



President's Report

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As reported at the recent AGM

The key focus for the past two years has been on the development of a new web-site for AICCM.

While there have been many people involved, I'd like to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution made by Alice Cannon and Jenny Dickens. The idea of new web software was floated at Council Meeting 124 in October 2006, when Jenny noted problems with the existing software. In November 2006, the CAN Coordinator, Joy Suliman offered the assistance of Crina Belevi to review our website and advise us on developing a website brief. Alice Cannon came on board in January 2007 to further develop the brief for web-site development and manage the tendering process, with the assistance of Jenny Dickens and Rowena Jameson. Energetica was awarded the contract in October 2007. Since then Alice has worked closely with the designers on content while Jenny has focused on development of the new membership management system.

This year saw several changes of Secretariat for AICCM. Initially Jenny Dickens took on the role for 6 months. Jenny's familiarity with AICCM through the many AICCM positions she's held and with the membership database,

was of particular benefit during this transition period. When Jenny returned to her position at Heritage Victoria, Robert Franzke took over the position as AICCM Secretariat. Robert comes to AICCM with strong administrative skills and considerable experience working with the conservation profession through positions held at the Ian Potter Museum of Art and the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation.

The Conservator of the Year Award is back on track thanks to AICCM's Membership Officer, Fiona Tennant. Nominations were received for four highly commendable nominees, making the selection process an unenviable task, so much so that the selection panel decided to present 3 certificates of appreciation in addition to the Conservator of the Year award.

Tamara Lavrencic

From The Editors

This edition of the Newsletter demonstrates the range of activities with which the Australian conservation profession is involved. From international conference attendance, to special interest group programs, to addressing the effects of climate change on collections, the profession is active and engaged in the broad issues of preserving cultural heritage.

This last quarter has seen the coinciding of the profession's two international 'blockbuster' conferences, the biennial IIC Congress, this year held in London, and the triennial ICOM-CC conference held in Delhi. At both events, the Australian profession was well represented with papers and attendance. Read a range of personal views on what our members made of both. The London Congress also included a public event hosted by IIC

on the effect of Climate Change on collections – we summarise a fascinating evening that raised a number of issues that need addressing.

In this edition, also particularly look out for:

- The state profile of Western Australia. We continue our state by state profile to provide an overview of the conservation activity and employment opportunities. Next edition we intend to focus on **South Australia and Northern Territory** (then Victoria and Tasmania for the June 09 edition and the ACT in Sep 09)
- The in-depth interview, this time with Vicki Humphrey, currently holding the position of Head of Conservation at the British Library.

- Ian Batterham's stories from the files. Ian continues his trawling through files at National Archives looking at a number of illuminating insights into the early days of our profession.

- Responses to last edition's **Conservation Matters**. We continue to receive thoughtful comments about Helen Hughes' article on British conservators and responses to it.

- Late news – the story of the discovery of the portrait Lucrezia Borgia at the NGV by Carl Willis.

Have a safe and restful festive season and do keep the content coming – we love to hear from you.

Fiona Tennant and Julian Bickersteth

State in Focus – Western Australia

State Library of Western Australia

The Conservation Team at the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA) is made up of a Senior Conservator, Paper Conservator, Book Conservation Officer and two Conservation Technician positions. It is part of Preservation and Maintenance in the Resource Service directorate.

We have been very glad to have **Ulli Broeze-Hornemann** filling the Senior Conservator's role and finalising our new pest management policy. Ulli has been on secondment from the Western Australian Museum (WAM) as the Library seeks to permanently fill this position. SLWA finds it particularly difficult to attract conservators to Western Australia. Many job adverts receive few or even no applications. The Library's Book Conservator, **Tim Cooke**, has been on secondment to WAM while Ulli has been with us. **Jonathan Schmidt** is the Paper Conservator and **Susan Crocket**, **Susan Anderson** and **Maureen Blackford** round out the team, filling the Conservation Technician positions.

Over the past couple of years Conservation has become much larger with the addition of the Repairs team. The Repairs team are responsible for the repair of public library stocks and were merged with Conservation during the recent restructure, as it was believed that they had a 'similar skill set' to Conservation. This has led to an increase in administration for Conservation but we have also taken advantage of this opportunity. The Repairs team has been trained to take on some simple repair of reference materials and to take on some of the encapsulation and boxing program.

The Conservation team work closely with the Reformatting team who run the microfilming and digitisation programs at the State Library. Until recently

the digitisation program was mainly photographic negatives, but there is an increasing amount of reflective material and in the future this will have to be reflected in Conservation's work load.

Conservation finds that it has to be proactive. Reminding staff not just about good work practice but about what conservators do and why, and importantly when Conservation needs to be involved.

In recent years Conservation has received a large increase in requests for tours, placements, visits and for presentations given by conservation staff. SLWA is always keen to showcase Conservation. This takes time away from traditional conservation activities and staff have to try and fit in conservation treatments with the requirements of other activities. Something that must be familiar to many other Conservators in similar institutions.

For further information please contact Jonathan Schmidt at: jonathan.schmidt@slwa.wa.gov.au

Western Australian Museum – Department of Materials Conservation

The Department of Materials Conservation sits under the wing of the Collections Management & Conservation division of the WA Museum. It is the largest department in this division, with 12 staff comprising a Head of Department, Manager of Technological Objects, Registrar, 5 Conservators, 2 Research Officers and 2 Technical Officers.

The department, known as the Department of Materials Conservation and Restoration in a former incarnation, was established primarily in response to the need for conservation work associated with shipwreck

excavations in the early 1970s. As a result, much of the expertise developed in the department has centred around maritime archaeological conservation. This is only one aspect of the department's work however, as conservation staff are responsible for ensuring that all WA Museum collections and displays are well cared for – this includes stored collections in the Welshpool Collections Research Centre and displays at 7 sites, 3 of which are in regional WA (Albany, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie). As part of an overall preventive conservation program, conservators regularly visit all sites to ensure that conditions are appropriate in the storage and display areas.

We are extremely fortunate to have a research wing as part of our overall structure. The history of the department's development and the skills of successive conservation scientists have kept the focus of most research towards applied maritime archaeological conservation. Collaboration between the conservation scientists and the conservators is one of the strengths of the department, allowing problems to be tackled and resolved very effectively.

The Department has a very active outreach program, participating in public presentations, workshops and providing lecturers in graduate programs in either materials conservation or for the conservation components of maritime archaeological courses. The demand for our staff's skills for courses and expeditions has resulted in fieldwork being undertaken in many different locations around Australia and overseas, including Sri Lanka, Turkey, Thailand, Sweden, China, Chuuk, Norfolk Island and the *Pandora* wrecksite.

Challenges are many, not the least of which being the perennials that confront most museums and museum departments – staff numbers, adequate funding and the provision of appropriate work spaces. Having to deal with the conservation problems associated with

a decommissioned submarine, associated cranes and slipways, typifies the sort of challenge facing the department. Fortunately the Conservation Department receives very good support from the WA Museum administration and is a cohesive unit. While the challenges are many, the diverse nature of our work, the professionalism of staff and the supportive, cooperative manner in which we try to operate make it a very satisfying place in which to work!

For further information please contact Dr Ian Godfrey at: Ian.Godfrey@museum.wa.gov.au

Art Gallery of Western Australia

As always, there have been more staff changes at the Art Gallery: **Stephanie Bailey** and **Kate Woollett** have both returned from maternity leave, and are concentrating on updating the disaster plan as well as replacing sensitive artwork on display in 'Wonderlust', the State Art Exhibition. After two years covering staggered maternity leaves, **Daniel Hoggar** has returned to the UK to pursue his career at larger institutions. We wish him well in the wintery northern hemisphere!

Following the resignation of **Vanessa Wiggins**, **David Graves** has been made a permanent member of staff, and is busy looking after Anthony Gormley's 'Inside Australia' sculptures located in Menzies, in addition to preparations for upcoming objects exhibitions.

Trevor Gillies is mounting and reframing a number of paper changeovers in the

Wonderlust display, and researching suitable 19th Century frames for Thomas Creswick's 'Crossing the Ford' and Alfred Parson's 'The Green Punt'.

Maria Kubik is immersed in numerous large format indigenous paintings, and preparing paintings for various travelling loans and exhibitions. Treatment of Charles Daubigny's 'Snow Scene, Valmondois' provided the opportunity to experiment with newly learned Wolbers gel formulations, and showed that snow looks much nicer when it is white. The arrival of a FLIR InGaAs camera and Olympus PLM is ushering in new avenues for research within the Gallery.

For further information please contact Maria Kubick at: Maria.Kubik@artgallery.wa.gov.au

ArtWorks Conservation

ArtWorks Conservation is a recently established objects conservation business run by **Vanessa** and **Seth Wiggins**.

Vanessa is an experienced conservator who first came to Western Australia in 2001 to work at the WA Museum, before moving across to the Art Gallery of WA. Realising the need for a professional objects conservation service in Western Australia, Vanessa decided to test the waters as a private conservator while on maternity leave from the gallery in 2006. Vanessa subsequently resigned from her position to concentrate on the flourishing business.

Seth has a background as a boilermaker and joined the business in 2007 as

Director of Works. Seth has a range of skills which have proved very complementary to Vanessa's, and have allowed us to take on larger and more complex projects. Seth specialises in industrial health and safety, height access, logistics planning and corrosion repair. Seth has also become adept at designing and custom making fittings for the installation of artworks.

2008 has been an exciting year for us with the establishment of ArtWorks as a company, and the launch of our new logo, brochure and website. The name ArtWorks was chosen to reflect our ability to work both on small delicate objects and larger scale projects. We have a particular interest in the conservation of outdoor heritage and have been successful in receiving several large commissions. Being home studio based, we have an added incentive to work predominately in-situ!

Our work comes from various small collections and government bodies as well as private individuals. Apart from hands on conservation work, we have also been engaged to provide conservation surveys, assistance with preservation survey grant proposals and project management. Our training workshops have become increasingly popular, with courses ranging from two hours to two days.

For more information contact Vanessa Wiggins at: vanessa@artworksconservation.com

Natural Fibres conference

2009 is the United Nations International Year of Natural Fibres. To celebrate, The Textile Institute is holding a joint Australian and New Zealand branch conference on Natural Fibres in Australasia, to be held in Dunedin, New Zealand, 15-17 April 2009. One day of the conference program is dedicated to artefacts made from natural fibres. Abstracts are invited from all those (such as conservators, curators, researchers and collection managers) involved with research, analysis, preservation, conservation and identification of fibre artefacts, particularly from Australasia. A conference dinner will provide opportunities for networking and information sharing, and single day registrations are provided for.

For further information please refer to <http://www.otago.ac.nz/textiles/naturalfibres09/>

Lab and People News

New South Wales

National Archives of Australia – Sydney Office

Lab news

Lynn Sisopha, Kathryn Brennan, Fiona Vaughan and Margaret Allen-Pike started treatment and repackaging work on a series of legal title documents relating to the acquisition of the General Post Office site in Sydney, dating from 1 May 1804. Almost half the collection is vellum documents. Preservation involves flattening and repair of both paper and vellum documents and re-housing.

Filomena Morelli has been finalising the Post Office negatives project which has involved digital copying of black & white, colour film negatives and colour transparencies. The images are now accessible through the Archive's national database, RecordSearch. Carmen Esplandiu and Peter Papisinos continue working on the analogue duplication and digital copying of Cockatoo Island negatives. This project specifically focuses on the duplication of large format cellulose nitrate and cellulose acetate negatives that show evidence of deterioration.

Shane Booth and Bo Robertson have been working on ABC publicity files relating to ABC Television series. The folders contain photographs of personalities and stills from programs, as well as written material such as press releases and information sheets. They are being repackaged into archival enclosures with negative photographic material being relocated and stored in our Isolation Vault.

People news

After almost two and half years away traveling far and wide (working at the State Library and Melbourne University)

Tracey Golds has returned back to the Archives! Tracey is now the supervising the Paper, Photographic and Digitisation Preservation (PPD) section. Lynn Sisopha who was acting as Supervising Conservator over the past 4 months will return to her normal duties in the lab as a Paper Conservator. Filomena Morelli officially became part of the PPD team as Project Officer moving from Digital and Audiovisual Preservation. We also welcomed our two new Records Processing Officers Shane Booth and Bo Robertson.

Powerhouse Museum

Lab News

The Powerhouse Museum has recently opened *Modern Times; Untold stories of Modernism*. *Modern Times* reveals how modernism transformed life in Australia across five tumultuous decades from 1917 to 1967. The exhibition traces for the first time, the impact of modernism on all aspects of Australian culture – from art, design and architecture to advertising, photography, film & fashion.

Bringing together over 400 artworks and artefacts, *Modern Times* focuses on a series of interdisciplinary exchanges between modern architects, artists and designers, including Margaret Preston, Max Dupain, Wolfgang Sievers, Clement Meadmore, Douglas Annand, Robert Klippel, Grant & Mary Featherston, Harry Seidler, Robin Boyd, Roy Grounds and Jorn Utzon.

