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President's Report

“Work demands keep increasing, time flies by at an ever increasing pace and it’s difficult to find sufficient time to attend to all the things that you’re interested in” is a familiar refrain these days. It’s therefore amazing when you consider the number of conservators who are actively involved, often in their personal time, in raising the standard of conservation in Australia, whether it is by involvement on AICCM Council, convening seminars and workshops for Special Interest Groups or providing support and advice to museum volunteers.

This year, in addition to the day-to-day administration of this active organisation, there have been several ambitious projects undertaken, none of which would have gotten off the ground without the dedication of a few individuals. If I tried to list all the people involved I’d inevitably leave someone out, so instead I’ll thank all the current Council members and those members who’ve been seconded into assisting with the development of the new website, developing the CPD for professional membership, developing and refining our strategic plan and reviewing our administrative needs.

In particular, I’d like to thank Jenny Dickens, Alice Cannon and Christine Ianna for their energy, for persisting when their energy and enthusiasm waned, and the commitment they have demonstrated to the conservation profession. The hours of personal time that these three people have donated and their contribution to fostering an active, well-informed and well-managed profession is significant and deserves special acknowledgment.

In August, after a selection process involving five expressions of interest, Jenny Dickens handed over the role of AICCM Secretariat to Robert Franzke. Robert has worked closely with the conservation profession since 1999, as the Assistant Business Manager/Administrative Assistant at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, then as the Administrative Officer for the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation.

The Conservator of the Year Award is back on track thanks to the patience and gentle persistence of our Membership Officer, Fiona Tennant. Nominations were ultimately received for four highly commendable nominees, making the selection process an unenviable task. As a member of the selection panel, along with the previous Conservator of the Year, Kim Morris, and Fiona, I’d like to acknowledge our appreciation to those members who took the time to complete a nomination form.

The launch of the new website is scheduled for the 8th of October, following the AGM in Melbourne. Council members and others who’ve had the privilege of viewing the design and content to date have expressed enthusiasm for the new product and await the official launch with great excitement. Again, thanks to the many people who provided new content and were otherwise involved in this major project.

Tamara Lavrencic

From The Editors

Thank you to all of you who got back to us on the new format of the Newsletter. We are glad to say that comments have all been very positive, and we hope it continues to get better from hereon. We are continuing to develop the readability and you will notice immediately with this edition that we have a used AICCM's new logo as well as a new header, moving into line with the look of our new website (www.aiccm.org.au). The new website goes live during October. Look out for that as there is lots to explore on it.

In this edition, particularly look out for:

- The state profile of Queensland. We continue our state-by-state profile to provide an overview of the conservation activity and employment opportunities. In the next edition we intend to focus on Western Australia.
- The in-depth interview, this time with Sarah Slade, who has held a host of challenging positions both in Australia and the UK.
- The Art Gallery of NSW's Artwork Acquisition form, developed to overcome the problem of accurate documentation of contemporary artworks in regards to how they were made, what the artists' intentions were, the likely longevity etc. Rose Peel has kindly made this available for the profession as a whole to save other organisations having to go through the same process.
- Ian Batterham's Stories from the files. Ian has been trawling through files at National Archives from the Department of External Affairs, and found an illuminating piece on Australia's response to the Florence floods in 1966.
- Responses to last edition's **Conservation Matters**. We received some fascinating comments on Helen Hughes' frank perceptions of the failings of British conservators and whether they were applicable to Australian conservators.

We promptly acknowledge all contributions by reply email. Please do follow up if you do not receive an acknowledgement, as it means your contribution has not arrived.

Do keep the content coming and bear in mind that deadline dates do mean just that. We received nearly half our news content after the deadline for this edition, and we need to get tough if we are going to deliver the Newsletter to you in a timely fashion.

Fiona Tennant and Julian Bickersteth

The new AICCM website

AICCM is proud to announce the launch of the new AICCM website!

If it isn't live by the time this newsletter goes to print, it will be very soon, so keep your eyes peeled.

The site will be officially launched on October 8, at the AGM drinks connected with the Paintings and Gilded Objects Conservation SIG meetings. We hope many of you will join us there.

The new website has many new features, including:

- Online payment for membership fees, via Paypal
- An online searchable Membership Directory (available to members only)
- Job listings
- A new and improved Members in Private Practice list, searchable by name, business name, place of business and specialization
- A Bookshop with online payment facilities, again via Paypal
- Access to PDF copies of Bulletin articles, conference proceedings and National Newsletters (publications from the past 5 years are available to members only)
- A members-only "Event Planning" area, containing advice for those wishing to organize events, from those who have gone before
- An online "card file" of specialist suppliers, again available to members only
- The new site also has content aimed at raising our public profile and general awareness

of conservation issues, such as:

- Online picture galleries of conservators at work, including specific conservation treatments
- "Remedies Gone Wrong", a section describing various materials and methods that have been used to clean or repair objects in the past that have not stood the test of time – such as sticky tape and bleach
- A "Visual Glossary", which uses pictures of damaged objects to help people better understand how to describe the damage that occurs to cultural materials
- Links to "Caring for Collections" resources online
- Links to news items featuring conservators or relevant heritage issues

It is also intended that AICCM members can use the images and text from these areas of the website to help answer public queries, or for presentations and workshops, as required.

Many thanks to all those AICCM members who contributed text, images and time to this project. We hope the new site is something of which our members will be proud, and encourage you all to keep the contributions coming.

There will inevitably be some teething problems associated with the site, so we also ask you all to be patient and to notify either the AICCM Secretariat (Robert Franzke) or the AICCM Website Editor (Jodie Proud) of any problems.

Sincerely,

The Website Committee

Letter to the Editors



Feedback on the new look June issue

Veronica Bullock

I would like to congratulate the Editors of the June 2008 edition of the AICCM National Newsletter. In response to their request for feedback (p2), I can say that I didn't particularly notice the font change, but found the 're-jigged' content a success.

