


FROM ICON, THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

Iconnect

MAGAZINE

Winter 2022/23 Issue 1



The Colston Statue

Conserving history
as it happens

PLUS: Benefits of microfade testing
Business advice & membership matters
International conservation: Hong Kong & Singapore

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WELCOME



To get us kickstarted, in this issue you will find articles that touch on the theme of politics and conservation

on the theme of politics and conservation, including our lead feature, *Conserving Bristol's History As It Happens*, by Fran Coles ACR (page 12). As well as providing us with a fascinating insight into the toppling, retrieval and conservation of the Edward Colston statue, Fran also reflects on what it was like having to suddenly deal with media interest and the opportunity to engage with the public about her work.

In addition, Jenny van Enckevort ACR and Kloe Rumsey talk about the processes involved in creating an inclusive and accessible exhibition on the history of disability activism (page 28), while Professor Jane Henderson ACR and Phil Parkes ACR share their views on the value of conservation degrees (page 46). You'll also find some useful business tips sprinkled throughout, and some new regulars, including *Improv*, *Careers in Conservation* and *Client Spotlight*.

Enjoy and please let me know what you think (iconeditor@centuryone.uk)

Karen Young, Editor

Hello and welcome to your new-look *Iconnect* magazine. As someone new to the field of conservation, I'd like to start by saying a very big "thank you" to everyone who has helped me to put this first issue together. In the space of just a few months, I have already received lots of support and guidance from the Icon community – including staff, members, trustees (old and new) and the lovely Lynette, whose big Editor shoes I now have the privilege of filling. I obviously still have a lot to learn, but I'm excited to be on board and look forward to working with many more of you in the future.

That said, my work on the magazine to date and attending the excellent 2022 Icon Annual Lecture, *It's Just a Dress*, has already highlighted to me some of the key issues that are important to Icon and its members. Whether it's developing and adopting collaborative, sustainable and accessible practices within cultural heritage, or feeling truly represented, valued and appropriately remunerated for the work that you do, please be assured that as a team, our aim is to explore these topics and offer practical support where possible through *Iconnect* magazine.

To get us kickstarted, in this issue you will find articles that touch

Iconnect – a Portmanteau

Icon – noun;
Icon, the Institute of Conservation – a charity and professional body representing and supporting the practice and profession of cultural heritage conservation

Connect – verb;
to join, link, or fasten together; unite or bind – to bring together or into contact so that a real or notional link is established

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NEW YEAR, NEW *ICONNECT*

It may be a cliché, but the start of a new year always feels like an optimistic moment, and for Icon there is an added buzz of excitement in the office as we launch our new members' magazine, *Iconnect*. So it is a genuine pleasure to share a few opening thoughts to mark this important occasion.

Over the past few months, I have noticed that the number of in-person events and meetings has increased considerably, with many more invitations to take part in seminars, celebratory events and parliamentary gatherings. I always seize on these varied

opportunities to meet new people and to introduce Icon and its work to new audiences, because this is key to delivering our strategic objective of increasing the profile of Icon and the conservation professionals we represent and support.

These days I tend to introduce Icon as a fledgling professional body, by which I mean that we are still a youngster in comparison to venerable organisations like the RIBA or the Royal Geographical Society, with their origins in the 19th century. While our youthful status has some downsides – we don't have useful assets like buildings or investments – it does mean that we can be nimbler and react more quickly to external events and opportunities. We're also not constrained by traditional models and can forge our own path, which brings me back to our new magazine.

For me the launch of *Iconnect* magazine is a tangible sign that Icon has reached a new level of maturity and I hope that you will agree that our refreshed approach is lively and engaging, and fully showcases the value of our profession. When we started this project, I said that my measure of success would be creating the kind of magazine that I would want to carry with me to press into the hands of the people I meet on my Icon travels. I believe that we have succeeded, and that I might now need to invest in a bigger backpack.

Sara Crofts, Chief Executive



For me the launch of *Iconnect* magazine is a tangible sign that Icon has reached a new level of maturity

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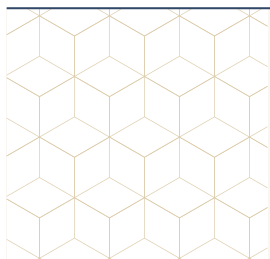
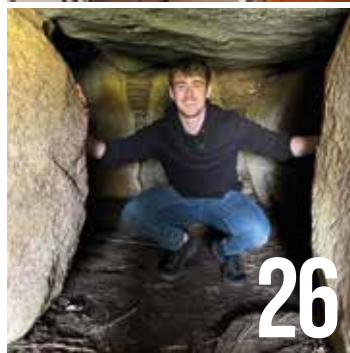
Fran Coles ACR reflects on her role in helping to conserve and display the Edward Colston statue

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With thanks to this issue's key contributors



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Diana Tay



Professor Jane
Henderson ACR



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NEW HERITAGE EXPERIENCE AIMED AT CHILDREN OPENS AT SUDBURY HALL

The National Trust has opened The Children’s Country House at Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire, in the hope of sparking a lifelong love of heritage in children.

Trust experts – including Icon member Anthony Beech ACR – worked with 100 children to create the new experience, where young visitors are encouraged to be curious, explore the house and ‘have fun with history’, all while protecting the late 17th century hall’s collections.

The activities on offer have all been inspired by the historic use of each part of Sudbury Hall and include:

- Planning adventures and voyages in the book-lined Talbot Room, where children can move model ships about on a specially commissioned map carpet.
- Curling up with a book in child-sized chairs in the Library.
- ‘Becoming a portrait’ in the Long Gallery, encouraging children to think about the symbolism of the portraits.
- Choosing a costume and dancing, clapping or singing along to music in the candlelit Saloon, where historically, the original owners

would have entertained guests.

- In the Great Stairhead Chamber, a card game titled Objective encourages children to pay attention to the elaborate details and special objects around the room.
- At the base of the Great Staircase, a convex mirror can be used to look at the ceiling paintings and carvings.

Alongside these activities, staff have developed a thorough conservation plan which safeguards each room by protecting fragile or precious objects

and colour-coding items which can be handled. In the Library, historic books are protected with conservation-grade acrylic book bars, while non-historic books on other shelves can be handled.

A Pantry of Destruction also brings the importance of conservation to life, with creative displays on some of the agents of deterioration that threaten historic houses and collections, including fire, flood, incorrect temperature and pests.

Source: National Trust

Airbnb donates £1.25m to English Heritage

Airbnb, an online platform for short-term homestays and experiences, announced in October 2022 that it had donated £1.25m to English Heritage, to ‘support the charity’s conservation and repair of historic houses, castles, abbeys and other ancient sites in its care. The commitment is a boost to heritage tourism and will help restore some of England’s most important historical attractions and homes.’

Source: The Guardian; Airbnb



NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES - ROBERT MORRIS AND ANNA PURNIA MELLOR

SHUTTERSTOCK

AWARDS FOR ICON MEMBERS

LORRAINE FINCH ACR

Finalist, David Middleton Sustainability Award

Lorraine, Chair and Founder of the Icon Sustainability Network and author of *Low Cost/ No Cost Tips for Sustainability in Cultural Heritage*, was presented with a finalist award for the 2022 David Middleton Sustainability Award in October last year, at the David Middleton Sustainability Conference.

The award is presented to an individual who has developed practical solutions or an innovative product, delivered a sustainability programme within their organisation, or has brought people together in a collaborative way to deliver sustainability.

Speaking about her finalist award, Lorraine told *Iconnect* magazine: “The award is recognition of the hard work and efforts of the Icon Sustainability Network team. It’s *our* award and shows how much can be achieved by a small team of passionate and dedicated volunteers.

“I intend to continue championing sustainability through the Icon Network and my business, LFCP, which develops tools and resources needed to accelerate climate and environmental action in cultural heritage.”

Source: Lorraine Finch, ACR



ALEXANDER COODE

Runner-up, NHIG Award for Heritage Metalwork Conservation

Alex, a specialist Blacksmith Conservator and regular guest lecturer at West Dean College, was awarded runner-up of the inaugural 2022 NHIG Award for Heritage Metalwork Conservation. It is the first award of its kind to recognise and celebrate exemplary conservation within the ironwork sector.

His work on the main gates belonging to Miserden House, Stroud, was one of just six projects shortlisted for the NHIG Award, with the judges paying particular attention to the appropriateness of materials and techniques used; the extent to which the loss of original fabric was minimised; and the quality of the craftsmanship.

Commenting on being the runner-up, Alex said: “It means a great deal to get the recognition. It is validation of a combination of my processes, conservation methodology and craft skills. While winning would have been nice, the competition was against some of the best and most established companies in the country, working on high-profile projects. As such, a runners-up position is still a source of pride.”

Source: Alex Coode, NHIG



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92 Institution directors support statement on activists risking works of art

In response to attacks carried out by climate activists to several famous works of art last year, the directors of 92 institutions from around the world joined forces to sign a statement, highlighting the risk such actions pose to fragile masterpieces.

The statement, issued by the National Committee in Germany of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) on 9 November 2022, said:

‘In recent weeks, there have been several attacks on works of art in international museum collections. The activists responsible for them severely underestimate the fragility of these irreplaceable objects, which must be preserved as part of our world cultural heritage. As museum directors entrusted with the care of these works, we have been deeply shaken by their risky endangerment.

‘Museums are places where people from a wide variety of backgrounds can engage in dialogue and which therefore enable social discourse. In this sense, the core tasks of the museum as an institution – collecting, researching, sharing and preserving – are now more relevant than ever. We will continue to advocate for direct access to our cultural heritage. And we will maintain the museum as a free space for social communication.’

Source: ICOM, Museums + Heritage Advisor

LEATHER CONSERVATION CENTRE LAUNCHES THE BETTY HAINES ARCHIVE

The Leather Conservation Centre has recently launched The Betty Haines Archive, which hosts more than 400 skin and leather sample slides, the majority of which were collated by Betty M. Haines between 1940 and 1970. It includes a wide variety of species types from around the globe, prepared as grain and cross sections.

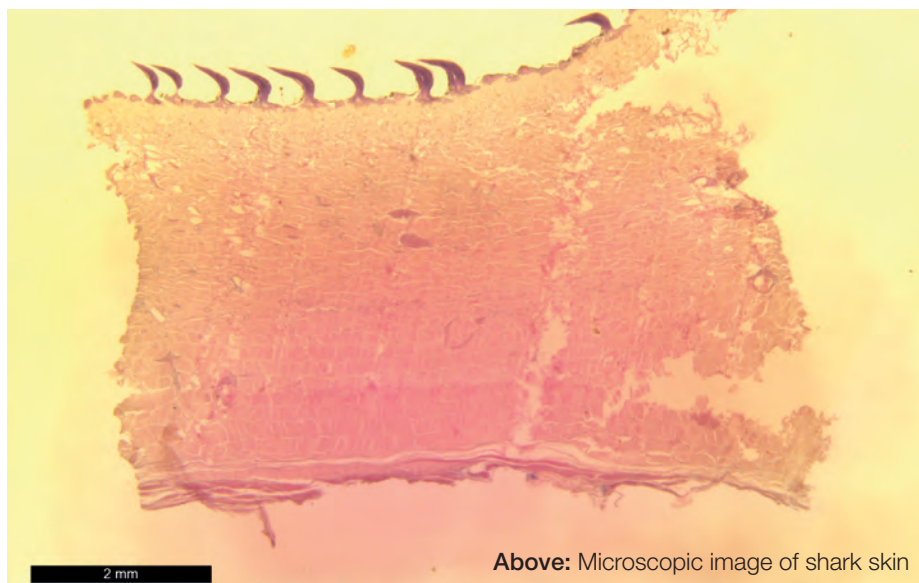
Betty, a former President of the Leather Conservation Centre, graduated from the University of London in 1945 with a BSc in Botany, Chemistry and Zoology, and had a long and distinguished career as a leather chemist. She applied her knowledge of protein science, bacteriology and entomology to a vast array of innovative research projects, including in the fields of

hide quality, pre-tanning processes, and collagen ageing. Throughout her celebrated career, Betty actively collected samples to further research and education.

Betty also had a strong interest in leather conservation and, along with others, is celebrated for introducing chemistry into the field. Betty collaborated with many museums throughout the UK, including with Dr Baines Cope of the British Library, which resulted in the publication of *The Conservation of Bookbinding Leather* in 1984 and the *British Standard BS7451:1991* for archival bookbinding leather.

Source: Leather Conservation Centre

Access the archive at www.bettyhainesarchive.co.uk



Above: Microscopic image of shark skin

BETTY HAINES ARCHIVE

Bronze statues unearthed in Tuscany

Italian archaeologists recently discovered 24 bronze statues under the ruins of an ancient bathhouse in Tuscany. With some of the figures believed to be 2,300 years old, the Director General of Italy's state museums, Massimo Osanna, said it was "one of the most significant bronze finds ever made in the history of the ancient Mediterranean". Source: BBC News



IMPROV

Paper Conservator **Amy Junker Heslip ACR** gives a brief introduction to her favourite improvised 'tool of the trade'...

One of the tools that I most enjoy getting out to use is my porcupine quill. What was a random thank you gift for letting someone stay in my flat while I was away has become a regular in my tool roll. One end is very thin and pointy and useful for thinning out paper fibres. The other end is flatter and softer and is spot on for pushing in and softly flattening awkward joints and repairs. I would highly recommend that book and paper conservators add this to their tool list (if you don't have an obliging houseguest, they are available online).



