

AICCM

**The Profession & The Professional
Body**

ABSTRACTS

Day 1 - 28th October

TRAINING

Chair: Pat Townley, Head of Conservation, Powerhouse Museum

Conservation Training: Toward the New Millennium

Dr. Richard Thomas, University of Western Sydney - Nepean

This paper discusses some alternative strategies for conservation that seek to maintain the standard of conservation training in the face of increasing pressure from within the education system. With particular regard to the new M.App.Sci (Mat.Cons.) course at UWSN, it is argued that falling standards of first-degree qualifications in the English-speaking world together with initiatives such as National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Europe, make a Masters'-based course in conservation an imperative if Australian conservation training is to remain competitive on a World's scale

Para-Professional Training - The Future

Geoff Bell, Canberra Institute of Technology

In 1994 the Canberra Institute of Technology introduced a new course titled "Certificate in Cultural Preservation". The course aimed to equip students with the knowledge and skills to provide technical assistance in the cultural preservation industry. Fifteen students graduated in 1994 and fourteen in 1995. The course was not offered this year but by popular demand will be reintroduced in 1997.

Modules include:

- Conservation Science
- Conservation Techniques
- Cultural Heritage
- Preventive Conservation
- Emergency Planning
- Preservation Surveys and Documentation
- Presenting Information
- Occupational Health and Safety

The Canberra Institute of Technology is presently investigating the viability of expanding the "Certificate in Cultural Preservation" to other states around Australia.

This could be done in several formats:

- I. By conventional teaching methods using local conservators and institutions.
- II. Distance learning package with residential held in Capital cities
- III. Distance learning package with residential held in Canberra

We also have on the drawing boards a "Graduate Certificate in Cultural Preservation for Curators" and several other mid career training courses.

Can Conservation Be Managed?

Richard Wesley, University of Sydney

Conservators will always hanker after greater influence in their organisations. One sure way of gaining it is to provide and shrewdly use high level, relevant, management information.

Suzanne Keene, Science Museum, London

This paper will discuss the need for Conservators and the Conservation profession in general to embrace modern cultural resource management techniques if they wish to remain influential in museum policy development.

Effective engagement with the principles of contemporary management theory will require conservators to review the basis upon which they operate. How cost effective is the treatment of artefacts which possess little monetary worth? Is a conservation department central to the "outcomes" of a modern museum?

How Can We Possibly Manage That?

Heather Mansell, State Library of NSW

A common question. Do you have the answer? Given some management training the answer is likely to be 'Yes!'. Management training for conservators is a must; it allows us to make the choices and manage the project rather than the project managing us. Unmanaged we can only react to bureaucratic whimsy. We need to take charge. A brief history of management styles and a working definition of management is provided.

Professional Development and Mid Career Training

Stewart Laidler, Art Gallery of NSW

Professional Development, in the context of the conservation profession can be defined as the improving or maintaining standards of knowledge, skills or practice amongst conservation and related occupations. Professional development is usually seen as on going or mid-career training, as distinct, but not totally separate, from initial conservation training.

With the current introspection within AICCM it is quite timely to review our approach to mid-career training and ask questions such as "What are we doing? Should we do more? What more can we do?" Two years ago the National Council recognised the need for such a review. It was seen that the present system of initiating training, such as workshops and lectures, operated in a very ad hoc way and solely relied on an individual with a perceived need and enough fortitude to organise the training, be it a workshop, a course or whatever. This system has produced many varied and interesting workshops, but is it enough? Is it meeting the needs of the profession? What are the benefits of a more pro-active approach by AICCM and can an organisation, with the given limitations of resources, seriously expect to be more pro-active?

Over the last two years the National Council has developed the terms of reference for a Professional Development Sub-Committee. Expressions of interest were asked from people willing to form this committee. The initial response was disappointing. At the present time there are three members, namely Tamara Lavrencic, Benita Johnson and Stewart Laidler.

Initially the committee will attempt to assess the current needs of the profession as the last needs assessment is now six years old. Professional Development is a fairly complex and difficult area. It is however an important area for all conservators, institutional and private alike. It is vital that all AICCM members are encouraged to bring ideas and their perceived needs to the attention of the committee and to the panel session for discussion.