The Preservation Exhibition Team has been involved in the condition reporting, treatment, mounting and display of objects in this exhibition. The Costume & Textile component was small in numbers and consisted of several bathing suits, including an Annette Kellerman costume and several early modern textiles. A much larger component of the exhibition was framed

material ranging from photographs, Sonia Delauney designs, graphics and drawings, David Jones wrapping paper, booklets and record covers.

Also installed is a Sounding Rocket from Woomera S.A. rocket range, the Gogo Mobile (The Dart), an authentic Fifties "Bates Milk Bar" from Bondi Beach, glass doors from the P&O building, Sydney, by Douglas Annan and Tom Bass door handles.

As part of Sydney Design 08, the Powerhouse Museum displays the finalists for the Australian International Design Awards. These include a personal tracking device for skiers and snowboarders, a communication device for firefighters and a selection of student designs. Another showcase displays award-winning designs over the past 50 years – including Leica, Ermanox, Bullet, Kodak and Box Brownie cameras, transistor radios and automatic telephones.

Sue Gatenby and James Elwing are investigating the Museum's collection needs for a Cold Store suitable for the storage of objects. The Museum already has a number of fridges used for archival storage purposes.

Sue Gatenby, James Elwing and Tim Morris have prepared and sealed the Sydney Swans Time Capsule. The air was evacuated and replaced with a nitrogen atmosphere. Tim Morris has treated furniture for the Great Collections Exhibition and engine models for the Regional Services Model display.

As part of the ongoing **Total Asset Management** project, Tasha Mac Farlane is condition reporting objects in the Penfolds Plastics Collection – historic plastics from the 1930s-40s. Sue Gatenby is working on a number of cellulose acetate badges from this collection, which have deterioration issues such as acetic acid production and the triphenyl phosphate plasticizer forming crystalline growth on the

surface. Once this collection is documented and analysed it will be placed into cold storage.

Rebecca Main has been surveying and repairing, and **Chris Brothers** has been photographing 1920s-1950s architectural drawings of hotels and other buildings from the Ruwald Collection. **Kate Pollard** has been photographing building materials such as tiles, cornices, and stamped metal sheets from the Wunderlich Collection at the Castle Hill Stores.

People news

Jenny Edmonds is currently overseas on a Winston Churchill Scholarship studying Steam Railway Locomotive construction and maintenance. Jenny is visiting various tourist railways and maintenance sites, observing construction of new boilers in Germany, Switzerland, France, England, Scotland, Wales and five states in America.

Kate Chidlow is working with Rebecca Pinchin (Regional Services) and Lindy Ward (Curatorial) on a Costume Register of NSW, covering colonial and well provenanced dresses. The aim is to collect as much information about the Regional costume collections of NSW and have it accessible as a database. The pilot phase will be launched at a costume seminar at the Powerhouse Museum on November 10. The register will be open to all after the pilot phase is completed next year.

Pat Townley, Head of Preservation, has retired after more than 25 years service, as has **Keith Potter**. Both have made significant contributions to the field of conservation.

Annaliese Treacy takes up a position at AGNSW. She has been invaluable to us in assisting with collection maintenance projects such as the Clyde Collection, Lawrence Hargrave journals and glass plate negatives from the Observatory. **Mary Gissing**, textile conservator, was also fondly farewelled to her new contract at ANMM.

Francis Fitzpatrick is back from maternity leave working part time.

Sarah Babister, a student from Melbourne University – Masters of Cultural Material Conservation completed a two week Industry Placement with us. Sarah worked on the mineral collection.

Suzanne Chee – won a Powerhouse Life Fellows Staff Development Award which will allow her to attend the conference, *Costume Colloquium: A Tribute to Janet Arnold* in Florence this November. The conference was the first international symposium exclusively dedicated to all aspect of dress history.

Skye Mitchell and **Dave Rockell** will be travelling with and doing the condition reporting on all the loan objects in the travelling Great Collections Exhibition for the Museums and Galleries of NSW Foundation.

SLNSW

Lab News

The Collection Preservation branch has been busily working away the past few months on our collection preservation programs, exhibitions and loans, as well as training our new staff members.

In mid September **Cecilia Harvey**, **Catherine Thomson**, **Anna Brooks** and **Tracey Golds** presented a 2 day workshop for State Records on De-Dramatising Disasters. Cecilia and Tracey also presented disaster workshops for new Library staff members.

Lang Ngo has been working on the upcoming exhibition *Bondi Jitterbug: George Caddy and his Camera*. This exhibition opens in December and showcases the work of amateur photographer, champion Jitterbug dancer and Bondi local; George Caddy. This display of 60 photographs document Bondi Beach during the late 1930s and early 1940s, features parading lifesavers, leisure seekers wearing the latest beach fashions, and the astonishing gymnastic feats known as 'Beachobatics'.

Cecilia Harvey, **Cathryn Bartley** and the trio of Martins – **Martin Bongiorno**, **Martin Polkinghorne**, **Martina Muller**,

have been preparing material for another upcoming exhibition, *The Magic Pudding: Watercolours by Norman Lindsay*. The much-loved characters of Lindsay's classic *The Magic Pudding*, star in this exhibition featuring his 1959 watercolour paintings. These works inspired the Marionette Theatre Company's Tintookie puppets, which bring Lindsay's characters to life.

In late October Catherine Thomson travelled to Paris for a week to accompany the return of Library items lent to the Musée National De La Marine for *The Lapérouse Mystery, discovering the South Pacific* exhibition.

People News

We say farewell to Tracey Golds and wish her all the best in her new position at the National Archives. Tracey's work has been invaluable and we will miss her extensive knowledge and exceptional efficiency. We would also like to welcome new staff members **Martina Muller**, **Martin Polkinghorne**, **Sarah Herman** and **Hamilton Churton**. Martina and Martin both have a background in archaeology and join us as assistant conservators. Sarah and Hamilton will be working as photographers in Imaging Services.

Steve Bell returned from Hawaii's Big Island and can now call himself a bona fide Ironman. The Ironman World Triathlon Championship is held each Autumn in Hawaii and consists of a 2.4 mile ocean swim, 112 mile bike ride and 26.2 mile marathon run. Steve completed this gruelling course and for this incredible effort we salute him.

International Conservation Services

Lab News

Mould on rare book collections and through the result of water used to put out a major house fire has been front of mind of late. Two major library collections are in the midst of being treated, using a team of students, coordinated by **Felicity Turner**. At the

same time **Anna Daikowska Czarnota** is looking after a private collection of artworks, saved from a house fire, but suffering various damage from water, smoke and collapsing ceilings. **Julian Bickersteth** attended the IIC Congress in London in September where he gave a paper coauthored with **Fiona Tennant** and **Sarah Clayton** (AWM) on the Antarctic Heritage Trust's conservation program.

Erin Watson and **Eleanor Sampaga** have been sampling the delights of Longreach, Queensland where they have been immersed in inventorying the collections of the Stockman's Hall of Fame for three weeks in October. **Karina Acton** spent another week on Norfolk Island advising on conservation of the HMS Sirius artifacts and then teamed up again with **Peter Maxwell** and **Wendi Powell** to conserve the vast bronze statue of Governor Philip in the Botanic Gardens.

People news

We welcome to our furniture conservation department **Eoin O'Sullivan** who joins us fresh from working with the National Museums of Scotland. We have also enjoyed the enthusiasm of University of Melbourne intern **Sarah Babister** who was prepared to turn her hand to almost anything whilst working with us for three months. Meanwhile we are set to lose **Fiona Tennant** (we hope very temporarily) on maternity leave.

Victoria

Museum Victoria

Lab News

As 2008 draws to an end, we are looking forward to a hiatus in time-consuming recruitment work related to the finalisation of our 'new' 2-team structure. In the New Year we hope to have all ongoing positions and fixed-term contracts filled so that we have a full complement of staff 'on deck' for a busy and stimulating year in 2009.

Toni Ross has settled in beautifully and is now accustomed to regular movement between multiple campuses in the course of her exhibition, loan and acquisition responsibilities. Toni has also provided helpful tips on comparative practice in her former workplace (NMA) and at MV. **Samantha Hamilton** and **Elizabeth McCartney** are both managing outward loans of indigenous (Canada/USA) garments and objects to organisations located in the areas of cultural origin of these items. **Marion Parker** will shortly join Sam, Toni and Elizabeth in the Collections Development & Access Team led by **Helen Privett**. Marion is back-filling **Karina Palmer** (Karina & Shane welcomed their first child, daughter Harriet, on 17/10/08).

Helen is currently liaising with colleagues and external stakeholders on the planned disassembly and transport from Mount Stromlo, ACT to Melbourne of the 'Great Melbourne Telescope' which is actually an MV collection item. The telescope was built in Dublin in 1868 and erected in Melbourne in 1869. At that time it was the second-largest telescope in the world and the only one in the southern hemisphere. It is proposed that the whole of the telescope assemblage (many components in storage for decades) be assessed for interpretation and potential restoration and activation. If this proposal goes ahead, it will be our largest-ever treatment project of this kind.

In 2008 we've noted an increased workload of pre-acquisition assessments for objects and collections, partially due to a shortage of storage space (hence strong justification for collection is needed!) and to targeted acquisition of items for sale by auction. Our thanks to those colleagues in private practice (especially interstate) who have agreed at short notice to dash to major auction houses to assess items on our behalf! We've also enjoyed seeing beautiful hands-on work by local conservators and associated professionals in private practice (ref. **Christina Ritschel** and **Annette Soumilas!**).

Using the new website...

Improve your profile...

- Are you organising an AICCM workshop or seminar?
- Have you just produced an AICCM publication?
- Would you like to put out a call for papers?
- Have you just held your divisional AGM?
- Are you a new SIG convenor?
- Would you like to let everyone know about the status of an AICCM project or committee?

Get exposure, ask for feedback or submissions, or just make your news known – post your news on the AICCM website!

Articles posted on "AICCM News" are linked to the State Division and Special Interest Group pages.

"AICCM News" articles can also be featured on the website's front page.

Send your text to the AICCM website editor (website@aiccm.org.au) and ask for a front page posting.

See current AICCM news stories by going to the home page (www.aiccm.org.au) and then to "About AICCM/AICCM News".



Another recent feature of our work is the need for preparation of work/cost assessments for conservation of collections which are the subject of ARC research grant proposals prepared by MV with its partner organisations. This has added to our workload during 2008, however, these (now successful) proposals will enable us to improve understanding, condition and management of key indigenous cultural collections and historical archaeology collections within the next 3 years.

As the leader of the Collection Preservation team, **Michelle Berry** is working on some strategies to improve our IPM program. Thank you to those individuals who responded earlier this year to our survey of IPM programs in institutions. It provided a quick 'snapshot' of how we compare to our peers' programs and tips on how we can improve our practice. A brief summary of the results (participant organisations are 'anonymous') has been despatched to responders. Information is available on request.

In 2009 we hope to direct a greater amount of attention to MV's natural science collections due to the assistance of a full-time conservator experienced in this field. This work, with improvements to management of image and audio-visual collections, upgrade of disaster preparedness/response systems and environment assessments in exhibition and storage areas, will be key goals for the collection preservation team.

In February 2009 we're hoping to host one of the proposed XRF training courses led by Dr Bruce Kaiser (Bruker AXS) and a meeting of the Preventive Conservation SIG.

People News

After a long absence, we're pleased to have volunteers return to our lab to assist us with preservation and remedial conservation projects. **Laura Curtis** and **Georgia Harvey** are working with Michelle on assessment of a wax cylinder recording collection. **Sheldon Teare** is cleaning glass plate negatives in preparation for a digitisation project. UK

conservator volunteer **Abby Maxwell-Bowen** will join us in February to assist preparation of a bark painting exhibition. Michelle is sailing to Antarctica in December for a season of work with the Mawson's Hut Foundation.

National Gallery of Victoria

Lab news

The *Klippel* exhibition is about to be deinstalled by Exhibitions conservation. Anchoring thin and delicate plastic sculptures onto small platforms was a challenge that brought a new (for us) material to light. Instead of wax we used Quakehold Gel. Trial and error has revealed a useful tip...we initially used small blobs underneath each work a la Quake Wax, but the gel seeped. It will do this until it ends up as a thin film, so apply as a film not in blobs and the resulting adhesion is very good. The objects twist off and the gel can be rolled up and off the surfaces.

Textile conservation have been busily working on a very large quilt from the 1840s which is due to be displayed at the NGV: Australia changeover in November. When this work is finished we will be working on two exhibitions, *Persuasion: Fashion in the time of Jane Austin* and *Imperial Robes*. This will be another busy time up ahead with these opening in April and May next year.