● Do you have a favourite improvised or repurposed 'tool of the trade' you'd like to share with other Icon members? Please send a short description and photograph to iconeditor@centuryone.uk

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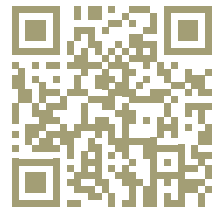


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CONSERVING BRISTOL'S HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS

We speak to **Fran Coles ACR** and **Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol**, who reflect on the conservation and display of the Edward Colston statue after it became the focal point of a #BLM protest



Above: Colston temporary display placards
Right: Colston statue with graffiti on the face



There have been several major events over the last three years that have driven Bristol Museums' contemporary collections and allowed us to record the mood and voices of the city. One of these includes the Black Lives Matters (BLM) protests, with the toppling of the Edward Colston statue marking a significant moment in our history as a city.

About Edward Colston

Edward Colston was a wealthy Bristol merchant during the late

17th century. For many years he was celebrated as a philanthropist, with schools and public buildings founded in his name, and in 1895 a statue was raised in the city to commemorate him. However, he made much of his wealth through the trafficking of enslaved Africans and throughout the 20th century, there had been calls for the statue to be removed. In recent decades it has been at the centre of protests and interventions, until – perhaps almost inevitably – the statue became the focal point of a BLM protest on 7 June 2020.



IN THE DETAIL

As well as being graffitied during the protest, the bronze statue was also damaged in several areas as it was toppled and dragged to the harbour

As protesters gathered around the base of the statue, a small group eventually climbed the stone plinth, attached ropes and pulled it to the ground. Looking at coverage from the day, we could see that it was at this point that the cane and one of the coat tails were lost. The statue was then tagged with graffiti before it was rolled almost half a mile along the road to the harbourside, where it was upturned over the railings, into the water below.

The statue

The city’s public art doesn’t normally fall within our museum remit. We will often provide advice and support to our colleagues, but as these are not accessioned museum objects, they do not form part of our collections. During the week that followed the protests, senior staff at the museum were briefed that we might need to provide support, if or when the statue was removed from the harbour. We were notified by the Mayor’s Office on Wednesday 10 June that the statue would be raised from the harbour early the following morning and that we would need to be present to see it into safe storage.

It was at this point that I became involved, as I was the conservator available at a time when it was difficult to travel and we were all balancing work with home commitments and health concerns due to Covid. Our Collections Documentation Officer and I arrived at the harbour to document the removal of the statue and to ensure all material that was raised with it was also kept. However, as access to the collections buildings was only made available that morning, we had little time to source materials to support us in safely storing the statue and any accompanying material.

The initial idea was to create a tank to store the statue in, which would keep it wet until specialist staff were available to formulate a more detailed conservation plan. But with such a short lead-in time, this simply wasn’t possible, and so we had to produce a plan B. Both our Objects and Preventive Conservators



Above: Protesters use ropes to pull down the statue
Below: The statue being recovered from the harbour



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Fran Coles ACR is the Conservation and Documentation Manager for Bristol Museums, part of Bristol City Council. Graduating in Archaeological Conservation in 2002, she has specialised in collections care conservation for the last 20 years. She has worked with historic house and museum collections, spending 11 years with the Science Museum Group before relocating to Bristol in 2015. Fran is currently an Icon CPD reader, assessor and member of the Icon Accreditation Committee.

MARTON GOSZTONYI

were unable to come into Bristol, so they briefed me on the most appropriate way to reduce any further deterioration, while ensuring we preserved the new additions and damage that had occurred on the statue's journey from plinth to harbour.

Once the statue had been delivered to the secure store, I was able to assess it for damage and undertake the first of several stages of stabilisation. Despite only being in the water for a few days, mud had filled the insides and obscured the evidence of what had happened during its journey.

As an organisation, we have a strong focus on contemporary collecting and particularly on collecting material that focuses on the history and people of Bristol.

It almost went unsaid that our approach would be to retain and stabilise the object as found

Working closely with our History Curators we are aware of the significance that damage, patination and use can have in shaping the story of an object. It therefore almost went unsaid that our approach would be to retain and stabilise the object as found and not to restore it to its former state. The only deviation from this was the decision to remove the mud and residues from the harbour, as this could have put the statue at risk of long-term instability, leading to accelerated corrosion and potentially the loss of the graffiti.

Luckily, the store had a water supply and we had also been able to source some pallets to rest the statue on and keep it off the floor. I spent the morning removing mud from its inside with a hose and extendable brush and gently washing the outside surfaces. The loss of the coat tail aided this as it revealed a hole in the statue's side (part of the casting process) and allowed better access to remove the mud.



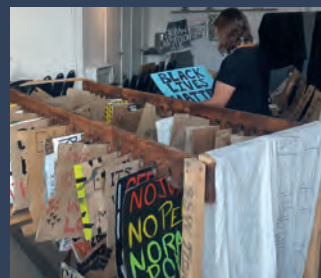
Over 550 placards used during the protest were collected and preserved

The placards

In the immediate aftermath of the event, our Head of Collections retrieved six abandoned placards from the protest site but the majority were bagged up by Bristol Waste and then taken to City Hall, as the Mayor had requested that the placards should be kept.

As it had rained that afternoon, it was clear conservation work would be required to ensure the placards could be preserved. After a call from staff at City Hall, they were brought to M Shed where we could assess their condition. This had to be done in a Covid-secure way, which added to the challenges. It was the first time we had been into work since the lockdown began and wearing masks, social distancing and having limited access to materials and equipment were all new experiences. Luckily, our Paper Conservator and Documentation Officer were able to come to M Shed to support the Curator in assessing and documenting the objects.

Covid guidance at the time meant we could not use fans to help dry the placards, so we used one of the learning studios and naturally ventilated the space as much as possible, by opening doors and windows. The placards themselves were propped against tables and chairs to aid drying and as this was being done, they were also photographed and catalogued. In total, the team dried and documented over 550 placards over two days.



The graffitied areas were very fragile and even a small amount of running water caused flakes to come away from the surface. I did not have the time or right equipment to stabilise these areas there and then, so I had to leave these until it could be done safely.

A rope used to tie a piece of black fabric over the statue was still attached to its base, but it was heavily frayed and at risk of being lost. I documented the location and knot type before removing and drying it separately. This has now been stored with the statue and may be reattached once the statue goes on permanent display.

A full assessment

After the initial clean, it was over a week before we were able to enter the building again to check on the progress of the drying, due to access and Covid issues. On examination we discovered that both the graffiti paint and a layer below this was starting to lift and flake away from the bronze surface. All the public sculptures are regularly maintained by the council and have protective wax coatings applied. Here the wax layer had become brittle and was starting to deteriorate. After further discussions with our Object Specialist, a tent was constructed over the statue to try and slow the surface drying.

When the teams returned to work in July 2020, a larger walk-in tent was constructed with dehumidifiers helping the drying process. A full condition assessment was completed, and a treatment proposal developed. It was decided that a custom pallet should be constructed to help better support the statue physically and allow it to be moved safely.

Once the statue was dry, our Objects Conservator completed a basic treatment to help consolidate the flaking paint layers and allow the statue to be safely winched while the new base was constructed. Once on the base, she was then able to complete the stabilisation of paint and wax layers so that it could be stored, moved and displayed safely.



Above: A rope retrieved with the statue was eventually removed and stored



Right and below right: Pallets are used to rest the statue on and keep it off the floor

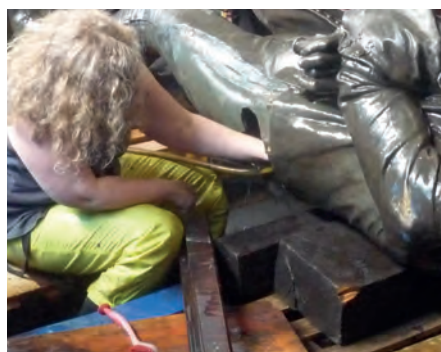
The key aim at this stage was to stabilise and preserve the statue while ongoing discussions and consultation took place, and to allow safe access to the object.

The media

As conservators, we are used to being in the background, quietly working away on projects – it’s not often we are the first people the media approaches for an interview! Being asked to pretend to conserve something when I didn’t have the appropriate tools, working with the press office to ensure any content I put out was in line with council messaging, and gaining the media’s trust so that they would ask me back to do more was all new and daunting. However, although I was worried I would say something out of place, the opportunity to talk about conservation in this context was truly a privilege.

I also used social media to talk about what we were doing. I put some information and images together and ran this past the press office, to ensure the council were happy with the content. They





approved the text with a few minor tweaks and then the messages were sent out via the museums' formal channels, and I was told I could share these via my personal accounts, after they'd gone live.

I thought long and hard about using the BLM hashtag, aware that I might leave myself exposed to abusive comments. However, I felt it was important for a wider audience to know more about what we were doing. On the whole, the response was positive. People seemed generally interested in what we were doing but it did make a couple of things clear to me.

First, I realised that the public's perception of me as a conservator was that I would want to make the statue shiny and new. There were tens of messages asking if we would be keeping the graffiti and a lot of happy, surprised people when I said that we would, as this was now part of the statue's story. The second was learning when to respond to critical comments and when to leave these well alone. I surprised myself when responding, finding a tone that seemed to work to defuse some of the more aggressive responses, while

Top: All graffiti was preserved

Above: Fran cleans inside the statue

Above right: The statue starts to pull apart

informing others who were genuinely interested in what I was doing.

The consultation

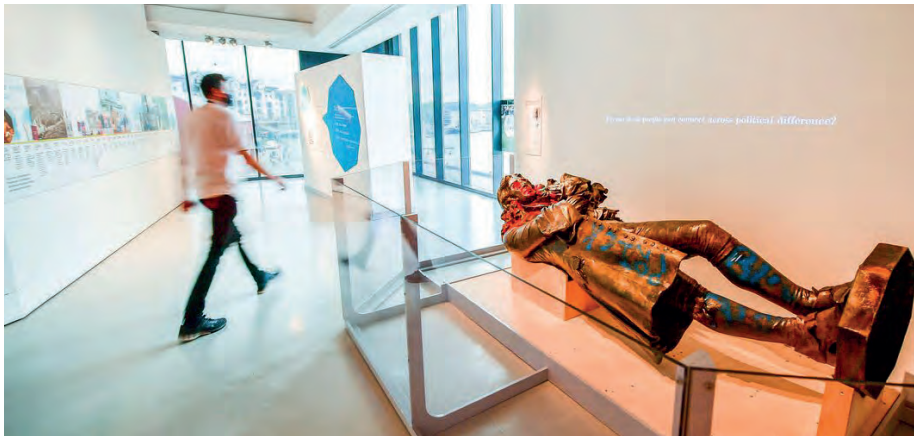
In the summer of 2021, the We Are Bristol History Commission engaged with the public about the future of the Edward Colston statue and plinth. This included a temporary display at M Shed, which was to act as a springboard for the History Commission's public survey, looking at what the people of Bristol and beyond wanted to happen to the statue. The display contained the statue, some of the placards, context around who Edward Colston was, and a timeline showing events that have focused on the statue over the years since it was installed.

The museum project team – which included collections, participation, design, digital and front of house – collaborated with the History Commission to produce the display. Every aspect of it was carefully discussed and debated, including whether to display the statue

vertically, horizontally, on a new stand, and so on. I advocated that it should remain on its storage plinth, as this was created purely to stabilise the statue and to allow it to be moved safely. It demonstrated that there was no judgement being made about the statue; it had been a purely practical decision, which could be explained to those with very differing views on the future of the object.

The above is just one example of the collaborative but complex discussions that took place during the development of the display. The museum had the exhibition and curatorial expertise, the History Commission was leading on the consultation and, throughout, the Mayor's Office maintained a presence to ensure that they were happy with our messaging.

Alongside the design of the display, our front of house team undertook additional training to help prepare them for any potentially difficult conversations that might arise. This included detailed briefings about the display, alongside conflict management and resolution techniques. The council also provided a member of the central



Left: Many said they liked the way the statue had appeared in the temporary display
Below: Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol

security team to be onsite for the first month after opening.

The survey closed in December 2021 and the display was taken down at the beginning of January 2022. After the display was dismantled, a condition assessment was carried out which found that due to lying on its back and damage to structural rivets, the statue was slowly pulling itself apart. Adjustments had to be made to the base to try and restrain and further support the statue's structure. Currently, it is in our M Shed store, where it is available to be seen as part of the bookable store tours run by volunteers.

In February 2022, the History Commission published its *The Colston Statue: What Next?* report in both short and long forms (visit bristol.gov.uk and search for 'We are Bristol History Commission').

This included their findings and the results of the public survey. They had 14,000 responses, and just under half of these were from Bristol residents.

Three out of four (74%) of all respondents and four out of five (80%) Bristol residents, said to put the statue in a Bristol museum.

In our sample of survey comments, for every one person from Bristol who said they would like the statue displayed vertically and cleaned up, five favoured having the statue displayed lying down and with the graffiti. Many said they liked the way it had appeared in the temporary display.

The History Commission has made six recommendations, the first three of which directly affect us as a museum service. The first

is that the Edward Colston statue enters the permanent collection of the Bristol City Council Museums service. The second is that the statue is preserved in its current state and the opportunity to reflect this in the listing description is explored with Historic England. The third is that the statue be exhibited, drawing on the principles and practice of the temporary M Shed display, where the statue was lying horizontally.