Ethics

Chair: Therese Mulford, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery

Does Post Modernism apply to Our Code of Ethics

Therese Mulford, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery

For a moment, regard **Pre-modernism** as the time when we said "*Oh, isn't this interesting, isn't this quaint? We must preserve it*", and **Modernism** as the time when systems were set up to deal with treatment of these chosen objects. Then, as our profession matures, have we approached **Post Modernism** where it is necessary to deconstruct our Code of Ethics to meet the needs of the people, the objects and ephemeral significance? If so, can we do this and then enter into **Post-Modern Modernism** where the conservator's Code of Ethics is part of a larger 'ethical' or 'moral' context?

The danger with Post Modern Deconstructionism is that the existing system can be dismantled and we can be left with nothing. Let us not rage forward changing things without due consideration. I would argue that conservation must operate in wider context, being part not only of the 'treatment' and 'scientific research' but also part of the social, business, technical and moral context. Before we cry out for change, it is important to read the Code of Ethics. We can hardly add new clauses if we are not familiar with the contents as they exist.

Some institutions make familiarity with the Code of Ethics a part of induction for new members of staff. An idea that should perhaps be adopted by all organisations.

In the past, several groups have expressed concern that the Code of Ethics may not be applicable in some areas, such as large objects, where the objects are required to remain working and functional. Should there be an overlap for the ethics in regard to the conservation of places and things? Others have expressed concern over the conservatism of the conservation profession with reference to cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, cultural planning, tourism and multi-culturalism. The inclusion of indigenous peoples has been addressed to some extent. Is there a need to go further? Should other interest groups be included?

Is there a split developing between private and institutional conservators in regard to the sharing of treatment information and procedures? Or has this become an issue of *Intellectual Property* where information is no longer shared unless it is paid for? Are we confusing business practices (contracts etc.) with conservation ethics? Do we need to change the Code of Ethics, or do we need to interpret and discuss the Code when and where potential problems arise?

The Ethical Dilemma

Tamara Lavrencic, State Library of NSW

Conservation organisations like the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) and the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) expect their members, especially those who are practising conservators, to abide by their creeds, or codes of ethics. In the case of both of these organisations, there is a principle which states that conservators should, where possible, share information gained from research, examination or treatment, in order to further the development of the profession.

Whenever I hear of “things that have gone wrong” during treatment, I ask whether the conservator has published a note or paper to alert and inform the profession. In most cases the response is a flat no. No they haven’t and no they won’t. Why?

The popular explanation is that people don’t want to admit their failures. I can sympathise with this, but I don’t believe that it is the only or the main reason. I think that there are a number of barriers to the dissemination of information that need to be clearly understood before we can explore mechanisms to overcome them.

One barrier is that imposed by the “Codes of Conduct and Ethics” common to government departments, which restrict employees from disclosing or commenting on “matters relating to official business or government policies”. Another can relate to the owner or donor. The owner may not want anyone to know that they have the item in their possession (a common concern for private collectors) or that any treatment has been done. A donor may lose confidence in the ability for an organisation to care properly for their donations and others in the collection if they hear that something has gone wrong, even if it was beyond the control of the collecting organisation.

These are valid concerns. So is that of the need to develop the conservation profession. Silence is not the best option. How can we share this information which could prevent someone else from making the same mistake and still serve the best interests of our employers and clients?

Palliative Care of Objects and Letting Them Die in Dignity

Pat Townley, Powerhouse Museum

(Can you tell I committed to this over the phone?.....I promise to be more cautious in future.)

I tend to have an anthropomorphic view of everything, reckon it has something to do with (only just) surviving anthrop at uni! My children have long since stopped pleading with me not to watch tragic movies such as *Milo and Otis* and *101 Dalmatians* and now just pass the tissues and leave me to it.

What could be more predictable, then, than me talking about objects as if they were living things.....

In my reality, conservators have regularly chosen medical terms for the things they do....we observe, examine, stabilise, and treat things all the time, with a few disasters and emergencies to keep us on our toes. We were into preventive conservation just when the dentists began to discuss preventive dentistry and mainstreamed UV control well before Slip, Slop, Slapping became a way of life.

A quick check with a range of dictionaries confirmed that I knew what *palliative* really meant. The most useful phrases included "to relieve without curing", "to cause to be less serious" and "to take up a more moderate position".

I like all of these statements because they promote a more relaxed approach to 'deterioration'. It seems to me that a conservator has, at most, 40 years to observe how objects deteriorate. Essentially, the conservator is deteriorating more rapidly than most of the objects that they observe!!