The NGV supported and sponsored a number of AICCM activities in October, such as hosting the AGM and website launch, as well as two SIG symposiums. The Paintings Conservation SIG symposium, organised by **Carl Willis** and **Alex Ellem**, was an opportunity to reflect on the progress of the profession, and a great success. The publication of symposium papers is still available for purchase through Carl. **MaryJo Lelyveld** coordinated a great program for the GOCSIG symposium held in early October at the NGV, which brought together frame makers and conservators from around Australia and across the Tasman. MaryJo and **Ruth Goris** have been kept busy making 23 reproduction

frames based on a late 19th century frame in the collection, made of oak with toned silver-gilded slips, for paintings by Australian artist George Folingsby.

In Paper conservation, **Ruth Shervington**, **Elisabetta Polidori** and **Louise Wilson** have just completed treatment on a range of works from the Asian Art Collection, including: Indian miniature paintings, Chinese and Japanese scrolls and Japanese woodblock prints, in preparation for the exhibition *The Cricket and The Dragon: Animals in Asian Art*.

In Photographs conservation, **Belinda Gourley** has been working on display methods for an Ed Ruscha concertina book, and treating two Frank Hurley photographs for display at NGV:A.

People news

The structure of the Exhibitions section has changed temporarily due to backfilling for maternity and sick leave. Our third, contract position is being shared between two people. Belinda Gourley is dividing her week across the Exhibitions and Photographic Conservation sections, and is backfilled in Exhibitions by **Solitaire Osei (nee Sani)** who is dividing her week between the Exhibitions and Textiles sections. There is enough exhibition work to satisfy everyone!

The Frames and Furniture section has morphed once again with the return of **Holly McGowan-Jackson** to head the section after extended maternity leave. **Noel Turner** did an excellent job filling in for Holly, and is now happy hiking in the Himalayas. **Suzi Shaw** has returned after completing a Senior Fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY where she undertook research and treatment on Qing dynasty lacquers.

In October we were sorry to say goodbye to **Melanie Carlisle** (H D T Williamson Foundation Fellow in Paintings Conservation) who is heading for the greener and sheep-filled pastures of New Zealand to take up a position at the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum. New Zealand has returned the favour and given us the very capable **Nicola Dunn** who will be

joining the Objects lab. Nicola has over twelve years of conservation experience working at the Museum of London, Auckland Museum and in Antarctica, and brings with her a specialisation in metals.

Two of our conservators have temporarily departed on maternity leave: **Pip Morrison** and **Trude Ellingsen**. We wish them the best of luck over the coming year.

State Library of Victoria

Lab News

Our paper conservators have begun working on a giant map; a geological survey map of Victoria, prepared by R C Selwyn and printed in the early 1860s, reputedly using the first steam-powered lithographic press in Australia (it also has areas of hand colouring). The map measures about five by three metres and is composed of many smaller printed 'quarter sheets' attached to a linen backing. The map has been stored rolled for the last century. It was recently donated to the SLV after being sent to Ireland in 1865 for the International Exhibition. SLV registrar **Catherine McFarlane** organised the transport of the long, skinny crate from Dublin to Melbourne. Our job now is to clean and repair areas of the map particularly the top section, which has become detached from the wooden roller and has damaged and lifting areas, and figure out how to mount it for display in the Library's Cowen Gallery in early 2009.

Sarah Slade and **Shelley Jamieson** have organised an environmental analysis program for our South East Wing. SLV is investigating whether set points and relative humidity control in our stack areas can be adjusted or switched off entirely, without unduly affecting conditions inside the building. Temperature and RH control has been switched off for the month of October in order to determine actual environmental effects and energy savings.

October was exhibition changeover time at SLV, with over 200 items prepared

for installation in the Dome Gallery exhibitions – *The Changing Face of Victoria* and *Mirror of the World*. Items installed included two manuscripts prepared for the *Medieval Imagination* exhibition, held earlier this year – the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* and the *Codex Sancti Paschalis*, both of which underwent extensive treatment and rebinding for display during 2007. For the changeover, **Katrina Ben** also repaired and rebound an early 19th century elephant folio, the *Pomona Britannica*, illustrated with images of fruit trees.

In other exhibitions news, Conservation assisted in the installation of 12 portraits by Caroline Williams as part of a temporary exhibition *Beyond the Persona: Eminent women of Victoria*. This exhibition is part of *Victorian Women Vote 1908–2008*, a program of events celebrating the centenary of Victorian women's voting rights. **Jane Hinwood**, **Amanda Wild** and **Jean Holland** continue to prepare items for an exhibition about the publishing history of Victoria, *Independent Type*, to open at SLV in April 2009. Amanda and **David Harris** travelled to Mildura with SLV Exhibition Designer **Megan Atkins** to install our touring exhibition, *Victorians on Vacation*, which will then travel to Warrnambool in December.

After many months of work, the Library has recently finalised the tender process for our new external binding contract, awarded to Apollo Moon. The book conservation staff have been familiarising themselves with the new software for Apollo Moon's automated order system. Additionally, book conservators Jean Holland and Katrina Ben recently visited CAVAL to view the Curtis scanner at work. Subsequently, SLV sent a small number of items from our Children's' Literature collection to CAVAL for digitisation using the Curtis scanner, as part of the Australian Children's Literature Digital Resources Project.

Preservation Technicians, **Michelle Lim**, **Savina Hopkins** and **Jeff Harrison** assisted the Storage Coordinator **Vanessa Ross** with minor collection

moves and reprofiling of storage systems. About 200 bags of architectural drawings were moved to the Ballarat Offsite Store and interfiled with existing flat works. Additionally, 115 linear metres of pamphlets were reconfigured in closed access La Trobe storage, 50 linear metres of acetate negatives were moved from the Public Record Office Victoria to onsite cool storage and 60 linear metres of uncatalogued material was moved from the Ballarat Offsite Store to the onsite Acquisitions store for decision and cataloguing. Adjustment of collections and insertion of additional shelves (where possible) was completed in the Arts closed access store, resulting in an increase in capacity of about 360 linear metres. Audits of storage systems and collection content continued in multiple areas across the Library.

Preservation and conservation staff members **Kate Holloway**, Savina Hopkins, David Harris, **Alice Cannon**, **Carolyn Fraser** and Michelle Lim have been surveying areas of the collection to determine rehousing and treatment needs prior to digitisation. Most of our current digitisation projects centre on significant Victorian collections, such as the Victorian collection of parish plans, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works plans, 19th century images of Victoria and our collection of artists' prints, drawings and watercolours.

Melbourne University student **Helen Szuster** spent two weeks with Conservation in September for her industry placement. Helen prepared a report on the current approaches to managing nitrate film collections, as part of our current review of our holdings.

AICCM AGM

Annual General Meeting 35

4.30pm, Wednesday

8 October 2008

Art Gallery of Victoria

Summary of Minutes

1. Attendance:

Alice Cannon, Christina Ritschel, Hilary Milsome, Susanna Collis, Christine Ianna, Carolyn Murphy, Margaret Sounili, Elizabeth Hadlow, Jude Fraser, Megan Sypek, Marika Kocsis, Briony Permberton, Isa Loo, Detlev Leuth, Sophie Lewincamp, Jonathan Schmidt, Ian MacLeod, Andrew Durham, Jacqueline MacNaughtan, Kerry Hannan, Erica Burgess, Marcelle Scott, Suzi Shaw, Vanessa Kowalski, Jean Johnson, Sherryn Vardy, David Parker, Alexa McNaught-Reynolds, Antonia Ross, Elizabeth McCartney, Anne Carter, Gillian Osmond, Mary Jo Lelyveld, Alexandra Ellem, Raye Collins, Helen Privett, Catherine Lovelock, Tamara Lavrencic, Maria Kubik, Libby Melzer, Robert Franzke, Davina Hacklin (minutes)

2. Apologies:

Margaret Alexander, Steve Gordon, Kay Söderlund, Karen Coote, Fiona Tennant, Jodie Proud, Deborah Lau, Bronwyn Cosgrove, Robyn Sloggett

3. Confirmation of minutes of previous AGM 34

Moved: Ian MacLeod, Seconded: Christine Ianna

4. President's report – Tamara Lavrencic

The key focus for the past two years has been on the development of a new web-site for AICCM, which is launched tonight, following the AGM. While there have been many people involved, I'd like to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution made by Alice Cannon and Jenny Dickens. The idea of new web software was floated at Council Meeting 124 in October 2006, when Jenny noted problems with the existing software. In November 2006, the CAN Coordinator, Joy Suliman offered the assistance of Crina Belevi to review our website and advise us on developing a website brief. Alice Cannon came on board in January 2007 to further develop the brief for web-site development and manage the tendering process, with the assistance of Jenny Dickens and Rowena Jameson. Energetica was awarded the contract in October 2007. Since then Alice has worked closely with the designers on content while Jenny has focused on development of the new membership management system.

This year saw several changes of Secretariat for AICCM. Initially, Jenny Dickens took on the role for 6 months. Jenny's familiarity with AICCM though the many AICCM positions she's held and with the membership database, was of particular benefit during this transition period. When Jenny returned to her position at Heritage Victoria, Robert Franzke took over the position as AICCM Secretariat. Robert comes to AICCM with strong administrative skills and considerable experience working with the conservation profession through positions held at the Ian Potter Museum of Art and the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation.

The Conservator of the Year Award is back on track thanks to AICCM's Membership Officer, Fiona Tennant. Nominations were received for four

highly commendable nominees, making the selection process an unenviable task, so much so that the selection panel decided to present 3 certificates of appreciation in addition to the Conservator of the Year award.

Moved: Alice Cannon, Seconded: Marika Kocsis

5. Treasurer's Report – Maria Kubik

I am pleased to present the AICCM audited accounts for the year ending 30th June 2008 (attached). Overall, after a small loss of \$2,318, the accounts show a total accumulated fund of \$218,499. This loss was due to long term initiatives and upfront costs, such as web software and development, process reviews and publication fees. These were largely offset by profits from the National Conference in Brisbane and the Book and Paper Conference in Canberra. The changeover in secretariat at the beginning of the last and current financial years has generated many opportunities for review and improvement of procedures:

a. Account review

In order to streamline accounts and simplify our bookkeeping, AICCM underwent a 'mini-audit' by BDO Kendalls of Melbourne in May this year. The scope included reviewing current practices and Quickbooks files, prepare a procedures manual for bookkeeping, and provide recommendations. Many points in the review have already been implemented.

b. Appointment of AICCM bookkeeper

Based on recommendations by BDO Kendalls, we have appointed Chagall Pty Ltd to undertake bookkeeping services on behalf of AICCM. This appointment will supplement the services provided by the Secretariat, and is already proving to

give efficient expertise in Quickbooks, BAS and reports.

c. Bank accounts

Two new community solutions Westpac accounts were opened to take advantage of lower operating costs. Commonwealth bank credit card processing facilities previously set up by Secretariat Australia however proved more expensive to transfer, and accounts must now be re-combined. Better interest rate options are being explored for the term deposit. Online signing and access were also considered to cut down on processing time.

d. Management of SIG accounts

BDO highlighted the difficulty in consolidating and reconciling accounts of SIG activities. I again stress that organisers of workshops and seminars using AICCM secretariat services need to submit budget proposals before, and reconciliations after the event so that we can accurately attribute monies.

e. State divisions

Cheques for 2007/08 membership capitation fees (8% of total memberships) have been issued, and 2006/07 end of year financial reports are requested from state treasurers. Due to the complexity of National and SIG accounts, there is currently no intention to absorb division finances into a central bookkeeping service. This will also retain the independence of State divisions and their activities.

f. GVEHO Grant

AICCM successfully applied for a heritage grant from the Environment, Water and Heritage Australia grant scheme (GVEHO). We have received \$9,000 as a one off payment towards administration costs, which is slightly less than the \$10,000 applied for. Due to the change of government, EWHA did not award any multi-year grants as in previous years, and are reviewing their grant types and amounts.

In summary, it has been an exciting year implementing activities and projects that had been budgeted for some time ago. I

am confident with the level of financial expertise and hard work that has been offered by Secretariat, Bookkeeping and Audit providers, hopefully leading to a more efficient and transparent AICCM treasury role in the future.

Moved: Detlev Leuth, **Seconded:** Elizabeth Hadlow

6. Secretary's report – Vacant

No report

7. Election of office bearers

The 2007/2008 National Council stood down. Nominations had been called for all positions on National Council 42 days before the AGM as required by the constitution. Sufficient nominations were received to fill all positions. No extra nominations were received and therefore no elections were held. The following will therefore be deemed elected:

President: Tamara Lavrencic
 Vice President: Kay Söderlund
 Secretary: Davina Hacklin
 Treasurer: Maria Kubik
 Publications Officer: Marika Kocsis
 Professional Membership Officer: Christine Ianna
 SIG Co-ordinator: Sophie Lewincamp
 Membership Services Officer: Fiona Tennant
 Ordinary Member: Ian MacLeod

The new 2008/2009 National Council then resumed and Tamara Lavrencic chaired the remainder of the meeting.