The future

The History Commission Report was presented at the April 2022 Cabinet meeting where recommendation one, that the statue should become part of the museum collection, was signed off. The remaining recommendations are subject to ongoing discussions but we have been given the go ahead to start the acquisition process and planning a future display. We do not yet have a timeframe for the installation of the statue, so for now we are working on designing a space and interpretation to go with the statue as part of our permanent galleries at M Shed.

To be part of such a historic event was a privilege and significant learning experience. It allowed me to talk about the work of conservators and how we look at preserving acts of history, as well as conserving works of art in the traditional sense. The experience has helped me to develop my own voice and the confidence to talk with authority about why we work in the way we do, and make the decisions that we do, to ensure we are able to preserve the stories of the people of Bristol and beyond.

I'm proud of the collaborative work done by the History Commission and across the local authority



Preserving Bristol's heritage

"Preserving and displaying a city's history as long as Bristol's can be a challenge and our conservators and curators work hard to handle the wide variety of items for which the museum service is responsible.

"Colston provided a unique opportunity to open up this work to the city and include all Bristolians in the conversation as to what should happen to the statue," said Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol.

"I'm proud of the collaborative work done by the History Commission and across the local authority to co-design the temporary display and public survey that will inform the future exhibition, and which has been widely recognised by the sector."

Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol

2022 – OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

MEMBERSHIP



300+

new members



160

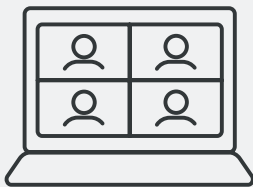
including 160 new Student Members,
and over **50** new Pathway joiners



46

representing 46 different
countries around the globe

SKILLS AND JOBS



115

events hosted across Icon's
Groups, Networks and Skills Team



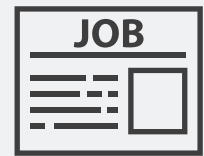
7,703

event bookings



23

members achieved
Icon Accreditation



104

job vacancies advertised
to members

COMMUNICATIONS



11,500

unique visitors to Icon's website
every month



1,695

searches on the Icon
Conservation Register every month



1,000

new followers gained from August
(past 90 days) on LinkedIn



115

Iconnect
e-bulletins

12

Iconnect
e-newsletters

5

copies of
Icon News

3

copies of *Journal of the
Institute of Conservation*



Colour change of a century-old dress during 10 years of museum display

STEFAN MICHALSKI, © CANADIAN CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

Vincent Laudato Beltran, Associate Scientist at the Getty Conservation Institute, provides an introduction to the current state of microfade testing and potential paths forward

A SPOTLIGHT ON COLOUR CHANGE

For a heritage organisation to meet its educational and exhibition mandates, it is necessary to expose objects to light. This allows for an appreciation of the aesthetics of the object, but simultaneously introduces energy that may lead to irreversible change. The ability to quantitatively assess an object's sensitivity to light can support collection care staff when deciding on an item's accessibility for exhibition and the intensity and duration of its lighting conditions.

The benefits of microfade testing

The microfading tester (or 'MFT' for short – a term also used to refer to 'microfade testing') was first introduced to the heritage conservation field in 1999 by Paul M. Whitmore, Xun Pan and Catherine Bailie, and represented an important advance in assessing the light sensitivity of an object.

Prior to this, existing lightfastness testing relied on either examining

mock-up samples, which are not always representative of the object, or in situ colour monitoring of an object over the course of display, which can be a laborious process.

In contrast, MFT exposes an object's surface to a high-intensity, stable, focused light spot while at the same time monitoring any resulting colour change with a spectrophotometer. The data collected from the sample surface takes into account the complexity of the material and display history of the object, which significantly reduces the uncertainty associated with mock-up samples.

The brightness of the MFT light spot facilitates rapid colour change over a very short period of time (typically several minutes), while the small spot size and continuous monitoring ensures that the change remains visually imperceptible, with the light exposure ceased when a maximum colour change threshold is reached. This combination of factors supports the use of MFT before exhibition to identify an object's most light-sensitive colourants and develop an evidence-based lighting strategy.

Supporting collective risk management

MFT can play a crucial role in

reshaping the dialogue about lighting policy and management. Collection care staff – including conservators, collection managers and registrars – are often viewed as 'gatekeepers of access', who restrict the choice of objects for an exhibition based on general lightfastness guidelines. This, in turn, can cultivate an 'us versus them' relationship within a given institution.

However, when presented with object-specific lightfastness data obtained using MFT, this can shift the discussion towards collective risk management. While a primary function of MFT is to identify objects that are light sensitive, in many cases objects are revealed to be more lightfast than expected. This allows for a more nuanced and sustainable classification of light sensitivity, offering collection managers flexibility in focusing their resources on protecting items with the highest risk of light-induced change and increasing access to objects predicted to change more slowly.

Though MFT has been accepted as a key preventive conservation tool and is used at over 70 institutions worldwide (Beltran 2021), there remain obstacles that prevent its more widespread use. Unlike other scientific instruments used in heritage conservation, MFT is

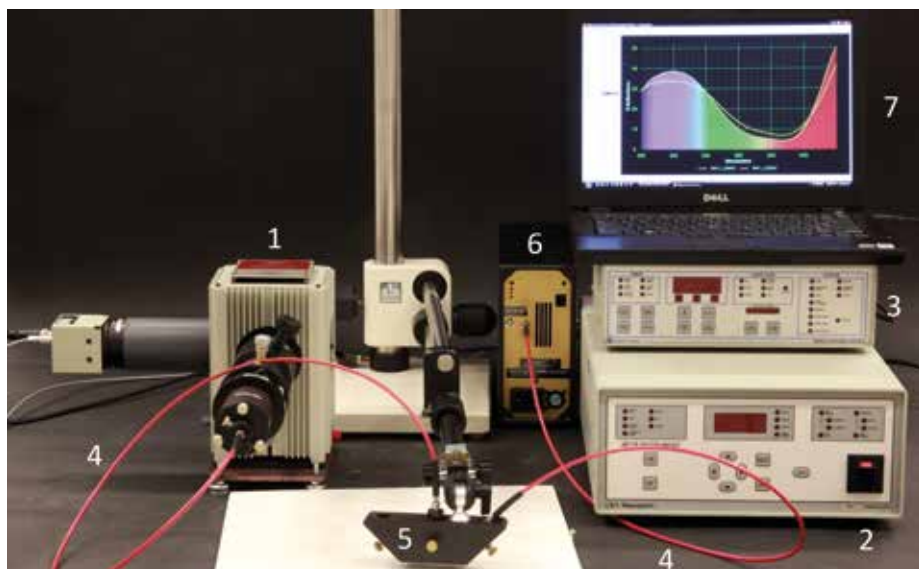
unique in that it emerged within the conservation field itself rather than having been transferred from a larger external field. As a result, opportunities for support and training that would typically be provided by commercial entities are limited. Ready access to didactic information about MFT is particularly important for institutions which may be operating and maintaining an instrument used on an intermittent basis. Individual users have also explored variations of light sources (xenon arc or LED), measurement geometries (0/45, retroreflective, or contact), and automation beyond the original design by Whitmore et al (1999), leading to ambiguity as to which version is most appropriate.

Addressing support, training and access

The cultural heritage field began to address these issues through a series of MFT-focused meetings organised by various institutions, including the Rathgen Laboratory, the New York Conservation Foundation and the Gothenberg Museum of Art in 2016, and the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) in 2018. These meetings formed an important bridge between the original cohort of MFT users and the next generation of practitioners, ensuring that the community builds upon shared experience.

Discussions at the 2018 Symposium and Experts Meeting at the GCI focused on both technical aspects of MFT and the dissemination of information to the field, which is summarised in a 2019 GCI report. Following recommendations for more training opportunities, the GCI organised two collaborative MFT training workshops for the 2019 annual meetings of the American Institute of Conservation and the Western Association of Art Conservation.

While the onset of the Covid pandemic paused additional training workshops, the GCI shifted its efforts to developing guidelines, which brought together technical and practical information about MFT. ➤



Above: Components of the original Whitmore MFT design. Shown are the (1) xenon-arc light source, (2) power supply, (3) digital exposure controller, (4) fibre optic cables, (5) 0/45 measurement head, (6) spectrophotometer, and (7) laptop with Spectral Viewer software



Left: Participants in the GCI's 2018 Symposium and Experts Meeting included scientists and conservators active in MFT development and application

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vincent Laudato Beltran is an Associate Scientist at the Getty Conservation Institute and active in the Preventive Conservation group and Managing Collection Environments Initiative. His research and teaching efforts focus on a range of topics, including environmental management in hot and humid climates, packing case performance during transit and museum lighting and light sensitivity assessments. Vincent holds a BSc in general chemistry from the University of California, Los Angeles, and an MSc in oceanography (geochemistry) from the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

The aim of this 2021 document - *Microfading Tester: Light Sensitivity Assessment and Role in Lighting Policy*, by the author, Christel Pesme, Sarah K. Freeman and Mark Benson - is to establish a baseline of knowledge for MFT users and stakeholders involved in lighting policy. The chapters of this document emphasise specific topics related to MFT, such as:

- Fundamental colour science underpinning the analytical technique;
- Various components of an MFT setup, and associated uncertainties and misperceptions;
- Practical considerations for conducting MFT, informed by the generous sharing of operating protocols by numerous institutions;
- A decision-making framework for lighting policy and the role of MFT; and
- Appendices including a directory of institutions using MFT, a glossary, key colourimetry calculations, a practical case study and a sample report.

Because of the issues mentioned previously, it is incumbent on the cultural heritage field itself to provide the necessary support to cultivate and expand the use of MFT. A primary goal is the development of a global MFT user community that collectively engages on various topics as well as regional networks of MFT expertise that can offer more direct support. There continue to be outstanding research questions to explore further, such as evaluations

of MFT results using xenon arc lamps and LEDs, assessments of uncertainty for ISO Blue Wool Standards, additional comparisons of real-time colour change studies to MFT predictions and the use of MFT databases to refine existing light sensitivity guidance for different classes of material.

Accessibility to MFT should also be a consideration for the field. While many small to medium-sized institutions, as well as private conservators and collectors, may not have the resources to purchase an MFT, the opportunity to obtain light sensitivity data for key objects can significantly improve their preventive care. Increased MFT access for these groups could be addressed by supporting MFT use at regional conservation centres or by select private conservators and conservation scientists; the inclusion of MFT in mobile conservation science laboratories; or the lending of MFTs or allotment of external MFT time by larger cultural heritage institutions.

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Whitmore PM, Pan X, and Bailie C. (1999). *Predicting the Fading of Objects: Identification of Fugitive Colorants through Direct Nondestructive Lightfastness Measurements*. *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, 38 (3), pp.395-409.

NOMINATIONS INVITED FOR THE PLOWDEN MEDAL CONSERVATION AWARD 2023



Established in 1999 to commemorate the life and work of the late Honourable Anna Plowden CBE (1938–97) this medal was endowed by the Royal Warrant Holders Association, of which she was Vice-President.

The Plowden Medal is awarded annually to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of the conservation profession and whose nomination would be widely welcomed within the conservation community.

The award covers all aspects of conservation – practical, theoretical or managerial – and is open to those working in private practice or institutions.

The 2022 Plowden Medal Winner was Julie Dawson FIIC, an exceptional conservator who has made a lasting impact in her field of archaeological artefact conservation, based at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

A Selection Board, drawn from the conservation community, the Royal Collection and the Royal Warrant Holders Association, will consider nominations in June 2023. From the end of January 2023, nomination papers can be downloaded from the RWHA website (www.royalwarrant.org/plowden-medal). The final date for the receipt of nominations is Friday 19 May 2023. The award will be presented at an RWHA event in the autumn.

Above: Following a design competition for QEST Alumni Scholars, a design by Alexandra Pengelly was used to create a new medal produced by Royal Warrant holder, Mappin & Webb and QEST Apprentice Sam McMahon. The medal takes inspiration from Anna Plowden's innovative work with a broad range of materials. A medal box was also created by Royal Warrant holder, Zone Creations, using wood from Anna's desk www.qest.org.uk

For more information about the Plowden Medal and past winners, please scan the QR code. For any queries, please email plowdenmedal@rwha.co.uk



A look at Icon’s recent involvement in discussions on sustainable practices, fair pay and the standard of forensic reports for lost and stolen objects

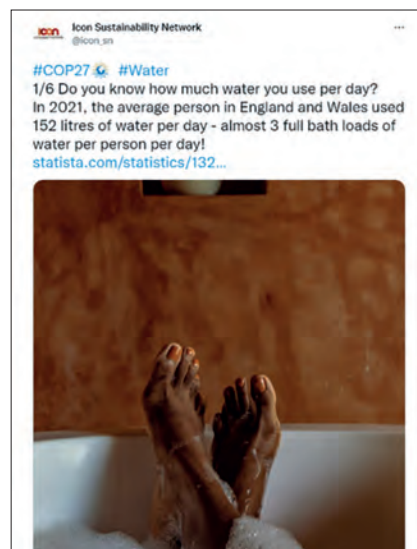
SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – also known as COP27 – took place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, during November 2022. Although Icon did not play an active role in the busy programme of cultural heritage activities surrounding the conference this year, our Icon Sustainability Network was very active on social media.

