

President's Report

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This is the last time I write as National President as I will be standing down at the Annual General Meeting in September. Looking back over the past four years (and 16 President's reports) there are a number of highlights worth mentioning, including: the expansion of the Conservator of the Year awards to incorporate new award categories; the new website and the smorgasbord of information that can be found there; AICCM's coordination of offers of assistance following the horrific bush fires in Victoria; the review and impending reinstatement of the Professional Membership category; and the development of the Preservation Needs Assessment template for the Community Heritage Grant program run by the National Library of Australia.

While there has been much progress, there have been a few projects that fell by the wayside: we have a public fund and lots of projects that we'd like to fund, but are yet to develop a fund raising strategy and raise some substantial funds; and we'd like to develop a "Conservation Angels" scheme, like that run by the AIC. These and other projects are just waiting for someone to pick them up and run with them. If you're interested in being involved, call anyone on council.

I've been privileged to work with many special people during my time on council. While I run the risk of offending some people by omission, I can't resist the opportunity to thank the following council members who made it especially worthwhile: **Kay Söderlund** who talked me into standing

for President again and again, and was always ready to be a sounding board; **Maria Kubik** for her calmness, clarity and financial diligence; **Davina Hacklin** for de-bugging the membership database and for bringing a sense of fun and lightness to the meetings; **Ian MacLeod** for being constantly entertaining and giving timely words of encouragement; **Alice Cannon** for her visionary ideas and steady focus; **Elizabeth Hadlow** for her practical and positive approach; **Jenny Dickens** for her attention to detail; **Alex Ellem** for her relaxed warmth and sense of ease; **Christine Ianna** for immersing herself in Professional Membership and Continuing Professional Development; **Sarah-Jane Rennie** for always offering to help (does she sleep); and **Fiona Tennant** for her can-do attitude and amazing organizational skills. I've been inspired and motivated by your enthusiasm, commitment and resilience, warmed by your humour, affection and support. Of course there were many more people involved with council; to one and all, thank you!

I've always thought of myself as a fairly resourceful person, used to finding my own answers, but working with the council has helped me realize that it's easier and more satisfying when you can share the responsibility. If you enjoy working collectively to find solutions to challenges, I wholeheartedly encourage you to stand for a council position. You'll be in great company!

Tamara Lavrencic
5 August 2009

From The Editors

The retirement of Alan Lloyd has been recognised with a major article in the latest Australian Art Review (August 2009), and it reminds us how young our profession really is. Alan has led a highly distinguished career at the Art Gallery of NSW, being trained by Bill Boustead who many conservators see as the founding father of conservation in Australia. So we are essentially only two working generations old as a profession. It is relevant therefore to include in this newsletter an article by Hans-Christoph von Imhoff on the history of the profession and how recently it all started. The Second World War and actions around the protection of artworks during it was a key catalyst and with the recognition of the need for professional conservators,

so too came the requirement for the establishment of university courses to train them.

After the training hiccups of recent years, we are fortunate in Australia now to have two dedicated and thriving university training establishments in Melbourne and Canberra, and in this edition we have news and comments from both.

Also in this edition look for:

- The State in Focus profiling the conservation establishments in the ACT
- The interview with Michael Marendy, a textile conservator in Queensland and long term stalwart of the AICCM Queensland branch

- Our Canberra reporter, Ian Batterham, reports on the response to the photograph of an unknown conservator and has another one for us to solve.

Meanwhile the AICCM 2009 Perth conference is falling into shape well with an impressive range of papers and a great program being put together by the AICCM WA Branch. It is going to be THE place to be seen in September folks, so hot foot to Perth and we look forward to catching up with many of you there.

Fiona Tennant and Julian Bickersteth.

State in Focus – ACT

ACT Division of the AICCM

The ACT is a state with an abundance of cultural institutions. This includes those with conservators – NMA, AWM, NFSA, NLA AIATSI, NAA and NGA and those without – National Portrait Gallery, Museum of Australian Democracy, Parliament House, Old Parliament House as well as many small museums/historical sites such as Blundell's Cottage. The constituency is therefore potentially big and we work hard to get the AICCM known as broadly as possible amongst all of these institutions. In this way we hope to increase membership and the profile of conservation generally.

The local AICCM council has a good representation from most of the big institutions as well as a private conservator. We are also in discussions with the UC students about having a student Representative.

We have had an interesting mix of events this year including a visit to the Australian Federal Police document forensics lab and a talk from Kylie Roth about the conservation of a mummy at MONA in Tasmania. Our next meeting is a visit to the Queanbeyan Printing Museum to see the presses in action.

Australian War Memorial

Conservation began at the Australia War Memorial in 1970 with one conservator, Les Byron. It has since grown to over 22 conservators and 8 assistant conservators and technical staff. The conservation facilities are located 14km away from the main museum in three purpose built buildings in the light industrial suburb of Mitchell. The first of these buildings was completed in 1979 the last building in 1994.

The Australian War Memorial

(Memorial) is the largest conservation laboratory in Australia. It has two conservation teams, one, managed by Laura Kennedy, comprises Large Technology, Objects and Preventive Conservators, the other, managed by Cathy Challenor covers Painting, Paper, Photographic, and Textile Conservators. The two conservation teams are part of a broader section called Collection Services managed by Barbara Reeve, which also incorporates Registration and the Collection Database Management teams.

The Memorial has an active volunteer program and is actively supporting the University of Canberra's new conservation course. We have conservation students already volunteering in our labs, and we will be working with University of Canberra to provide practical skills training for students from early 2010.

The conservators care for a very diverse collection, which ranges over archives, photographs, works of art, uniforms and accoutrements, souvenirs, weapons, aircraft, tanks, etc. Many items require expertise from a variety of specialist conservators, for example First World War aircraft can be covered with textiles and paint. The challenges of working as a conservator at the Australian War Memorial extend to managing and conserving hazardous items such as asbestos lined helmets, radioactive dials, weapons and pharmaceuticals, to name just a few!

Over the past 12 years the Memorial has seen extensive gallery redevelopment and a vigorous program of Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions, all of which has involved extensive work from the conservators. We have redeveloped our Orientation, World War Two, Aircraft Hall and 1945 to Today galleries. ANZAC Hall was completed in 2001 and now houses some of the largest conserved items in the collection. In 2009/10 we will be embarking on redevelopment of the Hall of Valour, and our Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions include: Sydney Nolan, Love and War, A is for Animals and Framing Conflicts.

National Archives of Australia (NAA)

The NAA is a national organisation with its National Office in Canberra and offices in all the State Capitals. The three biggest groups of archival material are held in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra and it is in these offices that we have staffed conservation sections. The Preservation section in Canberra dates back to the early 1970s when a single conservator was appointed to look after its archive. Since then its function has grown and passed through various permutations.

The Preservation section in Canberra is currently overseen by a Director who has responsibility for a range of other functions. Below him comes Assistant

Director Ian Batterham who carries out high level policy and development work with the assistance of other staff. The Assistant Director also has over all responsibility for the conservation laboratories in Canberra and Sydney, exhibition conservation and preservation digitisation. The exhibition conservation program is managed by Kylie Roth whilst Peter Shaw manages the Preservation Digitisation Program. We also have a conservation chemist, Rajani Rai, in Canberra who runs the archival quality testing program, does the Photographic Activity Test and looks after our range of analytical equipment which includes an FTIR machine and a Spectrophotometer. We currently also have an onsite preventive conservator, Alison McCrindle, who works to the national manager of Preventive conservation based in Melbourne.

The Canberra Conservation laboratory has a manager, Tania Riviere, and a number of professional conservation staff as well as assistants and technicians. In Canberra the focus of the conservation section is in the areas of intensive conservation treatments and remedial treatments as well as assisting with the work of the preventive conservator and exhibition conservator. Staff are also involved in training other staff in safe records handling and outreach activities such as conservation clinics. Certain staff members also have responsibility for providing advice and assistance to some of the smaller state offices.

The collection in Canberra is vast and varied. It includes much file material, maps and plans, photographs, objects and artworks. This material is of variable intrinsic value ranging from material that is only significant for the information it holds, up to iconic national treasures such as the Walter Burley Griffin Canberra designs and Holtermann photographic panoramas. Because of this great range, a variety of different approaches are taken to conservation, from simple repackaging, to digital imaging to intensive treatment. An archival conservator

therefore needs to have the ability to match the approach to the value of the object.

University of Canberra

I have been asked to introduce myself. I have been appointed as the new Senior Lecturer in Cultural Heritage Conservation at the University of Canberra. I will be working closely with conservators both in the museums and private practice to develop a new program in conservation. Conservation students will be based both in the university and working, as an integral part of the course, in the conservation department of museums. Students will have a sound academic education supported by practical training in the industry.

I graduated in archaeological conservation from the University of Cardiff in 1976. Since then I have worked in various museums in the UK working on a wide range of archaeological, social history, ethnographical and other objects. I have worked both in the museums and in the field as an archaeological conservator. I started teaching conservation in Lincoln in the UK in 1988. Working with colleagues we developed the conservation programs from small further education courses into a range of undergraduate and post graduate courses.

I managed to escape twice during this time. In 2000 to spend a year on a government funded program developing education programs in small and voluntary museums. In 2007 I worked as the senior conservator on the summer program for the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust.

I have now been at UC for 6 weeks and in Australia for 8. This is a big job and I am overwhelmed by the help and good will from the conservators. I have a lot to do and a lot to learn. I would love to hear from ex Canberra graduates with their experiences, observations or just to

say hi. I am looking to put together an alumni list of past students and photos of Canberra conservation students doing conservation stuff for publicity. Please get in touch.

John Greenwood

National Museum of Australia

History of the Conservation Department.

The National Museum of Australia Act was passed in 1980 and within months a conservation department commenced operations at Wiluna Street (an old transport depot) in the Canberra industrial suburb of Fyshwick.

Another lab and storage area was subsequently leased at 115 Wollongong Street Fyshwick, previously a lab occupied by the Australian Archives.

A purpose built repository with a general conservation laboratory was built at 9-13 Vicars Street Mitchell and opened in 1985.

The Wollongong Street facility was vacated during 1993 in favour of a leased facility which was redeveloped internally at 90 Vicars Street Mitchell complete with a conservation lab to augment the 9-13 Vicars Street facility. This lab was fitted out with the notable 1970's lab furniture from 115 Wollongong Street which included orange cupboards and green laminex bench tops with beige and brown trim.

Over the years the Conservation department has been led consistently by a small select number of staff including Margaret Alexander, Janet Hughes and Eric Archer.

