with the museum collections added under the IMLS funding).
- Six new collections of state documentation data which have been entered into databases and which will be researched, programmed and ingested into the West Virginia Quilt Search at the West Virginia Archives; Connecticut Quilt Search Project; Hawaii Quilt Research Project; Louisiana Quilt Documentation Project at Louisiana Regional Folklife Program; Minnesota Quilt Project at Minnesota Quilters Inc.; and New England Quilt Museum quilts as documented by MassQuilts.
- A collection of quilts amassed by one collector and now housed at the Iowa Historical Society: the Mary A. Barton Collection; and
- One small (40 quilts) well-researched and documented collection at Mountain Heritage Center at Western Carolina University

Many of these projects contain documentation about quilts held in small state museums and historical societies as well as those held in private hands. Letters from the new partners including detailed descriptions of their collections are included as Appendix E.

Future Phases: Continued Growth of the Database, Evaluation, and Educational Outreach and Development

[NOTE: Funding for this work will be pursued from sources other than NEH.]

The issues of basic sustainability of the Quilt Index and continual enhancement of its content, technology, and user features have been continually considered from the outset of the initial planning period. First of all, Michigan State University has committed to maintaining the **Quilt Index** and its related applications over the long-term. Project leadership staff at MATRIX, the MSU Museum, and The Alliance have already set in motion actions which are setting the stage for the continual expansion and upgrading of the

Index. The Index Task Force and the Index Editorial Board will provide ongoing consultation to guide and assist in development and enhancement actions. Ongoing publicity efforts and monitoring of project feedback will ensure the vitality of the Index, as well as its use by scholars, teachers, and a broad public audience.

Initial discussions and steps have been made on the following next phases.

- Enhancement of the educational value and use of the Quilt Index by creating more contextual materials that will help users to frame and understand the cultural significance of quilts. Users not only have an option to have their queries returned as a traditional list of relevant documents but they will also have the option to be supplied with a list of related materials (bibliographies, exhibitions, teaching aids, and related documents). During this Phase, MATRIX and the Quilt Index partners will also develop and implement a server side suite of tools that help users to find, segment, annotate, organize, and publish media and information found on the Internet. These applications provide users with an environment not only to work with and personalize digital media, but also to share and discuss their findings with a community of users. Because the applications store a significant amount of information about the digital objects selected by users and user generated annotations per digital object, it both provides a corpus of data on how digital repositories are being used and creates materials that augment traditional cataloguing records. In so doing, the application forms a secondary repository that holds metadata generated by its users, and additional resources for target groups (scholars, researchers, educators, and students) can be easily generated: specialized searches and galleries spanning across the collections that group the quilts according to theme or topic, extended materials such as lesson plans, interpretive essays, bibliographies, oral histories, and pointers to digital objects in primary repositories—either held within the Quilt Index, or related objects from other repositories such as the Library of Congress’s American Memory Collection. As part of this phase, a select set of scholars and quilt experts will be asked to develop materials and commentary to help augment the collections and contextualize the user’s experience of the collection. Thus the value of the application is that this group can enhance the usability, access, and interactivity of digital repositories like the **Quilt Index** by facilitating the creation of secondary repositories on top of the collections without significantly increasing costs and time needed to prepare and maintain additional resources.

- Expansion of the database to enrich the research and educational capacity of the Index as well as address the desire of other institutions to make their data accessible for users. Quilt Index staff are continually fielding inquiries from institutions who would like their data included in the Index. As part of the IMLS-funded portion of Phase III, staff are implementing one strategy for responding to these requests and for general data expansion through the development of a document that will be posted on the Index site and will offer potential projects and project partners information about sources of local, state, and national funding, including such grassroots sources as quilt guilds, state arts and humanities councils, universities, and foundations and organizations. MSU has been in discussions with both quilt museums and those art and history museums holding significant textile collections about submitting a consortium project proposal to the National Endowment for the Arts.

- Development of K-12 curriculum based on both the data held in the Index and the tools used to search, mine, and present that data. As part of the IMLS-funded portion of Phase III, project staff are targeting K-12 educators for user feedback and have received an invitation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to participate in a major quilt and curriculum conference in November 2005. The Alliance has begun seeking support through grants for the development of K-12 curriculum.

- Building the capacity to provide opportunities for individual researchers or research teams to use Index fields for the construction of research projects that will ultimately yield data that can easily be added to the Quilt Index. For instance, in the past year, directors of two distinctly different research and documentation projects approached the Index staff for assistance in setting up databases for their projects.