Network volunteers ran an extensive advocacy campaign during the COP27 fortnight, as well as hosting another lively and extremely well supported Twitter Conference. The Network also

published an excellent Twitter thread that engaged with the COP27 daily themes: Finance, Science, Youth and Future Generations, Decarbonisation, Adaptation & Agriculture, Gender, Water, Action for Climate Empowerment & Civil Society, Energy, and Biodiversity and Solutions.

You can catch up with their tips and ideas in the summary on the Icon website (search for ‘COP27’). A wealth of other sustainability advice can also be found in a new handbook written and published by the Network’s Chair, Lorraine Finch ACR, *Low Cost/No Cost Tips for Sustainability in Cultural Heritage*.



RECOGNITION AND REWARD

As part of our ongoing work to capture labour market intelligence we carried out a salary survey to gather real-world salary data from Icon members in 2022. This data was used to inform a review of Icon’s policy with regard to its job advertising service. As a result, Icon’s Board of Trustees agreed to publish salary benchmarks for early career, mid-career and senior level positions, which reflect the data gathered in the survey. The benchmark figures can be found on Icon’s website (search for ‘conservation salaries’).

We have also continued to advocate for fairer pay and conditions and are currently supporting the World Class Heritage – Second Class Pay

campaign led by Prospect. The campaign is built around an excellent publication that sets out the value of the cultural heritage sector and provides information about recent trends in heritage sector funding and pay. Icon’s Chief Executive, Sara Crofts, joined fellow heritage sector workers at a reception in the Houses of Parliament, hosted by Baroness Hayman of Ullock and Prospect, to share the key messages. Prospect believes that the experts and specialists who bring so much value to our lives and add so much value to our economy should be valued themselves. This means:

1. Greater value and recognition



given to heritage and heritage workers, with improved funding to address historic low pay levels and the current cost-of-living crisis.

2. Greater employer flexibility on pay, terms and conditions, to enable wages to better reflect skills, qualifications, knowledge and experience.
3. Meaningful pay progression mechanisms to ensure heritage staff can progress their careers and earnings.

We are keen to support this campaign and to work with our colleagues across the sector to deliver the recognition that conservation professionals deserve, in line with the ambitions set out in our current strategy.

Above: Ben Middleton from Prospect speaking about pay at the Houses of Parliament reception

SUSTAINABILITY AND COLLECTIONS CARE



Above: Sara presenting at HES in September

Over the past few months, Icon's Chief Executive, Sara Crofts, has been engaging in a wide-ranging series of conversations about energy use in relation to the care of collections. Speaking at a policy event hosted by Historic Environment Scotland in September last year, she told delegates: "I am hearing a growing number of voices challenging the rationale underpinning the widely used guidelines for the 'ideal' temperature and relative humidity for the maintenance of collections. Given that maintaining these ideal conditions often requires the use of costly and energy-hungry mechanical systems, there could be many benefits to adopting a more rational and sustainable approach that makes better use of our understanding of the needs of individual materials and the judgement of professional conservators."

This viewpoint has been echoed at a number of recent conferences and seminars. Sara joined members of the design team responsible for the refurbishment of the Burrell Collection to deliver a workshop at

the Museums Association conference in Edinburgh in November. She used the opportunity to make the case for taking a context-specific, risk-based approach that requires decision makers to have greater regard for the knowledge and expertise of preventive conservators and their conservation science colleagues. Conservation professionals have a deep understanding of collections care and the need to address all 10 agents of decay (not just relative humidity and temperature), which is key to making good decisions about how to adapt to climate change.

The overall aim of our policy work in this area is to reach a refreshed, shared understanding about what is good – not 'best' – practice and how to apply it in the varied and challenging contexts of our museums, galleries and archives.



Scan the QR code to read Sara's conference presentation in full on Icon's website.

FORENSICS IN THE ART TRADE

The Art Loss Register holds the world's largest private database of lost, stolen and looted art, antiques and collectables. It is used by a variety of stakeholders to identify stolen items and other claimed works as they move through the art market and to secure their recovery. Through their engagement with dealers at international art fairs, the Art Loss Register identified a growing concern about forensic reports prepared by laboratories or individuals who are not qualified in this area and a seminar was set up in November 2022 to explore the issue.

In tandem the Art Loss Register wanted to test the idea of creating a central database of condition reports so that when an object changes hands, the new owner can access the object's previous history and the conservator can gather information about past conditions and treatments.

Sara Crofts was asked to chair a panel of speakers considering the 'Impact of Forensics on Condition Reports – Standards, Recording and Access'. This was an interesting discussion, as it is clear that there are many stakeholders – including existing owners, potential owners, dealers, conservators, and the public – and that the condition reports can have different uses and also hold different value depending on your relationship to the object.

The seminar therefore provided a worthwhile opportunity to exchange views and ideas and prompted worthwhile questions about consistency and standardisation that could be explored further.

© HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

I didn't always know I wanted to be a conservator.

In fact, it was only after going on a dig in Italy as an undergraduate that it really occurred to me that there's a stage between objects being excavated and appearing in a museum (which, looking back on it, was a bit foolish of me). However, once I got more involved with post-excitation work and learnt more about it, I quickly became fascinated by the field of conservation. It was an area that allowed me to mix my passions of science and history to an extent I hadn't come across before. It also gave me the opportunity to work hands-on with objects that had always fascinated me as a child, while doing my bit to ensure these would be seen by a wider audience.



Left: Putting back together the staves of a barrel from the Samuel Wright Shipwreck, Western Australian Shipwreck Museum

Below: James inside a neolithic passage grave on the island of Ærø, Denmark

My undergraduate degree was in ancient history and archaeology

at the University of Edinburgh. I then went to Durham University, where I recently completed my MA in the conservation of archaeological and museum objects. I completed my work placement year at Bevaringscenter Fyn in Denmark, where I worked with a great team of conservators who taught me a huge amount. I was also lucky enough to undertake the Weston Heritage Science and Conservation Internship at the Mary Rose, where I helped clean the ship, monitor its movements/cracks and set up an experiment at the Diamond Light Source synchrotron. All in all, it was a great experience with an awesome group of people.

Right now, I'm based in Perth, Australia, soaking up the sun and completing an internship at the Western Australian Shipwreck Museum. The focus of the internship is working with objects recovered from a marine environment and getting in-depth training in the use



IMAGES: LANGELAND MUSEUM, JAMES HARVIE

MEET JAMES HARVIE

James Harvie, Chair of Icon's Emerging Professionals Network, talks about what attracted him to the industry, his career to date and his thoughts on the future



experience, this doesn't happen too often). Also, get as much hands-on experience as you can and make the most of every opportunity. Nothing really substitutes working with objects, and the more treatments you can get under your belt, the more comfortable and confident you will feel in your abilities. It also lets you pick up tips and tricks or ways of thinking about things that may be intended for particular objects but could be applicable across material types. Finally, don't be afraid to 'go for it' when chances come along. There are some really amazing opportunities within the field of conservation, and someone has to fill the roles, so why not you?



of common conservation lab analysis equipment. I'm also prepping for the upcoming ICOM-CC Waterlogged Organic Archaeological Materials conference, where I'll be presenting a paper and hopefully not tripping over my own tongue.

I'm currently the chair of Icon's Emerging Professional Network.

This basically means it's my job to try and help create a space for emerging professionals within Icon, where they can chat, meet people, access relevant resources and events, and so on. We're currently undergoing a bit of a revamp and hoping to hit the ground running early this year. So, if you are an Emerging Professional, watch this space!

If I was offering advice to someone just starting out, it would be to make the most of the conservation community. The main thing I've learnt from my time in conservation



Top: James cleaning a wood lantern during his time at Durham

Above left: Repairing a large banner for exhibition (Langeland Museum)

Above right: In front of the Mary Rose on a section of the scaffolding

so far is that as a field, it is generally very open to sharing knowledge. Don't be afraid to reach out and ask other conservators for advice or knowledge on what you're working on. The worst that can happen is that you don't get a reply (and in my

A few years from now, I hope to be working as a conservator,

with some really interesting objects. That said, I don't think I'm done learning about the conservation of different materials yet, so I hope wherever I go, I can continue with my learning. I would also like to keep working on excavations and maybe see some different places as an on-site conservator for a research dig or two.

I think the two biggest things on the horizon

for conservation centre around sustainability and our ethical approach to treatments. For example, looking into how we will incorporate an eco-friendlier approach into the restrictions placed on conservation by budgets and treatment viability, and continuing to find a viable middle ground between our current ethical stance of minimal intervention, and treatments that will (as far as possible) ensure the health of objects in conditions that are often suboptimal due to factors outside a conservator's control.

T

he People's History Museum (PHM) in Manchester is the national museum of democracy. It shares stories about the struggle for equity and equality, celebrates radical history and provides space to explore contemporary issues through marginalised voices. PHM is more than a museum about campaigning; it is a museum that campaigns, using its voice to encourage people to take action to bring about positive change. Through co-creation, PHM strives to embed long-term change in how the museum works.

The exhibition

During 2021 and 2022, the Collections and Engagement Team of PHM has been working on a programme of events and headline exhibition entitled *Nothing About Us Without Us*. This exhibition is the product of ongoing work on disability rights, which started with a small exhibition in 2018. Events, workshops and access assessments have been held ever since, with a community steering group exploring the history of disabled people's activism – from the early records of people confined in workhouses and asylums, through to current campaigns about welfare cuts, segregated education and accessibility in communication.

The Community Curators of the exhibition are Anis Akhtar, Ruth Malkin, Hannah Ross and Alison Wilde. They each identify as disabled, and as activists, and have been working as paid employees at PHM since August 2021. Alongside the Community Curators, the Collections and Engagement Team have made up the development team for the exhibition and surrounding work, with those in conservation and collections seeing to the objects and their display; and those in engagement and learning, developing the story, events and the access production. Other collaborators



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

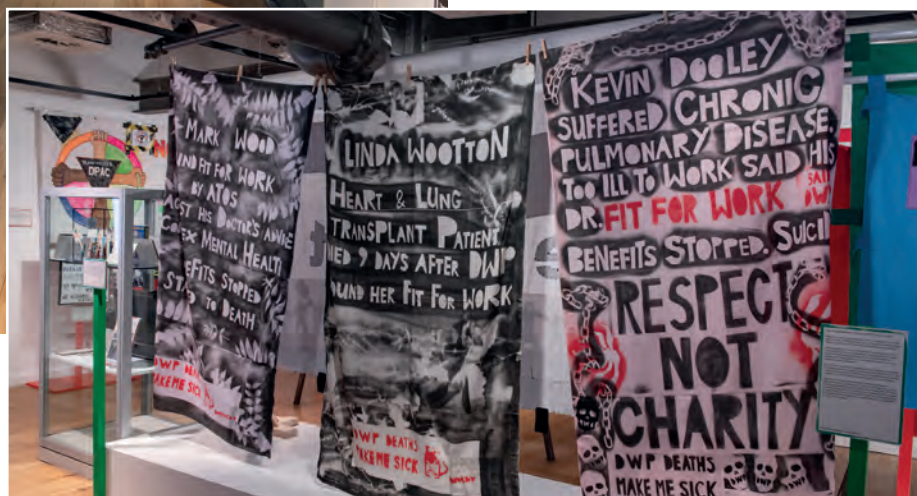
Jennifer van Enckevort ACR and Kloe Rumsey talk about creating an inclusive and accessible exhibition and events programme at the People's History Museum, covering the history of disability activism



include the wider community steering group and partners such as the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People.

From this development work, the exhibition has been underpinned by the Social Model of Disability, which states that 'disabled people are disabled by society and not by their impairments' and that 'society is responsible for removing the barriers disabled people face, in order to enable disabled people to be an equal, included and valued part of society' (Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People).

Nothing About Us Without Us will be the most accessible exhibition that has ever taken place at PHM. With the support of the Community Curators, steering group and PHM team, a range of accessible formats have been created to enable visitors to engage with the exhibition in different ways. This has been an opportunity to make changes both to gallery interpretation and the fabric of the building.



Top: Dennis Queen's protest dress is a focal point in the exhibition
Above: DWP Deaths Make Me Sick shrouds (artwork by Vince Laws, 2018)

In terms of the exhibition, panel information and labels are provided in audio description, Braille, large print, videos with captions, transcripts and a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter. In terms of physical access, seating and quiet spaces are provided and access dogs are welcome. Quiet viewing time slots and sessions with higher light levels are also planned but not scheduled at the time of writing. The video content and audio description will be available via a link tree, hosted on the PHM website. We also welcome any visitors who have different access needs to communicate with staff so we can help and improve in the future.

The collection

The exhibition is split into six sections, each exploring a different element of disabled people's activism:

Free Our People discusses the starting point of the social model and its continued influence on contemporary disability activism.

Disabled People Fight Back reflects on how this began through the lens of deaf activism.

Us addresses identity, describing the escape from the negative focus; that disabled people are more than their impairments.

Piss On Pity looks at the history and challenges of charity-based support for disabled people.

Tragic But Brave presents the work of disability arts, the challenges of representation, and the lean towards the superhero narrative.

To Boldly Go Where All Others Have Gone Before tackles accessibility and the limits imposed on disabled people in everything, from transport to education.

Community curation

Object selections were made entirely by the team of Community Curators and the steering group, aided by collections staff. We are immensely proud of this work towards true community curation. However, the step away from traditional selection and loaning presented challenges.