Today the 90 Vicars Street facility has grown by the lease of the 3 other units within the 4 unit complex to function as a major repository for the National Historic Collection. Additional conservation laboratories have been constructed here. This has allowed all conservators to be located at the one

address. The 4 labs are defined as: Paper/Textiles, Objects, Technology, and Research and Analysis. The Research and Analysis facility includes an XRF facility, a fade-meter and polarising light microscope.

Since 1988 the conservation department was involved with temporary exhibitions. Since 1992 conservation expanded its activity with the preparation and travelling of many exhibitions to capital cities and rural venues.

The development of the National Museum of Australia at Acton peninsula allowed for a large intake of conservation staff. This project resulted in the Museum opening to the public in 2001. Since this date our development has been driven by a varied and complex program of temporary and travelling exhibitions reflecting the huge spectrum of material within the National Historic Collection. We have been fortunate in being part of a number of ARC linkage grants including bark paintings, archaeological textiles, and dyes and pigments. Other research has included materials analysis of the Leichhardt plate and our review of lighting guidelines for the display of museum objects.

Staffing is currently 16 plus 3 volunteers. Our skill base has developed from a very broad spectrum of expertise which has allowed us to meet many varied, unexpected but rewarding challenges.

Mark Henderson

National Gallery of Australia

The National Gallery of Australia's Conservation Department first formed at an off-site storage facility in the late 1970s as the collection was being developed. It was not until 1982 – as the Gallery building neared completion – that the conservation lab was up and running, providing a full conservation service.

The Department is divided into five sections: Paintings, Objects, Textiles, Paper and Preventive Conservation, each managed by a senior conservator. Currently the lab employs 19 trained conservators, 10 technical assistants and a small team of wonderful volunteers. Conservation staff are responsible for the care of over 180,000 works of fine art from the Australian and international artistic traditions. Staff undertake up to 8,000 treatments each year and devote considerable time to research. Current research projects include in-depth research and conservation of the work of Danila Vassilieff, conservation techniques for theatre costumes and Indian *pichhawai* (painted cloth) and the identification and treatment of materials used in contemporary works of art.

The conservation team are committed to education and provide training, present lectures and supervise internships both locally and internationally. Staff present approximately 50 lectures and publish more than a dozen articles on their work and research. More locally, they respond to hundreds of inquiries from members of the public. This year four students from Southeast Asia will join the conservation department to undertake a training program funded by the Getty Institute.

Annually, staff prepare over a thousand works of art for loan to other institutions and NGA travelling exhibitions and often accompany these works to monitor conditions and assist with installations. In 2010, Phase 1 of the NGA Building Project will be complete, including a new front entrance, foyer and several exhibition galleries. Staff are busy preparing the additional one thousand works required for these galleries and are undertaking major treatments for upcoming exhibitions: *McCubbin: Last Impressions* (August 2009) *Emerging Elders: honouring our senior Indigenous artists from the national collection* (October 2009), *Shimmer* (November 2009), *Masterpieces from Paris* (December 2009) and *Ballets Russes: the art of costume* (late 2010).

Art & Archival Pty Ltd

Art & Archival was originally started by Kerry McInnis whose vision was a commercial paper conservation venture operating from a leased public space that specialised in paper conservation but may one day expand to include other non-paper based materials. She recognised the attractiveness and advantages of operating a private professional practice from a dedicated business premises.

In 1982, existing private services in the Canberra Region consisted of low public profile operations, largely in domestic environments. Although most of the national public collections were serviced by in house laboratory conservators and assistance, it was apparent that the possibilities of working under contract for the ACT's national and local institutions were as real as they were inviting.

Art & Archival commenced operations and was officially opened by Dr Colin Pearson in 1982 in our inaugural lab space – a large room above the Queanbeyan Age in beautiful downtown Queanbeyan. Two moves later, we operate from our purpose built Queanbeyan laboratory.

Art & Archival changed ownership in 2000 with Kerry wishing to return to her artistic roots. Kim Morris assumed the mantle and assisted by Kate Eccles-Smith, Rachel Spano, and a long list of past and present staff, continued to build Art & Archival into the multi-discipline practice of today utilising in-house and contract expertise as required. As Kerry envisaged all those years earlier the practice has developed in response to demand and the need to provide a comprehensive service to both private and institutional clients.

Today Art & Archival remains synonymous with conservation activity in the ACT and elsewhere in Australia providing a full range of laboratory and site based services including conservation treatments, training, consultancy, disaster response

and recovery, collection management, condition reporting and packing and exhibition preparation.



Photograph: L-R: Mick Fogarty, Teresa Duhigg, Kate Eccles-Smith, Kim Morris and Rachel Spano in the lab at Art & Archival.

National Library of Australia, Preservation Services

The Preservation Services section at the National Library of Australia currently consists of 10 staff, including six paper conservators, a bookbinder, an assistant bookbinder and two staff who work on preparing collections for reformatting, both digitisation and microfilming. The section is managed by Jennifer Lloyd. The laboratory space has been located in a number of different parts of the building, but since the mid 80's has been on the fourth floor with fantastic views of the lake and the National Museum of Australia. The natural light is very useful to us and the view is a bonus. The laboratory underwent refurbishment for three months early in 2009 and this work saw the replacement of fume hoods and the removal of two internal walls and all of the concreted down benches and cupboards. The new layout consists of furniture that can be moved around the open plan space easily and is much more functional than the previous set up.

The National Library collection consists of millions of books, but also has extensive collections of art, objects, maps, newspapers, photographs, audio collections and manuscripts. The audio collections are managed by the Sound

Preservation area which is attached to the Oral History collection. Their work involves converting analogue recordings to digital format and managing the preservation of both formats. There is a separate section that deals with the National Library's extensive digital collection, including born digital items, reformatted digital objects and websites that are captured in the web archiving program. The Preservation Services section is responsible for managing the preservation of the rest of the collections.

The preservation of collections at the Library is not only undertaken by the Preservation staff. Many people within the special collection areas, the cataloguers and the Stack staff, work at rehousing and protecting the collection during their every day activities. New acquisitions are rehousing as they are processed and over time the Library has become more proactive in ensuring new collections arrive in appropriate housing materials so they can go straight onto the shelves without extensive rehousing work.

The Library's collections are all 'working collections' meaning that they are accessed by users in our Reading Rooms every day. Certain categories of collection items are also sent outside the building on loan to other libraries as inter library loans. Our preservation work at the Library must always focus on the accessibility of the collections now and into the future, and our digitisation program is very active, ensuring that digital images of the collections can be made available to people all around the world.

We tend to focus our attention on our Australian Collections, since they are our prime collecting responsibility, but a considerable portion of our preservation activities support the National Library's exhibitions and digitisation programs. We depend on the curators of our collections to guide us in making decisions about collections which require attention and the type of treatments that collection items

warrant. For example some general collections can be *replaced* rather than be repaired.

In 2011 the National Library will be opening its Treasures Gallery, which will consist of a permanent display of the Library's treasures. Whilst maintaining an exhibitions program of this type will be challenging, it will focus our attention on important items in the collections that need preservation attention. It will challenge our perceptions of how long items can safely be on display without damage, and enable us to undertake research in a number of important areas of interest.

National Film and Sound Archive

The National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) employs more than 50 preservation specialists who repair, clean and transfer the NFSA's collection of 1.4 million items of films, sound recordings, videos, documents and artefacts.

Traditional conservation tasks are carried out by one staff member who specialises in documents and artefacts conservation, and another who specialises in audiovisual conservation. These conservators work across a large number of different media in the collection in order to stabilise items or to assist them to be safely transferred or accessed.

Active research into cutting edge conservation methods is also an important focus for the NFSA. For example, we have recently carried out tests on a rare form of zinc disc

decomposition, and have developed a new technique for unblocking magnetic stripe soundtracks from archival news footage.

Our conservation expertise is highly sought after from archives and media organisations in Australia and around the world. We have recently provided expert advice to organisations in Papua New Guinea, and have worked with New York University in Ghana to build preservation infrastructure and to increase conservation skills and knowledge in a number of media organisations. We have also been invited to be part of the teaching team for the ICCROM International Course on Sound and Image Collections Conservation to be held in New Dehli, India in November/December 2009.

Other conservation related activities at NFSA include the storage of collection material in world class vaults, and a range of cyclical maintenance programs.

Lab and People News

Victoria

Museum Victoria

Lab News

Over recent months the conservation team has been hard at work with a number of major exhibition projects. **Marion Parker** worked on the installation of the 'Star Wars: Where Science Meets Imagination' at Scienceworks while **Elizabeth McCartney** and **Helen Privett** worked on 'A Day in Pompeii'. Both exhibitions are breaking records for attendance at Museum Victoria and there is general feeling of excitement and enthusiasm amongst staff and visitors for these blockbusters. 'Ancestral Power and the Aesthetic', a joint exhibition between

Museum Victoria and University of Melbourne/Ian Potter Museum of Art, opened in May to high praise – if you have the opportunity we highly recommend seeing the exhibition which is open until 23 August. **Sheldon Teare**, **Antonia Ross**, Elizabeth McCartney and Marion Parker did a fantastic job stabilising around 22 oversized bark paintings from the Donald Thomson Collection, many of which are on display for the first time. We've continued working on the usual array of loans, including a large loan of visual illusion and entertainment objects for the redevelopment of the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. **Sam Hamilton** has ably been managing this complex loan.

The team has just acquired a portable XRF unit from Bruker and are beginning a major project assessing the use of heavy metal based pesticides

in a portion of our natural sciences collection. The team is very excited about the other opportunities having ready access to this equipment will present.

Work also continues on the Great Melbourne Telescope project; this will be the subject of a presentation at the AICCM National Conference.

People News

We've had a number of arrivals and departures over the last couple of months. We welcomed **Felicity Bolton** from her previous role at the Horniman Museum in London as our (inaugural) Natural Sciences Conservator. Felicity brings a wealth of experience in natural sciences collections and we look forward to making significant steps in our care of these collections with her guidance. After 9 months away on maternity leave

we welcome **Karina Palmer** back to the team on 3 August.

We bade Sheldon Teare a sad farewell at the end of June. Sheldon worked with us on a number of projects, including the Ancestral Power and the Aesthetic exhibition, the Spencer and Gillen ARC Grant project and a survey of restricted material in the Indigenous Cultures department. Aside from doing great work, Sheldon was a pleasure to have in the team.