Index staff provided consultation to independent scholar Nancy Hornback, who is working with a national team of scholars on a Signature Quilt Inventory Project. Their database of names inscribed on quilts will be an invaluable resource for genealogists, family historians, and other researchers. Marilyn Klaus and Sharon Sawatzky, both of Kansas, have adapted the database for their The Mennonite Relief Quilt Project, a project that involves research and analysis about the personal, social, theological, and political history of Mennonite Relief Sale quilts.

- Testing the use of the Index structure for another thematic, comprehensive, trans-institutional open source digital repository. Within the first couple of months of the launch of the Index, staff received an inquiry from University of Alaska-Fairbanks which immediately saw the potential for use of the Index structure for a cross-institutional, thematic project focused on Native Alaskan doll making. Subsequently other institutions have inquired with interests related to other thematic collections. An initial exploration is underway to seek National Science Foundation funding to test the Index structure on ethnographic Native American basketry collections.

Prioritization of the steps taken towards these future phases will depend on input from users, counsel from the advisory boards, and, of course, funding.

III. Methodology and Standards

The **Quilt Index** has adopted current “best practices” and standards of digital library research to optimize interchange of information stored in the Index. This design will help ensure the widest possible access to information as well as facilitate the inclusion of collections from around the country. General areas of standardization include intellectual property, terminology, imaging, storage and markup. **Quilt Index** project director, Mark Kornbluh, sits on the Best Practices in Humanities Digitization Advisory Board for the National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH) and on the National Research Council committee advising the National Archives on long-term digital preservation. Kornbluh is particularly attuned to the need to follow national standards in expanding and implementing this Index.

Metadata – The Quilt Index Comprehensive Fields

The initial task of the project was development of comprehensive descriptive metadata for quilts, as unique three-dimensional objects. Staff of the MSU Museum and MATRIX developed this comprehensive set of descriptive fields, utilizing the survey forms from documentation projects throughout the country and soliciting user feedback from quilt researchers and documentation experts. Project staff culled quilt documentation forms from nearly every state to find regional variations and cross-referenced twenty significant reference sources on art and textiles including the *Art and Architecture Thesaurus of the Getty Vocabulary Program* (1999) and Barbara Brackman’s *Encyclopedia of Pieced Quilt Patterns* (1979). AAT in particular, a comprehensive vocabulary of nearly 120,000 terms for describing objects, textural materials, images, architecture and material culture from antiquity to the present, is a recognized and widely utilized standard for archives and special collections staff but was insufficient for quilts.

To address storage and markup, project staff implemented available standards in the area of descriptive metadata for physical objects. Based on the metadata to be gathered (Appendix F) as a base, the project team evaluated several possible means of storing information in the database. The project team also conducted a survey of current metadata standards in museum and archival description and concluded that existing metadata standards do not serve well the detailed descriptions demanded of quilts. Working in consultation with scholars of quilts and related fields and with actual documentation forms from states across the country, the team developed a metadata standard for detailed description of quilts.

The resulting Quilt Index Comprehensive Fields, focusing mainly on descriptive metadata for the quilt object, is a standardized metadata schema -- a master list of metadata fields designed to accommodate all of the information requested on state documentation forms developed to date. This schema is divided into 27 Groups addressing a range of technical, administrative and descriptive metadata. These fields employ controlled vocabularies as well as more flexible text fields to encompass all descriptive information that may have been gathered for quilt objects. No single documentation project or quilt collection uses the entire list of Comprehensive Fields, rather the comprehensive fields are intended to be all-inclusive, to accommodate all of the information requested on state documentation forms developed to date in including variations for regional descriptive terms as well as those fields typically used by museums for collection descriptions and collection management. The descriptions of the fields clarify the type and meaning of data entered into each field. These descriptions currently serve as both a glossary and as directions for data entry.

A core subset of the Comprehensive Fields, **Quilt Index Core Fields**, represents the most common information that is collected by documentation projects, cited by curators or used for searching by researchers. These are used in the main sorting and searching functions on the site and are displayed in the “basic display” view of a quilt record in the Index website. Contributors match their data fields to the Core Fields and to as many of the Comprehensive Fields as necessary.

The MATRIX Repository

MATRIX has facilitated cross-project/repository development through the creation of REPOS, a database driven, online digital repository that allows institutions to ingest, manage, and deliver digital objects and their corresponding metadata. Working from a storage archive model proposed by NASA as the Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System (OAIS), MATRIX staff developed REPOS as a storage and delivery “archive” to store files as they are ingested from participating archives. REPOS is unique in that it can utilize any metadata scheme without altering its table structure or design. This allows multiple projects with vastly different collections and metadata to use the same architecture to create their digital library. Since the same infrastructure is used for all projects, MATRIX can build dynamic ingestion and delivery applications that work for any project utilizing the system. This modular approach allows for the creation of new digital library collections quickly and vastly reduces the cost of creating and delivering the projects. Because all projects are housed within the same database and table structure, cross collection searching and resource building is made much easier. The net effect is that REPOS has provided institutions with a cost effective digital library system that fully utilizes best practices within the discipline. To date, 20 national and international institutions are using REPOS for their digital library collections. MATRIX staff has integrated the Quilt Index Comprehensive Fields into the MATRIX Repository. Each metadata field includes the group name and number, field name (actual database field name), sequence (order in which field appears within its group), description (further definition of field for data entry and management), caption (for online management view), field type, note (for any additional information), and character limit.