Taken together, the articles in this issue are both comprehensive and thought-provoking. The 'State in Focus' is a great idea – it was good to see such a wide range of public and private conservation practitioners included. Also the selection of conference reports was good, and I especially valued the report on the Vocational Education and Training course at Holmesglen Institute of TAFE.

I would like to comment upon three of the other very good inclusions, in the light of recent developments in Australia.

Refresher guide for researchers by Ian Batterham

It has been so encouraging to see the level of conservation research rise (again) in recent years. I believe this is an outcome of the University of Melbourne conservation courses. My impression of the mood about Australian conservation research at the 'New Directions in Research' meeting in Melbourne, 2005, was one of despondency. By contrast the

mood at the 'Contemporary Collections' Conference in Brisbane, 2007 was buoyant.

It's always good to be reminded about the importance of conducting good quality research, and the influence this has on people's estimation of the profession.

Opinion piece 'Conservation Matters'

I do hope that readers respond to the ideas presented here. To me it seems more important than ever for conservators to share their skills through good communication. I would encourage members of the AICCM to be alert to opportunities to align conservation with political agendas for improved outcomes e.g. e-Research, innovation, community strengthening, education revolution.

Sometimes the most efficient way to achieve this is through submissions to public enquiries, whether as motivated individuals, as voices from collecting organisations, or as members of the professional association. (For example, please see the Collections Council's submissions to government on behalf of the collections sector at: <http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Default.aspx?tabid=71>. Particular mention is made of materials conservation in several of these.)

Interview with James Crawford

James should be congratulated for keeping up with developments in Australia, especially after such a long absence. He

has some valuable things to say to young conservators. His interpretation of the advent of the University of Canberra courses is logical. Unfortunately, I don't think the connection between the first recommendation of the Collections Council's Conservation Survey 2006 and this event is so direct.

To allay one of James' concerns, it seems that the Canberra and Melbourne university courses will be complementary – there is plenty of room for 'niche' development in conservation education, including the forging of stronger links with vocational educators and trainers via 'education pathways'.

Regarding funding for conservation, there are whole new opportunities to align with the imminent 'national innovation priorities' (and consequent revised 'national research priorities'), and with natural and built heritage conservation through the sustainability agenda.

I believe that by cleverly harnessing new agendas to communicate the value of materials conservation / cultural heritage, and backing this up with a vigorous body of quality conservation research, conservation can pull itself out of the seemingly eternal competition with health, resources and mainstream education for government funding support.

Hot tip for the new website...

Need to send out a message to the membership?

Now all messages, SIG or State, are sent out to all members, via the Secretariat. This includes messages about upcoming events. Please send your message text to the Secretariat at secretariat@aiccm.org.au

If we find that there are increasing numbers of such messages, we may look at setting up a mailing list in the future.



State in Focus – Queensland

Queensland Museum

Queensland Museum is a natural history and cultural heritage museum that includes collections of type specimens and wet specimens, fossils and minerals, archaeological material from both land and marine sites, history and technological objects and other cultural material including Aboriginal and Oceanic collections.

Queensland Museum is structured with a number of campus sites (Queensland Museum South Bank, The Museum of Tropical Queensland, The Workshops Rail Museum, Cobb and Co Museum and the Lands Mapping and Surveying Museum) and two program streams (Cultures and Histories, and Biodiversity). Materials Conservation is positioned within the museum so that it services all campuses and both programs.

Founded by the Queensland Philosophical Society in 1862, from 1900 until 1986 the museum (and until 1973 the Queensland Art Gallery) resided in the Exhibition Building on Gregory Terrace in Fortitude Valley. This building was much larger than previous residences but did not meet the storage needs of the museum, leaked frequently and eventually became structurally unpredictable (due to water damage and termite activity). In response to concerns for the collections, Queensland Museum's first materials scientist was appointed in 1980. Over the next few years (until the museum relocated to its current premises) a temporary laboratory was built up in a small, shared demountable without fume extraction or hot water. In 1986 the museum moved to its current location in the Queensland Cultural Centre at South Brisbane.

During the 1980s Materials Conservation was heavily involved in expeditions and recovery operations to the wreck sites of the HMS Pandora, La Perouse, Boussolle and Astrolabe. This maritime involvement eventually led to the construction of one of Queensland Museum's campuses, The

Museum of Tropical Queensland (which opened in 2000), and the transfer of the museum's Maritime Archaeological Department and its collections to this site in Townsville.

Since the 1980s staffing levels have swelled from one to three then to five and back to three. A Senior Conservator and one Conservator are based at the Queensland Museum South Bank and one Conservator/Collection Manager is based at the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville. Our small numbers mean that our work is very exhibition and loan driven but we undertake remedial treatments on the collection when possible. Our current work program is dominated by a major project to improve the quality of storage areas, provide better access, and create additional space for future growth where possible.

For further information please contact Davina Hacklin at: davina.hacklin@qm.qld.gov.au

Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art

The QAG/GoMA Conservation Department sits within the area of Curatorial and Collection Development and reports to one of 2 Deputy Directors.

The Head of Conservation oversees 2 conservators in each of the disciplines of paintings, paper and sculpture. Additionally we have a conservation framer who both restores original frames and crafts reproduction frames using traditional techniques. The conservators would be unable to function without the support of our part time conservation assistant/technicians for mount cutting (2), paintings (1) and sculpture (1) and an extremely versatile conservation administrator (also part time). We also are fortunate to have representation within the gallery's workshop, with a conservation workshop coordinator who

constructs and finishes standard frames and supports.

Physically the Conservation Department is located across 2 sites, the original purpose built paintings and paper laboratories which opened with the Qld Art Gallery building in 1982, and the new facilities at the Gallery of Modern Art which opened in late 2006, 150m away, which duplicate some of the QAG spaces, and additionally cater for sculpture and conservation science. Prior to 1982 the Gallery had been housed in makeshift accommodation since its establishment in 1895. Restoration projects were contracted out on an as needs basis until the late 1970s, when the first paper conservator was employed.