And last, but certainly not least, we said farewell to **Michelle Berry**. Michelle had been a vital part of the Museum Victoria conservation team for nearly 20 years and her experience, good humour and in depth knowledge of the Museum, conservation and the Melbourne criminal underworld is sorely missed. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Objects Special Interest Group

Greetings to members of the Object Special Interest Group. I'd like to express a big thankyou to **Amanda Pagliarino** for leading the group for many years and enthusiastically arranging a number of fantastic development opportunities. As the new Objects Special Interest Group Convenor, I'd like to invite members to let me know what they'd like the group to focus on next. Any comments, feedback or suggestions would be gratefully received. If you could also send expression of interest in meeting at the AICCM National Conference to discuss future activities I'd really appreciate it.

Helen Privett

hprivett@museum.vic.gov.au

Heritage Victoria's Conservation Laboratory

The lab is humming along with several concurrent conservation projects, including an interesting (land based archaeological) treatment project for a pair of wooden staved water pipes which date from the period of Melbourne's earliest sewage system. The HV Lab welcomed several CCMC students in July who worked under the supervision of **Susie Collis** on a ceramic treatment project and also assisted Susie with a key stage of the water pipes treatment.

Jennifer Anderson, Jennifer Brian, Silva Da Roche and Claire Tindal each undertook a treatment of a 19th century ceramic destined for public display; their task involved assessing the object, reversing the failed joins, identifying the failed adhesive, and then cleaning and rejoining the ceramic. Thanks to these students for spending some of their semester break at the HV Lab and for providing some valued assistance to the HV lab conservator.

Fine Arts Conservation Centre, North Melbourne

Andrew Thorn has spent several weeks this year assessing salt damage to mural paintings in a Danish church. The paintings were first applied in 1240 with the more substantial modern scheme appearing later that century. The distribution analysis helped reconfigure the problem and thus avoid misdirected treatments. Andrew has since spent several months working on a sandstone monument, and acrylic based outdoor murals in Sydney.

Sabine Cotte spent 6 weeks in Mustang, Northern Nepal, working on a mural painting conservation project and training of local conservators and architects. The project was initiated last year with a documentation and conservation assessment training workshop for post grad architects, and developed this year, in collaboration

with an NGO implementing sustainable development projects in the area. The difficult conditions of work, in a 10th century cave temple, with no electricity and very little space, greatly enhanced the team's problem-solving skills and made the beautiful result even more valuable. The most interesting challenge was the liaison of structural and painting conservation work in a temple in daily use, and work with local teams of different backgrounds. One of the side benefits is also to put life in a different perspective and rediscover "forgotten" pleasures like a hot shower upon return to Australia!

State Library of Victoria

Staff are preparing items for *'Till you drop: Shopping - A Melbourne History*, which opens in October. **Jane Hinwood** and **David Harris** have been removing miles of sticky tape from an advertising poster for *Aquamac*, a brand of raincoat. David had the brilliant idea of using our set of heat tools. The poster is very large and was printed in four separate pieces. It will be lined prior to display. The exhibition will also feature photographs, shopping bags, architectural plans and advertising brochures.

Shelley Jamieson and **Catherine McFarlane** acted as couriers to transport one of the State Library's rare books *The Commentaries of Isaiah* to Roermond, an ex-Carthusian monastery in Limburg, the Netherlands. The book was part of the exhibition *The secret of silence: the hidden world of the Carthusians in Roermond*.

Jane, David, Shelley, **Alice Cannon** and our installation crew **Mark Galea** and **Jordan Marani** hung a 12 metre work by Juan Davila in the Library's historic Cowen Gallery. The work, a screen print titled *A Panorama of Melbourne*, consists of three separate sections which were attached to the wall with magnets.

Peter Block has been mounting and framing numerous works for the next changeover of our permanent exhibition

Mirror of the World, including a series of fifteenth century woodblock prints from our Rare Books collection. He has also mounted a series of photographs by Richard Daintree, circa 1859-1863.

After bindery Apollo Moon closed earlier in the year, the book conservators **Jean Holland, Ian Cox, Katrina Ben and Helen McPherson** have been trialling a number of Victorian and interstate service providers to take on our external binding.

Catherine, **Amanda Wild** and **Sarah Haselton** have organised a variety of loans to Victorian institutions, including works for exhibitions about Ern Malley, Albert Tucker and Charles Darwin. Sarah and Ian installed a number of books and framed photographs for the exhibition *Break a Leg* at the City Museum, about the history of theatre in Melbourne.

Virginia Dahlenburg recently cleaned and revarnished a later work by William Strutt, *The Burial of Burke*. This painting will go on exhibition in the Cowen Gallery in 2010.

SLV was also fortunate to be able to borrow an XRF machine from Bruker Technologies in May. We used the machine to examine some deteriorated polypropylene (Corflute) found within storage enclosures. One sample had yellowed considerably and another had become extremely brittle. We are still investigating, but use of the XRF machine confirmed that the Corflute contained titanium, which may have contributed both to stress cracking and photolytic degradation.

NAA Melbourne Office

The end of the Financial Year also coincided with closure for many of the projects that Preservation Staff have been involved with over the recent months. The photograph albums documenting the active duties of the previous Government Ministers, the Hon. Andrew Peacock and Lord Richard Casey, have been treated

and re-housed. The biggest challenge with these projects was removing photographs from the notoriously nasty self-adhesive albums and to replace the pages with archival materials whilst closely trying to replicate the look and integrity of the original albums.

Long before the advent of fancy computer software, presentations were illustrated using glass lantern slides. The lab and repackaging staff have been working on one such pre-war collection from CSIRO. These beautiful items, often hand-coloured, include depictions of the trialling of new crops and grasses, and experiments in plant and cattle disease control – if you're a fan of prickly pears pics, this is the one for you!

As per usual, other routine work relating to referrals and intercepts have been running concurrently with the set projects. **Sarah Gubby** has been conserving a number of original posters from our Women's Land Army collection ('A healthy open-air life'), whilst **Debra Parry** has been repairing and re-binding some small index books relating to Australian Lighthouses.

The Preservation Digitisation Team is kept occupied in their grey room by the continuing project to digitise promotional material from our Board of Trade Collection.

David Parker, Amy Bartlett, Sarah Gubby and **Debra Parry** were privileged to attend the opening of the temporary village at Marysville, a community devastated by the Black Saturday bushfires. Representing both the NAA and the AICCM, they were able to talk to some of the locals and offer advice about the salvage of affected artefacts. It was heart-warming to witness a community pulling together to rebuild their lives after such a tragic event.

The Shrine of Remembrance recently hosted an NAA exhibition entitled 'Shell-Shocked: Australia After Armistice'. This popular and well received exhibition commemorated the Armistice and the impact of World War

I on Australian society. **Debra Parry** and **David Parker** assisted the Shrine staff and other NAA colleagues with the installation and de-installation.

The annual visit of the Melbourne University Conservation Masters students to our facilities here at East Burwood gave them the opportunity to see first-hand the approach of a major archive to conservation. The morning session included a couple of talks given by the lab staff, and a tour of the repositories and the laboratory. All students were given a 'show-bag' to remember the occasion.

We had to sadly say good-bye to **Savina Hopkins** who has taken up an on-going position at the State Library of Victoria, whilst we welcome **Jennifer O'Connell**. Jenny is currently completing the Masters Course at Melbourne Uni and will join the team here for two days a week until later in the year. We've already broken Jenny in by taking her to the Burvale Pub!

Tasmania

Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

Stephanie McDonald has been busy with a variety of jobs over the last few months. Four extraordinary early photographic panoramas of Hobart including a salted paper print by Frederick Frith were donated to the Archives by a local church. These required only minor treatments and new housings. Full-size digital reproductions were made for the donors in thanks. Stephanie has also re-housed 90 early maps and plans along with the humidification and minor repair of 26 Mt Lyell mining company tracing paper plans from 1942 of Blue Tier in Tasmania's north east. An archivist commented that most of the elevations would be of ground that has since disappeared in the mining process!! Stephanie coordinated with staff to produce a medium/long-term

display paying tribute to William Walker – a philanthropist who donated his collection of Tasmanian books to the State Library in 1923. Stephanie has also made a number of visits to government agencies to advice on storage issues for material destined to come to the Tas. Archives.

New South Wales

Powerhouse Museum

Lab News

Rebecca Main has been cleaning, re-assembling and repairing ambrotypes from the Museum's early photographic collection and the Sydney Observatory photographic collection. She has also been working on three pairs of Adam Gilchrist's cricket gloves for the Bradman Museum. Kate Pollard has been documenting the Museum's car collection at Castle Hill and is currently reproducing archive material from the Weatherly Sisters Circus on the Powerhouse Museum website.

Our Loans team, **Nadia McDougall**, **Frances Fitzpatrick**, **Margaret Juraszek** and **Skye Mitchell**, have had a busy few months, preparing objects for numerous outward loans, including Apollo 11 stamps, first day covers and 3D postcards going to Sydney University and swimwear from the Annette Kellerman collection for the National Maritime Museum's *Exposed: The Story of Swimwear* exhibition.

Skye and Margaret worked on a number of objects for loan to Maitland Regional Art Gallery for an installation by artist Fiona Davies entitled *Intangible Collection*.

The team also prepared objects for loan to a new venue in Melbourne, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. Costumes worn by Nicole Kidman in the film *Moulin Rouge* and the armour worn by Heath Ledger in *Ned Kelly* were among the objects lent

for an exhibition entitled the *History of the Moving Image*.

The Exhibitions team, **Teresa Werstak**, **Gosia Dudek**, **Suzanne Chee**, **Dee McKillop**, **Tim Morris** and **Bronwen Griffin** have been preparing objects for an upcoming exhibition which focuses on lifestyle and popular culture in the 1980s. The conservation labs have been filling up with all sorts of memorabilia including Nintendo Game Boys, Smurfs, Yo-Yo's and Cabbage Patch dolls. Conservation Photographer, **Nitsa Yioupros**, has been kept busy photographing all the objects for this extensive exhibition as well as photographing objects for the outward loans team. We feel very lucky to have her in the team.

Teresa travelled to Heide Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne to dismantle *Modern Times: the untold story of Modernism in Australia*. Suzanne then installed the travelling exhibition at the State Library of Queensland. *Modern Times* explores the transformation of all aspects of modern life and focuses on our unique experience of modernism. Objects drawn from five decades – 1917 to 1967 – reveal how our cosmopolitan culture was shaped.