Given the current limitations of XML databases, XML was not used to store metadata in the MATRIX repository. However, the database structure was designed to mirror the functionality of XML with the intent to migrate to XML in the future. Modeled after the METS schema and “bucket” approach, the database table structure of the MATRIX repository was developed to be highly flexible. Because the repository integrates so many different kinds of metadata from different institutions, the design moved away from statically defined tables and incorporated a schematized table design. Because the repository stores information about the kind of metadata being used by each project, MATRIX has developed a PHP based online utility that utilizes this information to generate metadata ingestion/administration forms for each of the partners. This design, an easy-to-use browser based utility, allows projects to begin their participation in the repository by selecting from existing metadata schemes (Dublin Core, MARC, EAD,

Quilt Index Comprehensive Fields, etc.) that they can then modify with any project-specific metadata necessary to describe the objects they will store in the repository. This information is then stored in the database and instantly used to generate online forms to begin entering metadata and ingest digital objects. The tools developed also facilitate the dynamic generation of galleries and aid in searching for files by format.

This flexibility is essential to working with regional quilt documentation projects. Each project selects the **Quilt Index** comprehensive field schema in the Repository, then, from that schema, selects the core fields plus other fields in the comprehensive fields that they gathered. This becomes their core set. Another important part of this design is the use of controlled vocabulary from existing sources, in this case the AAT modified with results from state documentation project findings. Quilt-related terms drawn from this thesaurus are now part of the metadata standard, and are used to form the lists of legal values for certain vocabulary-controlled fields. As extensions to the available vocabularies are needed, approved new terms can be added to those vocabularies. During the pilot phase, for example, the four contributors reviewed the comprehensive fields based on actual data entry and the term set was modified through petition to the Task Force and field experts by contributing partners and project staff. The field option “other” allows for terms or notes specific to each site or entry. Finally, the specification adapts to the fact that different subsets of data have been (and will be) collected by different organizations. Thus the **Quilt Index** is addressing the need for centralized information access through the comprehensive fields, controlled vocabulary values, and core fields, yet balancing that standardization with preservation of local variation through addition free text descriptive fields and a mechanism for modifying the comprehensive fields.

For contributors entering their data directly into the Quilt Index, data enterers use a web-based entry form to enter each quilt’s metadata, history and descriptive information from the documentation form into the database. Web-based entry forms have a number of important advantages. First, it allows easy and virtually error-free database update by providing a variety of checkboxes, drop-down menus, radio buttons, and text input fields. Also, staff at various locations simultaneously access database resources to retrieve and update information without any knowledge of SQL or database-specific software. Appendix F of this proposal provides a detailed list of quilt descriptive information drawn from the survey forms of several state and regional projects. Using this list as a base, web-based entry forms were further customized to show only those fields required by individual entry sites. (See web-based entry form, Appendix G.)

The **Quilt Index’s** underlying full-text database and search engine supports a wide variety of user-driven web-based interfaces. The various interfaces can provide information that is customized to suit the needs of many different kinds of users. The flexibility of the web-based interfaces means that quilt makers, for example, will not have to wade through irrelevant information when searching for a particular quilt pattern or design. Yet scholarly researchers can take full advantage of the **Quilt Index’s** database of extensive and rich documentation about the quilts and their production and use. They can also specify exact parameters to do highly refined deep searches to find the exact materials they need. Because of the design of the database and documents, users also have other ways to access the materials. They can browse the collections and explore galleries of related materials. The user can access graphical search interface that allows the user to visualize the relationship between materials. That is, in addition to finding specific materials they seek, users can find those materials in the context of other related materials. This is accomplished in several ways.

The distributed nature of the Internet makes the entire contents of the **Quilt Index** available to researchers, teachers, and the broader public everywhere. The Web interfaces to the **Quilt Index** will provide multiple views of the information. These views will be adapted to the needs of various audiences, including historians, folklorists, teachers, quiltmakers, artists, and students. Examples of how some of these interfaces look can be found in Appendix H, or viewed online at <http://www.quiltindex.org>. Users

will be able to draw from the entire database, or from subsets. For example, a researcher might wish to examine only information about Kentucky quilts. Another might wish to study regional variations in construction techniques, and might therefore choose to search the whole database. Data provided by each institution will be stored centrally for use by the Index, but a mechanism will be provided so that each contributor may maintain their own copy of the data for their own purposes, if they so desire.