With non-living things it is impossible to determine just when "all functions cease". Just identifying all functions is enough of a dilemma! The only comfort for the materially minded conservator is that functions are evident in the fabric. Conservators spend a lot of time protecting known and presumed past object functions as well as unknown future object functions. They also make changes to objects which are based on short term observations and which cause additional, perhaps accelerating, changes to occur. Documentation, reversibility and stability give us reassurance but each of these rationales is seriously flawed. To add to the confusion, it seems that gradual loss of fabric may sometimes be (perhaps always is) offset by increasing significance of that which remains.

Unlike doctors, conservators treat patients with a life expectancy many times that of their own. In addition, conservation is still a comparatively new field. Conservators need to be strongly future focussed and ensure that the objects they work with "live long and prosper" or, at least, remain worth keeping.

Ethics and the Conservation of Indigenous Cultural Materials

Karen Coote, The Australian Museum

All conservators working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material should by now be aware of the Museums Australia policy, *Previous Possessions, New Obligations, Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. This was published by the Council of Australian Museum Associations Inc. in December 1993. It is readily available through Museums Australia.

The particular ethical issues that must be addressed by conservators are in the basic principles that indicate self determination, and active involvement in management and access to collections by Aboriginal peoples. These are reflected in the detailed policy points which promote consultation at all times and especially with reference to human remains and secret/sacred material. One could take note for example of point 2.6 where "traditional custodians will be consulted on the method of storage and preservation of secret/sacred material." What this refers to is the need to respect the wishes of the owners. Conservators via their own code which currently reflects an ethic of conserving all cultural material may find it difficult to accept that those who must be consulted may not wish their own cultural material to be preserved.

Point 3 covers principles of acquisition, ownership and return with an emphasis on accommodating the wishes of the communities. The return of cultural material to communities may well fly in the face of conservation ethics where items knowingly may be housed in less than ideal conditions.

There may need to be a review of the AICCM Code of Ethics when reflecting on the implications of these and other points in this policy. This will presumably be the first of many other such policies in both the domestic and international museums arena that may challenge our understanding of the AICCM Code of Ethics.

Ethical and Professional Issues: A Conservator in Bureaucracy
Janet Hughes, National Museum of Australia

During 1994-96 as the lone conservator on the staff of the National Capital Authority I was responsible for management of some 90 outdoor memorials and artworks. Most treatments were contracted out. Much of my time needed to be spent as an advocate for professional conservation standards to ensure adherence to conservation standards against urging for 'expedient' treatments which would have resulted in damage.

For conservators to be credible in such an organisation (where most of the staff are architects, engineers, urban planners and finance administrators) the conservation profession must:

1. Develop a code of practice to ensure appropriate standards and procedures are identified, as is done by other professions eg. Institute of Engineers, Royal Australian Institute of Architects, etc;
2. Review tendering practices concerning conservation projects to ensure ethical standards can be protected while allowing fair pricing competition;
3. Promote acceptance of design and materials guidelines for contemporary outdoor artworks to minimise maintenance and safety problems before construction;
4. Seek broader recognition by other professions of conservation expertise in management of outdoor artworks and historic 'infrastructure';
5. Develop a strategic plan for identifying research priorities for improving conservation treatments;
6. Develop symbiosis between conservation staff in institutions and contract conservators. This will ensure there is adequate representation of conservation expertise within organisations such as NCA to ensure adequate guidance on priorities and conservation management responsibilities.

Do We Need a Code of Practice?

Jude Fraser, AICCM (Victoria)

Since the Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice was adopted by the AICCM in Adelaide in August 1986, the structure of the profession has changed considerably. At that time, the majority of conservators working in Australia were employed by State and National Institutions, generally as permanent employees. With changes in the economic climate and in industrial relations practice, the conservator today can be working under a totally different set of employment circumstances. The conservator could be working in private practice, either in their own business or as an employee of a larger business. They may be working on contract with an institution or organisation. Some institutions have moved into the world of private practice, offering conservation services to a range of clients.

With this shift in culture of the profession, is it time to re-assess and redevelop the 1986 document into a Code of Practice? Using the Royal Institute of Architects Code of Practice document as a guide, it is hoped that the conference discussion will answer the question. If the answer is "Yes", a draft Code of Practice can be developed for the conservation profession based on the discussions at the Conference.

