

The background image shows a close-up of a person's eye looking through the eyepiece of a light blue microscope. The microscope is positioned over an open manuscript. The manuscript page features a large, ornate initial letter 'D' in gold and blue, with intricate patterns. The text on the page is written in a Gothic script. The book's cover is made of dark wood with decorative cutouts.

Icon

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Impact Report

2023-2024

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The background is a photograph of a dome's interior, covered in ancient frescoes. The frescoes depict various figures, possibly saints or historical figures, in a classical style. The colors are muted and aged, with some areas showing signs of wear and peeling plaster. Overlaid on this image is a semi-transparent white rectangular box containing text. The text is arranged in three sections, each with a bold heading followed by a paragraph. The headings are in red, and the body text is in black. The overall tone is professional and informative, focusing on cultural heritage conservation.

About Icon

Icon (the Institute of Conservation) is a charitable company working to safeguard cultural heritage. Icon is also the professional membership body for the conservation profession.

Icon's Vision

Icon's Vision is to protect, preserve and promote our treasured cultural heritage through cultivating skilled conservation professionals, supporting meaningful collaboration across the cultural heritage sector, and delivering public benefit through engagement and advocacy.

Icon's Mission

Icon's mission is to represent and support the practice and profession of conservation by promoting the public value of caring for cultural heritage and upholding high standards and ethics in conservation practice. Icon ensures that the guardians and owners of objects, buildings and collections can access knowledgeable and passionate professionals who will help them safeguard the physical remains of our past for the future.



Strategic Priorities

Icon continues to deliver against the **Icon Strategy 2030**, which was published in April 2022 and focuses on achieving wider recognition of the value that conservation brings to society and ensuring that the work of conservation professionals is recognised and respected.

There are **five key objectives** that support the delivery of Icon's Strategy:

- 1** Champion cultural heritage and the value of conservation.
- 2** Extend our reach within the UK and internationally.
- 3** Maintain high standards in conservation practice.
- 4** Develop conservation as an inclusive and rewarding career.
- 5** Strengthen our Institute.

A Message from the Chief Executive



From whichever angle you look, 2023-24 was a year of profound change for Icon. The organisation started the year with the exciting appointment of a new Icon Chair - Emma Chaplin. Emma brought with her decades of experience in the heritage sector, and practical knowledge of running a charity and membership organisation as Director of the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) from 2018 to 2021.

In May 2023 Sara Crofts stepped down after four years as Icon's CEO and experienced conservator Kate Frame ACR stepped-in to lead Icon for six-months. Huge thanks to both Sara and Kate for their hard work and commitment to Icon, and for the careful handover of an organisation with an inspiring vision, a vitally important mission, and a brilliantly passionate and dedicated

membership of highly talented and extremely generous professionals.

Joining Icon on 1st November, I have been privileged to pick up the baton. Thanks to the support of the core staff team, the brilliantly supportive Board of Trustees, Icon's over 400 dedicated volunteers and all of our members, 2023-2024 was a busy and productive year. I am delighted to share with you some of the positive impact achieved for conservation, heritage, and wider society during the year.

Research and Publications

During 2023 Icon's Policy and Programmes Director, Patrick Whife, led on publication of the Conservation Skills Strategy, outlining Icon's approach towards ensuring the skills to care for objects, collections and built heritage exist in the conservation-restoration workforce, and the

NLHF Innovation Programme funded report 'Industrial Heritage Conservation Skills - A Plan for Action'. Both pieces of research were supported by Icon's members, volunteers, and professionals from across the heritage sector, and provided an honest insight into the needs of the conservation workforce and the challenges faced by those caring for our heritage. Importantly, both posed constructive challenges to the wider sector, its leaders and policy-makers, and have provided a springboard for ongoing conversation and partnership discussions which continue today.

Conferences and Events

Taking place in only my second week with Icon, November 2023's ACR Conference was an incredible insight into the variety within conservation and the depth of knowledge across specialisms. The

theme of 'to have and to hold' served as a unifying topic enabling presentations on subjects as varied as the practical and ethical challenges of conserving dynamic objects, packing and storing for move large and complex collections on a minimal budget, and the ethics of touch and public access in our nation's museums and heritage sites.

Environment and sustainability

2023-24 was also a year of much needed focus on the climate emergency and the part conservators, our cultural institutions, and wider sector can and need to play. In addition to the work of the Icon Sustainability Network, Icon's members contributed professional expertise to Arts Council England's GIS environmental conditions review alongside the refreshed Bizot Green Protocol. Icon also supported the Environmental Statement from Heads of Conservation in the UK to highlight the crucial role that professional conservators play in both reaching net zero targets and advancing the sustainability agenda.