MSU is well suited to host the data repository for the **Quilt Index**. The University is well connected to the Internet, with multiple high-speed connections. MATRIX has extensive experience in maintaining high-profile systems for use by a worldwide audience. Its existing computing resources are maintained in one of MSU's major data centers. The center is staffed with operators on a 24 X 7 basis, and offers redundant climate control and power systems. A rigorous backup program protects data from server hardware failure. In addition, MATRIX has several full-time professional staff devoted to maintaining its servers.

Crosswalking Tools

A major component of the **Quilt Index** during this phase is the continuing research and development of methodology and tools to integrate existing databases into the **Quilt Index**. When the Index comprehensive fields were developed, they were created with the intention of including many other projects in the future. The Comprehensive Fields and the XML compatible repository programming were designed to facilitate translation between other databases, both for ingestion of other site data, and for potentially sharing **Quilt Index** records with other databases. Phase III is the proving ground for such data integration. To establish these protocols and codify this process, partners are collaborating on the creation of crosswalk tools for metadata mapping (modeled after the Colorado Digitization Project's Cross Walk documents). Crosswalking facilitates the conversion of datasets into **Quilt Index** metadata standards and the ingestion of these sets into the Index.

Imaging Standards

The **Quilt Index** has developed a set of digitization specifications drawing on MATRIX's digitization white papers and on imaging resources for museums, universities, and cultural heritage organizations including the Getty Institute Standards Program's Delivering Digital Images: Cultural Heritage Resources for Education and Introduction to Imaging and the recently revised Colorado Digitization Program's Western States Digital Imaging Best Practices. These works outline critical issues surrounding image capture, data compression, quality control, and network delivery, and thus facilitate the development of common standards that are essential for sharing and preserving digital images. The established **Quilt Index** digitization process and standards are:

Preservation: The original slides or photographs are scanned at 24-bit depth color, 600 pixels per inch, and stored as uncompressed, high-resolution TIFF files. These large, higher resolution, detailed reference images are only available offline, from the collecting partner institution. Depending on the institution, these files are either burned to duplicate Mitsui Gold archival CD's which are then stored in separate locations; or they are burned to a single set of CD's with a duplicate copy maintained on a network server or on backed-up local hard disks. At least one set of the CDs will be placed in temperature and humidity controlled, long-term storage.

Access: Using Adobe Photoshop, the TIFF images are resized to maximum 450-550 pixels across the width dimension (the length scales), then optimized for the web as 72ppi JPEG files. These files are uploaded to the Index repository through the project's password protected online records management system. (See Appendix G) On the public access website, thumbnail and smaller scale viewing versions (See Appendix H) are generated automatically by the repository's delivery programming. This allows

multiple viewing options without re-sizing, saving, and storing multiple copies of the same image, and facilitates future editing of the interfaces without reproducing and storing multiple viewing image files.

Quality Control and Training

Central to successful digitization projects are quality control and training. MSU trains contributors through training documents, online walk-throughs, visual benchmarks for imaging, and telephone support, which proved successful in the pilot phase. In addition, under IMLS support, we will be developing an online manual and set of checklists to facilitate training and workflow. Imaging quality control and data verification are built into the workflow and into each site's budget. Images and full data records can be uploaded separately in the password protected management system. A file type checkbox field is used as the quality control approval. This field must be hand checked in a record in order for it to display on the public pages. This provides double access and a review opportunity of each record before it is made live.

MSU set the imaging standards (as described above), trains digitization staff, and assists in setting up hardware configurations, viewing conditions, monitor calibrations and color management of the digital objects as well as workflow. The scanning process begins with a sample of 10 – 15 images the digitizer prepares shares both the preservation and access copies with project colleagues who evaluate 100% of the images. Thereafter, a sampled percentage ranging between 5% and 15% (determined on a per site basis) will be evaluated.

A similar training schedule, which will be augmented by an online manual and checklists, is constructed for the entering of metadata. Projects entering metadata by hand have protocols for data entry. Projects ingesting databases have built data record review and correction into their budgets at 100% of their ingested records. Each partner site has committed a quilt expert (most as volunteer cost share) to review and verify the data records. A sampled percentage of 2% to 5% of metadata records (determined on a per site basis) are evaluated by both project team members and the Quilt Index Task Force, who will review the data entry protocols against their sample and develop recommendations. The Editorial Board will also be responsible for reviewing criteria used in selecting partners as well as materials for digitization and data entry.

Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights

Documentation projects developed statements of permission that quilt owners signed when the quilt was documented. With the common exception of personal contact information for ownership of quilts, most site permission forms allowed for admission of the documented information and images into a public record in accordance with the educational and research mission of the documenting group. Each contributing documentation project's collection goals and data gathering parameters are presented on the Index. All materials of the **Quilt Index** remain associated with the original documenting project, and are presented in adherence to MATRIX's copyright and intellectual property policy statement, "Principles of Intellectual Property and Digital Rights Management in Content Partnerships" (See Appendix I). Data and images in the Quilt Index are publicly available for non-profit research and educational use, per our guidelines. *Responsibility for adhering to copyright laws rests with the patron, although we have committed as an institution to making copyright information available.*

Each partner institution examines the nature of rights granted by quilt owners in the course of the state surveys. With advice from staff at the Library of Congress who have been addressing rights issues for the National Digital Library, The Alliance and its project partners develops processes for ensuring permission to include quilt images in the Index. In all cases where collections partner sites have questions relating to

copyright and ownership of images or quilt documentation, they attempt to contact quilt owners to secure permissions, and have built that into their site budgets.

We do not anticipate intellectual property issues, because documented quilts have been brought forward by owners to the various projects to be made part of the public record for “education and research” purposes. If, however, cases arise where intellectual property rights are at question, the cases will be reviewed by the **Quilt Index** Editorial Board.

IV. Plan of Work

MATRIX/MSUM staff members work with all partners to discuss how the quality of digitization and metadata can be continually monitored and assessed, creating guidelines, standards, and checklist to track quality and workflow.

For sites with datasets that have not been entered into a database, MATRIX/MSUM staff members provide sites with password protected management pages, assist with matching the site’s data fields to the Quilt Index Comprehensive Fields, and provide training and documentation for working with the Quilt Index Comprehensive Fields and web-based entry forms including uploading objects and adding metadata into the Repository,

For sites with existing databases, in addition to REPOS access and system and data training, MATRIX/MSUM staff members work with site staff to make a detailed crosswalk document. Once this crosswalk’s metadata mapping has been finalized, MATRIX staff program the transfer of data and ingestion into the Index. Prior to mapping and ingestions of all project databases, extensive testing was conducted with datasets contributed by the University of Nebraska, a thoroughly utilized database that provided the perfect test group for this work. In order to ensure further quality control, and to account for data conversion errors that may occur during the process, automatic data checking mechanisms are integrated into the programming. In addition, once ingestion is complete, site staff go through the ingested records, perform any needed hand corrections to known fields, select a random sample of records to test for complete accuracy (in some cases, a re-ingest of the data may be needed) and verify image and record correspondence and quality. Throughout the project, project staff from all sites collect already-documented resources that augment the records and objects contained in the Index. These resources include bibliographies, quilt maker biographies and quilting group histories, and descriptive information or scholarly essays on style, techniques, historical periods, and the varying purpose or functions of the quilts held in the various collections.

Timeline

To be completed before July 2006:

Complete 75% of IMLS-funded Phase III Activities including:

- Complete and make available national leadership documents: Quilt Index standards and protocols, training materials, data crosswalk templates, new contributors guidelines, etc.
- Launch at least 50% of IMLS funded quilt data and images
- Develop outcome-based evaluation plan
- Finalize board guidelines, solicit members, and activate Quilt Index Editorial Board
- Conduct user training and evaluation workshops at national meetings of targeted scholar and educator groups
- Solicit feedback from site staff and Editorial Board for priority directions and opportunities for QI future phases
- Develop detailed work plans for NEH-funded partner sites (completed for this proposal application)

Project activities for Phase III Activities to be supported by NEH:

July 2006

- Review contributing site work plans for 13 new partners (see Appendix E: Partner letters with detailed descriptions) (staff and sites)
- Determine overall sequence of sites for database ingestion 1 NEQM/MA, 2 CT prioritize 3 -6 (staff with sites, WV, HI, LA, MN)
- Prioritize order of data entry of objects (6 sites hand entering data NC, NJ, IA, RI, WY with staff)
- Execute subcontracts based on already-developed and reviewed detailed work plans (Alliance)
- Modify Quilt Index interface to create display pages for new partners (MATRIX)
- Contribute organizational and collection description for Quilt Index website (all sites)
- Order equipment as specified in workplans (all)

August –September 2006

- Match the Quilt Index comprehensive fields to the contributor's data fields (all sites)
- Draft crosswalk templates (6 sites that have existing databases WV, HI, LA, MN, CT, MA/NEQM)
- Assist with field matching and crosswalk detailing (MATRIX/MSUM)
- Create internal management pages for sites doing direct data entry (MATRIX)

