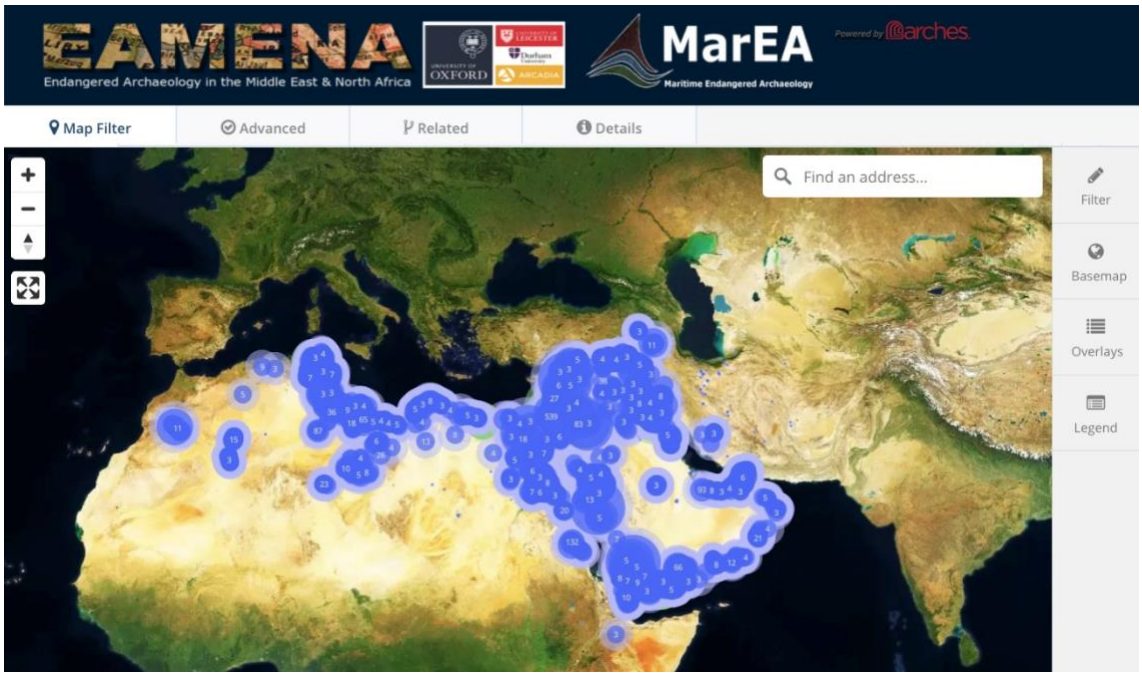
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 2021

Getty Conservation Institute Awarded Grant from Arcadia to Enhance its Arches Cultural Heritage Data Management Platform

$325,000 grant to make Arches accessible in Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew, and more



A screenshot from the implementation of Arches for Arcadia's Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East & North Africa (EAMENA) project, showing the extent of endangered heritage recorded to date over a 20-country region. Screenshot courtesy of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East & North Africa (EAMENA) project. Map: © Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

LOS ANGELES – The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) has received a $325,000 grant from Arcadia, a charitable trust of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, to support significant expansion of the GCI's Arches open-source data management platform. The new software development being funded by Arcadia will make possible comprehensive internationalization of the entire Arches platform, which is used to document and help protect cultural heritage places, such as historic structures, archaeological sites, and cultural landscapes.

The GCI, partnering with World Monuments Fund, originally created Arches as an open-source data-management platform, which is freely available for organizations to independently deploy.

"Arcadia's support for the internationalization of Arches is a perfect example of how an open-source project should work," said Tim Whalen, the John E. and Louise Bryson Director of GCI. "One reason the GCI built Arches as an open-source platform is that resources are typically scarce for cultural heritage organizations. It was our aspiration to see cultural heritage organizations adapt Arches to meet their particular needs—making modifications that can also benefit the broader heritage community. We've encouraged the pooling of resources toward enhancements for Arches for the greater good of the heritage field."

Heritage organizations in multilingual countries are currently assessing the feasibility of deploying Arches to manage their national heritage inventories. One of their essential requirements is the ability to use multiple languages and scripts seamlessly and throughout the

system. This requirement, said Whalen, “is why we deeply appreciate Arcadia investing in making Arches more accessible to colleagues working in any language or in multiple languages. That sentiment is fully in line with our own priorities at the GCI for Arches to be as inclusive and open as possible.”