Since 1982 and especially with the opening of GoMA, the Gallery's collection and programs have grown in size and complexity. The opening of GoMA has allowed for the establishment of the Australian Centre of Asia-Pacific Art, and we are rapidly acquiring a substantial collection of art from the Asia-Pacific region. A dedicated Children's Art Centre now also coordinates innovative museum-based learning programs for children. The Centre for Contemporary Art Conservation (CCAC) is another plank of the GoMA development, enabling us to host a series of professional development workshops for conservators in recent years. The Gallery's programs offer interesting opportunities for all staff, while simultaneously stretching resources across the board. The move to a 2 site model has had an inevitable and substantial impact on the function of the conservation department and although we appear well resourced in hardware, staffing levels have not increased in line with the demands on the collection for display, touring and loan commitments. There is enormous potential in the QAG/GoMA conservation facilities and we all look forward to capitalising on some of the opportunities once additional resources can be secured.

For further information please contact Gillian Osmond at: gillian.osmond@qag.qld.gov.au

State Library of Queensland

The State Library of Queensland's Conservation Unit was set up in 1988 with one conservator and one assistant. Twenty years later, the unit has 13 staff. This demonstrates the State Library's strong commitment to the preservation of our state's documentary heritage and is reinforced by the current strategic objective to 'Lead the capture and preservation of Queensland's cultural and documentary heritage'.

The Conservation Unit is part of Collection Preservation (Client Services and Collections) which also includes the Microfilm Unit and the Image Production Unit. In 2006 as part of the restructuring of Collection Preservation, the Bindery Unit was incorporated into Conservation and the following three conservation teams were formed. These teams are overseen by the Senior Conservator and the work programmes determined by priorities set by the Conservation Steering Workgroup and the exhibition programme.

- The *Treatment Team* has two distinct streams of work:
 1. Conservation treatment: This involves the treatment of individual book, paper, photographic and motion picture objects predominately from the Heritage Collections. A weekly remedial treatment programme for minor repairs to collections on open access is also in operation. The team currently consists of a paper conservator, a film conservator, an assistant conservator and a preservation assistant.
 2. Binding and repair: The binding and repair programme for treatment of non-heritage collections and presentation bindings is overseen by the Binding Co-ordinator with assistance from other members of the Treatment Team as needed.
- The *Exhibition Team's* core work is the preparation of collection objects for exhibition, working closely

with the Public Programs staff. The Library has three dedicated, climate-controlled exhibition spaces with demanding exhibition schedules. The conservation component includes object assessment and condition reporting, mount preparation, treatment, and selection of suitable exhibition environments and display furniture. The team consists of an Exhibition Conservator, an Assistant Conservator and a Preservation Assistant.

- The *Preventive Team* are responsible for the routine monitoring of environmental conditions (temperature, RH and air quality) and Integrated Pest Management in both Library buildings. This includes inspecting incoming loans, acquisitions and donations through our dedicated Quarantine facility. In-house construction of archival enclosures are made for collections that do not fit the standard commercially produced enclosures. The Preventive Team consists of a Conservation Officer, an Assistant Conservator and a Preservation Assistant.

In addition to the work activities outlined above, we place a strong emphasis on preservation outreach. We respond to approximately 2000 preservation enquiries annually from the public, government agencies, local history groups, schools, and universities. To enhance our information service we are currently in the process of updating our website and information leaflets to ensure accessible, practical information to suit a wide demographic. Our free monthly conservation clinics are very popular and are often fully booked. A minimum of 4 preservation workshops are held at the Library each year with further regional workshops run as demand requires. A permanent display known as the "Preservation Wall" along one side of the conservation lab includes viewing windows into the lab and provides visitors to the Library with insight into preservation of the collections.

Our IPM programme was recently enhanced by the purchase of a low

oxygen Mobigas unit from Germany. We are greatly indebted to Janelle Borig from the National Gallery of Victoria for all her help during the long process.

In February this year, work was completed on the upgrade of our basement vaults built in 2000. The upgrade involved the installation of two new refrigeration systems allowing the temperature set points to be lowered from 10°C to 4°C thus bringing them in line with the vault and conditioning room built as part of the Library redevelopment in 2006. A new conditioning room (40% ± 5% and 15 °C ± 1 °C) connecting the basement vaults was also included in the 2008 upgrade. The work has greatly improved the life expectancy of our film and chromogenic colour collections, as well as our glass negative, magnetic and digital media which are housed in the conditioning rooms.

For more information please contact Lydia Egunnike at Lydia.Egunnike@slq.qld.gov.au

RSM Art Conservation

RSM Art Conservation was founded in Sydney in 1971 and at the time, the company consisted of two full time staff members, working on the conservation of a variety of objects and a range of projects. RSM Art Conservation relocated to Queensland in 1986, establishing dedicated conservation studios in Mapleton (on the Queensland Sunshine Coast) and in the Brisbane metropolitan area.

The company has continued treating a wide range of artworks (from private, corporate and public collections) and has successfully undertaken a number of large architectural projects. In addition to the two original owners, RSM now employs two full time staff members and four contractors. Full time staff members and contractors have dedicated areas of specialisation in; conservation framing, gilding, paintings conservation, object and textile conservation, paper conservation, and architectural conservation.