October – December 2006

- Train six sites doing direct data entry into the Index (MATRIX/MSUM)
- Begin direct data entry (6 sites NC, NJ, IA, RI, WY, MHC – note Mountain Heritage Center with #40 quilts will complete in this quarter)
- Train digitizers on equipment and Quilt Index specifications (7 sites: WV, NC, CT, NJ, IA, RI, WY)
- 7 Sites digitizing produce 10-15 digital image samples for site and staff review, modify workflow
- Create ingestion programming for Database 1: MassQuilts Access Database for New England Quilt Museum Quilts (MATRIX)
- Digitize slides for NEQM/MassQuilts (# 200) (Wong, MSUM)

January – June 2007

- Ingest NEQM database and verify (MATRIX)
- Verify ingestion, upload images and edit records (NEQM)
- Continue direct data entry (5 sites: NC, NJ, IA, RI, WY)
- Begin digitization and image preservation (7 sites: WV, NC, CT, NJ, IA, RI, WY)
- Create ingestion programming for Database 2: Connecticut (MATRIX)
- Ingest CT database and verify (MATRIX)
- Verify ingestion, begin uploading images and edit records (CT)
- Create ingestion programming for Database 3 (MATRIX)
- Digitize Minnesota slides (#3600) (Wong, MSUM)
- Gather data and draft new searching and sorting interfaces (all contribute, MATRIX draft)

July - December 2007

- Ingest Database 3 and verify (MATRIX)
- Verify ingestion, upload images and edit records (Database 3 site)
- Continue direct data entry (5 sites NC, NJ, IA, WY; RI to complete)

- Continue digitization and image preservation (7 sites: WV, NC, CT, NJ, IA, WY, RI to complete)
- Create ingestion programming for Database 4 (MATRIX)
- Ingest Database 4 and verify (MATRIX)
- Verify ingestion, upload images and edit records (Database 4 site)
- Digitize Wyoming slides (#2600) (Wong, MSUM)
- Pilot and evaluate new searching and sorting mechanisms (all, MATRIX)

January – June 2008

- Create ingestion programming for Databases 5 & 6 (MATRIX)
- Ingest Database 5 & 6 and verify (MATRIX)
- Verify ingestion, upload images and edit records (Databases 5 & 6 sites)
- Continue direct data entry (4 sites NC, NJ, IA, WY)
- Continue digitization and image preservation (6 sites: WV, NC, CT, NJ, IA, WY)
- Launch new searching and sorting mechanisms (MATRIX)

Ongoing Activities

- Sites inputting data and quality control measures and assessment
- Data entry and image uploading
- Write and present **Quilt Index** status and research findings
- Collect existing contextual or supplemental materials held within the site collections.
- Assess usability of the **Quilt Index** within pedagogical and research context

V. Staffing

The leadership for this project includes five project PI's (Mark Kornbluh, Marsha MacDowell Shelly Zegart, Justine Richardson, and Mary Worrall) who communicate on Quilt Index issues and collaborate in planning, implementation, writing, reporting and evaluation. Individual roles for specific activities are described below for each person. This team of five collaborates with two advisory boards: the Alliance's Quilt Index Project Task Force and the Quilt Index Editorial Board (in formation). The Task Force, Editorial Board members, and key project staff (both centrally and at collaborating sites), communicate via a project listserv.

Principal Investigators:

Mark Lawrence Kornbluh is Director of MATRIX: The Center for Humane Arts, Letters and Social Sciences Online and Chair of the Department History at Michigan State University. Kornbluh holds a Ph.D. in American History from Johns Hopkins University. He leads national and international initiatives to research and implement Internet services for teaching, research and learning in the humanities. Kornbluh sits on several national standards boards including the Best Practices in Humanities Digitization Advisory Board for the National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH) and the National Research Council committee advising the National Archives on long-term digital preservation. Kornbluh oversees the technical direction of the project.

Marsha MacDowell is Curator of Folk Arts at the Michigan State University Museum and Professor in the Department of Art and Art History at MSU. MacDowell has published extensively on American material culture (with an emphasis on Michigan, Native American, and African-American quilting traditions); curated numerous regional and national exhibitions; and served as principal investigator on over 200 grants, including major ones from NEH, IMLS, NEA, and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest

Fund. A founding member of the Alliance for American Quilts advisory board and former president of the American Quilt Study Group, she is originating editor of H-Quilts. MacDowell directs the activities of the Great Lakes Quilt Center, Michigan State University Museum. MacDowell co-directs the project and leads the IMLS activities, including evaluation. With Worrall, she fields inquiries from and consults with prospective partners and liaises with partners on descriptive content issues.