8. Professional Membership

A vote on constitution changes regarding professional membership was held and unanimously accepted.

Moved: Tamara Lavrencic, **Seconded:** Detlev Leuth

9. Other business

AICCM Conservator of the Year Award – Tamara Lavrencic

The purpose of the selection and presentation of the AICCM Conservator of the Year Award is:

- To recognize and reward an individual whose extraordinary efforts have directly contributed to the raising of standards in her/his organisation in Australia and/or to recognize an individual who has significantly contributed to raising conservation standards as a whole and whose particular activity has had, or is recognized to have the potential to have, far reaching benefits in the conservation field, nationally or internationally.
- To promote the profession of conservation and its activities to the wider community
- To encourage membership of the AICCM

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the Conservator of the Year 2008 is Alice Cannon. Alice was nominated for the pivotal role she played in developing AICCM's new website. The website will improve access and use by AICCM members and by members of the public, will enable more efficient functioning of AICCM overall and will raise the profile of AICCM and conservation in general. In developing the website, Alice has collaborated with a number of conservators to draw on their experience and expertise.

In the lead up to calling for nominations for Conservator of the Year there was discussion about broadening the terms of reference to offer other awards. So this year, I have the pleasure to announce that AICCM is presenting 3 certificates of appreciation.

The certificate of appreciation for long term service to AICCM and the Australian conservation profession is awarded to Rose Peel for the far reaching effects of her active involvement with the development of the conservation

profession over the course of her career. In particular, Rose has been an important mentor for paper conservators, and particularly for conservators of works of art on paper, providing advice and expertise to colleagues both in Australia and internationally.

The certificate of appreciation for outstanding research in the field of material conservation is awarded to Vicki Richards for her remarkable contribution to the field of shipwreck artefact conservation. For the past 20 years Vicki has been studying the decay of metallic and organic materials on historic shipwrecks. The work that Vicki has done and presented at international and national conference has changed the way people understand and therefore manage the conservation of shipwrecks.

The certificate of appreciation for outstanding service to AICCM is awarded to Jenny Dickens for the sustained commitment and dedication

she has demonstrated over many years, serving council in a variety of roles and constantly focusing on improving services to the membership. Jenny has been an outstanding member of AICCM, helping us to get a better understanding of our administrative needs, liaising with Artslaw on legal questions relating to Professional Membership and general membership issues, tidying up the membership database and working with the web-site team to ensure that the worst of the problems with the previous database were not repeated in the new system, to name but a few recent projects.

Finally, on behalf of the AICCM, I'd like to thank to CCMC for supporting the Awards program by framing COTY certificate so beautifully.

No other business was raised so the meeting was declared closed at 5:00pm.



Using the new website...

Members in private practice - update your listings!

The new "members in private practice" list is searchable by name, location and specialisation.

Make sure the public can find you by updating your details!

When you log in to the site you will see the "My Account" menu. Choose "Edit Conservators in Private Practice details".

- Make sure your phone number, fax, business location, email address and other contact details are correct.
- Choose which areas you are able to service, including whether you work in metro and/or regional areas.
- Choose which types of material you work on, and the types of conservation services you offer.
- The new search feature also includes a field called "About You", where you can share more particular information about your business – e.g. specific areas of expertise etc.

Some fields are compulsory – make sure you have filled these in before you click "save".

Please note that your listing will not appear in the Directory if your membership has expired – so if you can't find yourself in the list, please go to "My Account" and check your "Membership History" to find out your current membership status. If your membership has expired, please go to "Membership Renewal".

If you have any questions about the Members in Private Practice listings, please contact the AICCM Secretariat (secretariat@aiccm.org.au).



**AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL CONSERVATION MATERIALS
INCORPORATED**

Detailed Profit and Loss Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
<hr/>		
Income		
Book/Publication sales	695	7,417
Grant - GVEHO	9,000	10,000
Memberships subscriptions	57,048	55,898
Advertising income	5,207	11,034
Sponsorship income		2,000
Donations	150	
Registration - Events	60,919	17,402
Interest received	10,039	9,652
Reimbursed expenses	1,563	4,083
Total income	144,620	117,486

Expenses

Advertising and promotion	33	
Accounting & Audit fees	5,261	6,612
Awards/prizes	310	250
Bad Debts		564
Bank Fees And Charges	1,416	1,092
Branch subscriptions		2,603
Computer expenses	23,625	5,519
Postage & Handling	11,948	4,517
Venue	3,151	182
Meeting exp. - Catering	21,335	3,593
Speaker	3,843	15,031
Event organisers	3,950	
Events Audiovision	1,291	
Events profit paid	909	
Insurance	3,908	3,350
Legal/licence fees	1,018	
Printing & stationery	2,948	7,584
Rent/parking/hire	566	1,044
Secretarial expenses	26,774	35,807
Publications	23,324	8,788
Telephone	1,617	669

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached audit report.

**AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL CONSERVATION MATERIALS
INCORPORATED**

Detailed Profit and Loss Statement

For the year ended 30 June 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
Travel, accom & conference	9,552	8,517
Workshop expenses	159	1,403
Writeback excess GST		(2,692)
Total expenses	<u>146,938</u>	<u>104,433</u>
Net Profit (Loss) from Ordinary Activities	<u>(2,318)</u>	<u>13,053</u>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements. These statements should be read in conjunction with the attached audit report.

An Interview – Vicki Humphrey

Vicki Humphrey trained at the Camberwell School of Art and Crafts in paper conservation and worked at Artlab Australia before being appointed as Head of Conservation at the British Library in 2003. Julian Bickersteth caught up with her at the IIC Congress in London in September.

How did your move to London come about?

I had been at Artlab for 13 years when a colleague pointed out the advertisement for the British Library's Head of Conservation position. Through a Leadership development programme run by the SA government, I had received much of the requisite training in management, motivation and communication, and I was keen for a new challenge, so I applied and amazingly was offered the position.

What was the Head of Conservation position about?

Fundamentally it was to provide leadership to approximately 80 staff in Conservation. It was also to manage change and move staff into a new building, which in 2003, still needed to be built. The British Library (BL) had moved into its new premises in 1998, but more than half the Conservation staff had remained in the old bindery building behind the British Museum. The staff were [physically] distant from the collections and from their curatorial and Collection Care (BLCC) colleagues. This presented a range of operational issues, not least the problem of moving collections out of a controlled and secure environment, to a very unpredictable environment with less BL controlled security. There was a recognised need to update and unify the Conservation section – this was not straight forward, with separate sites using different operating procedures.

How did you approach the job?

I knew the BL from my Camberwell days and had some sense of what it would be like. With the benefit of hindsight, I would say I started with familiarisation and informal fact finding and then got

stuck in. Looking back I would say the main strands were threefold, firstly; building the British Library Centre for Conservation. That involved raising the funds, contributing to the design and, of course, moving into it when built. Secondly, there was the task of bringing the Conservation section together and getting it to operate as a unit. This involved reviewing, unifying and streamlining systems and – more challenging – tackling cultural change within Conservation. Thirdly, and interdependent with the first two, was to ensure that Conservation was delivering, and seen to be delivering, sound conservation services to the Library. This involved profile raising within and outside the Library. All of this was rolled into the British Library Centre for Conservation (BLCC) Project Plan.

A senior user team was formed by my manager, Helen Shenton, the Head of Collection Care in November 2003, including on it; the project management consultant and architect co-ordinator. This group was to meet over 100 times as the project unfolded. The change programme I had initiated, including, for example; reviewing the way treatments were undertaken, and undertaking a skills audit of the staff, along with an equipment and documentation audit, was included and formed some of the 36 workstreams on the plan.

What proved to be the key issues arising from this?

Inevitably with this sort of change it is the people issues that are key and that require the most attention. We are all resistant to change, and some of the people had worked at the bindery for over 30 years. This was a big change to their daily routine. Reporting on conservation had been in terms of numbers of items



treated and there had been no real requirement to meet deadlines or provide data accounting for use of resources. There were also unrealistic expectations by curators, no communication between different conservation sections and little between conservation and curators, with strongly divergent backgrounds of bindery and conservation staff.

And how did you address these?

I formed mixed teams from different areas to work together on the conservation workstreams we identified as being necessary to realise the project. The whole focus on the BLCC project also helped. Five years on, not only are we now all working together on one site, on a unified programme, but there has been a fundamental positive change in both conservator and curatorial thinking, and a significantly higher profile for the conservation department's work at the British Library.

You have just achieved accreditation with ICON, the Institute for Conservation.

Yes, having been a bit of a sceptic of the process of accreditation, I am now a great advocate. I see the value it has brought to my professional development and I feel it provides some professional kudos to my employer. It is great to have been successfully peer reviewed. I achieved accreditation through the management stream (until a recent review there were three defined streams management, which was new, and preventive or hands-on streams). It provides an opportunity for those conservators without degrees but with lots of experience, to be able to stand up professionally. It also recognises the importance of conservation managers and the influence they have both on treatment processes and in mentoring younger members of the profession.

What's your perspective on Australian conservation, having been away from it for five years?

The British Library's size (with over 200 personnel in Collection Care alone) allows for highly skilled specialists, whereas Australia's conservators operate over a broader range of activities with less opportunity of focusing on hands-on skills or developing deep specialisms. However, the upside is that Australian conservators tend to be more rounded, knowledgeable in hands-on, preventive and treatment areas. My perception is that there is a drastic shortage of book conservators in Australia and I worry that the concentration on MA and post graduate qualifications is removing the development of the craft skills so vital to hands-on conservation. More broadly, we all need to get better at communicating what we are about. We have been trained to think in detail but

we need to think about communicating the key messages and we can do this in a number of ways; sometimes it is appropriate to use, for example, project and risk management frameworks and at other times, we should tell the story of what we are doing and why, rather than just providing treatment steps and details.

Thank you Vicki Humphrey.

 **Using the new website...**

Found a good specialist supplier or service provider?

Share their details and support their business by posting their details on the "Conservation Card File".

To access this new resource, you'll have to be logged in to the AICCM website. Go to "Suppliers" and then "Conservation Card File". Use the "Search" function to search by key words (e.g. "felts") or browse listings by category.

To add a new supplier you have found, click on the "Add entry" link. You will be asked to add contact, address and other details. You will also be asked to include your name as the person adding the listing, so that you can be contacted individually for personal comments.

A business entry can be added to five of the categories appearing at the bottom of the online form – click on the appropriate category title and then on the >> symbol to transfer categories across.

Businesses who are AICCM members themselves can add their own business to these listings.

Please note that your listing may not appear immediately on the site; postings are first approved by our Secretariat.



General News

Stories from the files: National Archives of Australia

The Commonwealth records held by the National Archives of Australia contain many fascinating stories. Ian Batterham is researching a number of these stories for the AICCM Newsletter. For this issue, the story comes from the mid-1960s and concerns the Commonwealth Art Collection, recruiting the first conservator for the Australian War Memorial, the early days of the National Gallery of Australia and discussion of the idea of appointing a Commonwealth conservator. Unless otherwise referenced, all information presented comes from the Prime Minister's Department file: CRS A463/33 item 1967/1063 'Conservation of Paintings. Appointment of a Commonwealth Conservator' and the Department of Administrative Services file: CRS A3808/19 item 1973/1373 'Appointment of a Conservator at the Australian War Memorial'.

Needed: a Commonwealth conservator

The information presented here is but a segment of a longer story. It provides a fascinating glimpse at the development of the conservation profession in Australia.

Central to this story is a body called the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (CAAB). The CAAB was first established in 1912. Its role initially was to inform the Historic Memorials Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, on suitable artists to be commissioned to paint portraits of; governors-general, prime ministers, presidents of the Senate, speakers of the House of Representatives and others outstanding in the fields of art, science and literature, as well as important national events such as the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament in Canberra in 1927, and the opening of Parliament by the Queen in 1954.¹

Over the years, the role of the CAAB changed, and by the 1960s its major functions were commissioning portraits of prominent Commonwealth people, advising on Commonwealth-funded public art throughout Australia, promotion of Australian art both within Australia and overseas, purchasing artworks for placement in Commonwealth buildings, embassies and overseas posts, and development of the Commonwealth Art Collection, which was to be the basis of the collection for the proposed National Gallery of Australia.

In the mid-1960s, membership of the CAAB was as follows:

- Sir Daryl Lindsay (Chair)
- Mr Russell Drysdale
- Mr Douglas Pratt
- Mr Robert Campbell
- Mr WA Dargie
- Mr AL Moore (Secretary).

At this time, the Commonwealth Art Collection comprised over 600 works, which were stored in a repository in Canberra. The Committee of Inquiry into the Establishment of the National Art Gallery was just then finalising its report, which was due in March 1966. The report was expected to clear the way for the establishment of the gallery, a process which was anticipated to take about five or six years. A minute dated 1 December 1965 from 'Kelly' of the Prime Minister's Department to Valda Leehy, who performed support duties for the CAAB (for which she received an OBE in 1969), discusses the needs of the Commonwealth Art Collection. It was assumed that the collection would grow and its need for conservation would become more acute; a conservator to look after it was therefore required.