The Community Curators and the Exhibitions Officer, Mark Watson, are experts in disability activism – this knowledge has grown from within the community, social networks and the study of individual displays and installation artworks over the past 20 years. The goal was equality of representation and the amplification of voices, rather than reiterating stories from existing institutional collections.

For conservation, the challenge for this selection process came with object details such as size, shape and the potential for mounting safely, etc. This is something we often find with our community-sourced exhibitions, but it was further complicated by factors such as lenders' accessibility, personal circumstances and Covid; that many of these objects remain in working use; and that contributing lenders are based all over the country.

In preparation for this exhibition, PHM Collections Manager, Sam Jenkins, developed accessible paperwork to allow for the great number of different lenders and objects. In hindsight, we needed more time between confirmation of the design and developing the display, and more space and flexibility to allow for the uncertainty presented by the objects. However, the careful design of the exhibition has allowed not only an incredibly rich story to be told, but also with the essential attention to access. Collaboration between the steering group, Community Curators and designers has allowed multiple factors to be included in the access production, from colour coding the exhibition sections, to QR codes for digital resources and easy read interpretation.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jennifer van Enkevort ACR manages the Textile Conservation Studio at PHM. She studied MA Textile Conservation with the RCA/V&A, graduating in 2009. Since then, she has worked in private practice and the National Museum of Wales before joining the PHM team in Manchester in 2014.

Above: The Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People partnered with PHM

Below: Object selections were made by the Community Curators and steering group, aided by collections staff



The conservation

The nature of the objects we display at PHM often cause conservation problems. Materials evident are frequently plastics and ephemeral in nature, such as duct tape and marker pen; they are often reused and repaired, overworked and uneven in places; and generally, not meant to last. Protest material treads a line between artwork, domestic items and emotionally charged social history. They are far

more sentimentally important than products of work but are also often designed to be used and passed along, handed out or disposed.

Our primary goals are to elevate objects of campaign and protest to recognition and value, for visitors and owners alike. Proper care and attention to display communicates and affirms experiences of life and protest, and those of us who work with living communities will have experienced the transformative

effect of bringing a personal item into the museum setting. To gain these benefits, a healthy amount of compromise has been necessary; we have needed to keep our planning and preparation for the mounting of the exhibition as fluid and reactionary as possible, to allow us to quickly mount large numbers of objects that we had not seen. We were able to group the object types to find consistent solutions for all. Placards, banners, framed works and objects in cases have been treated using common innovations such as passive mount supports, magnets, Perspex shelves and reusable barrier layers.



Protest t-shirts are a significant element of design that we in the conservation team developed specifically in consideration of this exhibition. We needed a t-shirt mounting solution that could be used for either standing or wall mounted t-shirts, that was fast to prepare and adaptable for different shapes and sizes of t-shirt. The solution developed was a standard T-bar type mount with a cotton

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kloe Rumsey completed a Masters in Conservation Practice at Cardiff University and worked in several objects conservation roles with World Cultures and Industrial collections. She joined the team at PHM's Textiles Conservation Studio in 2017 as an Objects Conservator and has since specialised in the conservation of large painted textiles. Outside of the museum she is known in the conservation community as one of the two hosts of *The C Word: The Conservators Podcast*.

jersey and polyester wadding covered cardboard tube, stabilised with cotton tape and hot glue. Though very popular for museums displaying 'world costume', T-bar mounts are often criticised for dehumanising and othering the costume. In the case of this exhibition, we have used the T-bar mount to allow the t-shirts to be displayed as objects of protest rather than costume; the padding and placement of them in the space gives them the human presence of a mannequin but without enforcing a normative body shape in the context of representing a wide variety of people.

Two other objects in the selection that required special attention for mounting presented different challenges. The Matt Fraser prosthetic arms were a challenge, with consideration to the context in which they were used. Unlike prosthetics used for aesthetics or movement, these were used satirically as part of a stage performance, and so it was considered appropriate to display these as discarded props rather than with bodily representation. The wrist and upper arm of one are raised to demonstrate movement and realism, but the other lies next to it in the case with the palm up.

The final object to discuss is the centrepiece to the exhibition, which is displayed as traditional costume. It is an ankle length protest dress made of campaign T-shirts by activist and artist Dennis Queen and worn at Disability Pride Philadelphia. Dennis uses appearance as a canvas for her protest, so the choice for the display mannequin had a number of specifications to fulfil. As well as supporting the object, looking human, and being representative of the artist's attitude and gender identity as a wheelchair user, the mannequin also needed to be seated in a sensible pose. Unfortunately, with the funding and time available to us, a highly gendered seated shop mannequin was our only option, and it was necessary for Conservation Officer Beth Gillions to completely reshape it by removing extraneous material from the form and building a more appropriate body shape with conservation materials. In doing so this costume, as a focal point within the space, became a clear physical demonstration of the dynamic, intersectional, and inclusive heart of the exhibition and wider disabled people's movements.

Acknowledgements: The Nothing About Us Without Us exhibition and programme was made possible thanks to the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Foyle Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation and The Granada Foundation.

Q | What prompted you to pursue a career in conservation?

While I was studying for a degree in fine art and photography, I discovered I really liked working with historical photographic techniques. I was lucky enough to attend multiple courses by Angel Fuentes, who was the maestro of photograph conservation in Spain. During one of his workshops on the authentication of 19th century photographs, he handed me a Daguerreotype, which is one of the first commercially available types of photographs developed in the mid-1800s. It made me very emotional. He picked up on this and suggested I should look into photograph conservation work. It was a life changing moment.

Q | Give us an overview of your international studies and work ...

I completed my first university degree in fine arts and photography in Barcelona and spent a year in The Netherlands with an Erasmus internship. I then came to the UK, where I worked as a photographer and waitress in

Marta Garcia Celma,
Chair of Icon's
Photographic Materials
Group, reflects on
her international work
and current role at M+
Museum, Hong Kong

Brighton, before moving to London, where I completed my Masters in Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts and got my first conservation job for The National Archives. Then, an Icon internship in photograph and preventive conservation led me to Scotland for two years. After that, I was based in Germany, doing a PhD under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network project New Approaches in the Conservation of Contemporary Art (NACCA), researching conservation approaches for contemporary fine art photography. This project lasted for three years and saw me travelling around Europe quite a bit. In September 2019, I moved to Hong Kong, to take up the role of Photograph Conservator for M+ Museum.

Q | Tell us about M+ Museum and your work there

M+ is a 21st century museum of visual culture. We care for many contemporary fine art pieces, but we also have a very strong design collection and a magnificent archive.

Although the institution itself has been 10 years in the making, the museum only opened its doors to the public in November 2021. In its first year, we welcomed more than two million visitors, and attracted over 9,300 members and 530 patrons, despite a four-month closure during the fifth wave of the pandemic in Hong Kong.

There are 15 team members working in M+'s conservation department and I am the only Photograph Conservator. My responsibilities include exhibitions



LOK CHENG, M+

INTERNATIONALLY SPEAKING

As a museum we also find it is imperative to support and give something back to the society in which we are embedded

and collection care tasks – from supporting acquisitions and loans, condition reporting, interventive treatments and preventive conservation, to preparing displays and developing procedures for collection care, such as looking into different

options for reproduction.

The key focus of my work during the first two years was preparing all the photographic artworks for the inaugural exhibition. Part of this included engaging with local framers, initiating them into different techniques and framing standards used by the museum, such as reversible mounting. Alongside working on our collections, as a museum we also find it is imperative to support and give something back to the society in which we are embedded, through collaborations and education.

Q | What do you enjoy most about your work?

As M+ is relatively new and the exhibition programme is broad, we have to constantly develop ways to care for the collection and staff, and serve the museum's objectives in a sustainable way. I really enjoy the collaboration and teamwork required for this, and having to think creatively, all the time.

The culture and institutional environment in Hong Kong is different to Europe. Many approaches and policies often used in European museums aren't feasible here, and so these have to be developed to meet the specific needs of M+. It is challenging but again, I really enjoy this aspect of my work. It's a great place to learn and grow as a person, team member and conservator.

Q | Have you studied and worked in different countries because you enjoy travelling or have other factors been involved?

I do like travelling, but I've learnt to like it a lot more because of my career!

Conservation can be a tough field. ➤



Left:
Marta assessing a photograph from the M+ collection

Below:
Marta Garcia Celma



The training isn't easy, and the work often not highly paid and based on short-term contracts. It can be even more challenging if you specialise in a subject like photograph conservation. At the time I realised that this was what I wanted to study, no educational programme was available in Spain. It meant that I had to look for opportunities in other countries that were both affordable and taught in English.

All my jobs have meant changing cities, countries or continents. I've loved every place I've lived and worked in, but each time I have moved, it has been to develop my career, to improve my salary or because the opportunities were just too good to say no.

Q | As a conservator, what are the benefits of gaining experience in different countries?

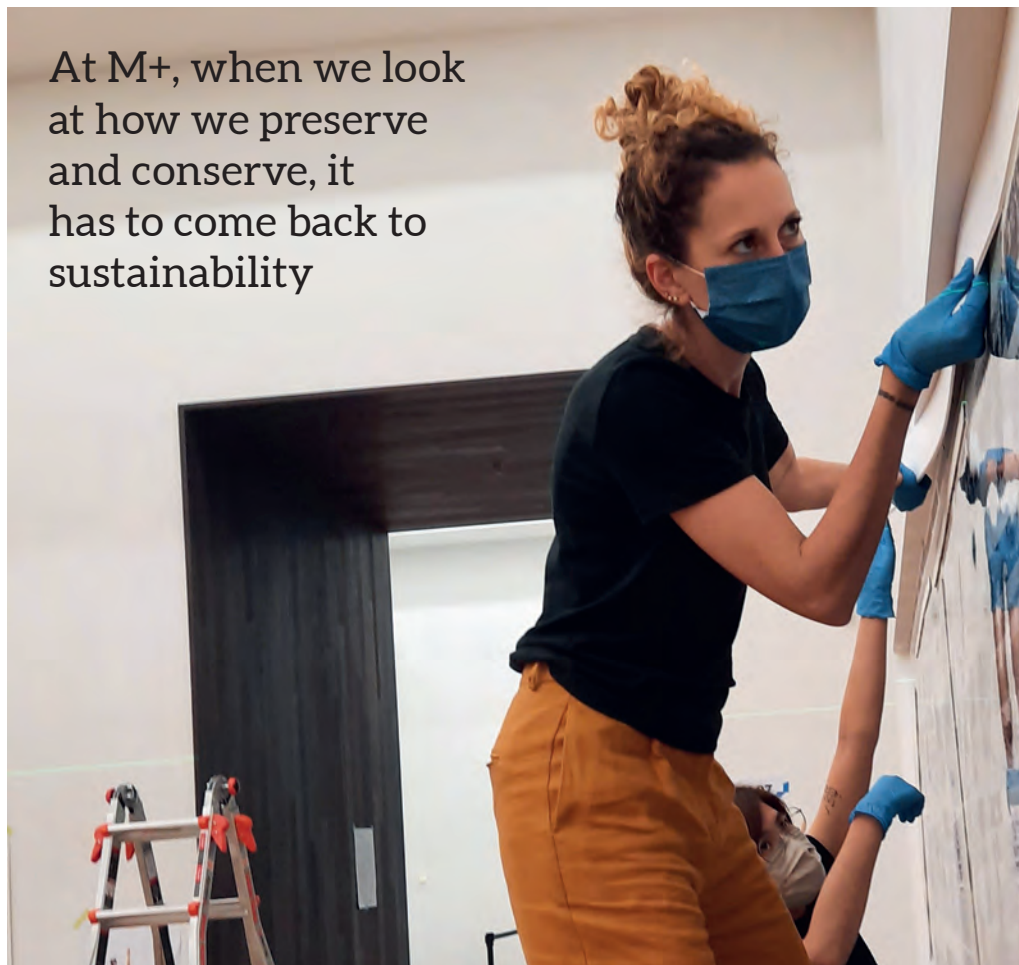
It's a real privilege to be exposed to different social and cultural backgrounds. When you work with an object or collection, it reflects the region it comes from and the culture of the stewards, and gives you a unique peek into a part of history that not many people have access to, which is very humbling.

Those who are new to the world of conservation often think that our job is just to preserve and restore items, but that is just the beginning of our work. We do, of course, conserve the materials, but some of these will be subject to decay, and so we have to conserve their memories and meanings, too. We have to maintain their identity through time and also serve the society where they were created. One day, I will be gone. No one will remember my name and that's fine. As conservators, I don't think we are supposed to be remembered. It is the legacy of the object or collection we work with what will be remembered. That's what we do and I find it fascinating and really fulfilling.

Q | Are there distinct differences when it comes to conserving photographs in different countries? Photographic materials are

At M+, when we look at how we preserve and conserve, it has to come back to sustainability

LOK CHENG, M+



very sensitive to environmental conditions, including high humidity. In Hong Kong, the relative humidity is above 80% for 95% of the year. To protect M+'s photograph collection, we need to have a well-controlled storage space. That's no different to any other institution around the world – but what is different is the cost involved, compared to some other countries. At M+, when we look at how we preserve and conserve, it has to come back to sustainability. How can we maintain the same degree of care and make it more sustainable at the same time? That is something we are busy working on at the moment.

Another difference is that in Europe there is a much better awareness about the value of conservation in general. In Hong Kong we need to work hard in communicating the importance of preserving cultural heritage – from fine art pieces to historical buildings. Naturally, that involves a lot of

MICHAELA PATSCHURKOWSKI



Top: Marta and a colleague mounting a photograph for M+'s inaugural exhibition
Above: Marta speaking at the NACCA 2018 conference in Cologne, Germany



advocacy and outreach work, which is something I'm very involved in and enjoy.

