

Notes from 7th Icon DN meeting

25-07-2016 14:00 Wellcome Trust

Present:

- Gillian Boal
- Simona Cenci
- Helen Dowding
- Clare Finn
- Frances Halahan
- Sarah Jarron
- David Leigh
- Jennifer Marchant
- Heather Marshall
- Jennifer Murray
- Stefania Signorello
- Michelle Stoddard
- Rebeca Suarez Ferreira
- Ana Tam
- Mary-Jane Tsang
- Thanasis Velios

Apologies:

- Deborah Farndell
- Lorraine Finch
- Michael Nelles
- Anne-Marrie Steel
- Joyce Townsend
- Francesca Whymark
- Jane Egan

Documentation Network management

Group chairs have started nominating members from their groups as representatives in the Icon-DN. So far we have:

- Paintings: Helen Dowding
- Photographic Materials: Lorraine Finch
- Scottish Group: Simona Cenci

Action – Francesca Whymark to add the Group representatives to the Who we are page.

Action – Current members of the Network to email their Group chairs and request that they are nominated as Group representatives.

The Icon board will discuss the approval of the Network as a generic structure and the existence of the Icon Documentation Network in September, following a report to be produced by Michael Nelles.

Progress on points from the 6th meeting

The group went through the action points from the 6th Icon DN meeting and the following were discussed:

1. Website updates: the checkbox for joining the Network will be added once the Network is formally approved by the Icon board in September. Tagging for meeting minutes will be considered at a forthcoming website update.
2. Anne-Marrie Steel has visited the Museum and Heritage show and spoken to some Collections Management software companies about the issue of them not wanting to take part in the trade show. They were either unaware of the Icon conference or did not think that their products were of interest to conservators. Anne-Marrie has expanded the list of stakeholders to include organisations in other professions and she will continue to build on this.

3. Horniman thesaurus: Rebeca Suarez Ferreira and Michael Nelles have tried to get more information about the Horniman thesaurus but there has not been any response yet.
4. SPECTRUM and Historical buildings responses: These have now been completed and forwarded.

Icon conference 2016

The presence of the Network at the Icon conference was successful. The papers presented were excellent and the high quality of the student paper in the second session was noticed. The turnout for the sessions was very good considering the large number of parallel sessions running. The discussion was vibrant and everyone thanked Jennifer Marchant for chairing both sessions so well. There are recordings of the sessions that Clare Finn made and can be found online:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5kSSF1HTeG5bVRXMzZRRm1fcU0/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5kSSF1HTeG5Wnd0c0tndS1fdmM/view?usp=sharing>

Some points that we brought up during the discussion session were:

- Value of documentation – minimum time spent: That conservators spent very little time on documentation tasks and that conservation managers consider this work to be less valuable than normal bench work.
- Terminology is important in conservation documentation which has been one of our points of focus anyway.
- Photography as documentation: people mentioned that taking a photo is much faster than writing words, as is comparing photos at different stages. There were various points discussed here including the value of drawing as opposed to a photograph, the importance of metadata accompanying the photos, the issue of terminology for describing photos and the technical specifications of photography.
- Why do we document: mostly people referred to a) condition reports for when objects were displayed and how they returned from loans, b) compliance with insurance policies, perhaps we should involve insurance companies to ensure that documentation records are adequate for them.
- Legacy data has been identified as a problem: various examples of thousands of pages of early documents of conservation records were mentioned.
- Good testimonials about KEMu – Axiell. Concerns about Axiell monopolising the market were raised and the fact that data integration through monopoly takes control away from the professionals. Part of the role of the documentation network is to influence companies' choices.
- Reasoning behind choices in conservation practice is not documented, but documentation systems should be more geared towards transparency in decision making.

There was also some discussion about approaching Axiell through the user conferences they organise. Rebecca Suarez-Ferreira has already circulated a newsletter from Axiell with information about forthcoming conferences on the Icon DN mailing list.

Targets for Network outputs

The group agreed that the Network should consider producing practical outputs which will benefit conservators undertaking documentation.

Thanasis Velios proposed forming two working groups, one for book and paper and another for paintings. The working groups will collect examples of populated documentation forms from various stakeholder institutions. They will review them and propose a set of guidelines and good

examples of documentation forms. During this process they will collect relevant resources (e.g. thesauri) and will include guidelines for data integration. Among others issues of criteria of layered documentation, justification of decision making, technical and metadata guidelines will also be considered.

Michelle Stoddard suggested that a number of institutions are currently reviewing their documentation workflows and therefore this is a good time to undertake such work.

Sarah Jarron suggested that she can follow similar steps with the stained glass conservators.

It was proposed that we combine this task with our call for documentation forms to the wider conservation community. This could be in the form of a questionnaire. Jennifer Marchant has already considered a number of questions to ask.

Action – Thanasis Velios to email the Network for volunteers for the two working groups. Rebecca Suarez-Ferreira to send her existing collection of documentation forms to Clare Finn. Jennifer Marchant to send initial ideas to the group. Frances Halahan to draft a questionnaire and circulate.

Jennifer Marchant proposed the development of a resource which will summarise the kind of resources which are being discussed in the group as well as a continuation of Jane Egan's review of documentation training.

Action – Clare Finn to revisit Jane Egan's report and summarise it. Jennifer Marchant to circulate notes and ideas for further activities (Jennifer has already done that).

A.O.B

A question was raised about an update on ConservationSpace. The group was not aware of any updates published by the project.

The group discussed reCollections at Robert Lane's request for feedback in terms of a possible collaboration and sharing of resources. It was clarified that this website is very much work in progress. Some members of the group had not reviewed the website but in principle the group welcomes new avenues of sharing resources. Clarification is needed on where does the existing content on reCollections originate from. The group would be happy to discuss how best any resource produced can be linked.

Action – Thanasis Velios to follow up with Robert Lane.

There was no decision on the date and place of the next meeting, but the Wellcome Trust is again a possibility, as is Chelsea College.

Presentations

Following the meeting Dave Thompson gave a presentation about digital preservation to the group. His presentation will be circulated to the mailing list.