Suzanne also worked on and installed 40 colourful textiles for the exhibition *Ties with Tradition: Macedonian Apron Designs*, a joint project with the NSW Migration Heritage Centre for Sydney Design Week. The display showcases Macedonian aprons from the Illawarra region, traditionally used for weddings, other special occasions and for everyday use.

Bronwen has prepared the Museum's display for the Apollo 11 lunar landing 40th anniversary, and has partially restrung the Lyon and Healy Concert Harp and lowered the pitch, to lower the tension on the neck and slow the progress of warping. She is also preparing Angus Young's Gibson Guitar for loan to the Arts Centre, Melbourne for their exhibition *AC/DC: Australia's Family Jewels*.

Archives Conservator, **James Elwing** has just trained two interns in basic archival conservation and environmental improvements. The interns, local government officers from Inverell, care for water damaged council and local history records and photographs. In other work, James made a facsimile photograph album to replace one thought too fragile & light sensitive for a display of Observatory lightning strike photographs.

Kate Chidlow has been continuing work on the Australian Dress Register database, an online database collection of Australian dress prior to 1945. We are trying to collect information about dress from this period from major and minor institutions and from individual collectors before it disappears. Institutions and individuals are asked to display their five most significant outfits. The resources attached to the database will help people learn about significance statements, research, measuring, storage, photography, dressing a mannequin etc. We are also running workshops in key regional areas on how to research and preserve dress for the Australian Dress Register. The resources, which are accessible to anyone, include help notes, information sheets, lots of photos and videos. The database will be launched in November 2009 and is promising to be an exciting project.

Kate also installed the travelling exhibition *Greening the Silver City* at the Canberra Botanic Gardens and she is working on the Powerhouse Museum's disaster plan with Conservation Scientist **Sue Gatenby** and other staff members.

People News

Sadly, we said goodbye to Photographer, **Chris Brothers**, and Conservator, **Tasha MacFarlane** at the end of their contracts for the Powerhouse Museum's Total Asset Management (TAM) project. The TAM project was set up to provide care and maintenance for the Museum's stored collection and includes dedicated staff from Conservation, Curatorial

and Registration departments. Most recently Chris had been scanning and photographing the Powerhouse archives and early photographic collection which is now accessible on the Museum's website. Tasha had been carrying out a conservation survey of the Museum's plastics collection, while working on objects for the Observatory and for travelling exhibitions. Tasha now has a position at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, while Chris has moved to Canberra with his family. Meanwhile, the TAM project continues, with Photographer **Kate Pollard** and Conservator **Rebecca Main**.

State Library of New South Wales

Lab News

In late July, **Nichola Parshall** and **Cecilia Harvey** prepared and installed a loan of 13 items to the Parramatta Heritage and Information Centre. The items will be in the exhibition *Breaking the Shackles*. The exhibition looks at over 100 findings which have been dug up from various sites around Parramatta and runs from 1 August to 8 November.

The year of Darwin continues. **Lang Ngo**, **Nikki Ellis** and **Cathryn Bartley** recently de-installed the *Darwin Downunder* exhibition while **Steve Bell** has prepared and is travelling to the Ian Potter Museum with a loan of 14 items for their *Reframing Darwin: evolution and art in Australia*. This is an exhibition of more than 120 items dedicated to exploring the lasting legacy of Charles Darwin in art, science and culture in Australia.

People News

Martin Polkinghorne will be on leave from us for 5 months as he takes up a position working with the early photographic collection of the National Museum of Cambodia. In the meantime we welcome **Glynis Scowen** who will be working with us in Martin's absence.

International Conservation Services

Lab News

The furniture section has been taken over by the City of Sydney's Council Chambers furniture, where **Oliver Hull**, **Kat Edghill** and **Eoin O'Sullivan** are busily preparing it for a new life in the restored Town Hall. It is an interesting suite, not least because it was designed by the Town Hall's architect, Hennessey and presumably constructed by the builder as there are very few proper joints and much use of nails and screws, i.e. a joiner's rather than a cabinet maker's approach to furniture.

Anna Diakowska-Czarnota and **Matteo Volonte** have been continuing their work on a range of paintings from MONA, both in Sydney and at MONA in Hobart, whilst also assisting the National Trust in a full assessment of their art collection.

Felicity Turner, **Kate Papierniak**, **Karina Acton** and **Wendi Powell** are preparing a range of paper-based, objects and other memorabilia for display in the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park South. This important building reopens after major renovations and with a new exhibition area in November 2009.

Karina worked with **Peter Maxwell** to undertake various conservation works on bronzes around Sydney and the Royal Botanic Gardens. **Arek Werstak** also undertook marble repairs on some of the Gardens' statuary, which has been ignominiously placed in what is known as the 'graveyard' in the 1960s due to changes in public taste. One statue being a copy of a figure by **Antonia Canova**, the famous 19th Century Italian sculptor, required a new head to be carved, necessitating prolonged negotiations with the Canova Foundation and the import of a special form of Carrara marble. The resultant story gained good newspaper and TV coverage on ABC and SBS.

People News

We welcome **Kate Papierniak** as our Senior Paper Conservator, and farewell **Felicity Turner** who is moving to Kate's home state of WA. We also enjoyed having **Alexandra Griffiths** as an intern from the University of Melbourne in the paintings department in August.

State Records NSW

Investigating tape removal on earliest Land Grant Registers – update

In the last newsletter we reported about a project involving the earliest Grant Registers for NSW (dated 1792 to 1825) which are still in the custody of the parent agency. State Records requires the agency to commission conservation treatment however we are assisting in the process by undertaking a small treatment trial to get an accurate estimate of how long, and therefore how expensive, the treatment will be. We have completed the tape removal phase of the treatment which involved the removal of 16 meters of various types of tape from the first section (22 pages) of Register 6, including 7 meters of "magic" tape. This process has taken 30 hours. We are hopeful that the next phase of treatment – repair – will be faster. The book had long lost its binding and will remain loose henceforth.

Crown Plan project

The Department of Lands is digitising its collection of plans, and they will be recalling the series of 5,500 already transferred to State Records in 1925. We have commenced the preparation work for sending these plans to Lands for digital copying and have completed treatment of about 125 plans.....we obviously have some way to go, but the progress has been speedier than we initially anticipated and has thrown up some interesting treatments which we will highlight in an upcoming newsletter.

Floods

Elizabeth Hadlow has been assisting agencies with a couple of floods in the past month – one large and one small. The first involved visits to salvage companies to provide advice and reassurance to the agency personnel that everything was going okay. The second was over the phone to a regional agency. In both instances it was good to note that the people involved decided to contact State Records to get advice rather than keeping it a “secret” which has sometimes occurred in the past.

People News

Dominique Moussou will be going on maternity leave in early September, and unfortunately due to the staff freeze in place in NSW we will be unable to back fill her position. We are hopeful that **Jill Gurney’s** contract will be extended in September.

South Australia

ARTLAB

Lab News

Objects

Artlab’s objects conservators have recently been focused on Japanese artefacts – suits of armour, weapons, screens, and large sculptures. **Justin Gare, Renita Ryan, Filipa Quintela** and **Sophie Parker** were all involved in preparing artefacts for *The Golden Journey: Japanese Art from Australian Collections* which was recently on display at the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA). The South Australian Museum (SAM) also has two suits of Japanese armour in need of major conservation treatment. **Renita Ryan** and **Kristin Philips** are currently trying to formulate a treatment proposal for these items. Justin is presenting a workshop on large objects conservation at the Kadina State History Conference at the end of July. **Jo Dawe** has been leading a survey of the ornithology

collection at SAM, checking for pest infestations, past and present. This is a huge task since the collection comprises many thousands of specimens. Jo and her team are becoming proficient in the pronunciation of Latin. **Megan Sypek** is on maternity leave following the arrival of baby Audrey born in May, our congratulations go to her and Scott.

Projects

Di Whittle and **Zandria Farrell** are looking forward to some time out of the weather, having just finished a season of outdoor memorial treatments for the Adelaide City Council, the latest of which was the Sir Ross Smith memorial. By coincidence, they are now about to commence the conservation assessment and cleaning of the G-EAOU Vickers Vimy aircraft that Sir Ross Smith piloted from England to Australia in his record making flight in 1919.

Paintings

Lisette Burgess is working on an 1830s decorative gilt frame which is in very poor condition. This frame belongs to AGSA painting “Portrait of William Giles”, artist unknown, which **Marek Payna** is currently treating. This involves removal of discoloured varnish and old retouching, inpainting and revarnishing.

All of the paintings team have been involved with the loan preparation of several AGSA paintings for a Sidney Nolan exhibition at Heide Museum of Modern Art, a Frederick McCubbin exhibition at the NGA and an exhibition of James Shaw paintings at the Riddoch Art Gallery in Mount Gambier.

Eugene Taddeo has been working on several aboriginal paintings owned by AGSA. This has involved fitting them onto new supports.

Chris Payne has been treating “Boulevard Montparnasse, Paris” by Will Ashton which is owned by AGSA. This treatment has involved removal of a discoloured varnish. **Gillian Leahy**

has been treating several privately owned paintings, involving cleaning, tear repairs, infilling and inpainting of paint losses. She continues to provide AGSA, Carrick Hill and the Migration Museum with monthly environmental monitoring reports.

Paper

Robyn Tait has been working on an impressive elephant folio of images and maps of Egypt from the State Library Mortlock bequest.

Jodie Proud has recently been working with curators from AGSA for the exhibition of ‘The Universes’ by Sally Selig. The sixteen different sized works are multicoloured spiderwebs caught and fixed to Canson black card. The works will be float mounted with internal hinges to black card, (finding a black card black enough as well as archival has been quite the task!), and measuring and framing the works for exhibition. The similar works by the artist have previously been shown at the Adelaide Biennial and are sure to be popular pieces for the public again due to their delicate and striking characteristic.

Anna Austin is currently in Chicago for a 6 week internship in printmaking.

Helen Szuster has joined the lab in May for a 12 month contract and is busy working on a mezzotint from the Charles Sturt collection.

Preventive

Anne Dineen is currently working with AGSA on the ‘Greening of the Gallery’ Project which involves the complete removal of the existing HVAC system and the installation of a more efficient environmentally friendly system in the historic Elder and Melrose Wings. The project commenced in mid July and is due for completion at the end of November 2009. The wings are remaining open to the general public and will have no central climate control system in place for the duration of the project. Thus-far it is progressing well but is proving to be an

ongoing environmental challenge with Adelaide's now unpredictable and often extreme weather conditions.

