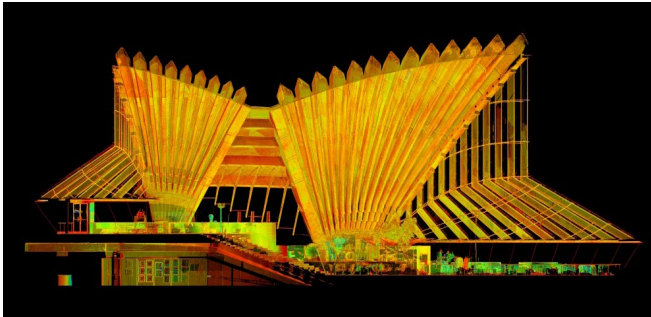


# digital heritage



Laser scan data for the interior of the Bennelong building of the Sydney Opera House. Note the steel beams of the window structure at each end as well as the pre-cast concrete shells' interior ribbed design beautifully exemplified here by having the exterior of the structure digitally removed. Image courtesy of the CDDV and Scottish Ten.



Laser scan data of the Peterson Rock Garden, showing two of the miniature bridges within the garden's landscape. Image courtesy of Restore Oregon, who listed the site on Oregon's "Most Endangered Places List" and ToPa 3D, Inc., who documented the site with 3D laser scanning and panoramic photography.

## When is heritage worth digitizing?

When an organization sets out with a mission to digitally document humanity's collective history of built heritage, that mission can get a little sticky, especially when qualifying "cultural heritage." CyArk is often asked what its criteria are for sites' inclusion in the digital heritage [archive](#). Many surveyors and service providers have come to us with collected data or an interest in collecting data for a site of personal or local importance, but fear CyArk would be uninterested. After all, what constitutes "cultural heritage"? Wikipedia has a [nice definition](#) (one of my favorites). ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites, UNESCO's primary advisory council on heritage) has redefined its own definition [several times](#) since it first began categorizing and listing heritage in the 1960s. The US National Park Service defines historic sites to be included on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as being "at least 50 years old." But "heritage" does not only include the "historic." Cultural heritage is truly the legacy of the past—both tangible and intangible—as passed from generation

to generation. That's a broad subject (and for this short piece we'll exclude the intangible). CyArk takes the position that heritage of all levels of significance are worthy of digital preservation. If a community feels a structure or site representing human activity is of cross-generational value and worth being maintained or remembered, then it is a piece of our collective cultural heritage worthy of digital preservation.

There are many examples of global digital preservation efforts that demonstrate a broad range of heritage typologies and significance. The Sydney Opera House is hailed as a modernist masterpiece, and it is also a mere 40 years old—falling a decade short of some definitions as noted above. Yet Australia has adopted the Opera House as its cultural icon, the way Egypt has the Pyramids and France the Eiffel Tower (it just happens to be a younger, but then so is modern Australia). Which is why, when approached by the [Scottish Ten initiative](#), the Australian government wasted no time in nominating the Sydney Opera House as its site to be digitally preserved.

In contrast to the beloved Aussie icon, here in Oregon, the little-known Peterson

Rock Garden has its own devotees. A quirky 4-acre garden of miniature castles, bridges, and other monuments built of rocks by a Danish immigrant beginning in 1935, the Peterson garden was recently under consideration for the NRHP. The Historic Preservation League of Oregon has been fighting for its protection and after some accidental damage in 2012, the League commissioned restoration work along with the recording of the rock garden with terrestrial LiDAR. In October 2013, the rock garden was listed on the National Register.

These are two very different sites, but each is deemed worthy of an immortal digital legacy according to the people who champion them as their heritage. And in the next "digital heritage" installment I'll discuss the surveying community's own cultural heritage: a historic survey site recognized by UNESCO for its scientific contribution to humanity. ■

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