The sourcing of a trained conservator was discussed by the CAAB, and the options were given of either recruiting one of the

very few in Australia from an existing gallery or training one. The latter option was considered the most desirable. The minute mentions that at that time the National Library of Australia was having a cadet trained at the Art Gallery of New South Wales under William Boustead (Ian Cook?) and that Mr Boustead would be willing to train another conservator to look after the Commonwealth Art Collection. The process of training a cadet would take 'about 3 years'. The National Library cadet was paid at the base-grade clerk salary by the Library, who also met the cost of fees and other equipment. The cadet entered into a bond of \$600 to work with the National Library for three years after completion of the cadetship.

In the mid-1960s, there were only two designated conservators working in Australian art galleries: Mr Boustead at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and one at the Adelaide Art Gallery. The National Gallery of Victoria had only a part-time restorer who was paid a retainer and a fee for each restoration completed. This is not to say that there were not other people undertaking conservation work. For example, there were five additional staff in the conservation section of the Art Gallery of New South Wales who, while not classed as conservators, did simple conservation work, condition reporting, mounting and framing.

In December 1965, Mr Boustead was brought to Canberra to advise on the conservation needs of the Commonwealth Art Collection.

He filed a report on his visit stating that he was somewhat dismayed at the storage conditions for the collection: 'Storage facilities at the repository leave a lot to be desired. Space is somewhat restricted and stacking the paintings against each other has no doubt contributed greatly to the number of abraded paint films.' He suggested that the installation of hanging screens of wire fencing mesh

would cheaply solve these problems. The installation of sliding racks was rejected as costly and unwarranted because the storage area was only temporary.

Mr Boustead also inspected Tom Roberts' *The Opening of the First Parliament*, then on display at the Australian War Memorial, which he found to be in good condition and believed would not require cleaning for 'some years'. He also looked at the large portraits hanging in Parliament House and found several to have sustained accidental damage in the form of gashes, possibly caused by careless cleaners. He offered to visit Canberra for a day (first plane in, last plane out) and put this right by patching the tears, then filling and retouching the lost paint. He also states that he was returning a painting, *Portrait Sketch of Mary Gilmour*, which had had its flaking paint 'sealed down' and missing paint filled and retouched. It had then been given a coat of fixative to fix its loosely bonded paint.

On 16 February 1966, the CAAB again met and among other things discussed Mr Boustead's report. They noted that the Australian War Memorial was exploring the possibility of appointing a permanent conservator from overseas to care for its large collection of paintings, although these duties were believed to constitute only 75 per cent of a full-time workload. The CAAB therefore suggested a pooling of resources and, as an interim solution, the appointment of a conservator to care for all paintings belonging to the Commonwealth.

On 21 February 1966, J McGrath, Director of the Australian War Memorial, wrote to the CAAB confirming that they were seeking approval from the Public Service Board to appoint a conservator to look after the nearly 7000 paintings in their collection. He requested a response from the CAAB and an indication of what they thought would be an appropriate salary for such an appointee. Later in the year Mr Lancaster, Acting Director of the Australian War Memorial, rang and gave his support for the idea of a shared Commonwealth conservator.

On 3 March 1966, Mrs Leehy reported that current conservator annual salaries were £1570 (\$3140) in Adelaide and £1970 (\$3940) in Sydney (decimalisation of currency had begun on 14 February 1966). These conservators apparently had the right of private practice but little time to exercise it. It was felt a salary in excess of £2000 would be needed to attract a conservator from overseas. The CAAB, at a meeting held in Melbourne on 9–10 June 1966, stated that a salary of \$5000–6000 would be necessary to attract a competent conservator.

A salary scale for UK conservators, provided by the British Museum, is given on the file. This has salary ranges for three grades of conservator. An assistant conservator earned from £396 sterling (at age 16) to £985, a conservation officer earned from £898 to £1359 and a senior conservation officer earned from £1365 to £1734. The Tait Gallery also supplied salary rates: Assistant Restorer II £492–699, Assistant Restorer I £847–1296, Restorer II £1364–1698, Restorer I £1572–2784 and Chief Restorer £2778–3199.

Also at this time, the recently established Art Galleries Association was apparently preparing a case for higher salaries for conservators in Australian galleries.

Mr Boustead wrote to the CAAB on 6 June 1965 indicating he was quite happy to take on a cadet restorer for the Commonwealth Art Collection. The letter includes information on what was expected from this cadet as well as a syllabus for the cadetship and a first-year exam paper (this will be covered in more detail in a future article in the 'Stories from the Files' series).

Discussion now moved to the question of whether a single conservator was sufficient to cover the collection of the Australian War Memorial, the nascent National Gallery collection and other elements of the Commonwealth Art Collection. WR Lancaster, Acting Director of the Australian War Memorial, wrote to the CAAB suggesting that more than one conservator might be required. He wanted a conservator to be dedicated to the Australian War Memorial

collection and felt that this would be a large task on its own, leaving little time for any other activity. He also raised the important question of the facilities needed to carry out conservation work. R Kingsland, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, at this time asked of the Prime Minister's Department whether the Australian War Memorial needed its own dedicated conservator, stating that he felt the national collection should be considered as a whole and should have a single conservation program to look after it.

The realisation of the inadequacy of a single Commonwealth conservator was also discussed. A note on the file asks Mrs Leehy to find out 'the maximum number of paintings per conservator' and whether the Commonwealth Art Collection, the National Library and the Australian War Memorial would each warrant a conservator. The answer provided was that the Art Gallery of New South Wales had six staff looking after a collection of 3000 paintings and a large collection of prints. The Adelaide Art Gallery had a staff of three looking after their collection. Mr Boustead felt that when he was the only conservation staff member looking after the Art Gallery of New South Wales collection, which at the time numbered 1000 paintings, he 'found it impossible to look after them properly'. Bearing this in mind, Mrs Leehy was of the view that the Australian War Memorial collection would warrant the attention of two conservators. The National Library also reported that their conservator, when he came on line, would 'have his hands full for a long time in looking after the Nan Kivell Collection alone'. She concludes that it seemed necessary, given the size and growth of the Commonwealth Art Collection that it have a conservator appointed solely to look after it.

In light of this, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet agreed that the Commonwealth Art Collection needed its own conservator, and placed a proposal before the Public Service Board for the creation of a cadet position to fulfil this role. In the meantime, Mr Boustead would continue to regularly

check on the collection and advise on its conservation.

The Australian War Memorial Board of Trustees at the same time were obtaining advice through their art advisers, WA Dargie and M Napier Waller, who consulted 'well known conservator Mr Harley Griffiths about its needs'. After visiting the Australian War Memorial to view its collection of paintings, Mr Griffiths concluded its 'problems of restoration and conservation are unlike those of the normal art gallery. The War Memorial's paintings are all of comparatively recent vintage and there would thus not be the same problems of restoration encountered in other art galleries as, for example, with Old Masters.' In his opinion 'the problems of the War Memorial will be those associated with wartime artists having worked with inferior materials, in cleaning, stripping, revarnishing, and in providing an adequate archival record, as well as close and generally continuous supervision.' Mr Griffiths stated that, 'It would not be desirable... to put someone through a long apprenticeship

as a conservator with the risk of losing him to some other art gallery as soon as the apprenticeship was completed. The War Memorial's needs could be filled by someone who has been an artist and would now prefer a task where he was continuously engaged in handling fine paintings.' Mr Griffiths offered to 'teach him such additional information as a trained artist might need in a relatively short course of instruction'.

The Australian War Memorial Board of Trustees therefore recommended the creation of a conservator position at the salary range of \$3343-3795, the same scale as a 'Drafting Officer Grade 1'.

Unfortunately the files end before a cadet for the Commonwealth Art Collection or a conservator for the Australian War Memorial were appointed. I have asked David Keaney, late of the Australian War Memorial paintings section, and he states that the recruit to the role was one Les Byron who had been a cadet under Mr Boustead. On the last page of the file, a report from the CAAB meeting of 18 January 1967, it is reported that the

matter was still with the Public Service Board. The same report also states that a further position, an exhibitions officer for the Commonwealth Art Collection, had been appointed – a Mr James Mollison, whose 'qualifications were impressive', so impressive that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet were expected to ask the Public Service Board to increase the original salary offered for the position.

James Mollison went on to become the first Director of the National Gallery of Australia, but what about the other threads of the story – who was the National Library cadet? And was a cadet conservator recruited for the Commonwealth Art Collection?

¹ A McCulloch, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994.

Using the new website...

Are you running a workshop or training session? Dealing with public enquiries?

The new AICCM website has some resources that might help.

- Direct people to the online "Members in Private Practice" directory – listings are searchable by name, location and specialisation. If you don't select any search options, pressing the "search" button will bring back a list of all members in private practice. (AICCM Home/Conservators/Find a conservator in private practice).
- Illustrate your talk with images from our "Visual Glossary". Descriptions of damage are listed alphabetically. Find a picture you would like to use, then click on it to download a higher resolution version. Please remember to acknowledge the person or organisation who supplied the image. (AICCM Home/About Conservation/Visual Glossary).
- Show members of the public what might happen if they use sticky tape or an abrasive cleaning solution on their collection items. "Remedies Gone Wrong" includes case studies about cleaning and repair techniques that haven't stood the test of time. (AICCM Home/About Conservation/Remedies Gone Wrong).
- Direct members of the public to online resources about caring for different types of collection material, via "Caring for collections". (AICCM Home/About Conservation/Caring for Collections).
- Educate your colleagues or clients about what conservators do – show them images or treatment case studies from "Conservators at work". (AICCM Home/About Conservation/Conservators at work).

If you would like to contribute to any of these areas of the site, please contact the AICCM website editor (website@aiccm.org.au).



Conference Reviews

Conservation and Access The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) London Congress, 15th-19th September 2008

Colin MacGregor

This conference was a journey into a place where the conservation profession sometimes fears to tread – increasing access to collections. The theme of Conservation and Access generated a range of papers that tackled “access” from a number of interesting angles. Some were from a practical point of view such as methods of designing safe transport and display systems to allow collections travel, and others approached more philosophical themes such as how closely should the public interact with cultural objects.

In general there were less graphs, statistics and experimental results than usual, and more practical approaches about the use of collections. This was an opportunity to wrestle with the conundrum that collections are for people to use, but how much can they be used before they are diminished for future generations?

In some sessions, we were given opportunities to forget about the problems of carefully controlling conditions within cultural institutions, and consider the challenges of conserving enormous items in hostile environments such as urban murals in the US, the large steel ship SS Great Britain, and explorers huts in Antarctica.

Liz Pye's paper, “The benefits of access through handling outweigh the risks” was guaranteed to provoke a reaction. For many of us, we regularly face the consequences of the mixed messages of hands-on objects alongside open displays of “Not to Touch” exhibits and the confusion this causes, particularly for

children. This topic merited a lot more discussion time than was available.

The National Trust and English Heritage both presented papers which demonstrated their current methodologies for assessing risks and conservation needs of vast collections spread over many sites. This was thorough in its approach and impressive in its scale. In contrast, Andrew Thorne's presentation near the close of the conference about Aboriginal art sites at Uluru and in Tasmania refreshingly presented another voice, questioning the wisdom of any public access to sites that are so isolated and vulnerable. Does the cultural importance of these sites to the Indigenous community outweigh the demands of tourism?

At the end of the conference, I still craved some solid answers to many of the questions. How can we quantify the risks of many of the forms of access? Perhaps Jonathon Ashley-Smith could have presented a paper based on research for his book “Risk Assessment for Museum Collections” to give us some way of comparing the relative risks of each approach.

It was certainly a timely conference on the access theme, as the population becomes more aware of the scale of hidden museum and gallery collections and the pressure for increased engagement and access grows. Whether this is best served by internet access or physical visitation through viewable storage remains to be seen. Even the preparation of large collections for digitisation presents a major challenge for the conservation profession.

Catherine Nunn

Overlooked by Westminster Abbey, in the shadow of the London Eye, flanked by the Houses of Parliament, The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster was the venue for the 2008 IIC Congress. The theme

of the congress, ‘Conservation and Access’, examined the central role of conservation in the presentation and protection of the world's cultural heritage. Over 460 delegates from over 40 countries attended the congress, and over 40 papers were presented as well as an extensive poster display.

Memorable presentations included; the conservation of Helen Lundeberg's *The History of Transportation* mural (Rosa Lowinger and Andrea Morse), a project of enormous scope and one that addressed many aspects of the interpretation of artistic intent and the changing environment for the suitable display of public artworks. The presentation of the conservation of the Harvard glass flowers by Stephen Koob (et al) and their exhibition at various venues, was a chance to marvel at the skills of these conservators (and also the artists who constructed these botanical models), and the high calibre of modern exhibiton transport that makes such fragile artefacts accessible to a wide audience.