People News

Rita Bachmayer, now known as Rita Costabile, is on maternity leave following the arrival of her beautiful baby girl, Isabelle. We wish her and Maurizio all the very best.

Queensland

QAG/Q Cont Art

Lab News

It has been heads down at QAG over the past months. **Liz Wild**, **Lyn Streader**, and Delaware University intern **Marie Stewart** have all completed the preparation of *Floating Life* – an exhibition of indigenous fibre work. With over 400 artworks on display, this involved many hours of designing mounts and sewing artworks to them. UK conservator **Abbey Maxwell Bowen** also volunteered with sculpture conservators recently on Fiona Hall's *Words* and Tony Albert's *Sorry*. **Amanda Pagliarino** continues to work on the *Easton Pearson* fashion exhibition. Amanda and Liz are also starting preparation for *Paperskin* exhibition which will show tapa cloths on open display using a magnet hanging system.

Kim Barrett and mountcutter **Nick Cosgrove** have been kept busy while **Sam Shellard** and mountcutter **Damian Buckley** are on holidays overseas. Kim has been working on preparing work from local indigenous artist Ron Hurley for display at GoMA while also preparing 18th and 19th century Japanese prints for display at QAG.

In paintings conservation, **Anne Carter** and **Gillian Osmond** continue to prepare outward loans and paintings for internal exhibitions. We have recently had luck using Richard Wolbers Pemulen TR2 to prepare solvent in water emulsions,

with Anne cleaning a difficult coating from John Peter Russell's 1887 work "Almost trees and ruins" and Gillian using the emulsion to clean Charles Napier Hemy, "The Home Wind" which had previously proved difficult to clean. Anne is about to begin treatment on John Ford Patterson "Lake Catani, Buffalo Mountains", which although acquired the year after it was painted in 1911, has not been displayed since the 1980's because of severe mechanical cracking. With works already arriving, it is then on to preparation for the upcoming Asia Pacific Triennial which opens in December this year. Gillian is about to head off on three years leave to commence PhD candidacy as part of The 20th century in paint ARC linkage grant. Her topic is broadly "Deterioration processes of modern artists' oil paints and implications for the conservation of 20th century paintings" and will investigate the effect of zinc components on degradation". **Mandy Smith** has been busy stretching oversize paintings as they come into the collection.

Robert Zilli has been busy making reproduction frames, including works by John Peter Russell, and AME Bale.

We have found a window of opportunity and are about to finally commission our industrial x-ray machine – so that is a real treat.

ACT

National Gallery of Australia

NGA Conservation lab welcomes **Noel Lane** to its team. Noel has been managing aspects of the Gallery's integrated pest management plan and has been instrumental in the set up and running of the new quarantine suite and treatment room.

Micheline Ford continues to coordinate the team for the up coming 2010 exhibitions *To Please the Living and the Dead* and *Ballets Russes: Designing*

Dance. Textile Conservation warmly welcomes **Hannah Barrett** from the UK. Hannah has recently graduated from the Textile Conservation Centre, in England and has a Bachelor of Art in Footwear Design. Hannah and **Stefanie Woodruff** have been preparing South East Asian textiles. **Chandra Obie** is currently working on a hat designed by Henri Matisse. Conservation technicians **Blaide Lallemand** and **Dave Mc Roberts** continue preparing mannequins and display devises. **Jane Wild** recently presented a paper on the cultural context and conservation of painted textiles (*pichhawai*) at the ICON Textile Group Annual Forum; *Mind the Gap*: structural and aesthetic options for the treatment of loss in textiles held in London.

Australian War Memorial

Lab News

Eileen Procter, **Rebecca Dallwitz**, and **Melanie Forward** have been working on a number of travelling exhibitions, new acquisitions, Gallery change over objects and loans. George Bailey has spent the last month surveying the AWM's collection of radioactive objects.

In the Textile Conservation lab, the team is preparing four wedding dresses for the exhibition *Love and War* and packing the taxidermied animals for travel around Australia for *A is for Animals*. **Jessie Firth** is heading to the NATCC in October to deliver her paper 'How to Bag a War Bird, the recovering of two WW1 German Aircraft'.

Over the past few months **Alana Treasure**, **David Keany** and **Janet Hearne** have been working almost exclusively on large Sidney Nolan paintings from his Gallipoli series for the exhibition which opens at the Memorial on August 6th then tours the country. Some of the masonite supports evoked some creative solutions in gentle 'de-warping' in order to be glazed. Alana and David have analysed

some of the paints used by Nolan using the University of Canberra's FTIR instrument, finding a range of alkyds and PVA.

The Large Technology Laboratory has carried out conservation on the Hudson Turret, and the MKIV Tank. Work is currently being undertaken on the Dingo Scout Car and the moth balling program has included a number of large tracked vehicles.

People News

The Objects Lab farewelled **Rebecca Dallwitz**, who is taking up a temporary position at the National Gallery of Australia. Our intern, **Melanie Forward**, will be extended to replace Rebecca.

National Library of Australia

In the mid 1980's the conservation laboratory at the National Library of Australia was state of the art, with purpose built work spaces and the latest laboratory equipment, it was a very exiting time to be there. Over the years changes in working patterns and procedure has meant that we needed a more flexible working space and arrangements. During April, May and June this year the conservation laboratory was renovated, removing most of the fixed benches and two walls between work areas. During the construction work we moved to a temporary space at the other end of the building.

In July we moved back into our beautiful new open plan work-space. Basically the area was gutted and with moveable furniture we now have a light, flexible, open- plan workspace. We still have designated areas for our different work programs, Preservation Reformatting, Binding, the main paper conservation laboratory and exhibition preparation areas. The renovation provided an opportunity to rethink our working needs and we are all pleased with the results, especially with our new fume

cupboards and BAC storage cabinets and tables. The colour scheme is a grey/blue and off white and of course we still have our wonderful Lake Burley Griffin views! A viewing of our new work space is planned for conservators, TBA.

Jennifer Lloyd Head of Preservation Services and **Sophie Lewincamp** Laboratory Manager, have been the driving force behind the laboratory refurbishment. They have been good at keeping our spirits up and focused during the sometimes difficult refurbishment process. **Lisa Jeong Reuss** continues as the Preservation liaison officer with the Digitisation Program, which keeps all of us busy. **Lydia Preiss** continues to work three days a week and we all enjoy working with **Kerry McInnis** once a week. **Patricia Crampin** and **Jutta Crosthwaite – Klien** continue to run the Preservation Reformatting Unit. They are currently organising filming of ACT newspapers under ANPLAN as well as preparing volumes of the 'London Missionary Society' collection for digitisation. There have been quite a few staffing changes at the Library, both **Rowena Jameson** and **Rachel Spano** have left the Library. Rowena is teaching English in Tokyo and Rachel has joined Art and Archival.

Susanne Wullen has recently taken over from **Denyl Cloughley** (who had been filling in for Rowena) as Exhibitions conservator. She and her assistant **Jacqueline Bradley** have been busy with a number of loans in particular *James Cook and the exploration of the Pacific* travelling to Germany. The Treasures Preview exhibition at the Library has just finished, soon to be replaced with an exhibition showcasing Nick Cave. **Janet McDonald** has been in the paper lab for 2 years, working on wide variety of collection material, including the cleaning of the Tom Bass lintel sculpture at the front of the Library. Janet previously studied photography and is particularly interested in the treatment of photographs. With the new course, Bachelor of Cultural Heritage Conservation, opening up again this year, she is now studying

part-time at UC. Our new Assistant Bookbinder **Anthony Shaw** has been with the Library for 8 months. Anthony comes from a non-bookbinding background and is learning the trade with bookbinders **David Roberts** and **Neale Wootton**. **Alexa McNaught-Reynolds** has recently joined our team after a stint at the AWM. She is a recent Graduate of the Master of Arts (Cultural Materials Conservation) from the Uni of Melbourne. We are pleased to have Alexa join us in preserving the Library's collections. We also welcome an enthusiastic volunteer **Erica Mordek** who has a background in frame-making, box-making, bookbinding and tango dancing!

The National Library has been working closely with other cultural institutions in Canberra to put in place arrangements for the new Conservation course at the University of Canberra. John Greenwood, the course convenor, commenced work in July and now has the task of developing the content and delivery method for conservation subjects. It is likely that there will be a mixture of workplace learning and learning at the University in a basic conservation laboratory they will be building. John is in the process of developing MOUs with the institutions to clarify expectations between the organisations.

National Archives of Australia

The past couple of months have seen the addition of the Repair Team to the lab in Canberra. Ruth, Laura and Helen perform basic file repair on records requested for access in the Reading Room. This has provided the lab with vital extra staff to help deal with the deluge of researcher requests, whilst freeing up some of the conservators time to work on the intensive treatment projects.

The month of June saw the completion of a number of major treatment projects. **Travis Taylor** completed his

treatment on the 1892 ferrogallic plan of the Brisbane New Victoria Bridge. This item had many losses, which were in-filled using Archive Text, colour matched using the resin coated Epsom UltraChrome K3 ink jet pigment ink. A re-moistenable lining technique was employed to provide support to the fragile support with the smallest level of moisture possible.

Suellen Bailey continued work on the Commonwealth Election Propaganda Bill posters 1906-1920, whilst **Tania Riviere** with Assistant Conservators **Rachel McNally**, and **Steve Willet** are working towards completing the cleaning, humidification and lining of the Port Arthur tidal records dating from 1850, a project which has been ongoing over the past four years. June also saw the completion of the River Murray Commission maps and plans of 1919-1943.

Sally Kneebone surface cleaned, flattened and repaired 77 large format items, which included lining 7 items included one which was over 3 meters in length.

Clair Murray worked on 7 folios of designs for the book titled 'Gundy' by May Thomas. Dating from 1944 these drawings follow the adventures of Gundy, a little Aboriginal boy and include various native flora and fauna. Clair has also completed work on a series of copyright applications which included a particularly detailed dress pattern application for 'Dress cutting by tape measure made easier'.

Cheryl Jackson is still working for us but is outposted to Jervis Bay (still in the ACT though). Cheryl is working on a listing of our photographic holdings Australia wide. Work meetings with Ian her supervisor are held at Berrima over lunch.

Peter Shaw looks after our Preservation Digitisation program in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. Work currently being undertaken includes the large Australian Overseas Information Service collection, ABC publicity

material, Trademarks, Trade publicity and large format material.