Q | Outside of your day-to-day work, what else do you do?

I am still working on my PhD, which should be finished very soon. I'm also contributing to a forthcoming Routledge publication, *Conservation of Photograph and Image Collections*. There are 90 other authors writing for the same manuscript and I am co-authoring a chapter about advocacy and strategic initiatives.

In addition, I'm writing a paper with one of my conservation colleagues for the 2023 ICOM-CC conference. Hopefully we will be able to present this in person as I love attending conferences and events, both as a speaker and delegate. It's great being able to network, face-to-face, with others working in the field.

And after being the Events Coordinator for the Icon Photographic Materials Group, I

am now taking on the role of Chair, which is exciting.

In my free time, I enjoy dancing and yoga. These days, I am focusing on both more seriously as it helps me to keep a good work-life balance.

Q | What are the benefits of doing all this additional work?

It's rewarding and it's also an opportunity to connect with like-minded people. I love working with everyone at M+, but to my knowledge, I'm currently the only Photograph Conservator working in Southeast Asia. Taking part in conferences, writing for a book alongside 90 other conservators and chairing the Icon Group, where I get to see friendly faces in a Teams meeting – it all keeps me in the game. It also allows me to share doubts, discuss challenges and ask for help from people who understand my line of work. Of course, I take these activities seriously, but it's also about catching up with good friends and being part of something bigger.

Q | What have been your career highlights so far?

The first was my photographic internship with Icon, which totally put me on the path I wanted to be on. My Masters in England focused more on paper conservation, and even though I went on every training course and workshop that I could find, I was struggling to progress into photograph conservation. During my paid internship at HESS (formerly RCAHMS), I had great mentors, who created an incredible platform for me to learn and grow from. They really helped me to develop my skills and, perhaps more importantly, a critical mind about photograph conservation.

The second highlight was being part of the NACCA project. It was a fully funded, three-year fellowship, as part of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions project. It was just magical – spending time with 15 other PhD students, all working in contemporary conservation research, and having access to 30 of the most experienced mentors in the

field. It was definitely another real turning point in my career and, like the internship, the only reason I could take up this great opportunity was because it was fully funded. We cannot expect people to fulfil a career in conservation unless they are appropriately remunerated.

Q | What advice or top tips would you offer Icon members interested in working on a more international level?

Develop networks and partnerships through international conservation groups. Conservators tend to be really open and enjoy collaborating, which means that should be fairly easy.

When applying for jobs, always follow this up with an email to the conservator in charge, or the person who advertised the job. Sometimes Human Resources act as gatekeepers and you also never know what opportunities there might be with the same employer, two or three years further down the line.

If you are moving to a different country to work, for the first few months just try to be observant. Try not to overshare your prior experience with the team, saying "In my previous job, we did...". Given time, you will start to understand the social and cultural needs of the institution you're now working for, alongside any political and financial barriers they face. Chances are, there's a very good reason why they do things differently. Once you have lived in their shoes for two or three months, only then will your suggestions and advice be of real value.

Q | What's next for Marta?

Literally a week before this interview, I was offered the position of Senior Conservator at M+, which is very exciting. The role will involve more managerial tasks than 'hands-on' work, and I will support the conservation team's development within the institution at large. It just goes to show you the personal and professional growth and opportunities that can come from working internationally.



DOWN TO BUSINESS

Sarah Peek ACR runs an independent ceramics conservation business, working for top auction houses, dealers, collectors and members of the public

I became interested in conservation because I grew up in a very practical family that enjoyed antiques and, being dyslexic, I was drawn to a visual world. Those two areas of interest intersected in conservation – both the visual and the practical.

I gained an art education degree in America – my first career was as an art teacher – then in 1995 I completed a course at West Dean College and started working as a conservator in a

commercial studio. In 1997, I set up my own business (www.sarahpeek.co.uk), specialising in ceramics, and have run that ever since.

I take as much care with the business side of my work as I do with my adhesive choices when repairing an object. The two skills are equally important and I take my reputation in both very seriously. The balance between conservation and commercial skills cannot be overstated.

SARAH'S TOP TIPS

Get the business basics right

Keep your overheads as low as possible. I chose to build my own workshop near my home, so owning that helps. Also, make sure you are insured and create a set of terms and conditions to explain exactly what your work will entail, using plain language, as this helps to create realistic customer expectation.

It is also critical that you work within professional standards, judgment and ethics.

Build a varied client base

I have always put effort into gaining customers from a diverse set of sectors. The market is always changing with recessions, fashions, dealers going in and out of business, people retiring, and varying demand from trusts. By having clients in many different areas, I've always kept work on the bench.

Know how to talk to different clients

My communication with clients varies quite a lot, depending on who they are. I have found dealers to be more direct and matter of fact in their requirements, whilst for the general public, the story of the object is far more personal and important, so I always take time to listen.

What doesn't change is my consistency in discussing the treatment – I still explain it and present treatment options, using either technical or layman's language, depending on the customer. For me, there's no difference in who gets more of my time.

Use your network to build your client base

Don't be afraid to ask existing clients to recommend you and put attention to detail on the whole service you provide, not just the restoration. If you do that, your client will want to tell their friends the story of the day they came to your workshop.

If you're Icon-Accredited, take out an Upgraded Listing on the Conservation Register – I always refer

**Far left:**

Sarah polishing colour fills on a glazed terracotta armorial roundel from the workshop of Della Robbia

Left:

Sarah working with Jasmina Vuckovic on a Berlin KPM Krater vase

people to that if they are not in my area or have a different discipline to mine. If you have a local auction house advertise in their catalogues and go put a face to your name and present your services.

**Be realistic, be clear and get it in writing**

Listen carefully so you understand a client's requirements and tell them exactly what can be done. Many people want invisible repairs, which isn't always possible or ethical. Make sure you formalise the appraisal process and confirm the 'go ahead' to proceed, otherwise the client may say "I didn't ask you to do that" and you could end up covering the costs.

If the communication is verbal, follow it up by email so it's in writing to avoid a mismatch in expectation. Just a short email saying, "following up on our phone conversation earlier, I agree we will be doing A, B, C, at a cost of X" is enough. Take photographs at various stages, get agreements and if you can't meet a deadline, tell people in advance.

**Don't undersell yourself**

It's easy to sell your services for less than is commercially viable,

I take as much care with the business side of my work as I do with my adhesive choices when repairing an object

particularly if you are starting out. Be realistic about how long a repair will take and charge accordingly. There's nothing wrong in doing a trial at a lower rate to build a relationship, but make it clear what your charges are. Stand your ground with deadlines too, as a good job can't necessarily be done as quickly as demanded.

**Don't quote, estimate – and do it accurately and fairly**

To estimate accurately, you need to work out a realistic hourly rate. Include all your overheads and a required salary and divide it by the number of hours you work. You can refer to Icon's Conservation Salaries Survey 2022 for guidance – this is on the Icon website. Experience has taught me to understand which tasks are my strength, along with tasks that

always take me time.

I only ever estimate; I don't quote. In my terms and conditions, I state that I do each part of the process once. In reality, I may redo things, but that comes out of my pocket, not the client's.

I estimate the time I'll need for each phase of a project – assessment, cleaning, bonding, etc – and then tally up the hours and record the actual time spent, to check my estimate was accurate. If the project unexpectedly needs more time, there is some flexibility built in, or I refer back to the client. Invariably some projects come in under time, some go over. As long as you keep your eye on your on-going profitability you can adjust and react accordingly.

If an object has lots of previous restoration, I often take it in for a couple of hours to remove that work, then get back with an estimate once I understand the actual condition. If you do that, it's important to photograph the object before you start and be clear it's a one-way ticket – once the old restoration is gone, it can't be put back.

**Always have a second pair of eyes and ears to work with**

It's important to work with others, both for problem solving and practicality. You often need more than one pair of hands when bonding things or more than one pair of eyes to look at things. Also, it's easy to obsess over tiny details and lose the ability to see an object in the whole. A trusted peer review can restore your perspective.

**Stay informed on developments in the conservation industry**

I read the *Antiques Trade Gazette* to see what objects are coming to auction as they often come into my workshop. I keep updated through Icon, among other professional bodies, and I regularly attend webinars and conferences online and in person (yay!). To develop new skills, cast your net wide – you never know what you might learn and from whom.



INSIGHTS FROM SINGAPORE

Diana Tay, Founder of BARC Labs and Chief Art Officer at ArtRatio, shares the findings of a short survey to gauge conservation awareness in Singapore

At present, there are no conservation schools in Singapore. However, the local conservation community is growing, and so is the desire to engage the public with art and cultural heritage decisions. The Singapore Heritage Plan 2.0, organised by the National Heritage Board in 2022, is one such initiative.

My painting conservation career began in 2009 in Singapore through on-the-job training from international colleagues before pursuing formal education in Australia. Having returned to Singapore, I started BARC Labs, a conservation research studio, aiming to increase accessibility and awareness of conservation.

The act of conservation itself and the decision making behind it often lies in the realm of the conservator and the object's

immediate stakeholders. However, if the dialogue is to be expanded into the local community, it depends on an individual's accessibility and awareness. Otherwise, these decisions are limited to those already within the industry.

Today, there are more young Singaporeans pursuing education overseas and more tertiary-level students asking how they can become a conservator. This sparked a curiosity to understand the current state of conservation awareness in the local Singaporean community and which areas to focus on in terms of conservation outreach work. This article shares the findings from a short survey I conducted on 97 Singaporeans.

The survey

A one-minute survey comprising seven to nine questions was hosted

on Typeform and distributed via social media and word of mouth. By targeting a group of participants not from the art industry, the questions attempted to give an overview of whether they have an awareness of art conservation. If so, the survey tried to identify how they learned about it and if education had a role in its introduction. This was then followed by asking participants if they had any artwork at home and if they had noticed any changes. Finally, it asked participants to choose the top three factors they thought would cause change or risk damaging artworks.

Overall, most of the participants (90%) were not from the art industry, which is a positive indicator that there is a willingness to participate in conservation-related dialogues. In addition, a high completion rate of 96% indicated that the survey



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Diana Tay is the Founder of BARC Labs, a research-driven conservation studio based in Singapore. As the Chief Art Officer of ArtRatio, Diana extends her knowledge and explores ways in which technology meets conservation. diana@artratio.co.uk

format was user-friendly and gave confidence to further develop the survey.

Conservation awareness

Participants were categorised into three age groups, with the majority aged 26-40 (53), followed by those above 41 (38) and 25 and below (6). Of the 97 participants, nine identified as part of the art industry. Excluding those from the art industry, 65% of participants were aware of conservation through word-of-mouth. Interestingly, there were twice as many participants who had heard of conservation through someone from the arts industry, followed by social media. While the overall percentage was encouraging, it suggested that learning about conservation has been mostly left to chance by meeting someone from the art industry.

Could the introduction of conservation through local education curricula be one possible way to broaden the community to engage in conversation dialogues? Data collected indicated no participants were introduced to conservation in primary or secondary education. Focusing on participants who had received an art education in

Survey on conservation public awareness in Singapore – November 2022

9 OUT OF 10

participants not from industry were engaged

43%

art educated participants were not introduced to conservation in their curriculum

69%

of participants are conservation aware

ENVIRONMENT LIGHT NEGLECT

were considered the top three factors that would cause change or damage to artworks

Singapore, the results suggested that 43% were not introduced to conservation. Those introduced to conservation in their art education indicated that it was only briefly mentioned in their curriculum. Most of these participants were from the younger age group of 18 to 25, suggesting that conservation was a recent inclusion in the curriculum.

Relevance

This survey was an opportunity to reach out to those not yet aware of conservation. With most participants indicating that they have artwork in their homes, 75% have noticed material and physical changes. While conservation outreach occurs in museums through programmes such as on-site conservation or conservator talks in Singapore, the ownership of artworks and observance of any degradation patterns could be one way to make relevant the role of a conservator. When asked which top three factors they felt would cause change or risk damage to their artworks (choosing from transit, neglect, pests, light, environment and inherent materials), environment, light and neglect were their top choices.

Moving forward

The data collected from this short survey offered a quick overview of the public awareness of Singaporeans, as well as when conservation was likely to have been introduced to them. The survey engagement indicated that there is a good baseline of participants aware of conservation, but there is still room to grow. Including the other factors of change and risks offers data for future conservation outreach programmes to focus on, such as the importance of art handling transit, pest management and how inherent artist materials could affect changes in artworks. With increased public awareness, conservation dialogues can occur in broader communities, and more people can be engaged in decisions.

NEWS FROM ICON'S GROUPS AND NETWORKS

BOOK & PAPER GROUP WELCOMES NEW CHAIR



William Bennett has recently taken up the role of Chair of Icon's Book & Paper Group, having served as Treasurer for the past three years.

William works at the Smithsonian Institution Archives in Washington DC, caring for records documenting the history of the institution. He was first introduced to Icon as a student at West Dean College, during which time he attended numerous events sponsored by the Book & Paper Group. William was immediately impressed by the close-knit feeling of the conservation community in the UK, further strengthened by the efforts of Icon.