For more information please contact Richard McDonald at conserve@bigpond.net.au

Lab and People News

New South Wales

Art Gallery of NSW

Lab news

In the Paintings Lab, **Paula Dredge** has been working on a large oil painting entitled *Portrait of Mrs Alexander Spark* 1840 by Sydney surgeon/painter Maurice Felton. Painted on two narrow lengths of Damask linen sewn together, this work is a wonderful example of 'make-do' from the early period of the Colony. The frame for the painting has been treated by the frames dept (see details below). **Stewart Laidler** has completed a condition survey of the paintings collection in anticipation of the collection move next year to off-site storage. **Matt Cox** has temporarily taken up a curatorial position within the Prints, Drawings and Photography Dept at the Gallery and **Lisa Charleston** has joined us from the SLNSW. Lisa is currently working as Assistant Conservator on a number of re-framing and environmental monitoring projects. **Julia Sharp** and **Kate Wilson** have also joined the team for a short while to work on loans. Paintings conservation student **Janet Hearne** (University of Melbourne) completed a 3 week internship at the Gallery commencing treatment on the painting *On the Beach* by Rupert Bunny. With the generous support of the conservation benefactor group at the AGNSW, **Andrea Nottage** is continuing treatment on the painting *An Island Festival*, (1940x3030cm) by English artist Charles Sims, 1907. Unsuitable for display since the early 1950's due to severe water damage, Andrea has spent much time consolidating and restoring structural stability to the work. After almost 5 years of on-off treatment Andrea is now at the final in-painting stage.

In the frames lab **Malgorzata Sawicki** has spent three months restoring the

gilded surface on the frame for the *Portrait of the Mrs Alexander Spark*, 1840, by Maurice Felton. This original frame was commissioned by Mr Sparks from Solomon, a carver, gilder & tobacconist, who also made frames for Conrad Martens and Samuel Elyard. Fortunately, most of the original gilding was retained during treatment, providing a great source of information on one of the oldest framers workshops in Australia. In addition to preparing items for loan and exhibition, Malgorzata has also completed the most challenging task of all – submitting her PhD thesis on *Non-Traditional Gilding Techniques!* **Basia Dabrowa** has been continuing restoration work on the huge 19th century original frame for the painting *Rorke's Drift* by Alfonse De Neuville, the treatment of which should be completed by the end of November 2008. **David Butler** has been working on a reproduction frame for the painting *Esther*, 1869, by Jean Portaels, which provides a new challenge in regards to mould making, as it is based on the photograph of an original frame surrounding another painting by the same artist. David has also been busy making new frames for works by Morandi and Whitely in addition to a photograph by Ostoja-Kotkowski, designed according to the precise description provided by the artist in a letter to the AGNSW curator in 1979.

The recent purchase of x-ray fluorescence (XRF) equipment at AGNSW has meant that a number of staff have undertaken radiation safety training and have now received their radiation users licences. Further in-house training is continuing to get everyone up to speed with how to operate the XRF and more importantly how to analyse the results.

In the paper lab, **Carolyn Murphy**, **Analiese Treacy** and **Jessica Crann** (Intern, Northumbria University, UK) have been using XRF to examine a mixed media work on paper by Robert Klippel and a photographic work by Peter Yanada McKenzie. Carolyn and

Jessica have also been working on the treatment of a number of Japanese Ukiyo-e prints as part of the Gallery's collection conservation program and in preparation for the exhibition, *Genji – The world of the Shining Prince*, opening at the AGNSW in December. Carolyn is also preparing works for *Half Light*, an exhibition of photographic works by Australian Indigenous artists. Analiese, now with the Gallery full time, is working on the extensive loans programme while **Kristel Smit** has joined the lab one day per week working on various re-framing projects. **Lily Yang** has been continuing her endless job of skilfully mounting works for exhibition and loan, while Asian art conservator **Sun Yu** has been busy travelling to and from China with objects for *The Lost Buddhas* exhibition – a show of 35 exquisite sculptures discovered in one the most significant archaeological finds of the 20th century.

In the Objects lab, **Donna Hinton**, **Kristel Smits** and **Anne Cummins** of SAC, worked out a treatment plan to restore the pristine white finish of a large degraded polyurethane sculpture entitled *Elongated Plinths* entitled by Rachel Whiteread. No sooner had Kristel patiently cleaned and repaired the work when Tom Arthur's work *The fertilisation of Drako Vulen's cheese pizza* arrived to the lab in boxes and bubble wrap. The work (consisting of a delicate airplane frame 5 meters long suspended over a huge bed of sand with neon lighting and additional parts made of glass, silk & wood) requires cleaning, repair and replacement of electrical components. Four days have been set aside for installation of the work with artist Tom Arthur in early September. **Kerry Head** has been busy working on the treatment of a number of Indonesian textiles and jewellery required for display changeovers over the upcoming months.

People news

Last but not least, the team congratulate Department Head **Alan Lloyd**, who marked his 45th Anniversary at the AGNSW on July 29th! Alan commenced working at the Gallery in 1963 as one of Australia's first Cadet Restorers, making him the longest serving staff member at the AGNSW (no mean feat)! It is believed that Alan may be the longest serving conservator within any one institution in Australia, but if anyone has or is up to the challenge of breaking this extraordinary record – please let us know!

Australian Museum

Lab news

Materials Conservation staff have had a busy time with two new permanent galleries opening to the public amidst ongoing lab and workshop renovations. Staff are also gearing up for the big collections move into the new Research and Collections building due for completion in early September. **Heather MacKay** has been providing advice and support to collection managers on fumigation aspects and has worked closely with the Ornithology collection to prepare the 60,000+ specimens for freezing in mobile freezers before going into the new building.

Kate Jones has been busy preparing and packing loan material that was sent to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory for an exhibition entitled "From the Hands of our Ancestors". The exhibition is a joint project featuring the National Collection of Timor-Leste and the MAGNT Timor-Leste holdings and opens next month.

Melanie Findlay has completed the treatment and reconstruction of the 3,000 year old earthenware Lapita burial pot from Teouma. This pot was in a very fragile state with some parts of the base being particularly crumbly as a result of water pooling around it during excavation. Pieces were consolidated and then re-adhered. Mild warming

of adhesive joins allowed the pot to be adjusted into shape where necessary. The many small missing areas were filled with tinted acrylic modelling pasted mixed with Microballoons, and a large area filled with a reversible cast plaster fill to give structural strength. The pot will now be displayed at the Vanuatu Cultural centre.