Exhibitions conservator **Kylie Roth** has been very busy with various exhibitions including touring exhibition 'Shell-Shocked' which deals with the aftermath of WW I, changeovers of our 'Memory of a Nation' and 'No Common Creation' exhibitions as well as loan exhibitions 'Women Transported' and 'Artists of Steel – The Art of Australian Stamp Engraving'.

Alison McCrindle is our locally posted preventive conservator. She has been busy preparing disaster plans monitoring our environment and keeping an eye out for insects and leaks. She has also been involved in steps aimed at reducing our energy costs through the application of well chosen environmental parameters.

We also have old friends **Dara Rome** and **Ellie McFadyen** working with us on policy documents.

Western Australia

Art Gallery of Western Australia

The conservation staff have all been busy preparing and installing works for the second annual West Australian Indigenous Art Awards. The awards this year included a vast range of materials and techniques including, hand tinted digital prints on canvas that had been sprayed with an acrylic fixative, a seven meter long barbed wire and scrap metal sculpture, as well as a number of traditional paintings. The awards give us a rare opportunity to discuss materials and techniques with living artists.

David Graves has been busy preparing works and installing several objects based shows including jewellery for two retrospectives of the work of David Walker and Mari Funaki and numerous craft and design pieces for "Thing: Beware the Material World". David has also been working on the conservation and management of Antony Gormley's

Inside Australia installation located at Lake Ballard near the Town of Menzies, WA.

Stephanie Baily and **Kate Woollett** have been working on the refit of the gallery's paper conservation lab in order to allow treatment of oversized works on paper. As part of this renovation, the gallery has purchased a new suction table to replace our twenty-five year old vintage model. Stephanie and Kate have also been working on updating the gallery's disaster plan.

Both Stephanie and Kate are working with **Lucy Harper**, Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings on a proposed exhibition for 2011 called *Unknown Land*. This gives Kate and Stephanie a wonderful chance to survey, research and treat a large part of the early colonial works on paper in the collection. The first part of the project will involve research into the early drawings of Richard Farrington.

In between preparing for the upcoming AICCM 09 National Conference, **Maria Kubik** has been working on a number of outward loans including government furnishing loans, the Frederick McCubbin retrospective and paintings for the upcoming Cubists and Australian Art exhibition at Heide Museum of Art.

Conservation Framer **Trevor Gillies** recently attended *Picturing the Frame: Attitudes, context and treatment, from conception to consolidation*, held at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London. While in London, Trevor was able to carry out research at the Victoria and Albert Museum and visit a number of institutions.



Conserving Public and Private Collections

AICCM National Conference 2009

Fremantle, Western Australia
September 21-25

The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM) is the professional organisation for conservators in Australia. Conservators work to preserve our cultural heritage and work in museums, art galleries, libraries, archives and in private practice.

The AICCM will be holding its next National Conference in Fremantle. This year's theme is 'Conserving Public and Private Collections'. It will cover the range of issues that conservators face when working on collections: private, public or as part of collaborative projects. It is aimed at attracting conservators, curators, collection managers, conservation scientists, and others working with collections.

Venue

**Western Australian Maritime Museum
Victoria Quay, Fremantle**

Looking out over the Indian Ocean, the Western Australian Museum - Maritime is symbolic of Western Australia's contemporary role in the Indian Ocean region. The Museum, positioned in a working port, houses six unique galleries, each focusing on a different aspect of Western Australia's relationship with the sea. The conference will take place in the NWS Shipping Theatre.

Getting there:

Fremantle is well serviced by trains from Perth. From the Fremantle Station you can walk (10 minutes) or if you'd like to take the scenic route catch the free CAT Bus service. The CAT Bus service departs every 10 minutes and The Museum is the second last stop on the route.

Workshops

Numbers are limited but we will try and place you in the workshop you have chosen.

Media and communication workshop

A workshop on communications and dealing with the media for AICCM National Council and subscribers. The workshop will be conducted by Caroline Lacy, Head of Communications and Issues Management at the WA Maritime Museum.

Sunday 20th September 9:00 - 1:00
Cost includes morning tea.

Digital photography of artefacts

Workshop on digital photography of artefacts presented by Patrick Baker & Jon Carpenter, WA Maritime Shipwreck Galleries, Cliff Street.

Monday 21st September 9:00-4:00.
Cost includes morning and afternoon teas.

Electrochemistry workshop for monitoring artefacts during treatment

Electrochemistry workshop for monitoring artefacts during treatment Vicki Richards & Ian MacLeod in the conservation laboratories, WA Maritime Shipwreck Galleries, Cliff Street Google map

Monday 21st September 9:00-4:00.
Cost includes morning and afternoon teas.

Trade Show

This event offers a rare opportunity to present your company to the broad cultural heritage, museum and conservation communities in Australia (and beyond).

We are offering a range of opportunities that will allow you to present your company to the conference delegates including a Trade Show. Stands are available in the Trade Show which will be held for the duration of the conference.

The trade show booth start from \$1700. The package consists of a 2x3m booth with lighting, fascia sign, walls, powder supply, a table and two chairs. The package also includes one registration for the conference.

Social Functions

Welcome Reception

A Welcome Reception will be held on Tuesday 22nd September in Notre Dame University's Malloy Courtyard. This event is included in registration.

Conference Dinner

The Conference Dinner will be held on Wednesday 23rd September. This event is included in registration. It will be held at the Mad Monk Brewery Restaurant, 33 South Terrace, Fremantle. madmonk.com.au

Contact

Jonathan Schmidt

Email: jonathan.schmidt@slwa.wa.gov.au

Phone: 08 9427 3316

Mail: Jonathan Schmidt
C/o State Library
of Western Australia
Perth Cultural Centre,
Perth WA 6000

Web: www.aiccm.org.au

Paying Registration

Please use the registration form to calculate total registration including workshops and any extra guests for the social events. Use the below information to pay registration and then forward a copy of the registration form to the organisers.

Conference delegates can pay their registration for the Conference through the Western Australian Museum's shop in Perth; either in person, by credit card payment over the phone, or through email. Payment can also be made by direct deposit to the AICCM.

Payment through Western Australian Museum

Kirsten Springvloed
WA Museum Shop,

Western Australian Museum, Perth
Phone: (08) 9427-2776

Email: kirsten.springvloed@museum.wa.gov.au

Payment by bank transfer.

Attach a copy of the transaction documentation to the registration form.

For overseas transfers please add \$10.00 Australian to registration fee to cover our bank's fee and ensure that your bank's fees for arranging the transfer are covered. Retain a copy of the registration form if you are paying by bank transfer as it is your tax form once paid.

AICCM Bank account details for Internet

banking or overseas bank transfer:

Bank: Commonwealth Bank of Australia.
Address: 84 Giles Street Kingston ACT 2604
AUSTRALIA

Account name: Australian Institute for the
Conservation of Cultural Materials Inc.

BSB: 062910. Account number: 1003 6632

Please fill in one form per person.

Delegate Registration

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr/Prof _____ First name: _____ Surname: _____

Organisation: _____ Position: _____

Postal Address: _____

City/town: _____ State: _____ Country: _____

Postcode: _____ Telephone (home): _____

Fax: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Conference Registration

Please select the appropriate box

- | | | |
|--|----------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AICCM Member | \$500.00 | (including \$45.46 GST) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AICCM Student member | \$300.00 | (including \$27.27 GST) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-AICCM member | \$650.00 | (including \$59.09 GST) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Day registration – AICCM member | \$200.00 | (including \$18.18 GST) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Day registration – Non-AICCM member | \$250.00 | (including \$22.73 GST) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Late registration fee (After the 31st August) | \$75.00 | (including \$6.82 GST) |

Workshops

Numbers are limited but we will try and place you in the workshop you have chosen.

Please select appropriate boxes.

- | | | |
|---|----------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Media and communications workshop (Sunday 20th September) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital photography of artefacts (Monday 21st September) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrochemistry workshop for monitoring artefacts during treatment (Monday 21st September) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop fee – AICCM Member | \$80.00 | (including \$7.27 GST) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workshop fee – Non-AICCM member | \$120.00 | (including \$10.91 GST) |

Tax Invoice for GST Purposes

Note: All rates are quoted in Australian Dollars (AU\$)

All registration fees include 10% GST.

AICCM Inc ABN: 60 209 816 117

Social Functions

Welcome Reception (Tuesday 22nd September)
included in your registration

Please indicate if you will be attending the Welcome Reception

Yes No

Additional persons (not already registered) may attend the Welcome Reception for \$35p/person including \$3.18 GST.

Number of additional guests:

Total cost: \$ _____ (including \$ _____ GST)

Conference Dinner (Wednesday 23rd September)
included in your registration.

Please indicate if you will be attending the Conference Dinner at Mad Monk Brewery Restaurant.

Yes No

Additional persons (not already registered) may attend the Conference Dinner for \$75 p/person including \$6.82 GST.

Number of additional guests:

Total cost: \$ _____ (including \$ _____ GST)

Please add up total cost including workshops and if you have additional guests attending social functions.

Total Registration cost:
\$ _____

Total GST: \$ _____

Special Requirements

Special Assistance: Please indicate if you have a disability or require assistance to be able to participate fully in Conference.

Please state the type of assistance required:

Dietary Requirements: We may be able to provide for special meal requirements.

Please specify if you have any special dietary requirements:

Privacy: Do you agree to have your contact details included on the delegate list?

Yes No

Payment Details

Indicate with method was used to pay registration. Please select appropriate box.

- Payment through Western Australian Museum**
- Payment from Australia by bank transfer.**
Attach a copy of the transaction documentation to the registration form.
- Payment from overseas made by bank transfer.**
Attach a copy of the bank transfer documentation to the registration form.
Add \$10.00 Australian to cover our bank's fee and ensure that your bank's fees for arranging the transfer are covered.

Retain a copy of this form if you are paying by bank transfer as it is your tax invoice once paid.

After you have paid your registration please send this form to:

C/o Mr Jonathan Schmidt
State Library of Western Australia
25 Francis Street
Alexander Library Building
Perth Cultural Centre
Perth WA 6000
Australia Phone: 08 9427 3316
Email: jonathan.schmidt@slwa.wa.gov.au

Registration Cancellation Policy

Cancellation of a registration must be notified in writing to the Conference Committee. Cancellation prior to 7 September 2009 will receive a full refund less \$100 administration fee. No refund will be given for cancellation after 7 September 2009, however substitutions will be possible.