"I came to conservation after finishing my undergraduate degree in English literature at Brigham Young University, where as a lark I took a bookbinding course through the visual arts department," William



explains. "Unbeknown to me, the course was taught by the university's library conservators, who saw my interest and encouraged me to pursue training in conservation. I secured an internship at the Library of Congress, cataloguing a research collection, and at the end of my time I was invited to apply to backfill a general collections conservation position while the post holder took her own degree in museum studies, which spring boarded me into my time at West Dean.

"In my time as Chair of Icon's Book & Paper Group, I hope to promote access to conservation for all by contributing to the approachability and visibility of the field, as well as facilitating opportunities for under-represented communities to become involved."

With thanks to William Bennett (left)

BETTER CONNECTED IN 2023: EMERGING PROFESSIONALS NETWORK REFRESHES ITS COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND OFFERING



Following a new intake of committee members, the Emerging Professionals Network (EPN) is refreshing its committee structure and the aims of the network, and will be meeting every two months to plan for a more interactive and connected year ahead in 2023.

Work currently in progress

includes:

- Creating more accessible and dynamic EPN pages on the Icon website, including useful resources, group news and videos featuring short interviews with Icon Group and Network members.
- Featuring more student projects via the 'Call for Projects' link on EPN's web pages.

- Confirming and organising events for the year, including an evening of mini presentations and a panel discussion with Icon's Conservation Higher Education Institutions Network members.

You can also learn more about EPN's Chair, James Harvie, in this issue of *Iconnect* magazine – see page 26.

With thanks to Carola Del Mese

CARE OF COLLECTIONS GROUP PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER RESTORATION AND RENEWAL PROGRAMME



It's been two years since the Houses of Parliament Restoration and Renewal Icon Lecture and so it seems fitting to provide an update on how the programme has evolved, adapted and progressed.

In July, both Houses of Parliament approved a new approach for how

the work to restore and renew the Palace of Westminster should be governed and delivered. The programme's sponsor team will be replaced with a joint department in Parliament. In collaboration with Parliamentary colleagues, the Delivery Authority is developing several options for the scale, scope

and delivery of the programme.

We've continued building the most detailed ever record of the Palace of Westminster by conducting thousands of hours of surveys. The heritage and collections decant project remains a priority, as well as the heritage survey work, which underpins the palace design and construction options.

This year, our heritage team has delivered the Building and Collections Conservation Environmental Performance Survey. This comprises three strands of investigation – the Building Environmental Performance Assessment, environmental monitoring and a particulate matter study which, when combined, build a holistic environmental picture of the palace from a collections perspective. The results will inform decant methodologies, logistics and collections storage parameters as well as informing the end stage design of the palace.

Our Heritage Vibration study focuses on objects that remain in situ while the works are ongoing, such as wall paintings and decorative surfaces, as well as the architectural building fabric. The data will inform proposed construction methodology and scheduling in addition to protective controls, with the survey broken down into three phases: benchmarking, testing exemplar construction techniques and monitoring during the construction period.

These projects build on existing studies developed by Parliament's in-house Heritage Collections Team – who we work closely with – and were scaled up to incorporate the entire palace.

We look forward to sharing the results and learnings of these surveys, as well as continuing to keep you up to date with our progress.

With thanks to Aimee Sims ACR



Left: The Palace of Westminster
Below: Cloister Court stonework



CERAMICS & GLASS GROUP SHARE NEWS ABOUT THE NIGEL WILLIAMS PRIZE AND REFLECT ON ITS 2022 AUTUMN MEETING



A new judge, Peter J. David ACR, joins the Nigel Williams Prize panel

The Nigel Williams Prize (NWP) is a biennial award, resulting from the collaboration between Nigel Williams' family and the Icon Ceramics & Glass Group. It was created to serve as a memorial to Nigel's work and to encourage continuing high standards at all levels within the profession.

In 2022, the NWP underwent a review, resulting in both the criteria and assessment method being updated. During this period a new judge, Peter J. David ACR, was welcomed to the NWP panel.

Having trained at West Dean, Peter became a freelance ceramic conservator/restorer in 1982 and has applied both his conservation skills and knowledge of ceramic history since this time. He has built longstanding working relationships with clients from the public and private sectors, and has a national and international client base, with projects ranging from individual objects to whole collections, conservation surveys and redevelopment projects.

Peter is a former winner of the Nigel Williams Prize (2014), for his joint project with Judy Pinkham ACR (National Museums of Wales) for the Conservation of Teresa Margoles' '32 Años'.

Lauren Burleson won the Nigel Williams Student Prize in 2021, for her work on the conservation of progressed glass deterioration on blue beads in a human bone Rus rGyan ensemble.

"To be recognised with a prize that has such an incredible legacy attached, and so early in my career, was a great honour. Since winning, I have gone on to work as a conservator in several national museums and it is always a great example to bring up in interviews,

to showcase work that I am proud of. Due to the atypical nature of the glass that won the prize, it also allows me to demonstrate my range as a conservator, as I now specialise in organics and natural history. I believe that when I next have research or treatment to submit for publication, I will have that much more confidence with the legacy of the Nigel Williams Student Prize buoying me up. I am grateful to Nigel Williams' family and the Ceramics & Glass Group for continuing the prize – it is such a meaningful and impactful recognition within the conservation profession."

Ros Fraser, a member of the Ceramics & Glass Group who is returning to the field of conservation, reflects on the group's 2022 Autumn Meeting

In September 2022, the Ceramics & Glass Group hosted its AGM and Autumn Meeting, Presentation Re-Imagined, at the Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio, Knole House, Sevenoaks. Those attending enjoyed presentations from Tiago Oliveira, Felicity Bolton and the group's Chair, Ros Hodges, showcasing different approaches to conserving objects for new exhibition opportunities. The afternoon included a tour of the conservation studio, led by Emma Schmeucker, Conservation Studio Manager, as well as a tour of Knole House.

"The morning presentations were fascinating and so informative," Ros Fraser commented. "It was particularly useful for me, having been out of the loop for a while, to update myself on procedures, materials used, and the level and style of finish currently preferred in the industry. It was a privilege to spend time in the conservation studio at Knole, having a tour of the equipment and the ceramics – both the finished pieces and the collection



Above: Peter J. David ACR



Above: Lauren Burleson



Above: Ceramics & Glass Group Autumn Meeting

of blue and white ceramics that had just arrived. It is a busy working studio and I appreciate and thank everyone who took time out of their day to make us feel welcome and answer our endless questions! It was a great day, meeting new and interesting people and catching up with old friends. I returned home with copious notes, full of enthusiasm and look forward to the next event."

With thanks to Peter David ACR, Lauren Burleson, Ros Fraser and Marisa Kalvins

ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP INTRODUCES TWO NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Riva Boutylkova (above) is the Archaeology Group's (AG) new Emerging

Professionals Liaison. Riva has a BA in Conservation (specialising in ceramics) from Antwerp University and an MA in Conservation of Archaeological and Museum Objects from Durham University. Since completing her degrees, she has worked in different museums as an Objects Conservator and is now an Archaeological Conservator at MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), treating

freshly excavated archaeological material from sites in and around London. Before joining the AG committee, Riva was a member of Icon's Emerging Professionals Network committee. In joining the Archaeology Group, her aim is to continue advocating for student and early-career conservators and to ensure initiatives offered by the group are accessible and affordable for emerging professionals.

Reed Hudson (right) is a graduate from the MA and MSc programmes in conservation at University College London and will be acting as the Archaeology Group's Social Media Liaison. Since graduating, she has worked as a conservator on several projects, including archaeological digs in Egypt and Greece. She has a background in jewellery and gemmology and is currently working as a Metals Conservator for

Historic Environment Scotland. She is passionate about conservation education and the promotion of accessibility and diversity in the sector. By joining the committee, she hopes to continue learning and sharing knowledge by connecting with other conservators, as well as archaeologists, museum professionals and members of the public.

With thanks to Charlotte Wilkinson ACR and Helen Ganiaris ACR



MIDDLE KINGDOM THEBAN PROJECT - PATRI MORFOTHOGRAPHY

SCOTLAND GROUP REPORTS ON ITS 2022 PLENDERLEITH LECTURE IN EDINBURGH



For our first in-person Plenderleith lecture since 2019, we invited Dr Richard

Mulholland from Northumbria University to share stories from his time providing conservation training and support in Afghanistan.

This thought-provoking lecture looked at Richard's British Council-funded work, offering expertise and training for heritage professionals in Kabul. Richard's talk touched on the complexities of this work: the mixed benefits of media coverage for cultural recovery, varying attitudes to the concept of cultural heritage, corruption and scepticism often encountered, but also the courage and enthusiasm of local professionals and custodians of cultural heritage.



Above: Dr Richard Mulholland

Richard explained how quick-thinking curators and conservators had made attempts to save cultural heritage from destruction or to hide items from looters by stowing them in the National Palace, or unframing works and slipping them under floorboards and carpets. Figurative works, banned by the Taliban, were temporarily overpainted with watercolours and gouache.

In addition to obvious difficulties in establishing a paintings and paper conservation studio in a post-conflict society, and transporting solvents and chemicals across borders, Richard highlighted some translation

issues. Conservation terms are rarely consistent, even in English, and translations into Pashto and Dari had led to some surprising local swap-ins for conservation tools and materials.

Efforts to avoid potential narratives of Western European, white saviour mentality, and approaching teaching in a more student-led style was in fact at odds with the dogmatic, learn-by-rote expectations of the students. This experience has provided Richard with some useful case studies and critical thinking in pedagogical research. Resilience and adaptation were common themes of the lecture, as well as the importance of collaboration and relationship building. Managing expectations and an awareness of the risks and differing priorities have led to a profound experience for Richard and his team. Ongoing instability in the region and the use of cultural heritage as a political bargaining chip highlight the importance of this work in safeguarding collections for the future.

With thanks to Mary Garner



Welcome, new members

We would like to wish a very warm welcome to all those who joined us in August, September and October 2022.

We hope you enjoy the first issue of our newly-designed membership magazine and look forward to seeing you at an Icon event soon!

Student

- Lisa Allan
- Carlota Balcells
- Siân Blake
- Denise Carapiet
- Yu hsuan Chang
- Daniela Chavez
- Lauren Chiu
- Eli Cunniff
- Rhianna Deaves
- Luke Foulds
- Trinity Golding
- Daisy Green
- Rebecca Haines
- Abigail Howard
- Lola Jackson
- Laura Jacobs
- Martha Jones
- Yann Laumenech
- Samantha Levick
- Keziah Lim
- Sophie Little
- Ross McKirdy
- Margaret Monaghan
- Hannah Roberts
- Jane Sampson
- Chris Sebestik
- Julia Silvester
- Robyn Timmins
- Abigail Tudor
- Suzann Vaughn
- Hazel Wong
- Caitlin Young

Intern

- Camella Ramjet

Associate

- Deborah Bichener
- Molly Brass
- Hattie Davidson
- Penny Fisher
- Frank Holmes
- Natalia Krupa
- Robyn Matthews
- Carlos Salvador Mira
- Emily Watts

Pathway

- Coleen Everitt
- Andrew French
- Philip Norman-Ross-Burrows
- Frederick von Preussen
- Lori Wong

Supporter

- Yukie Baba
- Rhys Cowdry-Howes
- Sanna Kapanen
- Ambrose Robertson
- Melanie Swan
- Bin Wu



CHANGES TO ICON'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In 2022, we said a fond farewell to eight members of Icon's Board, paid our thanks to seven who continue in their role as Trustees, and welcomed five new people to the table (please see box opposite for details).

We are extremely grateful to all our Board members, past and present. Each demonstrate their deep commitment to Icon and our members by devoting considerable time and energy to their roles, and by encouraging our small staff team to deliver Icon's strategic objectives.

In this issue, we would like to introduce you to three of our new Trustees...

Charles Morse

Location: Nazareth and London
Work status: Employed

Charles has two degrees in archaeology, both from UCL, and a Masters in Human Rights from the University of London. He worked for 11 years as an archaeologist in the UK and the

Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and since 2012 has worked in the NGO sector on inclusive education and heritage programmes in the MENA region.

Since 2018, Charles has also worked with the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund to assess projects aiming to protect and conserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage in MENA countries. He has strong interests in the use of cultural heritage for inclusive and ethical development, and the vital role of conservation within this process.

Commenting on what attracted him to the role of Trustee, Charles said: "The opportunity to develop my experience and learn from others from a range of backgrounds in the heritage non-profit sector was very appealing. I was also very interested because of my belief in the value of conservation to secure heritage items for present and future learning.

"I aim to support Icon by



Left: Charles Morse
Middle: Professor Anita Quye
Right: Mark Ross

applying my experience in building inclusive engagement in the heritage sector, and to help increase diversity and reach in Icon's donor support base. I hope this will contribute to the organisation's development and potentially develop areas of support for members."

Professor Anita Quye

Location: Glasgow
Work status: Employed

Anita is Professor of Heritage Science in History of Art and the Kelvin Centre for Conservation and Cultural Heritage Research at the University of Glasgow. Previously she worked for National Museums Scotland in the Department of Conservation and Analytical Research where her interests grew in dyes and synthetic plastics and fibres and connections between their material history and ageing behaviour. Anita has served as a committee member for the Scotland Group and the Heritage Science Group and has been an Icon Mentor.

"Becoming an Icon Trustee was an attractive next-step after being an active committee member," Anita told *Iconnect* magazine. "I am keen to support knowledge sharing,

collaboration networks and mid-career continuing professional development."