Conflict of Interest: Taking a Stand at Conservation Access

Marion Roubos-Bennett, Conservation Access, SLNSW

Some ethical questions asked of the conservation profession today are:

- When conservators working for an organisation undertake private conservation for clients outside the organisation, is there a conflict of interest?
- Should the conservators be using facilities, materials and equipment belonging to the organisation whilst undertaking conservation for a private client, albeit in their own time, then reaping the benefits of the revenue made?

These questions and other issues will be presented to the audience for discussion. *Conservation Access* has taken an ethical stand regarding these issues and is well placed in the eyes of the public sector as a positive example of addressing conflict of interest.

AICCM

Chair: Robyn Sloggett, President, AICCM (Inc.)

Publishing and the Profession

Vinod Daniels, The Australian Museum

Publications are a dirty word for some, a waste of time for others, and it is somebody else's business for most. Why does a museum professional have to publish, what should they consider publishing, what are the avenues available for publishing are some of the questions which a conservator, scientist or administrator in a museum constantly ponders on.

The purpose of this talk is to provide a brief overview on publications especially with relevance to some of these questions. Various avenues such as newsletters, journals, and conferences will be touched on. Internet and electronic mail as an extremely important global linking tool will be discussed, and avenues for publishing and sharing information through the Net will be highlighted.

AICCM and Museums Australia

Karen Coote, Museums Australia Conservation Special Interest Group

This brief presentation will discuss the Conservation Special Interest Group (CSIG) of Museums Australia and how it was formed in 1994. It will describe the membership and the broad base from which skills and networks can be drawn. It will articulate the three main aims and objectives of the CSIG and discuss the potential for collaboration with AICCM for the common good of the conservation profession.

The presentation will introduce the concept of broadening horizons within both organisations. Issues such as lobbying and focussing on tangible outcomes through planning and networking within the two organisations will be touched upon. There is also the inevitable problem within both organisations of too few people to achieve too much. How best can we involve more of the memberships and make best use of their considerable and diverse skills.

With energy and common goals, the AICCM and the Conservation Special Interest Group are in a position to combine forces and use whichever organisation works for the best outcome for the conservation of Australia's distributed national collection. The independence of both organisations will be acknowledged whilst considering common goals and how to achieve them.

Funding the AICCM

Ian McLeod, Past Treasurer of AICCM (Inc.)

The funding of a body such as the AICCM is subject to the normal vagaries of any institution which is dependant on the professional membership of it's members. With the acceptance of Professional Accreditation a new source of funding became available but always there has been a reluctance for members to fully embrace the concept. With increasing competition between the private and commercial sectors for the conservation dollar there will be an increase in members taking out the full rate of membership. Like childbirth, the whole process of getting AICCM onto a firm financial footing takes time. ALL conservators must take on some of the responsibility for the future.

The AICCM's Strategic Plan

Sarah Jane Rennie, AICCM (S.A.)

The AICCM strategic plan is an ongoing dynamic process which is intended to focus the Institute's activities on both an annual and triennial cycle. This presentation will provide people with the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the next plan.

PRIORITIES FOR 1996/7

The 1996/7 focus of activities for AICCM will take account of endorsement of the National Conservation Policy and will work to develop policies from that and the following:

- Present the AICCM National Conference/Focal seminar
- Review the secretariat
- Secure office space for the secretariat
- Centralise a data base on conservation training
- Monitor training in conservation components of tertiary courses
- Produce a position statement of how AICCM relates to the NPO, HCC, Museums Australia, University of Canberra/NCCHSS and other bodies as relevant.
- Encourage State Divisions to implement components of the strategic plan

- Ensure the aims and objectives of Special Interest Groups are in accord with those of AICCM
- Respond to identified conservation issues as they arise
- Respond to the National Policy of Moveable Cultural Heritage

Updating the By-Laws

Linda Clark, AICCM (Tas.)

As part of a comprehensive review of the role and functions of the AICCM, the Tasmanian branch of the organisation has been asked to update the By-Laws of the AICCM constitution. These were changed when the old ICCM became the AICCM and again altered in 1994.

The Tasmanian branch is just beginning the current review. An outline of the branch's intended approach to the review will be presented at the 1996 National AICCM conference. Some issues that have already emerged as requiring close examination include:

- the role and composition of the national council
- the definition of different membership categories
- changes required to register AICCM as a charity so as to enable tax deductible donations.

The AICCM and its Members

Tamara Lavrencic, Past President of AICCM (Inc.)