Agreement to term and conditions: I wish to register for the 2009 AICCM National Conference and acknowledge the registration term including the cancellation policy.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student News

During the May and June period, the Student Conservators at Melbourne (SC@M) organised a series of successful lab tours for students, including the Heritage Victoria Conservation Lab, Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) labs and the Melbourne Museum labs. Students were given the opportunity to have a behind the scenes look at a working laboratories in some of Melbourne's major conservation institutions, talk to staff and see for themselves some of the exciting conservation projects being undertaken in situ. Many thanks go out to **Susie Collis** at Heritage Victoria, **Helen Privett** at Melbourne Museum and **Jude Fraser** at the PROV labs, for both hosting the tours and being so generous with their time.

With second semester set to yield a new wave of students embarking upon their thesis projects, a busy first semester wound up in early in June with the second year students presenting papers discussing the major treatment projects

they completed. Over a two-day period, first year students, CCMC staff and University of Melbourne Collection managers were invited to attend, and to witness the audible sigh of relief from the presenters when it was over.

Second year CCMC students **Benita Dass-Grasse**, **Johanna Ellersdorfer** and **Luke Zeme** have been selected to participate in a Monash University excavation project in Egypt. The three paintings conservation students will be heading off to Egypt's western desert from late December for six weeks to work on wall paintings dating from the second century AD. These works are painted on gypsum plaster above a layer of mud plaster on mud-brick walls, from which large sections have become detached. The work will involve assisting in the excavating and raising the detached fragments, consolidation and cleaning of the fragments together with storage preparation.

CCMC student **Mel Wilkinson** is

currently in Auckland, New Zealand undertaking work experience until August. Mel will be working with book conservator David Ashman, president of the New Zealand Conservators of Cultural Materials (NZCCM), Auckland City Library for two weeks, before moving on to the Christchurch City Art Gallery under the supervision of paper conservator Lyn Campbell. As co-president of SC@M, Mel will also be working hard to develop existing relationships and forge new ones with New Zealand professionals and students in conservation.

Finally, it is with a tinge of sadness that we say goodbye to **Alvin Tee**, who headed back home to Singapore in July after studying at The University of Melbourne for the past two years. Alvin was specialising in object conservation, with a special interest in metals. On behalf of all the students and staff members at CCMC, we wish Alvin all the best for the future and thank him for his valued contributions to the course.

Tax time – how to get more of your money back.

Many of you will now be working on your tax returns, hoping that some of it will come back your way after work and charity deductions. Did you know the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material is also a registered tax deductible organisation? Any donation over \$2.00 that you make to the AICCM Public Fund is 100% tax deductible.

The AICCM Public Fund has been set up to raise money for specific projects. In the last financial year, our achievements have included:

- New, improved website with up-to-date contents
- Streamlining of secretariat services, ensuring quicker query turnaround times
- Quarterly Newsletter, now more environmentally friendly and in colour

In the upcoming year, we hope to reinstate Professional Membership and Development. We are also investigating funding individual 'Angel Projects', community based conservation work similar to those in the United States.

To do this we need your help. Our generous benefactors from last year would have already received e-mail

confirmation of their donations, which serve as tax receipts for the 2008/09 period. Any new donations may be made via our website, using secure online payment, or by mail, sending cheque or money order to the Secretariat.

Your contribution will make an immediate difference to Australia's cultural heritage and makes it possible for us to continue to provide services for the conservation profession. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to make any comments, and I join with all of the staff and volunteers at AICCM to again thank you for your donations.

Maria Kubik, AICCM National Treasurer

An Interview – Michael Marendy

Michael Marendy trained and worked as a fashion educator before undertaking a M.Sc in textile conservation. He holds a doctorate from Griffith University and is currently Acting Senior Curator, Cultures and History at the Queensland Museum, where he is known as Dr. Frock. Julian Bickersteth recorded this interview with Michael in August 2009.

How did your interest in Conservation arise?

I was teaching fashion design at TAFE in Brisbane and I kept being asked advice on how to care for historical collections. This sparked my interest in conservation and I looked around for suitable practical courses. This was the mid 80s and it was not possible at the time to specialise in textiles at Canberra University, so I looked overseas. The University of Alberta, Canada was offering a M.Sc (Clothing and Textiles), specialising in conservation and the history of costume. This tied in with my interest in fashion, tailoring and costume design. It was a very practical 3 year course which I managed to compress into 2 years and returned to Brisbane ready to pass on all that I had learnt.

What happened upon your return?

Well the scene had changed whilst I was away through restructuring at TAFE, and there was no opportunity to teach textile conservation or indeed my old course. So I was sent to Mackay for 2 years, which was not much fun. However, one door closes, another opens, this time at Brisbane College of Advanced Education, which was about to become Queensland University of Technology. I was offered a job there lecturing in textile science and clothing design and from this the opportunity arose in 1992 to establish a textile conservation service under the auspices of QUT, primarily aimed at cultural institutions and communities with textile collections.

In 1997, however, QUT also underwent restructuring and I seized the moment

to establish my own private business **Studio 105**, offering services in textile conservation, textile education and costume/clothing design, including making costume reproductions for museums.

Between 1998-2000 I also completed my PhD at Griffith University on the subject of why museums collect costume. This included researching the rag trade in 19th century Brisbane, how women's clothes were made and even the history of girls education.

What are you up to now?

I continue my private work through Studio 105 but I am now acting as Senior Curator, Cultures and Histories, at the Queensland Museum with a brief to build the textile and costume collection. I have just co-curated an exhibition at the Museum of Brisbane entitled *In fashion – Dressing up Brisbane*. Unbelievably, this is the first time in the history of Queensland that historic costumes have been displayed en masse.

Do you see yourself as having two parallel careers, one curatorial, one conservation based?

No, I very much see the two going hand in hand and complementing each other. I am of the belief that all conservators should have a specialist knowledge gained either before they get into conservation or during their conservation work. With textiles, it is vital to have good knowledge of their history and production to be able to conserve them. So with this latest exhibition, I was able to research, curate, conserve and install the costumes, making the process seamless



– though I would have to say that I enjoyed the conservation component most!

How do you see the health of textile conservation in Australia at present?

Somewhat varied, I would have to say. The AICCM textile SIG continues to be very active, and I strongly support that. But within institutions the situation is not good. There only appears to be funds available for exhibition conservation purposes and it is a constant battle to get anything else conserved. On the training front, I like what Canberra University is trying to do by linking up with museum conservation departments to teach the necessary practical skills, but we also need to encourage the University of Melbourne's course focus on building theoretical knowledge, particularly in research. There is far too little conservation research going on in this country. Above all, however, we need to maintain passion amongst conservators – that is what keeps us going.

Thank you, Michael.

Conservation Matters – What do YOU think



In the last newsletter we published an excerpt from a paper by Hans-Christoph von Imhoff on aspects and development of a conservator-restorer's profession since World War II. In it Mr Imhoff expressed concerns about the current state of university conservation education, which in his view puts more weight on theoretical rather than practical training. We asked the two providers of university conservation courses in Australia, the University of Melbourne and the University of Canberra, to comment.

Marcelle Scott

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The excerpt of Hans-Christoph von Imhoff's commentary on conservation education highlights a long-running tension in our field – the balance between teaching theory and practice in an ever expanding, already crowded, university curriculum.

In Australia, claims that graduates lack necessary practical skills have been common since the first cohort emerged from the CCAE more than 25 years ago. However, the criticism seems at odds with the reality. The Australian conservation sector has grown remarkably and very successfully in three short decades; Australian graduates continue to be well regarded internationally; our practice meets and in many areas leads international standards; the findings of our research is published in refereed journals and presented at international conferences. Could this be achieved if the education of Australian conservators has been inadequate? Inherent in this ongoing discussion is the broader question of what conservators need to know, and be able to do, for the profession to remain relevant and viable in the 21st century.

Hans-Christoph no doubt will have seen new graduates who are inexperienced in one or two, or a number of 'routine procedures'. The aim of any professional education, is to produce graduates fit for practice, not fully adept at all procedures, routine or otherwise –

this is the domain of the experienced practitioner. My first employers certainly saw many failings in my work during my early years as a conservator. Yet the benefit of a university education, based as it was on sound theory and supervised practical classes, combined with generous post-training mentoring, gave me the tools and insights to develop as a professional. The combination of study and experience gave me the confidence to hone my skills, to problem-solve and, as Chris Caple (1994:66) exhorts, to eventually "behave in a constructive manner when presented with any artifact".

As a counterpoint to the focus on practical skills and the lack thereof in new graduates, I'd like to share a concern I have had for some time; that is the emphasis by experienced conservators, and reinforced in our professional precepts, of the *material* in material culture at the expense of *culture* in the material, and the view that conservators are somehow remote from the politics of collecting and exhibiting that continues to inform museum practice, and therefore the work of most conservators today. An alarming example of the end result of this thinking was the proposal put to the 1999 ICOM-CC conference in Lyon to merge the natural science and ethnographic working groups, based on the reasoning that the materials conserved by members of both groups is similar. The motion wasn't passed, but that it was even proposed and considered by one of the leadership groups of the international conservation community concerns me more than the fact that a new graduate may not be fully accomplished in 'routine'

procedures. A decade or perhaps such a proposal would no longer be considered appropriate. Certainly a number of 'routine' interventions that I have applied in the past wouldn't necessarily be carried out today. Approaches change, techniques are revised, equipment and materials are improved – professionals need to be equipped to challenge and champion these changes.

Of course, the excerpt of Hans-Christoph von Imhoff's paper doesn't reflect the totality of the views expressed in his article. Those readers interested in the points raised in the excerpt will find the full article (eConservation Magazine Issue 8) an enjoyable and illuminating read, not the least because of its terrific contribution to documenting the history of our profession. Hans-Christoph notes that prior to the 1970s "...conservator-restorers' qualifications were neither acknowledged economically nor in status." This is also true of numerous fields, and history shows that the move to tertiary education, concomitant with the development of codes of ethics and practice, signals the move from a craft to a profession. The move to a profession, informed by disciplinary knowledge, and reflecting an increasingly complex and demanding sphere of knowledge and influence, directly equates to increased 'job value' as assessed by any industry metric. The history of law, teaching and nursing professions provide a useful analogy. Each has developed from a model of on-the-job training to university education, and in each case the transition faced numerous practical and pedagogical challenges.

Many professions are juggling the tension between the knowledge required to enter the field and the

experience needed to drive and sustain it. Currently society trusts universities to develop those abilities in students, and expects professional bodies and employers to set standards and invest in continuing development programs. von Imhoff notes in his paper that the success of the informal 'apprenticeship' model of training '...depended for one part on the student's motivation and personal input and for the other on the educator's quality in professional as much as in educational, pedagogical terms.' This remains true today, and perhaps that is the point of relevance to us all – the continuing development of our field requires individual motivation and investment, a commitment to mentoring, and a willingness to invest in the future of our profession. In that sense, the old adage 'the more things change the more they stay the same' remains true.