Mark Ross

Location: Reigate
Work status: Employed

Mark is Managing Director at a strategic communications and public affairs consultancy for companies in the built environment sector. He has 20 years' experience of the UK political and media environment, delivering campaigns, stakeholder engagement strategies and community consultation programmes. Before moving into consultancy, Mark worked in local government and on political campaigns, and led the public affairs team at the retail sector's main trade association.

"Although I have little direct experience of conservation – and so have a lot to learn! – I have a strong interest in cultural heritage," Mark commented. "I am looking forward to using the experience I do have in public affairs, campaigns and communications, to help Icon continue to be a powerful voice for those who care about safeguarding the past for future generations."

A WARM WELCOME...

To our new Trustees:

- Nic Boyes ACR
- Charles Morse
- Professor Anita Quye
- Michelle Rheeston
- Mark Ross

Thank you and farewell...

To our outgoing Trustees, who had reached the end of their latest three-year terms:

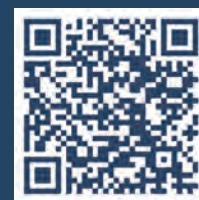
- Duygu Camurcuoglu ACR
- Lorraine Finch ACR
- Frances Graupner
- James Grierson (Chair)
- Mel Houston ACR
- Martin Kirke
- Adam Klups
- Pierrette Squires ACR

Thank you for your continued support...

To those Trustees who continue in their roles:

- Richard Bruce
- Diana Davis ACR
- Louise Davison
- Claire Fry ACR (beginning her second term)
- James Murphy
- Sophie Rowe ACR
- Michelle Stoddart

For more information about Icon's Board of Trustees, please scan the QR code



VALUE, EDUCATION AND MONEY

Professor Jane Henderson ACR and Phil Parkes ACR share their views on the value of a university degree and the marketisation of education

Google ‘the value of a university degree?’ and you will be presented with information about boosting your future earnings and, just as quickly, you will find discussions of ‘low value’ degrees. The critical input of politicians and media commentators has created an environment where the purpose of education is often debased. Questions about the value of degrees seem to occur most often about arts-based degrees and those leading to careers in arts and heritage.

One of the most common measures of degree quality are employment statistics and salaries 15 months after graduation (HESA, 2022). The term ‘worthless’ has been used when salaries don’t exceed ‘national averages’ and this has called into question the existence of some degree schemes.

University managers claim that your degree contributes to you, your community and the economy but they measure success by salary. Do you agree that the value of an education is only to be measured

in salary? When heritage salaries are notoriously low (Icon, 2022; The Museum Association, 2022) are all degrees and careers in the sector meaningless? We hope *Iconnect* magazine readers agree that this is not true.

The Museums Association campaign Museums Change Lives (The Museum Association, 2022) provides numerous case studies evidencing the benefits of the heritage sector to society. We also believe that better salaries and working conditions are something we should fight for. Sadly, the marketisation of education has also played a part in depressing salaries and conditions for staff in higher education.

Marketisation of education

The UK education system has been ‘marketised’ which means that market mechanisms decide how resources will be allocated.

Education is a commodity and education establishments compete under market forces to provide services. The marketisation of education impacts on



student expectations, encouraging a culture that paying fees means you have bought an outcome. The student-as-consumer expects to receive an experience rather than to participate in an educational process. They expect good value measured in money rather than a good education measured in stimulation, knowledge and growth. Receiving a bad mark becomes a failure in the delivered service rather than an opportunity to learn and grow. When we remove the ability to grow through experience, we disempower conservation students and future conservators from the ability to develop their own learning skills.





Education should provide all learners with personal and professional benefits regardless of career path

What can a student reasonably expect?

Conservation is complex, requiring students to grasp theoretical concepts across academia, develop practical skills and enact them within an ethical framework that serves society. Conservation students are expected to learn to do this in only a few short years and on graduation take up a position with responsibility for the care of irreplaceable cultural heritage. Doesn't this suggest that the degree should be challenging? We reject education as the passive consumption of information with the work being done by those who deliver it. We think educators should facilitate learning

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Professor Jane Henderson ACR teaches collections care and conservation at Cardiff University and has worked in museums for decades. Through her career, her focus has moved from preventive conservation to communication and decision making, to issues of social justice within collection care.

experiences and shape the context in which the students work. It is our job to provide appropriate challenges, not to make things easy.

Another question to discuss is: should a degree fully prepare you for any conservation job? Workplace apprenticeships certainly do this well, where the education is led and shaped by employers, and this supports learners to slot perfectly into an intended job role. Such a perfect jigsaw piece is likely to be less adaptable though to a range of different job roles. For this the academic approach may be more suitable.

The academic approach teaches more generic skills; decision making, critical thinking, the ability to read and reflect, a commitment to ethical practice and a framework and aptitude for personal development. Students leaving a degree for private practice may wish they had learnt bookkeeping, those working in the field may wish to have had an additional language, other graduates may focus on analysis, teaching or communication. No academic degree can ever offer an instructional approach for every eventuality and adding one thing always means taking another thing away. Because marketisation creates an environment where education is a passive consumer experience, it strips students of their agency to plan their careers, to follow their hearts and to be active leaders in their own development.

What value is there in a conservation degree for a non-conservator?

By making degrees transactional – ‘you pay us fees we transition you to a well-paid job’ – the educational process itself is lost. Why shouldn't a conservation graduate work as a dance teacher, or in computing and finance? Education should provide all learners with personal and professional benefits regardless of career path. When students learn to be thoughtful and accountable decision makers, to marshal resources, to collect and appraise



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

New Education and Skills Strategy coming Spring 2023

Icon's new Education and Skills Strategy document is nearing completion and will be published in Spring 2023. The Strategy will build on Icon's recent Labour Market Intelligence research and seek to chart a course through the needs of the conservation workforce to establish the best ways Icon can support the UK's world-leading conservation training sector into the 21st century and beyond.

evidence and apply it to context, then they can conserve, or they can find other roles. There are many roles that need critical thinkers who can develop and evidence an independent perspective, who can listen to and acknowledge the input and expertise of others and can promote that in an ethical way. The value of those life skills cannot simply be measured by salary. None of this precludes campaigning for better salaries, it is simply making the distinction, demand education for learning and salaries commensurate for skills and knowledge.

Marketisation and impact on staff and students

By commercialising education, capitalist economics shape how education is run. Universities are investing in new buildings to promote their status, the salaries of the highest earners are eye-watering, but profit must be made so costs are reduced elsewhere. In recent years in the UK this has meant that staff costs, in the form of salaries and pensions, have been cut. Increasing numbers of students on courses without increasing support has seen workloads rising, with around seven in ten respondents to a recent UCU survey saying that workload pace and intensity had increased significantly and over a third of staff responding by saying that their workloads were

unmanageable most of the time (University and College Union, 2022).

This in turn impacts on students. Excessive workloads reduce student contact time available, time to return coursework and provide feedback, and the interaction that might be expected in practical classes and seminars. Staff workload is an education issue – well motivated staff with time to teach are essential to a decent higher education system.

Sadly, the advocates of marketisation are right about one thing: what attracts students. Open days are marketplaces where students tour the statement buildings, hear from any superstar staff and get fed a rich offer of lifestyle and leisure. They are sold an experience. In reality, students only meet the teaching staff with no money to heat their homes, the ones whose mental health is in crisis through chasing myriad targets, or whose work and life has absolutely no balance once their fees have been paid.

Is there a better way?

We can take a stand for the value of education and for our value as

professionals. We can defend the idea that a (conservation) degree should be challenging and support our next generation through that. Encourage the language that students are active in their learning, that they make choices and control their priorities and that we, their teachers, want nothing more than to support them to succeed.

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SHUTTERSTOCK



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Phil Parkes ACR teaches conservation at Cardiff University, bringing 30 years of practical conservation experience into the laboratory modules. He currently enjoys making copies of archaeological and historical maille items and teaching these skills through workshops.

WHO GOT THE JOB?

In this new regular, we look at who has successfully filled a work opportunity advertised through Icon's e-bulletin, *Iconnect Jobs*



Name: Holly Cook
Position: Full-time Filming Conservator
Employer: Spencer & Fry, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Tell us about your background...

After studying history as an undergraduate, I went on to complete a Postgraduate Diploma and Masters in Conservation. From there, I worked in collections care roles for the National Trust, Science Museum and the British Museum, and as a Paper Conservator at Bath Record Office and the Mathaf Museum of Modern Art in Qatar.

What attracted you to this position?

The main appeal was the variety this role provided and the new challenge filming conservation

presented. I'm not great at sitting still for long, so a role that allowed me to travel to different locations and interact with new people really excited me. There's also a strong focus on personal development and training within the team that was apparent from the job advert, which is something I highly value.

What does your job involve?

In a nutshell, I have to ensure the process of filming doesn't negatively affect the heritage site or its collections. Whether that's safely relocating the historic collections, inspecting props for potential pests or supervising the shooting, each heritage location and film crew present different challenges and have varying requirements. Adaptability is certainly key in this position! I often work alongside the staff at the property to guide the crews, providing advice and

suggestions when necessary to ensure the crew achieves its aims without compromising the historic location.

What are you currently working on?

I can't give any specific details but since starting the position in August 2022, I've worked at a variety of beautiful heritage sites that are privately owned or under the custodianship of the National Trust and English Heritage, for Amazon, Netflix and Disney+ productions.

What do you like the most about your new job?

I love the variety and flexibility of my role – no days/weeks/months are the same! The team at Spencer & Fry are great, too. They come from a variety of professional backgrounds and have such a wealth of experience. When we've faced new scenarios and conservation challenges together, I've felt incredibly supported.

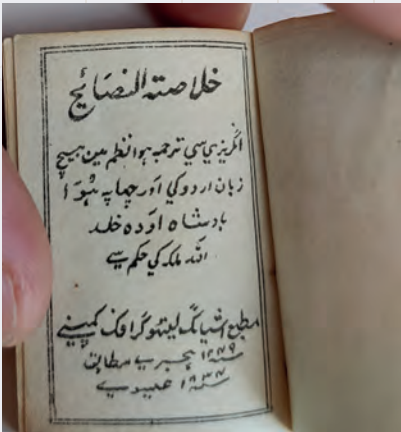
What top tips would you give anyone looking to apply for a similar job?

When I first saw this role advertised through Icon last summer, I never in a million years thought I'd get an interview. Though it sounds cliché, I think it's important to just go for it and apply. I was surprised once I started my application, just how many transferable skills and relevant experience I had gathered from different positions I'd worked in previously. When applying for a role such as Filming Conservator, attitude and your ability to work with a wide variety of people is just as vital as your conservation skills.



TREASURE ISLAND

Antiquarian bookseller **Nick McBurney** reflects on some of his favourite objects

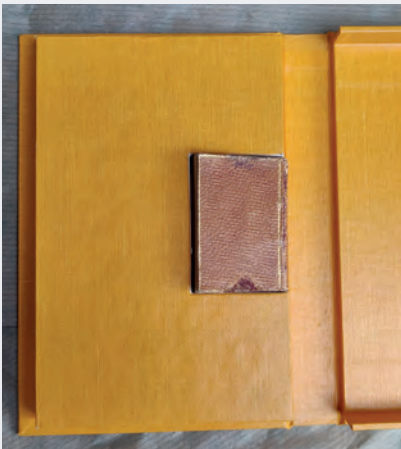


What books do you specialise in?

I specialise in printed and manuscript material from the Muslim world, ranging from medieval Qur'an fragments to diaspora presses printing Arabic poetry in Brooklyn. I deal from my home, in London – mainly by correspondence, quote and catalogue.

What prompted your interest in these items?

I used to work for Bernard Quaritch, a rare books and



manuscripts dealer in London, where I found myself dealing in Arabic and Persian manuscripts at a high level, having studied those languages as an undergraduate. It all rather snowballed from there.

Who are your typical buyers?

The majority are institutions – museums and libraries, in the main – with a smaller but extremely varied group of private clients. Most of my business is with overseas buyers, from Southeast Asia to North America. In addition to dealing from my own stock of books, I occasionally act as a buying (or selling) agent for single high-value items or whole collections.

Who does your conservation work for you?

Abigail Bainbridge ACR (one half of Bainbridge Conservation) is the conservator I use most. I came across Abby on Instagram, during one of the many lockdowns. She is based not far from where I live, so it was initially because I liked using a conservator I could hand-deliver books to. I try to keep the

conservation work I have done to a minimum (many of my clients prefer to use their own conservators) but having someone close by who is extremely efficient with the kind of work I do need is a godsend.

Can you tell us about one of your treasures that Abigail helped to conserve?

I had a very fine chromo-lithographed Istanbul Qur'an with its original slipcase. It was almost in immaculate condition, but the flap on the slipcase had just started to peel. Abby was able to stabilise it sensitively, which was very pleasing. Like printed bibles, printed Qur'an have usually been handled to destruction, so to have an example like that was pretty extraordinary.

Another example of Abby's work is the very smart cloth case she made for the earliest miniature book printed in India (see photos). I have very dour taste in picture frames but love a bright bit of cloth for a case.

Why do you think it's important to conserve rare books and manuscripts?

Put simply, books and manuscripts are objects with material histories, which allow us to capture the stories of their past readers, travels, and uses. Kept carefully, a well-made book will outlast people and countries, which is both extremely cool and a little terrifying. Why *wouldn't* you conserve them?

Learn more about Nick McBurney at www.ngmcburney.com

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