Studies of the global transport environment and vibration as a hazard during the transportation of canvas paintings were delivered by two authors (Nobyuki Kamba et al of Japan and Lukasz Lasyk et al of Poland), with interesting results. Other memorable lectures ranged from the preservation of a petrified forest on a Greek island (Evangelina Kyriazi and Nickolas Zouros), to risk assessment in historic country houses (Katy Lithgow et al) and discussion of the relative costs of the construction of the Westminster Abbey retable in the thirteenth century (Spike Bucklow).

The Australian contribution to the congress included talks by Andrew Thorn on restricted access to indigenous cultural sites, Julian Bickersteth on the conservation project on the historic huts in Antarctica and two poster presentations (Ian Geraghty and Catherine Nunn).

The congress also included many evening functions at various museums and galleries across London. Most notably, a round table discussion at the National Gallery on the challenges to conservators and museums presented by global climate change. London turned on beautiful late summer sunshine for the international delegates, and the final day of the congress was spent on site visits to historic houses in the English countryside. The conference dinner was a cruise aboard the 'Silver Sturgeon' down the Thames in the evening twilight, complete with a band formed of staff from the Natural History Museum. They had many eminent conservators dancing to covers of The Kaiser Chiefs' 'I predict a riot' and U2 classics.

Overall the conference was extremely enjoyable; a chance to reconnect with international colleagues, learn of new developments in conservation research and practice across all disciplines, and keep up to date with current issues affecting our profession.

Ian Godfrey

I particularly enjoyed the conference (possibly heightened because it was the first conference that I have attended at which I wasn't presenting a paper). For me it was refreshing to see and hear conservators and conservation scientists openly advocating greater access to objects and to our world – via greater handling of selected objects,

education programs, visible conservation workshops, opportunities for interaction between the public and working conservators etc.

Beyond that, the range of papers, from case studies to more technical papers, was very good. While I admit that I was not overwhelmed by all presentations (but almost completely overwhelmed by some of the risk analysis/management processes – the work involved in these was extraordinary), the majority of papers were extremely well presented, very professionally so, and covered a myriad of different ways in which conservation could be used to increase access to collections and sites. Some of the papers I particularly enjoyed included:

- Roberto Nardi's (Conservation for presentation: a key for protecting monuments). The fact that the paper was not read enhanced the presentation, the content was very interesting and, having worked in some similar circumstances. I was pleased to see the ways in which local people were involved in the conservation work, leading to more ownership of the projects.
- Isabelle Brajer's (Values and opinions of the general public on wall paintings and their restoration: a preliminary study) was interesting to see the attitudes of the public to this issue and compare it to the conventional professional perspective.

- Stephen Koob's et al ('Botanical wonders': the conservation and exhibition of the Harvard glass flowers) – the glass objects themselves were quite wonderful and the packing a challenge!
- Siobhan Watts' et al (Science revealed: the hidden story of objects) – it was good to note how the Liverpool Conservation Centre has changed its approach, in response to public interest, to engage more easily with the public.

Another highlight was the finish to Andrew Thorn's paper. I can't remember his exact words, but instead of the usual rounding off, conclusions etc of virtually every other paper, to finish with something like 'I have nothing more to say' and then after being pressured, in a good natured way, to come back with his final slide of some rock art and one of his friends and add 'I wonder what Philip was thinking' and then wander off was memorable.

I also enjoyed seeing and hearing Julian Bickersteth's paper, co-authored with Sarah Clayton and Fiona Tennant, on the Antarctic historic huts conservation program, and then listening to the impressions of others about it! It made me feel quite privileged to also be working on a related project that fascinates so many others, most of whom will probably never be able to share our experiences.



Using the new website...

AICCM Member Directory – update your details!

The AICCM Member Directory exists to allow AICCM members to contact each other. Search results for members include your employer or place of business, your phone number, email address, State division and the Special Interest Groups to which you belong.

The Directory also includes a field called "About You", where you can share some of your particular interests – e.g. current research, specific areas of expertise etc.

- To update your phone number, log in to the site and go to "Edit contact details".

- To update your email address, go to "Edit email address"
- To update professional information, such as special interest groups, employer and the "About You" field, go to "Update professional details".

Make sure you have selected your "Areas of Interest" (Special Interest Groups) and your Division, so other members can find you this way as well.

If you have any questions about the Directory, please contact the AICCM Secretariat (secretariat@aiccm.org.au).



**Climate Change and
Museum Collections
IIC Dialogues for the
New Century
National Gallery, London,
September 17th 2008**

**A Review of the roundtable
discussion by Julian Bickersteth**

The likely effects of climate change on museum collections has not been at the forefront of discussions in the public arena, nor more tellingly, amongst cultural heritage professionals. So the International Institute for Conservation's (IIC) initiative in creating a public forum for such a discussion was both welcome and timely. Welcome in that the packed theatre at the National Gallery London showed how much interest the topic generates, and timely by revealing how little hard data exists.

IIC President, **Jerry Podany** introduced the roundtable and thanked the funders, the Kress Foundation, for their support. Particularly in the light of the poor response of many other funding bodies, who had been approached and failed to see the relevance of the topic. **Sarah Staniforth**, Historic Properties Director at the National Trust (Vic), then took over to moderate the roundtable and introduced the speakers.

Christina Sabbioni, Coordinator of the Noah's Ark EC Project began by explaining the work of the aptly named Noah's Ark project, funded by the EC, to co-ordinate cultural heritage scientific research around climate change. Sabbioni stated that climate change research had concentrated on sectors such as agriculture, the environment and health, but not on threats to cultural heritage. The most relevant climate parameters affecting cultural heritage have been identified as temperature, water, wind and pollution. These have been mapped by Noah's Ark using existing data from 1961-1990, to provide scenarios for the period up to 2099 in Europe. The results have shown rises in RH resulting in increased salt

crystallisation activity and accumulation of biomass on monuments, along with increasing stone etchings, metal corrosion and glass leaching. Noah's Ark has established a Vulnerability Atlas to aid policy managers to assess threats to climate changes, and adopt strategies to counter potential changes.

May Cassar, Director for Sustainable Heritage at University College London spoke next establishing the destructive threats posed to indoor materials as opposed to outdoor materials. By their nature, they are more protected, which may explain why we have limited data on "damage functions" for indoor materials. Most outdoor condition damage functions do not transfer meaningfully to the indoors. What we do know something about is wood and paper (e.g. a 4°C increase in storage temperature can reduce a paper object's lifetime by 40-50%). Conservators have the best knowledge of the physical state of collections and they need to work with scientists to develop damage functions for a wide range of materials, to allow modelling for different climate change conditions. This may result in reducing use of fossil fuels e.g. by having fewer block buster exhibitions being transported around the world or relaxing environmental specifications. But before these decisions are made, more data is required.

James Reilly from the Image Permanence Institute in Rochester, New York then spoke on the Institute's development of Preservation Metrics to directly address how much damage, and what types of damage, may be occurring to collections arising from any pattern of environmental conditions. This information can then be laid alongside the likely energy costs to maintain an indoor environment in the light of outdoor conditions becoming warmer and more humid. Natural ageing (the form of decay seen in hygroscopic materials such as paper, leather, wood and textiles) can be calculated using the Metric showing, for instance, that the natural ageing of a wooden cabinet stored in an unheated stone building in northern Europe will be halved when compared to one stored in a controlled

constant room temperature and relative humidity.

Michael Henry, engineer and architect, addressed the issue from the energy consumption and societal needs perspective. The tighter the environmental controls, the greater the energy consumption, and architects and engineers need to be much more mindful about using low-tech solutions such as vegetative shading or operable shutters to reduce this reliance. The question needs to be asked, posited Henry, as to "what interior conditions are necessary, achievable and cost-effective, for the longevity of collections, and where is the point of diminishing returns"? More reliance certainly needs to be put on the use of thermal mass in building architecture, rather than infrastructure that can fail or be highly expensive to run.

The final roundtable speaker, **Sir Nicholas Serota**, Director of Tate London, provided the custodian's perspective, discussing what all the science and research covered by the previous speakers really means at the coalface. Serota's fundamental point was that public collecting organisations hold objects in trust. To maintain that public trust they must create organisations that are sustainable. Practically this means:

- a. putting our house in order by being more energy-efficient and eco-conscious
- b. actively collecting relevant data on environmental conditions
- c. establishing a new dynamic around exhibitions possibly having fewer for longer to reduce carbon footprints
- d. training audiences to accept wider temperature fluctuations in galleries

Sarah Staniforth then opened the roundtable to public discussion. This was wide ranging, covering the needs of small museums, and opportunities for new museums, to be assessed not only on their visual worth, but also; their environmental stability, the incumbency on conservators to undertake better new environmental control work so

as to engage articulately with facilities managers, and the need for more data.

It was clear the roundtable had touched on an issue of wide interest which could have been happily debated for the rest of the evening. But as the five panellists provided a quick summary of their views, it was apparent to all present that climate change is not going to be good for collection health or energy bills from mechanical systems. They concluded that we need to start collecting data now as the first stage in understanding what to do about it. IIC is to be congratulated on initiating discussion on so fundamental an issue.

The following direct quotes from the speakers give a feel for the quality and relevance of the content of the Dialogue (Thanks to Alice Cannon for compiling these).

Professor May Cassar

Director, Centre for Sustainable Heritage, University College London, and AHRC/EPSRC Programme Director for Science and Heritage

So what can we offer the debate on environmental standards at this time of climate change? As conservation professionals, we are challenged to be responsible for our use of energy... We can reduce our use of fossil fuels now without altering our current environmental specifications. We can look around other activities with which we are engaged and look at their sustainability, for example we could consider having fewer blockbuster exhibitions transporting collections around the globe. We can switch to alternative forms of energy, but we may have to accept some changes in the appearance of cultural heritage, as solar panels and other forms of wind generation might appear. We can also relax environmental specifications. But with our present state of knowledge, we also have to understand better the implications for a possible increase in conservation treatments... While energy is the current external driver of change to environmental specifications, as we strive to become more responsible stewards, not only for our museum collections,

but for the global environment, damage to collections is the internal driver. I believe we cannot deal with one without the other.

James M. Reilly Director, Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, New York

If I may be permitted to speculate about the future, the challenges that global climate change will bring to the care of museum collections – and this is quite apart from disasters such as cyclones and hurricanes, which may well become more frequent and more severe – these will be real and significant. They will come in the form of worse heat, worse humidity, and fluctuations between extremes. These will be noticeable in the form of higher energy bills and faster rates of collection decay. A greater premium than ever will be placed on managing museum environments to obtain the longest life for collections at the lowest cost in staff time, energy consumption, and capital equipment. Management approaches that are based on quantifying the effects of environmental conditions will predominate and museums will seek to compromise gracefully with outdoor climatic conditions and not neutralise them.

Michael C. Henry PE AIA

Principal Engineer/Architect with Watson & Henry Associates, New Jersey, and Adjunct Professor of Architecture, School of Design, University of Pennsylvania

I'd like to consider this dilemma, if you will, of how do we resolve being good stewards for collections and still reduce the impact of climate management within our museums and archives, the impact with respect to fossil-based fuel and energy consumption. If we look back at traditional buildings, the building envelope was used in active management of interior conditions. As contemporary building systems for interior environmental control became widespread, use and knowledge of the active functions of the building envelope were lost. Actively operated building envelopes can provide light

control, natural ventilation and moisture management, negating the need to operate systems when exterior conditions are acceptable. Obviously the emphasis is on 'when exterior conditions are acceptable'.

In the twentieth century...criteria for collections environments progressively tightened with low-cost energy and the availability of building systems for control. There was a general sense that 'If we can get it, we need it and it's available'. But Marion Mecklenberg at the Smithsonian reported strong correlation between stringent temperature and relative humidity control and increased energy costs... Recently, David Artigas at the University of Pennsylvania, confirmed this correlation of energy consumption and control for a sampling of historic house museums. Certainly not a statistically significant sample, but what we see here is the emergence of the curve of diminishing returns. This should be no surprise to any of us, the curve of diminishing returns being applied to environmental control and energy costs, so perhaps what we need to do is restate the question as: what interior conditions are necessary, reasonably achievable and cost-effective for collections' longevity?

Getty Conservation Institute Bulletin

The Getty Conservation Institute is pleased to announce the launch of the GCI Bulletin, the Institute's new electronic bulletin. It will complement the GCI's print newsletter, *Conservation*. Published six times a year, the GCI Bulletin offers updates on our events, science and field projects, educational initiatives, and publications and videos.

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**Diversity in Heritage
Conservation – tradition,
innovation and participation
ICOM CC 15th Triennial
Meeting Delhi 22nd – 26th
September 2008**

Marcelle Scott

New Delhi provided a culturally rich and diverse environment within which to explore the theme of the ICOM CC 15th Triennial Meeting “Diversity in Heritage Conservation – tradition, innovation and participation”. Conference themes are inevitably fluid in their interpretation by authors and participants alike. In the end, it is up to participants to find links within and across the range of papers they attend, the ones they read afterwards and the many conversations in between. With 700 delegates, 180 papers, 40 posters, numerous cultural events, technical visits, trade shows, and the everyday surprises of life in India, there was something for everyone.