The lab recently took delivery of a 3D laser scanner. The device has a number of potential uses. These include creating 3D images of objects for viewing on the internet, overlaying scans in order to detect physical changes in objects and the laser replication of museum objects without the need for physical moulding. Trials are currently under way and **Colin Macgregor** is trying to get his head around the software.

People news

Recent visitors to the lab have included two interns from The Royal Palace Museum in Indonesia who spent time with all staff members over the last six weeks, learning primarily about preventive conservation. Staff have also sadly said goodbye to **Meghan MacFarlane**, a student from the conservation masters degree course at Delaware University and Winterthur Museum, who was with us for six weeks and was a great asset to the lab.

Australian National Maritime Museum

Lab news

Many of the staff of the ANMM conservation section are taking leave during September and October – **Kathryn Yeates** will be traveling in UK and Europe, and will be attending *Conservation and Access* – the 22nd biennial Congress of IIC from 15-19 September in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster. Jonathan London will be holidaying in the UK and Europe, with a potential professional visit to Paris to trace a swimsuit! **Daniel Wardrop** will be undertaking what seems like a world

tour traveling in USA and Europe, and **Caroline Whitley** will enjoy a short holiday in Oz at the end of September.

Jonathan has been busy with preparations for an ANMM outreach program training workshop, which he and Daniel will present in Port Macquarie for the staff and volunteers of the local museum. In addition to this he has been involved in the usual round of meetings and preparations for Core Gallery changeovers, preparations for cleaning of large exhibits and the November install of *Vaka Moana-Voyages of the Ancestors*, a traveling exhibition from the Auckland Museum. Jonathan has also helped convene staff workshops to develop the new ANMM strategic plan.

Sue Frost has just finished working on some uniforms for the *Great White Fleet* exhibition based at the museum. Both Sue and **Mary Gissing** are working on objects belonging to Olympian swimmer Linda McGill for a story line changeover in the core Watermarks Gallery. The objects which include commonwealth games medals, an airline ticket, a photograph and a jacket had been recently framed by a sport memorabilia framer whose method of attachment involved the use of very long staples and massive amounts of double sided tape into and over every thing. Removing the tape from the jacket has been Mary's biggest challenge. Great results have been achieved!

The big search is on, via brainstorming and through suppliers, for suitable mannequins/supports for costumes for an exhibition on swimwear due to open next year...the usual problems of period and size versatility face us. We'll keep you posted!

The Henry Hanger coat hangers mentioned in our last report, arrived and we are well pleased with the selection. The next challenge is to get the uniform collection out of boxes and into the new hanging storage area. The making of the textile storage area was a project undertaken last year where we had a compactus unit adapted to take rolled textiles and coat hangers.

National Archives of Australia (Sydney)

Lab news

The Paper, Photographs and Digitisation Preservation (PPD) section has just finished a massive project that has taken over ten years to complete. The Post Office files from SP32/1 is a popular and highly used series of records dating from the 1850s, and documents the establishment and history of approximately 3,800 post offices in NSW. All items from the series received minor treatment and repair, and were repackaged and described in a database. Some of the records have also been digitised and are available to view on the Archive's *RecordSearch* database. Numerous interesting records were found in this series, one of which will be featured in NAA's Find of the Month soon. Watch out for it on our website – www.naa.gov.au Thanks to all who have been involved in this project in the past ten years or so – pretty much anyone who has ever worked in the Sydney office preservation section has had a go! The PPD's next big undertaking is the treatment and repackaging of ABC publicity files and some highly used Immigration records.

Training, workshops and outreach programs have also been a big part of the section recently. **Lynn Sisopha**, **Nina Thornton** and **Kathy Brennan** undertook a book binding workshop with private conservator Sabine Peirard. They will be using these skills to carry out the treatment of some of our high priority records. Three of our staff members, **Emma Scott**, **Carmen Esplandiu** and

Peter Papisinos, along with the rest of the Preservation Digitisation sections from the state offices, recently took a course run by Les Walkling. This course was designed specifically for the National Archives, working to the NAA standards and focusing on digitisation of items for preservation purposes. Lynn Sisopha and **Peter Shaw** have been involved in the Summers Past exhibition touring the country. They have traveled to Wollongong, Huskisson, the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney, and Dubbo Regional Gallery, with a presentation regarding the care of photographs.

People news

There are also some staffing movements within the section – Peter Shaw has been appointed as Supervising Conservator, (Projects) in our Canberra Office. **Tracey Golds** will be joining us in October to take over Peter's position, and Nina Thornton will be on maternity leave from August. We have two new assistant conservators – **Fiona Vaughan** and **Margaret Allen-Pike** who joined us in April this year. Emma Scott has left us and commenced a new position at Tourism NSW as the images coordinator for the Creative Services and Brand Management Unit. **Filomena Morelli**, who is usually in our Digital and Audiovisual Preservation section, is acting in Emma's position until September this year.

Due to technical issues with emails, the profile for NAA (Sydney) was not received for the last newsletter. Stay tuned for more information from this organisation!

State Records NSW

Lab News

We have seen an increase in the number of retrieval requests from Agencies over the past couple of months – both the Department of Community Services (DOCS) and the Department of Lands (Lands) have been requesting many of their archives back for different projects. DOCS are retrieving archives as part of their ongoing business following up on State Ward or Adoption information requests. DOCS archives need basic repairs and rehousing prior to further handling – they are usually on extremely poor quality copy papers and have suffered from heavy use in the past. Lands are retrieving maps and field books for two copying projects. We have been removing linen backings on those plans with extremely bad tears and relining with Japanese tissue. For other plans the conservation treatment is simply to re-paste small lifting areas of paper back to the existing linen backing.

People News

Dominique Moussou returned from maternity leave in August for one day per week. **Sarah Bunn** and **Jill Gurney** continue on their part-time contracts. **Carol Marsh** is returning to us after a stint working in higher duties as Records Officer. **Elizabeth Hadlow** is feeling overwhelmed as the only full-time permanent conservator in the team at present!