The AICCM has been the peak organisation in Australia for the profession since its inception in 1973. Categories of membership include institutional, student/pensioner, ordinary (individual), associate (accredited individual) and honorary. Membership numbers fluctuated little until about three years ago, when a steady decline aroused concern.

In 1993 the AICCM undertook a major membership survey to address the issue of declining membership and in particular to assess where members come from and why they belong to AICCM. It was already known that not all conservators are members of AICCM and not all members of AICCM are conservators. The disturbing discovery was a trend indicating that individuals who work in major institutions are more likely not to be paid up members.

Most of AICCM's funding comes from membership fees, and this income basically covers services to the members which is one of AICCM's primary goals. Another of the Institute's goals is to promote conservation and preservation of cultural heritage in Australia. More funding and a higher profile for the organisation is needed in order to have a greater impact in this area, which means increasing the membership base, both within the profession and beyond.

AICCM is at a cross-roads. What is the role of AICCM in the future? Do we continue to concentrate our resources on the profession or do we seek additional resources to put into our other goals? If we pursue the former course it is likely that we will maintain a low profile within the heritage industry. If we follow the promotional road, how will we relate to the other organisations working in this sector?

Conservation

Chair: Kay Söderlund, President, AICCM (NSW)

The Conservator's Dilemma - Managing a Full Conservation Programme
Ian McLeod, Western Australian Maritime Museum

This paper will address the issues associated with the routine hassles of a conservation manager trying to maintain a balance between the needs of the institution for exhibition related conservation work, the ever increasing demand for training from the public and the museum community and the need to prevent deterioration of the collections. The real needs of performing applied research on the materials in collection to optimise the treatments will be discussed. Proposed solutions will be revealed to those who attend the session.

Stirring the Pot and the Insatiable Apple Pie
Sharon Towns, Victorian Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Material

This presentation will discuss 'conservation diversification', examining the last ten years of the profession's development within the context of traditional business structures.

How the nature of business structures influence the provision of conservation services and the diversity of professional relationships is briefly discussed using the Victorian Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Materials' (V.C.C.C.M) as a specific structural example. The purpose and objectives of the V.C.C.C.M are embodied within the organisation's structure, which then determines strategic planning and operational issues. As the only non-profit, incorporated association dedicated to providing conservation services in Australia, V.C.C.C.M's model is described by the metaphoric title of this presentation, "Stirring the Pot and the Insatiable Apple Pie".

This presentation attempts to heighten discussion around conservation developments by drawing parallels with museological issues of cultural diversity and the benefits of stimulating and encouraging these developments. Ancillary issues include code of practice and the business of managing the profession's future.

The Business of Conservation

Catherine Akeroyd, International Conservation Services P/L

Managing any organisation is viewed as requiring art and science. What counts most in managing is performance. This presentation will discuss managing the art of making a profit and balancing it with the science of conserving material culture. There will be a focus on discussing the issues that occur when time and cost constraints are placed on conservators working privately, and the need to balance these with the scope of work and the ethical approach that is required.

The Conservator for Exhibitions: a Working Model

Catherine Earley, National Gallery of Victoria

The *Conservator for Exhibitions* position at the National Gallery of Victoria has been evolving since 1992. This position, related solely to exhibitions, serves two major functions. Firstly it addresses the conservation requirements for each exhibition which in turn enables the work schedule of the conservation staff to focus on the institutions collections rather than be run by an exhibition programme. Secondly, and importantly for the profile of the profession, it increases the interaction of the conservation department with other departments/museum professionals within the institution as a whole.

The structure of the *Conservator for Exhibitions* position ensures a high contact rate with staff from other departments involved with the planning, installation and pack up of exhibitions. A busy exhibition schedule means that dialogue with other non-conservation staff is almost constant. The result is, hopefully a heightened awareness of conservation requirements permeating everyone's approach to each exhibition.

The effectiveness of this education process is dependant on the Conservator gaining the opportunity to comment on as many aspects of an exhibition as possible, from the wording of the legally binding contracts, to display materials, the environment, and the timetabling for installation and packing of a show.

Selling Conservation within the Institution

Barbara Reeve, Australian National Maritime Museum

Conservation is often the poor cousin to other museum activities in the yearly scramble for funds and public recognition of achievements. A factor contributing to this is the erroneous image of conservators as people who say 'No'; as people who inhibit, rather than support the development of visually exciting exhibitions.