As those involved with ICOM CC Sydney or IIC Melbourne can attest, hosting an international conference is no small feat. The Indian organising committee is to be congratulated on their work, and if the Australian experience is any guide, they will perhaps only in hindsight, realise the import of their achievements. The logistical and technical aspects were all taken care of, something we’d expect from our Indian colleagues. Of more interest to me is the level of political support the conference was able to attain. The opening session was Chaired by the Minister of Tourism and attended by several tiers of senior government ministers and officials. While some might consider this to be little more than bureaucratic ‘dressing’, it may reflect the kind of high-level commitment that will be required if Delhi is to achieve the UNESCO World Heritage City status it is seeking. On the other hand, an article published in *The Times of India* newspaper while I was there reported that the complexities of decision-making within the layers of Indian bureaucracy were hampering progress towards this goal. Time will tell.

With 27 existing listings, the various bodies in India certainly have experience and *tradition* to draw on.

The sessions I attended were a bit of a mixed bag, but I guess that’s the joy of conferences. As we know, they are about much more than just the papers – professional networking, planning collaborations, getting projects off the ground all happen because people make the effort to *participate*. Australians were at the conference in considerable numbers, and not just there to enjoy the food! A clutch of Australians gave papers; David Hallam, Angeletta Leggio, Ian MacLeod, and Andrew Thorne all chaired sessions; David, Ian, and Margaret Sawicki were elected Coordinators of various working groups, and Vinod Daniel was re-elected to the Directory Board.

There were some great papers, but the stand out experience for me was being in the auditorium to hear Tharron Bloomfield’s presentation *Pupura te mahara – preserving the memory: working with Maori communities on preservation projects in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Tharron exhorted the profession to finally relegate the term ‘ethnographic’ conservation to our professional history, and gave us a memorable quote, when he said that he’s not an “objects conservator but a conservator of peoples’ objects”. It is from these kind of exquisitely described ideas, that great *innovations* can result, and conferences provide the ideal influential forum from which to initiate such changes. It was one of those moments for those of us present, will remember for a long time to come.

Vinod Daniel

The ICOM CC Conference in New Delhi, India, September 22-26, 2008 was a very successful and spectacular event. Credit is due to the Indian National Organising Committee for their hard work in organising this. There were nearly 700 delegates including 200 delegates from India. The Vision of the ICOM CC board in taking this conference for the first time to Asia was for increased people to people linkages between conservation professionals in Asia and the West and the large number of Asian participants

at the conference greatly facilitated in achieving this outcome.

Australian conservation professionals were very visible at the Conference and many of them have taken a leadership role for this triennial period (2008-2011). Andrew Thorn is the coordinator of the Stone, Murals and Rock Art working group, Malgorzata Sawicki from AGNSW is coordinator of the Furniture and Lacquer working group and David Hallam from NMA is the coordinator of the metals working group. Vinod Daniel was elected to the ICOM CC board and will be the Vice Chair of ICOM CC for the triennial period.

Nicole Tse

For the first time, the International Council of Museums – Conservation Committee (ICOM-CC) Triennial Conference was held in Asia in New Delhi, India. 550 members, including over 200 Indian delegates, gathered from 74 countries to take part in the proceedings of 23 Working Groups.

The efforts of the Indian National Organising Committee were evident from the start, with the formalities; a fantastic cultural event in front of the Old Fort, buses to and from the venue and significantly, the inauguration of the Conference by Vice-President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari. This was a rare event for conservation.

After a morning of opening events which set the tone for the Conference, it began with 148 papers and 41 posters over 5 days. Participants skipped from one session to the next, moving in and out of the air conditioned venues typical of the tropics. The benefit was to cross disciplines, and realise the contribution of all the Working Groups to our jobs as conservators (a very simple message that is sometimes forgotten). There was a positive flow of ideas and meeting of countless conservators that only an umbrella organisation such as ICOM-CC could attract.

The theme for 2008 was 'Diversity in Heritage Conservation – Tradition, Innovation and Participation.' It aimed to highlight the participation of non-professionals; users and owners of heritage, in conservation practice. This is of particular relevance to the Asia region. The theme also reflected ICOM-CC's recognition of intangible heritage, following the passing of the 'UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage' in 2006.

Whilst the theme was explored by some papers where context and community voice was recognised, acknowledgment was one step but true engagement and shared decision making was another. Further, many papers became embedded in policy and theoretical frameworks rather sincere engagement. Ultimately it seems that decisions and conservation solutions continue to be controlled by conservators and institutions. This showed there is much work in this area, and in my own research.

One paper that successfully addressed the theme was from our New Zealand compatriot Tharron Bloomfield, 'Pupuru te mahara-preserving the memory: working with Maori communities on preservation projects in Aotearoa, New Zealand'. Bloomfield spoke with engagement and feeling which was recognised by a 26 second applaud, a real measure of success, according to Gael de Guichen, who times audience responses.

The weighting of papers presented was science based, however it was good to see the use of high resolution techniques used in situ to develop more appropriate conservation solutions. Further, many of the research questions from such science based papers had wider practical applications.

It was also promising to see many more papers from Asia, even from institutions with new conservation programs. For example, both the University of the Philippines and the Islamic Arts Museum in Malaysia have only recently established conservation programs and have already produced internationally recognised research. So ICOM-CC certainly achieved its aim to increase Asian participation, and this was also supported by the Getty bursaries and CollAsia (in the previous week to the Conference they had arranged a workshop).

In addition to the papers was ICOM-CC business and the political formalities that go with any large organisation. Vinod Daniels can be proudly claimed as the Australian representative on the Directory Board and has been re-elected for another term. From the audience, the long panel definitely looks political, especially from the huge plenary hall and the spectacular flower arrangements. The recent ICOM-CC activities endorsed standard terminology for the conservation of tangible cultural

heritage. It is now 'conservation' as the umbrella term, 'preventive conservation', 'remedial conservation' and 'restoration' all familiar and standard terms in Australia but caused some debate (especially for the European countries) and took a 2 year task force to resolve.

Australian conservators were well represented with papers from Robyn Sloggett, Marcell Scott, Vinod Daniel, Ian MacLeod (2), David Hallam, Elisabeth Hinde, Nicole Tse, Andrew Thorn (2) and Browyn Ormsby (we can still claim Bronwyn!). Now for the next three years Andrew Thorn, David Hallam and Malgorzata Sawicki will be Working Group Coordinators and are sure to entice further Australian participation (as well as Angeletta Leggio from Photographic Materials).

Finally the most positive aspect of the ICOM-CC Triennial Conference was the concurrent papers from the 23 Working Groups. Ideally it would be great to see the AICCM National Conference and SIG groups to work together in such a way and hold a major conference for its entire membership. Considering the limited organisational support for conference attendance this would be one way for AICCM membership to attend both SIG meetings and the National Conference. I would like to thank the Indian National Organising Committee for such a fine job.

Using the new website...

Been in the news? Let us know!

If you've been interviewed or featured in print, on radio or on television, let us know!

The AICCM website includes a section about conservators 'in the media', as a way of raising the profile of conservators within Australia.

Contact the AICCM website editor (website@aiccm.org.au) and provide them with a brief description of the article and a link to some online content – e.g. a newspaper's online article, a radio show transcript, a blog or an online video.

Media items are also linked to the relevant Special Interest Group page – e.g. a news item about a paintings conservator will be linked to the Paintings Special Interest Group page.

To see what media stories have already been picked up, see "AICCM Home/About Conservation/In the media".



The Transforming Power of the Frame, Makers, Marriages and Materials – Exploring American Frames and Frames in America
The Graduate Center, The City University of New York, New York, 18-20 September 2008

Suzi Shaw and Louise Bradley

Suzi Shaw and Louise Bradley attended this conference organised by Initiatives in Art and Culture. This was the fifth in a series of frame history conferences, the previous four conferences were organised by New York University, School of Continuing and Professional Studies. Suzi juggled conference attendance with her very intense final week of a fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The seventeen speakers covered materials and techniques used in frames, artists' frame choices and re-framing in museum collections. Conservator Jonathan Thornton spoke of the materials, coatings and pigments used in period frame manufacture. Art historian Lynn Roberts spoke on the British origins of American frames, the emigration of British frame-makers to America and the growth of the crafts of cabinetmaking, carving and gilding.

Artists' frame choices were discussed by several speakers including Carol Troyen who spoke on the frames chosen by Modernist American artists; Arthur Dove, John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, and the very inventive frames used by Florine Stettheimer. Frame historian Suzanne Smeaton spoke on the use of antiqued timber and textured gesso surfaces on frames used by Charles Burchfield, Edward Hopper, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Theodoros Stamos and others. Art historian Sarah Parkerson's paper, a conference highlight, was based on her doctoral research into the re-framing practices of James McNeill Whistler. Her investigation of six frames used by Whistler on one painting

revealed Whistler's shifting beliefs in the function of a frame, the stylistic evolution of the frames and how each frame transformed the painting.

Museum reframing projects were discussed by curator Mark Cole, who presented a paper on the reframing of American paintings in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Conservator Mark Tucker spoke about reframing paintings by Thomas Eakins in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Carrie Reborra Barratt, curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, discussed the 20-year long ongoing inventory and assessment of frames in the museum's collection. She also spoke of the recreation from period photographs of the original, monumental, long lost frame for Emanuel Leutze's painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*.

Conference participants viewed the exhibition "Drawn by New York: Six Centuries of Watercolours and Drawings at the New-York Historical Society," during a reception at the New-York Historical Society. A second reception was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where many Modernist works in original frames were on display.

Another frame history conference is planned for 2010, with the working title of "Trans-Atlantique." Initiatives in Art and Culture seem committed to



Louise Bradley and Suzi Shaw

holding these frame history conferences bi-yearly. It would be great to see some Australian content in a future conference, so don't hesitate to contact organiser Lisa Koenigsberg if you have something you would like to present: lisa.koenigsberg@artinitiatives.com. For further information: info@artinitiatives.com or go to: www.artinitiatives.com.



Louise Bradley



Suzi Shaw

Special Interest Groups

Antarctic

Australian conservators are leading the two most significant polar artifact conservation projects in the world at present, with Dr Ian Godfrey from the WA Museum managing the Mawson's Huts Restoration Project, and Julian Bickersteth and ICS coordinating the Antarctic Heritage Trust of New Zealand's Ross Sea historic huts artifact conservation program. Both programs involve a number of Australian conservators and are generating a wide range of cold climate conservation research information. It is proposed that AICCM will mount an international conference on cold climate conservation in either 2010 or 2012. The AICCM conference in Perth next year will be a good time to discuss as a SIG, how this concept is progressed. So please start thinking now about how you would like to contribute, either with papers, or by assisting in the organisation of the conference. We

will organise a special Antarctic SIG session to discuss the idea as part of the 2009 conference.

Book and Paper

I'm pleased to announce that the Book and Paper SIG legends in Melbourne have offered to host the next Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium in 2010! As more details come to hand we'll publish them in the newsletter to keep you up to date.

Preventive

The Preventive Conservation SIG is in planning mode again – for not only one, but two events next year! The first is planned for **Friday 20th February 2009** – and will look at the latest applications of risk assessment concepts in preventive conservation, based on information from the much renowned ICCROM

course. Two graduates of the course, **Eric Archer** and **Catherine Lovelock** will be key presenters of the session. One of the many aspects of the day will look at developing a national 'risk register' for collections across Australia.

This session will be backed up by a second session, as part of the National Conference in Perth in **October 2009**. Details of this SIG gathering will be developed next year.

In my absence (maternity leave), Sarah Jane Rennie is acting convenor until the February session, when a new convenor will be elected. Please contact Sarah Jane for further information on Rennie@netspace.net.au

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GOCSIG

FRAMES: past, present and future. AICCM Gilded Objects Conservation Special Interest Group (GOCSIG) Symposium, 8th October 2008, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The one-day GOCSIG symposium *Frames: past, present and future*, was held prior to the Paintings Special Interest Group symposium. The two symposiums shared a focus of the changing approaches to conservation over time, while also exploring current practices. As frames conservation has relevance and interest for many disciplines, there was a grand chance for ideas and experiences to flow between academics, conservators, commercial framers and craftspeople. Presentations ranged from Ian Geraghty's theoretical ideas of the frame with a suggested taxonomy; to the description of construction techniques used by Mario Antonio Rey Rincon to create frames for Juan Davila's paintings. Speakers addressed the many decisions involved in the re-framing of paintings within institutions. Discussions over the historic precedence for a frame, locating and using documentation, and the role of subjective aesthetic and practical decisions all pointed out the great range of approaches possible, when a new frame is chosen or an existing frame treated,



GOCSIG convenors past and present: (L to R) Holly McGowan-Jackson, Malgorzata Sawicki, MaryJo Lelyveld

Australian and international institutional policy toward frames was also discussed. Included were approaches to framing works on paper at the Art Gallery of New South Wales; and an example of the relationship between a private frame craftsman and an institution in the re-framing of a Monet painting in the Brooklyn Museum of Modern Art. Several examples of 19th and 20th Century frames from New Zealand showed a relationship with Mori artistic practice, and illustrated the importance of an understanding of frame history,

to inform current frame conservation approaches.