Thank you

Throughout the year, I have been delighted to join a range of Icon Group events and visits to members' venues. A big thank you to all who have given their time to show me their workplaces, introduce me to their teams and the incredible skill and adaptability required to care for heritage and conserve objects for future generations. I have learnt a huge amount and will continue to put this knowledge to use when advocating for the vital role of conservators and the importance of this expert, professional voice in making the best decisions to safeguard cultural heritage.

Emma Jhita

Emma Jhita
Chief Executive Officer

Icon continues to champion conservators and the conservation profession with an informed and passionate voice. This report helps us reflect on the impact we have made, thank our extensive network of partners and stakeholders and recommit to our vision, ambition and strategic priorities. I look forward to working with our strong team of board members, staff, volunteers and members to build on this year of change into our 20th anniversary year in 2025.

**- Emma Chaplin
Chair of the Board of Trustees**

Our Year in Numbers

129 New Members

Including **67** new Student members

Representing **45** different countries
around the world

102 Training and skills events delivered

Attracting **3,908** delegates

26 Members achieved their Icon Accreditation

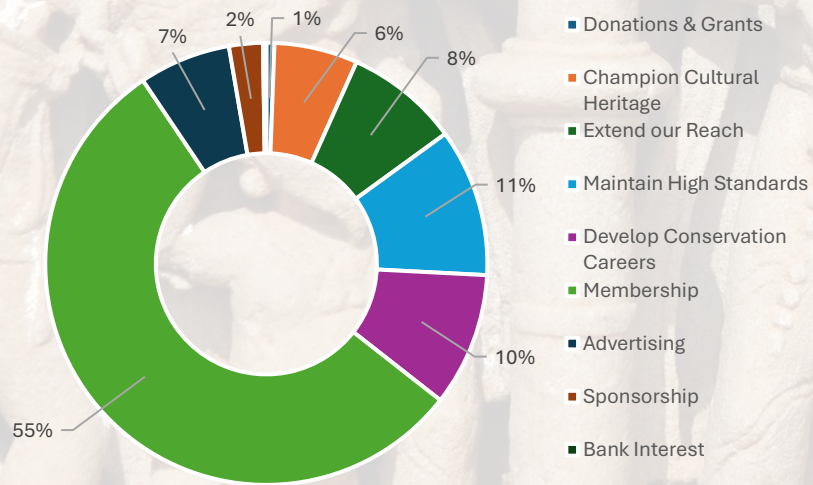
29 started the assessment process

146 Jobs advertised through our website

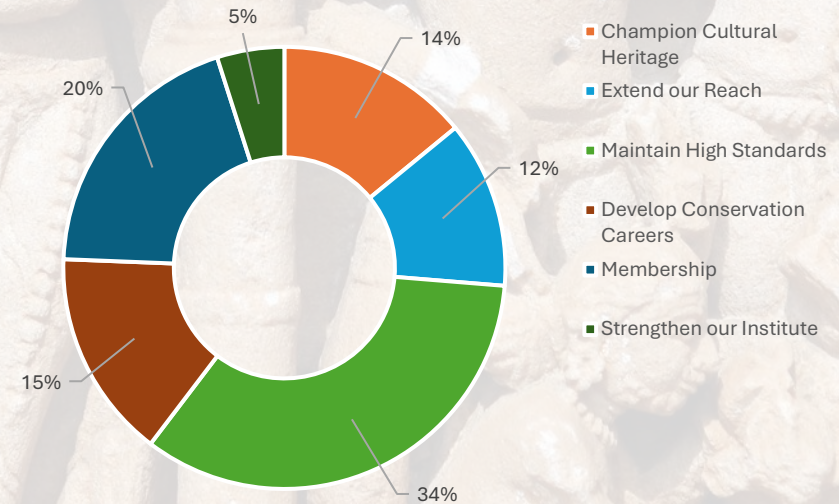
4 people took part in an Icon
Internship

Our Year in Numbers

Income



Expenditure



Icon Groups

Icon's 24 specialist interest groups continued to provide an outstanding offer to the professional community. This was made possible by the incredible support of 187 volunteers who freely gave their time to arrange events and training throughout the year.

Over 2023/24 the groups organised 78 events attracting 3,908 registrations - a phenomenal success.

Highlights included:

- The Care of Collections AGM which was focused on the ever-recurring issue of mould, the impact of environmental conditions and methods for cleaning and treatment.
- Icon's Paintings group organised a talk from the Rijksmuseum's technical research team on the results of new research on Vermeer's technique.
- The Ceramics & Glass Group organised a series of lunchtime lecture to give students the opportunity to showcase their projects and work placements.
- The Sustainability Group organised a joint meeting with the American Institute of Conservation to discuss ways in which small museums and archives can reduce their energy consumption.

SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

Industrial Heritage Skills: A Plan for Action

Industrial heritage collections represent a significant part of our shared cultural heritage in the UK. However, it is widely recognised that the skills required to conserve and restore these collections are at risk. Urgent action is needed to implement activities to resolve these issues, and to ensure that collections can be effectively protected and preserved for future generations.

Icon was successful in securing the generous support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Heritage Innovation Fund to deliver this work.

We already had a strong sense that the very low number of fully qualified and trained conservators specialising in industrial heritage conservation posed a significant risk to our ability to care such collections. It is inevitable that people will retire or leave the profession, and with that create a significant gap in the labour force and a loss of highly specialist skills and knowledge.

The funding allowed us to spend time to research and deepen our understanding of the true nature of the workforce challenge. We did this through surveying museums, practitioners and representative bodies. We also pulled together a steering group to oversee the work and ensure that the proposed solutions are deliverable in practice and meet the most urgent needs of the sector.





SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

The Tru Vue Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme

2023-2024 marked another year of successfully supporting small heritage institutions to care for our shared cultural heritage. With thanks to our partners Tru Vue®, we were able to deliver the Tru Vue® Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme for the 5th year running.

This year, Tru Vue® funded projects continued to reflect the breadth of heritage collections in the UK and internationally. From Shakespeare's first folio and Stuart court dress to a postwar watercolour, the scheme has enhanced access to a range of historically significant objects while safeguarding them for future generations through conservation treatment.

A particular highlight this year has been the return of a rare Pre-Reformation cross to Lamport Hall to mark the 50-year anniversary of the Preservation Trust. The 15th century crucifix had been kept at Peterborough Cathedral for years due to security concerns but now resides in a secure Tru Vue® display case for all visitors to see.

With more of the 2023-2024 projects coming to a close at the end of the year, we're looking forward to sharing their exciting outcomes with Icon's membership very soon.

SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

Restructuring Icon Accreditation

Work on the restructure of the accreditation assessment process continued during the 23-24 year, as the Skills Team started implementing recommendations made during the design phase in 22-23. New policies have been introduced to support the fairness and integrity of Icon's Assessment Process. These are:

- Assessment Appeal and Complaints Policy
- Assessment Fair Access Policy
- Assessment Conflict of Interest Policy
- Assessment Quality Assurance Policy
- Assessment Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

All of these policies are available to view on the Icon website.

As part of the new system, 10 ACR members have become qualified End-Point Assessors for Icon and over 50 assessors from the old assessment system have remained as Specialist Advisors. The process itself has been split into two stages: an e-portfolio has been introduced for candidates to collate project summaries and documentary evidence and, upon completion of this, candidates have a half-day discussion with assessors. The new system offers more flexible timelines for candidates, allowing up to a year to complete both parts of the assessment process. There are currently 42 candidates enrolled on the e-portfolio. Four candidates from the initial cohort have now been accredited under the new system.





SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

Conservation Skills Strategy 2023

Ensuring that the skills to effectively care for objects, collections and built heritage exist within the conservation workforce relies on a fine balance between the number of individuals undertaking training, the skills they are being taught, and the need to respond to demand from employers, clients and commissioners of conservation services.

The purpose of the new strategy is to guide our work and enable us to focus our time and resources on the most pressing issues impacting the sector. It builds on our established commitment to Icon Accreditation, the development of sustainable entry routes into the conservation profession and the support for continuing professional development opportunities for conservators throughout their careers.

The key aims of the strategy include:

1. Ensuring that skill supply activities are sustainable and meet the needs of employers, clients and commissioners.
2. Recognising the need to stimulate demand for conservation skills, to ensure that clients and commissioners engage fully trained professionals where appropriate.
3. Prioritising accessibility in all stages of training and development so that everyone can achieve a rewarding career in conservation.

Acknowledgements

Icon is grateful for the contributions of all those who worked tirelessly on the projects mentioned in this report.

We would like to acknowledge the many members who choose to contribute their time to their professional body, including Group committee members, participants in Icon's various working groups, trustees, event speakers, and critical friends.

We are also grateful to all our members who support the Icon Accreditation process including Accreditation

Committee members, assessors, mentors and CPD readers. We estimate that our members contribute more than £260k of in-kind support each year, calculated at a professional day-rate.

Lastly, we wish to express our appreciation to all those who donated funds in memory of the late Nigel Williams and the late Frederick Bearman, as well as those who made donations in support of our broader work.

We thank you for your continued support

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