REFERENCES

Caple, C. 1994 'Preventive Conservation Within Conservation Training Programs' in *Preventive Conservation: Practice, Theory and Research*. Preprints of the Contributions to the Ottawa Congress, International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, London, IIC, 65-68.

STABILTEX/TETEX UPDATE

Sefar, based in Switzerland, manufactured the Stabiltex/Tetex that conservators have all been using over the years. It has been purchased through various companies such as PlastOk® in the UK, Test Fabrics in the US, and Sefar in Australia. Sefar have confirmed that they will no longer be producing it.

In the short term Preservation Australia (www.preservationaustralia.com.au) currently have a limited stock in certain colours. In the long term, PlastOk® a supplier in the UK have confirmed they are working with a new manufacturer to produce Tetex to the same specifications: a light, fine, plain woven fabric approximately 13g/m² with a thickness of 85µm. They feel they are very close to achieving this.

John Greenwood

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One door closes another opens.

Conservation courses have closed and are continuing to close throughout the world. The TCC in Southampton and the V&A program with the RCA have now been lost. There are many reasons for these closures financial, academic and political and we are all wiser in hindsight. It has however given the profession the opportunity to review and evaluate how conservation can be taught. The profession has constantly been at odds with its self over the balance between the theoretical underpinning needed for the student to understand the increasing complex world of conservation. To balance this is the need for practical hands on skills which all conservators need no matter which discipline they have chosen to follow. Conservators will never agree on the perfect training structure. Conservators will never actually agree on anything and will hold strong views on everything to do with the subject.

The recent article by Hans-Christoph Von Imhoff in the e-conservation journal (<http://www.e-conservationline.com/content/view/717/236/>) highlights the developments and controversies in conservation training very succinctly. His observation that students will come out of training still unable to stretch a canvas should be of concern to practicing conservators. He expresses caution with the development of charters and regulation of conservation education and how this regulation of content and approach can lose some of the excitement and magic a student can feel when entering into our diverse profession.

I came to the University of Canberra a few weeks ago with the daunting but fascinating task of re co-ordinating the Conservation of Cultural Heritage program. When the original program closed in 2002 it was a great loss to the conservation profession but now is a chance to move forward. I have been working in conservation education for over 21 years and started in conservation 32 years ago. I hope to bring this experience to my new challenge here.

The model that has been formulated in conjunction with the conservators from both the museums and private practice is an innovative one. The students will be taught a grounding in the generic skills and knowledge needed to understand the basic ideas, skills, ethical and legal concepts of conservation. The majority of the practical work will be learnt working with conservators in different disciplines, based in the museums. As the student's skills and knowledge progresses they will undertake other practical placements, with more challenging outcomes. At all times their work will be underpinned by lecturers and tutorials given by both University of Canberra staff and practicing conservators. Following their chosen path students will be given a thorough education and training in the principals and practices of conservation along with the worldly skills of management, collection care and communication.

It is an ambitious project for which there is endless good will and support from my colleagues in the profession. As far as I can find out this is the first time an undergraduate programme in conservation has been taught this way. The combination of university based education and practical skill from conservators should fit with the ideas expressed by Hans-Christoph. The students will not only know how to stretch a canvas but also the more useful skill of how to stretch a budget.

"Cleaned pictures" and the beginning of modern conservation

Hans-Christoph von Imhoff has led an eminent international career within the conservation profession. Here he puts forward his views on the current status of university training for conservators.

The developments that lead to the emerging of modern conservation started in 1930. It was then that the first "International Conference for the Study of Scientific Methods for the Examination and Preservation of Works of Art" took place, organised by the International Museum Office, a body from the Leagues of Nations. There it was decided to edit the still excellent "Manual on the conservation of paintings", which was printed in French in 1939, in English in 1940 and reprinted in 1997³. After WWII the United Nations (UN) took the banner from the League of Nations, established UNESCO, which helped to found ICOM in 1946 and ICOMOS 1965 in Rome, both as NGOs. In 1967, the Executive of ICOM approved the constitution of its International Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC). This was achieved by fusing ICOM's International Commission for the Care of Paintings, later renamed Subcommittee for the Care of Paintings, and the Committee for Scientific Laboratories, later renamed Committee for Laboratories. The Paintings Commission had been established already in 1948 in London, and the Subcommittee in 1951 in Brussels. Interestingly enough it weren't the restorers who founded these committees but the assembled director generals of the world largest art museums, the Metropolitan Museum (New York), the Louvre (Paris), the National Gallery (London), the Doerner Institute (Munich), the Hermitage (then Leningrad) and a few others.

What kicked it all off? In 1947, just after WWII, following the unpacking and reinstallation of museum holdings

everywhere, the National Gallery in London mounted a revolutionary exhibition entitled "Cleaned pictures", i.e. pictures from which old varnishes and repaints had been removed, and the full freshness of the painting, often hidden for centuries, appeared.

This exhibition was the public appearance of science and scientific conservation as major contributors to enhanced and better connoisseurship of paintings. This exhibition was created as a collaborative effort by Helmuth Ruhemann, the then restorer at the National Gallery in London, and Sir Phillip Hendy, its director. It resulted in a huge and highly polemic discussion in European professional journals and even in newspapers and became an extremely important international controversy about the cleaning of paintings, patina and the perception of what is original. Among the contributors were the most important art historians and conservation professionals of the time, including Cesare Brandi, Ernst Gombrich, Otto Kurz, Stephen Rees Jones and Joyce Plesters – the main public stage being the Burlington Magazine, still now a preeminent art historical periodical. Alessandro Conti assembled all the contributions on this topic and published them translated into Italian⁴.

This discussion caused many museum directors to investigate what took place behind the usually closed doors of their museums' own restoration studios. It was the museum directors who wanted access to the working methods and considerations of their restorers, who wanted to know the details, the recipes and the methodologies of their restorers. The directors started to put their restorers and their work into the limelight of public awareness, and to engage them in discussions with art historians, scientists and the public. It was at that moment, in the 1950s, that

modern conservation was conceived and shortly after also born. Resulting were discussions about appropriate training and education of this rather unknown species – the conservator-restorer. Only few countries had started early to care and think about the education of restorers; so in the 40s and 50s only few institutions offered academic education for conservator-restorers – L'Istituto Centrale del Restauro in Rome (1939/1947), the University of London (1948), the Art Academy in Stuttgart (~1950) and the National Academy of Arts in Prague (~1948).

At that time conservator-restorers' qualifications were neither acknowledged economically nor in status. The period was characterised by a nearly complete lack of the conservator's profession and its formal and legal recognition. Consequently during the second half of the twentieth century, the energy of the profession went into formulating education guidelines, creating conservation facilities, conceiving programs and setting up educational institutions for preservation. This situation persists in many places and has still not been resolved everywhere. To create a profession and win its acceptance is always a slow process. But, as the political and economic situation of state budgets worsens, it becomes increasingly difficult for this profession to get recognition in places where this has not yet been achieved. Despite the high standards required and requested for the education of conservator-restorers, at places they continue to be classified as artisans and craftsmen, poorly paid and with no say.

This was very unsatisfactory, not only in terms of economics, but still more so in terms of the lack of recognition of the responsibility they bear. In order to exercise a responsibility a person has to be accorded the right to decide and intervene. As responsibility is one

major criterion at all levels for the classification of employment positions, the term has to be defined and definable – the more responsibility, the higher the level of classification, the better the salary – a scale used to appreciate every function everywhere, be it public or private. Another very important criterion for classification is the type of education. Curators and scientists have long been educated at least to the MA level (lic. in Switzerland and France, mag[ister] in Germany and Austria) and more often to the PhD level, i.e. at university. If in their dialog with curators and scientists, conservator-restorers were to hold an equal level of responsibility and decision making power, their education had to be an academic one as well. As early as the 1950s, ICOM itself had requested this trinity partnership. And since then, the topic has always been of interest⁵.

So the aim of the conservation profession became to earn academic credentials, i.e. to be educated at university with the academic title ladder attached to it. This happened quite quickly in North America where, with few exceptions, formal conservation education since 1967 (Cooperstown - NY) was always provided by universities. In Western Europe it took much longer to achieve the same as its universities are brain centred on the intellectual type of knowledge, places that provide education for white-collar jobs. In opposition to this, countries like the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary have academic systems with a tradition of incorporating blue-collar professions and artistic disciplines into higher education. These countries had no trouble to establish conservation education at an academic level.

From *Aspects and development of a conservator-restorer's profession since WWII*, by Hans-Christoph von Imhoff, reprinted with permission of the author.

Can you help?



Mystery picture from the Archives

Can you help identify this conservator?

This issue we have a much older picture for you. The image is one of a group of images of the same gentleman dated from 1949. Each has the simple caption: "Overseas art connoisseurs sent art treasures to Sydney restorer". If anyone knows who the restorer is and any associated detail please let Ian Batterham know (ian.batterham@naa.gov.au). We will report back next issue and also give another image to ponder.



Mystery solved!

Mystery Conservator Named

Thanks go to John Perry, John Payne, Michael Varcoe-Cocks and Richard McDonald who identified our last picture as conservator Matthew Moss and provided much interesting detail on his career. Matthew was an Irish conservator who had worked for a time as the National Gallery of Ireland's Chief Restorer and was founder of their conservation laboratory. He came to Australia and worked as restorer for the Regional Galleries Conservation Centre, Ballarat from 1977 to 1979. After leaving the centre he worked for a time in private practice in Victoria before leaving Australia. Now in his 70s, he lives in Monte Carlo and primarily focuses on his fine art practice, being deemed "an official Monegasque artist". He has been an exhibiting artist since the 1960's and has had two books published on his work. His wife was Australian and they travelled and painted throughout most states of Australia.



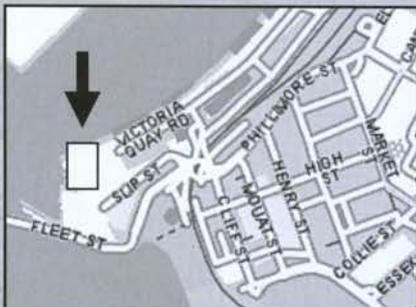


2009 National Conference

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See registration form included in this Newsletter for more information.

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