Holly-McGowan Jackson offered reflections on the history and present development of the GOCSIG special interest group and the growing interest in frames conservation. Thanks again to the convener MaryJo Lelyveld and GOCSIG presidents (past and present) for creating an excellent day.

Cutler innovation report

The Cutler innovation report, entitled *Venturous Australia: building strength in innovation – an overview*, has been released. Chapter 7 deals with collections “particularly in relation to the uniqueness of museum collections and their importance to research, education, creativity, innovation and cultural identity and change”.

A copy of the report and/or an overview can be downloaded from the following link: <http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Pages/home.aspx>

Stop the Press!



NGV Solves Renaissance Portrait Mystery

The NGV announced on November 25th 2008, that it believes the subject of a mysterious Renaissance portrait it has owned since 1965 is **Lucrezia Borgia**, and that the painter is famed Renaissance artist **Dosso Dossi** (c1486-1542).

As a result of this astounding conclusion, the NGV's painting could be the only surviving formal painted portrait of the famous Lucrezia. The discovery is attracting considerable international interest following extensive conservation and curatorial research work undertaken by NGV experts.

"This new research is revelatory", said NGV Director Dr Gerard Vaughan.

"What was previously a portrait of an unknown sitter by an unidentified artist, now seems likely to be one of the most significant portraits surviving from the Renaissance, by one of the great Northern Italian painters", he said.

Lucrezia Borgia was arguably the most famous woman of the Italian Renaissance. She was born in Rome as the illegitimate daughter of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, who ruled as Pope Alexander VI from 1492 to 1503. She became the Duchess of Ferrara, securing refuge from the political scheming of her family, before dying in 1519.

The oval painting, purchased by the NGV in London in 1965, was titled *Portrait of a Youth*, by an unknown Northern Italian painter. The portrait had baffled every expert on the subject since it came into public view during the later twentieth century. It has always been assumed to be of a young male.

NGV Paintings Conservator Carl Villis has undertaken several years' detailed technical and art historical research to conclude that the painting is a work by Dosso Dossi of Lucrezia Borgia.

Major technical examination of the painting now confirms that the floral background and its oval shape are

entirely original. Until very recently it has been assumed that oval-shaped paintings did not exist in Italy in the first half of the sixteenth century; the only exceptions identified by the NGV's new research were by artist Dosso Dossi and his younger brother.

The technical examination shows another characteristic thus far identified as exclusive to Dossi: an unusual priming layer. Additionally, the use of shell gold was also a telling pointer to the Ferrarese origins of the painting.

Gradually, the mystery of the sitter also began to be unlocked. It had previously been assumed that the sitter in the portrait was a young male.

Research found that the myrtle bush and flowers behind the sitter are symbolic references to the goddess Venus and the Latin inscription refers to the Virtue and Beauty of the subject, themes used only in female portraits. The dagger is also a symbolic reference to another Lucretia, the sixth-century BC heroine of ancient Rome, who took her own life with a dagger following her rape, to preserve her family honour. Together, these elements symbolise Lucrezia Borgia's Christian and family name – the Borgias used Venus as a family emblem.

Portraits of women in the early 1500s were relatively rare, and only a woman of the highest nobility would have been placed on this level. In the context of Renaissance Ferrara, Lucrezia Borgia is the only candidate who matches these specific references.

Carl Villis said that the outcome of the process of identification of the painter and sitter had been thrilling:

"It has been very exciting to unlock the secrets of this beautiful and enigmatic painting, which now has unique standing in view of the fame of its sitter and the strength of the artist", he said.

"Generations of art historians have attempted to identify portraits of Lucrezia Borgia, but this appears to be the only

one which contains direct personal references to this intriguing historical figure. The only reliable likeness of her features we have is on a portrait medal in bronze, made in 1502. The facial profile on the medal bears a striking resemblance to our portrait".

Dr Vaughan said the finding demonstrated again the importance of the work of attribution and analysis of artworks within galleries such as the NGV:

"This identification is the result of highly detailed technical and art historical work, which is the part of the cut and thrust of life in the NGV. From today, a painting previously thought to be of a youth by an unknown artist will be known as the portrait of Lucrezia Borgia by the Renaissance master Dosso Dossi – a great outcome".

Dosso Dossi's *Lucrezia Borgia* will be on public display from Wednesday 26 November at NGV International, St Kilda Road.



Dosso DOSSI
Italian c. 1486–1541/42
Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara c.1518
oil on wood panel
74.5 x 57.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1966

Conservation Matters – What do YOU think

Comments from the last issue



In the June edition of the Newsletter we published an article by Helen Hughes on the perceived failings of British Conservators, which elicited a range of responses. Those responses have in turn generated more comment, and as we believe the Newsletter can provide a useful forum for such discussion, we publish these below.

Having often pondered the questions about intervention and reversibility which Helen refers to in her article as “minimal intervention.....one standard of workand irreversibility” and having read Ian Cook’s eloquent response, I thought I might also respond as I had intended to do so for the last Newsletter!

To answer Julian’s question directly “do Helen’s comments have validity for Australian conservators?” – they don’t have validity for me personally, but perhaps I can see some of what she refers to in others.

In my experience Australian conservators are often part of a small team – they may be the only conservator in an organisation, or part of a small conservation team asked to wear multiple hats. Again in my own experience, our participation in exhibition development teams, or on government advisory committees liaising with non-conservators about how they are going to care of their archive collections, or liaising with building contractors about air-conditioning, provides us with ample opportunities to try to view things from our client’s perspective – and to use their knowledge to our benefit. For this reason I believe that Australian conservators tend to view clients as “allies and partners” rather than as “the enemy”, and we use these partners to help us make informed decisions about all sorts of preservation decisions.

In complete contradiction to that.... Whilst I wouldn’t go quite so far as to say that conservators in Australia are “entrapped by vocabularies and terminologies”, I do think that sometimes our training falls into the trap of narrowing our focus to just the material

of an object, rather than looking at it within its wider social, historical and economic context. Or probably more accurately we are often seduced by the ‘wizz-bangery’ of technology and the execution of our own skills.

The economic context was a point raised by Stephen Gower AO, Director of the Australian War Memorial, when he opened the AICCM Paper Symposium in July. He commented on the conservator’s tendency to undertake expensive and lengthy treatments on single objects, and as he sees it, often to the detriment of the collection as a whole and without proper heed to responsible expenditure of budgets. The reception to these comments of the paper conservators present was mixed – some agreed, others were uncomfortable, others outraged. I agreed – I think we do need to make decisions based on economic reality and not just the reality of our organisation’s budget – but the reality of our whole society’s budget.

Budget is normally seen as a dirty word – having to restrict the treatment of an object because of money is often seen as a sully of ideal conservation practice. For most of us however, it is reality and there is no getting around it. To link it back to Helen’s article, what usually results from the implementation of her notion “one standard of work” is a waste of money and resources that could best be spent elsewhere. Why can’t we admit, accept and embrace the need to save resources and money and to undertake the most cost effective treatment possible – why always strive to do every test, to treat to the ultimate extent, to provide only the very best enclosure? Why not accept the need for compromise – even embrace the need for compromise – and enjoy the knowledge that you have saved

tax or client dollars to be expended on other objects (or even more important things like health....gasp!)? Evidence of conservators always wanting the very best materials and treatments can be observed in all collections – a fantastic example is the use of archival quality boxes for the storage of newsprint and other ridiculously poor quality paper documents. When asked why we need to store these documents in archival quality boxes can any of us really in all good conscience say the newsprint will be any better off than if stored in a standard cardboard box? Or do we just want to give a standard answer and not have our fallibility questioned?

While I believe that all objects (like people) should be treated equally, it doesn’t necessarily follow that all objects be treated the same. We already make decisions about what treatment to pursue based on analysis and testing, but the tests are often not comprehensive – we may not have all the equipment required, we may have treated many identical items already – and so we make subjective decisions based often on experience and/or circumstantial evidence. If we accept that as true, then why not open ourselves to the more subjective decision making processes surrounding significance? All documents are created equally, except where they contain Bradman’s signature or King George’s seal....

As to the “[we] are not restorers” comments in Helen’s article – well, we could argue, and do argue, that our ‘restorations’ are always obvious (are they?), documented and clearly not intended to imitate the object. Instead we ‘tone and sympathetically replicate’ – we do not partake in fakery! But again, this is all extremely subjective stuff and why can’t we admit that just like others,

we like to see things cleaned up, filled and painted – and further more we like to admire the workmanship of our peers!

Ian's response to the Hughes article was more eloquent than my own and has covered the topics she raises so well. I agree with Ian's definitions/explanations of 'minimal intervention', 'one standard of work' and 'reversibility'. I also agree with him and Barbara Hickson that Helen's article promotes contemplation and stimulates discussion. Without this sort of professional scrutiny and self-evaluation where would we be? – still using soluble nylon?

I was so pleased to see the responses to the excerpt of Helen Hughes' article and I love the idea of having a topical discussion question in the Newsletter that gets us all thinking. Bring on the next one!

Elizabeth Hadlow
NSW State Records

In my experience of nearly 30 years as a conservation practitioner and manager, I have observed that there is a very wide range of attitudes and mind sets to be found in the profession, both in the Australia and elsewhere. My experience tells me that there is not really one rigidly held set of values in conservation, and I

am sure that this is also the case in the UK. Our profession is a very young one, invented in the 1970s and emerging out of the ancient craft of restoration. In its current manifestation, the conservation profession barely has one generation of practitioners to back up its body of knowledge. That one generation, however, has produced a prodigious body of work and experience that we are only now able to step back from, and digest. And this is what we have started doing, and this is where Helen Hughes comes into the picture.

Helen's provocative comments I am sure are meant to be just that – thought provoking – and as such, I do not see them as being an attack on the conservation profession. My own reaction to Helen's comments was to recall the work of Scottish epidemiologist Archie Cochrane, who, in the 1970s, stepped back from the vast body of knowledge accumulated by the medical profession, and made his own critical appraisal. Cochrane urged the medical profession to continually re-evaluate its science, and question the sustainability of its practice. What emerged was a new discipline called evidence based medicine, which now exists in parallel with, and mediating between the science, practice and teaching of medicine. The conservation profession

worldwide is now going through a similar kind of coming-of-age, and this can only be a very healthy and necessary sign of our evolution as a profession.

Whilst strongly supporting Helen's intention, and the need for critiquing our business, I would just as strongly caution against creating the perception that we may be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. This is not going to happen, but I raise the issue because we need to take great care in how we represent changing ideas and advancing science, to conservators, other museum professionals and the public. If we don't, we run the risk of undermining the very process that will advance our cause, and create resentment and confusion in the minds of our constituency.

The conservation profession in Australia is characterised by its openness, ingenuity and maturity. Whilst on the one hand a great many conservators are open to new ideas and change, they are not going to accept what is on offer without thoroughly testing it first. Ultimately, it is up to those who advocate change to respect due process and provide positive and constructive leadership.

Eric Archer
National Museum of Australia

Glenrowan Siege Archaeological Project

A team of archaeologists and conservators undertook a four-week project in May 2008 to excavate the Glenrowan Inn site where bushranger Ned Kelly made his legendary Last Stand. A further week was spent in November 2008 to allow filming for "Ned Kelly Uncovered" a documentary to be screened on ABC1 in early 2009.

The Ann Jones Inn was the focal point of the Glenrowan Siege on 28 June 1880, which ended with the deaths of two hostages and three Kelly Gang members- and the capture and eventual hanging of Ned.

The Rural City of Wangaratta commissioned the archaeological investigation after receiving a \$121 000 Grant from the Department of Transport and Regional Services. The dig will add another element to the Glenrowan Revitalisation Project, enhancing the understanding of the place and its history, in particular what remains from the Siege.

Archaeologist and Project Director Adam Ford from Dig International worked in association with La Trobe University to systematically excavate the site by hand.

Heritage Victoria's senior archaeologist Jeremy Smith said the project would also help to direct future use of the land.

The findings of the dig are still being analysed but further information is available from Adam Ford, Director DIG International (adamford@diginternational.com.au) and Karina Acton at ICS (k.acton@icssydney.com).

The AICCM National Newsletter is the quarterly newsletter of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Materials (Inc.)

It is issued to all members as part of a membership entitlement in March, June, September and December.

Deadlines for copy are:

- 1 February
- 1 May
- 1 August
- 1 November

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AICCM wishes to acknowledge the support provided by the Australian Government Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO) program of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

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