Hot tip for the new website...

Adding to “Specialist Suppliers”

Have you found a supplier of a rare or hard-to-find material or service? Add their details to our members-only online card file.

- Log in and go to “Suppliers/Specialist Suppliers”
- Click on “Add Entry”
- 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 up to five categories, to help with searching (e.g. “Paper and Boards”, “Fabrics and leather”, “Tools” etc.)

Businesses who are AICCM members themselves can add their own business to these listings. AICCM likes to support specialist suppliers, as they are often rare, but please note that this area is not intended to be a source of free advertising. Please remove any “advertorial” content prior to posting.

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

Preservation Australia

Lab news

Tegan Anthes has begun her “sabbatical” with Preservation Australia. Starting at the end of July Tegan was initiated into the ongoing Department of Lands NSW project by becoming the regular Thursday assessor. Following this Kay and Tegan did a mammoth assessment of the Department of Lands Bathurst Branch. This was on one of those very cold days – so we saw snow!! Together Tegan and Kay have been charging ahead on all sorts of new project ideas, business ideas, website ideas, and product ideas, including 3 workshops to be held in September/October. At the studio we have been treating a beautiful collection of fans, some sentimental glass slides and the usual run of watercolours, prints and drawings and of course plans! We are delighted to be hosting the NSW AICCM AGM in September and are working to develop and improve the website for this occasion. There might even be a few new products to touch and feel and oooh and ahhh over on the night.

International Conservation Services

Lab News

The Hamilton Inn Sofa, possibly one of the most important pieces of Australian colonial furniture, is being conserved at ICS for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Unknown until 3 years ago, it is a highly sophisticated piece dating from the early 1820s, totally unrestored and still with its original upholstery. This makes it the earliest example of extant Australian upholstery by over 30 years. It is proving an exciting challenge for **Skye Firth** (textile component) and **Oliver Hull** (timber components) with helpful advice being offered by all and sundry. The ABC Collectors program are filming the treatment to bring it to a wider audience, their interest being helped by their presence with cameras at the auction when it was acquired.

Arek Werstak and **Matteo Volonte** have been matching and patching scagliola (imitation marble) at Transport House in Sydney during a major refurbishment of this 1920s building. Whilst not far away, **Karina Acton** and **Wendi Powell** have been working with **Peter Maxwell** on various sculptures and bronzes in the Botanic Gardens.

People news

We welcome back **Anna Diakowska Czarnota** from extended leave in Poland and wish **Adam Godijn** safe trekking in Nepal as he heads to Europe for a few months.

South Australia

Artlab

Lab news

The Paintings department has been busy preparing paintings for the ‘Misty Modern’ exhibition which has now opened at the Art Gallery of South Australia. **Rita Bachmayer**, **Gillian Leahy**, **Marek Pacyna** and **Eugene Taddeo** were all involved in the preparation and presentation of the paintings department’s display and talk for the 90 school children who toured daily through Artlab during ‘Science Week’. **Chris Payne** and Eugene Taddeo went to the Fremantle Prison for a week to treat several wall paintings, which were painted on the cell walls shortly before the prison closed. Chris Payne gave a paper at the Victorian Interiors Conference at Melbourne University on the treatment of interiors at Mandeville Hall, Loreto.

In Textiles, **Kristin Phillips** has recently returned from Indonesia where she conducted a week-long Textile Conservation Workshop at the Museum Batik Pekalongan in Central Java. Representatives from more than 15 Indonesian museums and textile organisations were involved in the workshop, which focused on the conservation of traditional Indonesian textiles and batik. The workshop gave

participants an opportunity to test fabric samples, carry out dye tests, cleaning techniques, and learn generally about the care of coloured textiles. The project was sponsored by the Australia-Indonesia Institute.

In Projects, **Joanna Barr**, **Di Whittle** and **Zandria Farrell** have recently completed ‘preening’ the Carrick Hill Epstein collection in preparation for their outstanding exhibition on the artist. Thanks to the Objects and Paper teams for assisting us with preparation of works from AGSA and the condition checking. Zandria and Di also completed a more extensive maintenance treatment of Epstein’s ‘Mother and Child’ in preparation for the exhibition. Di, Zandria and **Filipa Quintella** have recently undertaken a maintenance treatment to the bronze components of the National War Memorial in Adelaide, and Joanna has been providing stone conservation advice to the principal contractor on this project.

In Objects, **Renita Ryan**, **Megan Sypek**, **Justin Gare**, **Sophie Parker**, and Dianne Whittle, and Zandria Farrell from the Projects team have been focused on preparing and installing the Sir Donald Bradman Collection at the new purpose built museum at the South Australian Cricket Ground. While there were challenges, the experience was ultimately a very satisfying one with a fantastic result. Renita and Sophie have been preparing a range of objects including 3 very large cloisonné vases, for an upcoming exhibition of Japanese Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia. The objects team has thoroughly enjoyed having Filipa Quintella in the lab. Filipa has completed a spectacular cleaning treatment on a Balinese wooden temple door, revealing intricate carved detail.

Unfortunately it hasn’t really been a case of ‘business as usual’ in the Paper lab as our fume hood renovations continue to disrupt our already tight management of space. But, with the steady flow of work on both the institutional and private fronts the team has been kept busy and has been soldiering on obliviously.

Jodie Proud, our Senior paper conservator, has been working towards the Art Gallery's upcoming Hans Heysen exhibition. Treatment on some of the loan works has included a full backing removal and foxing stain reduction of a charcoal portrait, 'Sallie'. And with the help of our dependable assistant **Anna Austin** a number of the works have been unframed and re-matted for display. Jodie has also been preparing for a Stain Reduction workshop she is to deliver to the National Archives of Singapore next month. **Charlotte Park**, after preparing a number of works for the migration museum's exhibition 'Evidence of survival: the impact of WWII in document', is currently focusing on work for her private clients which include a collection of lithographs from the ANZ and a map for Santos. **Colin Brown** our Senior book conservator has been continuing to attend to the needs of the State library whilst also servicing the grateful little old ladies of Adelaide and their family bibles. **Michael Veitch** continues with the Library's on going acetate film project which involves surveying the condition of the collection, re-housing it and preparing it for freezing.