With support from the Arcadia grant, the GCI has begun working with Farallon Geographics, with whom it originally developed Arches, to build the internationalization enhancement, a complex undertaking that will require extending the Arches platform’s dynamically generated user interface and database to accommodate scripts that read right-to-left, such as Arabic, Farsi, and Hebrew. This enhancement is expected to be completed in early 2022.

Dennis Wuthrich, CEO of Farallon Geographics, noted, “The semantic modeling capabilities of Arches already enrich the information collected about cultural heritage resources. By supporting multiple languages and scripts in the software's user interface and database, we’ll expand the capability of everyone to access, discover, and better appreciate their heritage.”

Arcadia works not only to document endangered cultural heritage, but also to protect threatened ecosystems and to promote open access to information. Arcadia currently supports cultural heritage documentation projects in more than 40 countries, each of which is deploying the Arches platform as its data management system.

At present, Arcadia’s projects can be found in the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, Mongolia, China, Nepal, Afghanistan, the Indus River Basin, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Brunei, Vietnam, Mali, Senegal, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.

Mike Heyworth, consultant to Cultural Programmes at Arcadia, noted, “Our international projects to document endangered cultural heritage encompass many languages, including several non-Latin scripts, such as Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, and Russian. This enhancement to Arches will greatly improve accessibility to a huge volume of new data and consequently new knowledge about the many diverse cultures and communities that Arcadia supports.”

Arcadia’s projects were early adopters of the Arches platform, beginning in 2015. Robert Bewley, who was director of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa project (EAMENA) at the time, noted: “By choosing the open-source software platform Arches as our database of record, the EAMENA project has saved years of software development work.”

Mohmoud Abdelrazek, database developer for one of Arcadia’s newer projects, Mapping Africa’s Endangered Archaeological Sites (MAEASaM), observed that, “Recording data about archaeological sites is a complex task [and] Arches fits our purpose…Arches provides an easy to use and clean interface to the user whilst maintaining complex data and functions on the backend.”

Arches utilizes international standards for cultural heritage information and information technologies. It is highly customizable and can be configured for use by public agencies and policymakers, researchers and students, non-governmental organizations, property owners, developers, visitors, and the public at large. The Arches platform is freely available under the AGPL3 open-source license for cultural heritage organizations worldwide to implement however they wish, but with the stipulation that any enhancements are made available to the community.

In a separate initiative known as Arches for Science, the GCI is expanding the Arches platform to manage conservation science data. This will enable scientists to secure, retrieve, visualize, compare, and share their data, as well as to manage the process of laboratory research tasks.

Another new expansion to the platform recently initiated and also funded by the GCI—one which goes hand-in-hand with the new internationalization effort—is the creation of a stand-alone Reference Data Manager (RDM). The RDM is a vocabulary tool that manages the meanings and relationships of words and concepts, allowing users to find records by searching for any known synonym, including any local terms or foreign words. Along with the internationalization work, it will vastly facilitate searching, improve accuracy, and aid in data preservation.

###

Getty is a leading global arts organization committed to the exhibition, conservation, and understanding of the world's artistic and cultural heritage. Working collaboratively with partners around the globe, the Getty Foundation, Getty Conservation Institute, Getty Museum and Getty Research Institute are all dedicated to the greater understanding of the relationships between the world's many cultures. The Los Angeles-based J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs share art, knowledge, and resources online at Getty.edu and welcome the public for free at the Getty Center and the Getty Villa.

The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) works internationally to advance conservation practice in the visual arts—broadly interpreted to include objects, collections, architecture, and sites. The Institute serves the conservation community through scientific research, education and training, field projects, and the dissemination of information. In all its endeavors, the GCI creates and delivers knowledge that contributes to the conservation of the world's cultural heritage.

ARCADIA
A CHARITABLE FUND OF
LISBET RAUSING & PETER BALDWIN

Arcadia is a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. It supports charities and scholarly institutions that preserve cultural heritage and the environment. Arcadia also supports projects that promote open access and all of its awards are granted on the condition that any materials produced are made available for free online. Since 2002, Arcadia has awarded more than $910 million* to projects around the world.

More information at www.arcadiafund.org.uk and on Twitter @ArcadiaFund.

Contact:

Alexandria Sivak
Getty Communications
asivak@getty.edu
1+480-239-4324