The secret to selling conservation philosophies and a range of issues within museums and other cultural institutions is to change the received wisdom about conservators. The message to promote is "Conservators make things happen".

Conservators: Are we Intellectually Vigorous or Intellectually Vapid?

Heather Mansell, State Library of New South Wales

Descriptions include: 'navel gazers', 'process workers', 'self-absorbed', 'precious'. Who are they talking about? Surely not us? Afraid so! Questions are posed: How many senior, Australian conservators are IIC fellows, have PhDs, MBAs, write papers for international conservation journals (let alone the national one), have high status within the employing institution? Where do conservators fit within the management structure. Do we need super-conservators or managers; or both? Who cares?

Professional Relationships within Conservation

Kay Söderlund, Söderlund Consulting P/L

Over the last 10-15 years, the face of conservation has changed rather dramatically. Conservators are now to be found working in many different situations, through choice rather than necessity.

As a profession, I do not think our guidelines have kept pace with the different roles that conservators now play in all their different working lives, and how these differences affect our professional relationships. Our Code of Ethics and Guidance for Conservation Practice was developed over 10 years ago when these issues were not as clearly defined as they are now and there were not as many working models available to conservators. It outlines how we should behave as conservators, towards both objects and fellow professionals. However, it could be argued that this is not a living document and that our guidelines are not strong enough to address some

current issues. Certainly, there has been no action taken over the years to address clear breaching of the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Conservation Practice. This paper is intended to complement other papers presented at the conference that are focussing on one of the areas that is often overlooked - that of our professional relationships with each other, as conservators.

Some areas of our working relationships that need immediate clarification and guidance:

- The many and various working situations that conservators find themselves in all need to be clearly defined, and recognised as valid components in the overall goal of the preservation of our cultural heritage. This heritage does not lie solely within collecting institutions.
- With both institutional and private conservators competing for the commercial dollar, the free exchange of information between us as professionals has been somewhat constrained. We need guidelines regarding:
 - a) a conservator's professional/commercial expertise - to what extent is it appropriate to use another conservator's professional knowledge, especially when it is their means of earning their living? Should a conservator charge consultant's fees when approached by another conservator for information?
 - b) what do we want to do about the common occurrence of conservator's working outside their field of expertise, especially when they approach other conservator's for information regarding technique etc?
 - c) some institutional conservators feel restricted in their exchange of information with other conservator's due to the Code of Conduct of their institution, and because their department may have been directed to source income from outside the institution. However, doesn't this go against our clear guidelines regarding the sharing of information gained from research, examination or treatment? And how does this attitude affect the traditional view that research undertaken or information held by a public institution should be freely available to the public, and certainly to professional colleagues. It could be argued that morally and ethically this obligation still exists.

By directing conservation departments to seek commercial work, a major dilemma and conflict has been created within the profession. We need guidelines from both the AICCM and the institutions involved, about how to resolve this in a manner acceptable to all conservators.

Strategies for the Future

Chair: Ian Cook, Director, Artlab Australia

Where Have We Come From? Where Are We At? Where Are We Going?
Tamara Lavrencic, Past President, AICCM (Inc)

AICCM is undergoing a period of great change as new organisations with a preservation/conservation focus emerge. The ALIA- Preservation Special Interest Group, Museums Australia - Conservation Special Interest Group, the National Preservation Office and the Heritage Collections Committee - Conservation Working Party are all active in the area of heritage preservation. Are we serving the same members? Do we duplicate activities? What relationship does AICCM have with each of these organisations and how can we work together to implement an effective National Conservation Strategy?

Sustainability of the Conservation Profession
Pat Townley, Powerhouse Museum

Sustaining conservation is, I reckon, important. We have made a good start but need to go on with it.

Over the past 20 years or so, I have worked with lots of conservators from many different backgrounds with a great range of professional expectations. How can we ensure that all (or mostly all - I'm a realist!!) remain interested, flexible, creative, involved and motivated over a period of 30 or 40 years?

Firstly, I think we can become more realistic about what conservation is. I believe that it is just a job, but one which is broad enough to allow people to contribute and be involved in many ways. Specialists, generalists, publicists, trainers, field conservators, council conservators, hands-on, hands-off, philosophers, scientists etc, etc.

Secondly, conservators need to be supportive, encouraging, positive and less paranoid about each others work.