People news

We are delighted to welcome Filipa Quintella to the Artlab team. Filipa is a recent conservation graduate from Portugal, and is working as a volunteer with Objects as well as doing some casual work for the Projects team. The Objects lab is very happy to have Sophie Parker back working amongst us. The last few months have been a time of change in the paper lab. The retirement in July of the paper teams fearless principal conservator **Fred Francisco**, whilst well deserved on his part, has been a sorry loss to the team.

It is with great joy that we announce the arrival of **Liz Mayfield's** son, Rex born on the 7th of July. Both are happy and healthy and we look forward to Liz's return to work in the future.

Western Australia

Western Australian Museum

Ian MacLeod has spent 2 weeks in August working in Chuuk State, in the Federated States of Micronesia. He has been specifically working on in-situ corrosion surveys of the Japanese merchant and Imperial Navy fleet. This fleet was sunk by the Americans in Operation Hailstone in February and March 1944, thus preventing the Japanese ability to capitalise on their invasion plans for Australia.

An initial survey was conducted in 2002 for the US National Parks Service with Ian, Dr Bill Jeffery of James Cook University in Townsville, and Andrew Viduka (now of the shipwrecks program manager in Canberra). They have subsequently been back for several seasons of work, this time funded by the Earthwatch Foundation.

Having worked on several sites in 2006, 2007 and in 2008, they are now in a position to be able to assess the negative impact of socially challenging issues such as dynamite fishing, which causes shedding of large sections of the protective concretion close to the source of the explosion.

This concretion loss causes significant acceleration in the corrosion rate of the historically significant wrecks. Diving tourism is the major earning source of foreign income for Chuuk State. The State's economy struggles with very few



natural resources, other than its people and the 2015 km square lagoon in which traditional fisherman ply their trade and craft.

The final session of field work is planned for November this year, but this, as in all Earthwatch Projects, depends on the number of people who sign up as volunteer divers. It is their contribution that enables the principal investigators of Bill Jeffery, Maria Beger the marine biologist, and Ian, to do their integrated study.

Last year at the ICOM –CC metals working group meeting in Amsterdam, we reported on the world's first example of bio-dynamic interaction of marine organisms with submerged aeroplanes and iron shipwrecks. Without the assistance of WA Museum staff **Vicki Richards** and **Jon Carpenter** the data collection could not have been managed and the research plan brought to fruition. They have had an exciting 2 weeks that have been wonderfully free of any incidents on the diving side of things and were rewarded for their patience with some new and interesting data, which is only now just beginning to be analysed.



Victoria

National Archives of Australia (Melbourne)

Lab news

One of the core activities of the Preservation Section of the National Archives' Melbourne Office has been the treatment and repackaging of a number of important photographic collections, containing mostly colour, negative and transparency material currently housed in our cold stores here at East Burwood. This material forms part of promotional and historical images from such diverse collections as the ABC, Telstra, The Australian Wool Board, Commonwealth Buildings and Sites, and the Fishermens Bend Aircraft Manufacturing Industry. The latter being a mammoth task which has just been completed after an undertaking of 3 years. The dedicated team consisting of **Alexa McNaught-Reynolds**, **Jill Martin**, **Michelle Arthur** and **Savina Hopkins**, have worked diligently to re-house a total of over 272,000 individual items over the last twelve months!

Our Preservation Digitisation Team has also been busy. **Liam Ryan**, **Luke McKay** and **Tha Iem** have scanned over 9000 high resolution images between them in the last 12 months. These have mostly derived from the Board of Trade Series, the highlights being some stunning fashion shots from the 1960s and 70s, some of which can be seen in all their splendour at the 'Strike A Pose' Exhibition, currently showing at the NAA in Canberra. We have also contributed other items from our collection to various recent exhibitions such as 'Billy Hughes' at the Shrine of Remembrance, The Immigration Museum and the Royal Melbourne Golf Club.

Amy Bartlett, **Carey Garvie**, **David Parker**, **Debra Parry** and **Sarah Gubby** continue to concentrate on various projects and vital treatment work on items

needed for public access and copying. **Rebecca Keys** is currently located at the North Melbourne repository completing some survey work of the collection. Staff have also been involved with an ongoing program of outreach and training. As part of the Archive support annual program, the NAA in conjunction with the PROV, ran a full Saturday presentation and workshop at the Geelong Historical Society on 'How to preserve your Photographs'. A full house of Professionals and Public alike ensured lively discussion and would hopefully prevent individuals from removing photos from 'magnetic' albums by subjecting them to a couple of minutes in their microwaves!

The recent AICCM Symposium had a healthy representation from the NAA Melbourne Branch with representation by **Detlev Lueth**, **Carey Garvie** and **David Parker**. With a special mention and praise to **Carey** and the rest of the organising committee for making it such a memorable week.

Recently the NAA, Burwood East Site was privileged to host a two-day CAVAL Disaster Workshop, facilitated by **Kim Morris** from Art and Archival. **Detlev Lueth**, **Rebecca Keys**, **Debra Parry**, **Amy Bartlett** and **David Parker**, along with participants from other Institutions, donned their wellies and armed themselves with mops and buckets to successfully save precious items such as teddy bears, Readers Digests and recent copies of the 'Age' from certain destruction during this mock disaster. The NAA are hoping to run more of these in the future.