Shelly Zegart was a founding director of The Kentucky Quilt Project Inc. (1981) and The Alliance for American Quilts (1993). She has curated exhibitions here and abroad, lectured widely on quilt history and aesthetics, written numerous articles, and founded and edited *The Quilt Journal: An International Review*. Recent exhibitions, publications and consulting projects include *Kentucky Quilts: Roots and Wings*, Morehead College, Kentucky (1998); *A Heritage of Genius: American Master Quilts Past and Present*, The Durst Corporation, NYC (2001); *The Quilts of Gee's Bend* publications (2002); and *Mosaic Textiles: In Search of the Hexagon*, Rouen, France (2003). The Art Institute of Chicago has recently acquired her private quilt collection. Zegart holds a B.A. in Education from the University of Michigan. Zegart will oversee partner relations and subcontracting to the new sites under this NEH request.

Justine Richardson is an educational media specialist at MATRIX: The Center for Humane Arts, Letters and Social Sciences online at Michigan State University. Richardson holds a bachelor's degree in Art History from Yale University and a master's degree in American Studies from MSU. Richardson serves as project director and manager for a number of MATRIX projects including the Quilt Index and Quilt Treasures. She has written and presented on the development and coordination of distributed and collaborative online arts and humanities projects. Richardson co-directs the Quilt Index project and manages project activities at MATRIX. With MacDowell, she leads grant reporting and much writing for scholarly presentation; and with Worrall, she oversees the development of documentation and training materials.

Mary Worrall is an Assistant Curator at the MSUM. Worrall has a bachelor's in Public History from Western Michigan University, a master's in Art History from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and is currently working on a second master's in textile history. Worrall has served as project manager for Museum Loan Network projects, curated interpretive quilt exhibitions, and written on quilts and quilting. In addition, she is a quilter and is a professional quilting instructor. Worrall manages subcontracting for the IMLS-supported sites. She and MacDowell field inquiries from and consult with prospective partners and liaise with partners on descriptive content issues. She will manage MSUM activities for this grant project.

Primary Project Staff:

Michael Fegan is Chief Information Officer at MATRIX. Fegan has developed some of MATRIX's most successful online projects, Historical Voices (<http://www.historicalvoices.org>) and is also one of the key architects of the MATRIX online digital repository (REPOS) and MediaMatrix - an online application for segmenting and annotating streaming media. He has conducted training and presented papers on the digitization and delivery of online multimedia objects across the United States, Africa, and the U.K. Fegan is the lead architect on the Quilt Index's preservation repository and searching and retrieval systems.

Pearl Yee Wong, MSUM Collections Coordinator, leads MSU Museum's digital lab. She directs and implements all scanning and photographing projects for the Museum. Wong advises on imaging standards and will conduct image digitization and preservation for the three contributing partners that require this service.

Alliance **Quilt Index** Task Force

The Alliance's **Quilt Index** Project Task Force is The Alliance for American Quilts' coordinating body for Quilt Index issues and quilt field expert integration. The Task Force consists of Alliance board members who shaped the original design of the Index and continue to advise on the funding, operation, and evaluation of the project.

The Alliance's **Quilt Index** Task Force includes: **Doug DeNatale**, an independent consultant who specializes in ethnographic documentation and database development for cultural organizations; **Marcie Ferris**, Alliance executive board co-chair and Visiting Professor of American Studies at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; **Alan Jabbour**, Alliance Executive board co-chair and former Director of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress; **Pat Crews**, Director of the International Quilt Study Center and professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; **Patricia Keller**, independent scholar; **Merikay Waldvogel**, independent scholar and advisor to Tennessee State Archives; **Janice Tauer Wass**, independent scholar and retired Curator of Collections, Illinois State Museum; **Denise Mayorga**, Assistant Director, Center for American History, University of Texas-Austin; and **Kornbluh, MacDowell, and Richardson**.

Quilt Index Editorial Board

Now that the Quilt Index has been piloted, a group is being established to provide an ongoing mechanism critical for quality control over growing content and expansion. The **Quilt Index** Editorial Board will be a select group of 5-7 humanities scholars, recognized for their contribution to studies of material culture and folklife, who will function independently from the three lead institutions (The Alliance, MATRIX and MSU Museum). Members for the board are currently being solicited and it is expected that the board will be established by fall of 2005. This group will be responsible for providing overall scholarly input for the project, serve as an on-going consultative body for issues identified by project directors and managers, vet nominations of collections to be added to the Index, recommend new components to enhance value and usability for research and educational communities, and identify other scholars and consultants who can contribute to discrete aspects of the project, such as evaluation and development of interpretive galleries.