Thirdly, we need to have some good, accessible mid-career training opportunities. We need to make these opportunities ourselves and stop expecting 'some-one else' to provide.

Fourthly, we need to get out into the 'real' world more. We need to relax a bit and listen to what other museum professionals and the general public have to say. We need to find out what they need from us and work toward broadening the conservation network.

Finally, we need to have more conservators in senior positions within the museum industry. To achieve this we will need to demonstrate that we are broad-thinking and have transferable management skills.

As conservators we are fully aware of the complexities of maintaining objects and the planning, effort and commitment required for this. In order to sustain the conservation profession we need to apply these same skills more broadly and in a much more enterprising way.

Industry Developments - Co-operation and Globalisation

Ian Cook, Artlab Australia

Traditionally, the private sector has had a long standing role in the delivery of expert services in the built heritage arena. A similar trend is emerging in the movable heritage sector.

There is a growing role for private sector delivery of services to museums and other collecting institutions. These services cover a very wide range of activities from human resource management to security, exhibition design, collections management and conservation.

Not only is there a significant private sector role for delivering materials conservation programs, but there is a convergence between the movable and built heritage sectors in the provision of services.

There are thus, two major partnerships evolving in the Australian Heritage Services Industry:

- The private sector in partnership with the public sector (AusHeritage Limited, Australia's heritage industry export network, is a prime example of such a synergy) and;
- the built and moveable sectors working together on a broad cross-section of projects where the combined skills of both groups provide competitive advantage and market positioning.

The above situation has emerged as a result of historical factors such as the role of the public sector in the building industry over many years and economic changes largely related to the way governments are approaching fiscal management such as the sale of assets, outsourcing and dumping of 'non-core' functions.

We are all aware of the pressure to achieve sustainability and the offsetting of public spending as a result of economic policy developed often as a response to factors and trends outside Australia.

Many of us have developed in professional environments which have been largely protected and where the emphasis on accountability was limited. The concept of service to the customer, whether taxpayer or direct fee paying client, has become a fundamental objective for many organisations - and rightly so. However, many of our colleagues are slowly coming to terms with these issues in an environment where continuing change is creating challenges to the way we work as well as our sustainability.

There are two phenomena:

- electronic communications
- globalisation of industries and services

which are intimately linked and which will be so all-pervasive in their effects on society that every effort will be necessary to manage their impact on the Australian heritage industry.

The ease for international business management through new communication systems will mean that conservation programs can be managed from any part of the world. What this means is that if the Australian Industry is not proactive in embracing new technologies and shifts towards globalisation we could easily end in being managed from elsewhere.

It is important that the Australian Industry restructure itself so that it becomes competitive internationally. The establishment of collaborative co-operatives and networks would appear to be a fundamental mechanism for achieving a new competitive and sustainable industry.

The establishment of the proposed national conservation and preservation strategy for movable cultural heritage by the Heritage Collections Committee while not necessarily addressing a new structure for the industry, will support collaborative and co-operative systems. The strategy, will very likely make a strong contribution to new approaches to managing conservation which will embrace world wide developments over the period to 2001.

The Shape of the Industry in 2010

Julian Bickersteth, International Conservation Services P/L

The role conservators play in the preservation of Australia's cultural heritage, the demand for their services and the positioning of the conservation profession in the wider cultural heritage field have all changed significantly in the last fifteen years. This paper looks at current trends and takes a crystal ball view at the shape and extent of the profession in 2010. What training will conservators receive, how will they work and where will the jobs be, what implications will the Internet have, and where do the challenges and opportunities lie? All will be surmised and revealed in this stab at the future.

The Way Forward

Robyn Sloggett, President, AICCM (Inc)

The AICCM is the peak body for conservators in this country. Formed in 1973 it has achieved a number of important objectives including the development of the AICCM Code of Ethics, the introduction of a system of accreditation, the establishment of a paid secretariat and a membership numbering some 450. The political and economic climate at the end of the twentieth century is however quantifiably different from that of the previous two decades. Workplace restructuring with an emphasis on contract and private employment arrangements, an increase in the number of conservators in the country, the maturity of the profession, and the existence of the National Conservation and Preservation Strategy for Moveable Cultural Heritage, are all challenges and opportunities which the AICCM must address. This year is without a doubt one of the most important in the history of the Institute. This paper examines some of these issues and optimistically presents a model of the AICCM in the year 2010.