VI. Dissemination: Outreach and Applications

By its core design and intent, the Index enables worldwide, public access to locally-held data. Moreover, information about the Index is communicated to scholars, students, and interested public audience around the globe through an extraordinary array of networks represented by the three lead project organizations as well as the partner organizations. The primary and broadest dissemination of the Index will be achieved through the structure and efforts of the Alliance and MSU and through its dissemination partner: H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences OnLine. Through the efforts of project partners, additional local and regional dissemination will be achieved via their various websites, newsletters, member constituencies, and professional society affiliations.

The **Quilt Index** is demonstrated at a range of scholarly conferences including the annual meetings of the American Historical Association, American Association of Museums, Museums and the Web, American Studies Association, American Quilt Study Group, and the American Association of State and Local History. Press releases about the Index are distributed to a variety of related publications.

The World Wide Web provides the ability to create a variety of applications based on the **Quilt Index** that are tailored to the information needs and interests of a variety of audiences. In addition to this resource, the MSU Museum, MATRIX, the Michigan Department of Education, and the Michigan

Humanities Council are devoting additional funds to develop educational materials for use in K-12 curriculums on North American quilts, and related lesson plans for teaching about quilts. Creation of these applications demonstrates the valuable education resources that can be constructed from the Index data.

Part of the dissemination effort includes evaluation of **Quilt Index** resources and their utility for researchers, scholars, students, and a wide public audience. Evaluation of the Quilt Index has included formative user feedback and testing.

Feedback mechanisms are incorporated throughout the **Quilt Index** and web site. Encouraging users to provide information about the site's utility and their needs, such mechanisms also allow a continued dialogue between those who will maintain and design the site, and the individuals who make use of this resource for a variety of purposes. For privacy issues, data is not collected on individual web users, however an analysis of user domains provides abundant information about where the Index is being used, where the Index is being found, as well as how much specific parts of the site are used. These statistics can be very useful for analyzing utility of the Index and related resources, as well as targeting publicity and outreach.

MATRIX/MSUM are in the process of designing tools and strategies to obtain evaluation data from general users as well as selected scholars and educators representing some of the primary humanities disciplines served by the Index. These target users are being asked to critically assess the usability, comment on the ways in which they have already incorporated or plan to incorporate the Index into their research and teaching, and recommend additional tools and features that will strengthen their use of the Index. Strategies being developed include online surveys administered directly through the Index and through listservs and questionnaires administered at key gatherings and conferences of targeted user groups (a pilot survey was tested at the American Association of Museums meeting in May 2005). As part of the current development, workshops are in progress to assess scholars' uses of the QI as a research vehicle. Results are being used to design a distributed infrastructure for the QI that supports innovative scholarship and scholarly discussion. This infrastructure will facilitate multi-demographic mining and yield durable knowledge about quilts and their place in history. This effort to define the needs of scholars in terms of distributed preservation architecture will both bolster the humanist dimension of quilt research and help researchers construct a unified set of precepts on which quiltmaking and quilts are based.

Dissemination Partner: H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences OnLine

H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences OnLine is an independent, worldwide consortium of teachers, scholars, and public humanists and is committed to facilitating access to educational and scholarly resources to the broadest possible audience, across disciplinary, institutional, and national boundaries. With over 150 networks, which reach over 90 countries, H-Net is the most prominent source of scholarly electronic discussion networks in the world, and hosts one of the most extensive web sites in the humanities.

As part of the Quilt Index project, H-Net has worked closely with Michigan State University Museum to expand its family of networks to include H-Quilts, an electronic network devoted to quilt history and scholarship. Initiated by the Michigan State University Museum and jointly sponsored by The Alliance for American Quilts and the American Quilt Study Group, H-Quilts facilitates dialogue among public humanists, scholars and academics, while encouraging ongoing exchange of research and knowledge. A team of quilt scholars edits the discussion network where they assist other researchers to locate additional research tools and to make best use of quilt studies resources. Syllabi, bibliographies, commissioned essays, book reviews, and logs of H-Quilt discussions are archived on a web site devoted to the discussion list. These resources will also be accessible from the **Quilt Index** web site (See Appendix H or <http://www.quiltindex.org>). Reports on the project are published on the **Quilt Index** grant website and sent out on the H-Quilt discussion and Quilt History List (QHL) networks to keep the profession fully abreast of the **Quilt Index** progress. H-Quilts enables us to know how closely we are approaching the needs of target users and allows useful input and exchange from members of other H-Net networks.

IV. Conclusion

Just as The Index of American Design in the 1930s provided a national basis for consideration of American craft and design traditions, so the **Quilt Index** in the 21st century is intended to provide a national data base to increase the number and scope of studies of this vibrant art form and to provide raw material to inform studies in other fields. The decentralization and local access of the World Wide Web will make the entire database of The Index available to users everywhere.