People news

There have been two new starters in the section: we would like to welcome **David Parker** and **Amy Bartlett** who started in May and June respectively. **David** joins us as an ongoing Conservator, and **Amy** is working part-time as a Conservation Assistant whilst she completes her Masters in Conservation at Melbourne University. A new starter of another kind, **Soren Raphael McCarthy-Wilkie** was born to **Julie McCarthy** in April. Sad farewells go to **Diana Nguyen**

who has transferred to our Operations Section, and to **Catrina Sgro** who has left the Archives to join BHP Billiton.

Museum Victoria

Lab News

At MV, we're moving into the second phase of review of our team structure and roles. Our aim is to create more opportunity to address whole-of-collections issues and find time to review our practice, as well as manage our public programs-related workload. **Michelle Berry** and **Catherine Lovelock** have been investigating our long-term IPM program, gathering data on dispersed image, audio-visual and paper-based collections, and exploring macro- and micro- display environments in our different museums. **Helen Privett** has recently been involved in recruitment to her team of conservators who provide services and advice to acquisitions, loans, exhibitions and collections access. **Helen** is also refining planning and work flow to ensure her team's expertise and labour is distributed and used in the most effective and beneficial way possible. Additionally, **Helen** is over-seeing re-development of the Science & Life gallery at Melbourne Museum (3 exhibitions in 2008-2010) and we're recruiting to a role which will focus on preservation of natural history collections, working alongside **Michelle**.

Karina Palmer and **Melissa Gunter** recently completed a brief pilot project in XRF analysis of natural history specimens and indigenous artefacts for detection of residues of now-banned preparation materials and previous pesticide treatments. They employed a borrowed Bruker instrument and found localised bromine deposits (possibly due to methyl bromide fumigation) and varied heavy metal deposits on items pre-selected to encompass a wide date range of preparation (specimens) and use (artefacts). Some residues on eighteenth century indigenous North American artefacts appeared to derive from textile dyes. Other residues appeared to be related to pesticide powders.

Karina is also working on some data and terminology clean-up, and reconciliation of legacy treatment reports and images with updated records in EMu. This work will enhance usability, accuracy and consistency of conservation information in the database. Most of the conservators will shortly be unpacking and assessing nearly 600 objects from the *Freestyle* design exhibition which has just returned from a Milan showing – where it sustained ‘slight damage’ in a disaster – details yet to be revealed!

People News

Karina Palmer is about to commence maternity leave. We wish Karina and Shane all the best on their first venture into parenthood! In October **Toni Ross** will join us – fresh from her Exhibitions Conservator role at the National Museum of Australia. Melissa Gunter has a new role in exhibitions-focused collections management at MV. We have been implementing our biannual exhibition cleaning program during the past month. Current CCMC students **Sarah Babister**, **Kellie Leahey**, **Albertine Hamilton** and **Sandi Mitchell** have been employed for this project, in addition to **Kasi Albert**, **Maria Hromek**, **Alex Ellem** and **Kellie Slape**. We really do appreciate everyone’s great work and enthusiasm – and tolerance of the very early morning start!

Michelle Berry appreciated the cross-disciplinary relevance of presentations at the recent Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium. As the only objects conservator present, Michelle felt like an interloper first time around, however preservation of these collections at MV is a feature of her new role and she’s enjoying it! Helen Privett attended the metals conservation course led by Ian McLeod. **Elizabeth McCartney** and Karina Palmer attended the objects-focused ‘New Methods for Cleaning Painted Surfaces’ workshop led by Richard Wolbers. **Samantha Hamilton** attended the textiles-focused equivalent workshop at the NGV. **Catherine Lovelock** recently provided lectures for CCMC and Deakin Uni students.

ACT

Australian War Memorial

Lab news

George Bailey and **Rebecca Dallwitz** have been busily preparing a long list of relics for several upcoming exhibitions. George is fabricating a support for a balloon basket to go on display in ANZAC Hall later this year. **Jamie Croker**, **John Kemister**, **Andrew Pearce**, and **Alistair Muir** have completed the major conservation of two rare First World War German bi-planes, the Albatros D.va and Pfalz which will be installed as part of a permanent exhibition in ANZAC Hall. **Dean Willis** is treating a range of other First World War large technology objects, including a 1650lb bomb, a 6lb Hotchkiss gun and taking over contract management work. **David Gordon** has been assisting with all projects. **Andrew Schroeder** has completed the treatment of a 7.3m camouflage tree that was souvenired on the Western Front. **Eileen Procter** has been acting in the Preventive Conservation Officer position, busily monitoring a range of issues and keeping programs on track.

Sharon Alcock and **Kathryn Ferguson** have completed the preparation of paintings for the new Anzac Hall exhibition: “Over the Front: the Great War in the Air” which is to be installed at about the same time as “Advancing to Victory 1918”. The lab is also in the middle of preparing for “Framing Conflict” a travelling exhibition of works by the war artists Lyndell Brown and Charles Green. This exhibition opens shortly after the other two. **Alana Treasure** and Sharon and have been involved in the loans work which continues in a steady stream and David and Alana are planning to attend the Paintings SIG Symposium in Melbourne in October.

The Paper Lab is carrying out some refurbishments to modernise our orange and yellow themed, late ‘70s facilities. Our first major improvement, a mobile

stainless steel sink, has just been delivered. The Lab’s had a significant increase in photographic conservation work as a result of the publicity surrounding the search for Roll of Honour photographs (see http://www.awm.gov.au/roh/roh_photographs.asp). This project, seeking to acquire an image of each fallen serviceman or servicewoman, has received an enthusiastic response from the public.

People news

Alana Treasure has been appointed the new Senior Paintings Conservator and started at the beginning of August. Alana has come to us from National Archives and University of Canberra and will continue with her research work at the University. She has just completed 3 days at the synchrotron in Melbourne analysing parchment samples.

Sharon Alcock attended the Wolbers workshop in Brisbane, and unfortunately will be leaving us in mid-October after 3 years at the Memorial.

Kathryn Ferguson’s contract has been extended until at least mid September. Kathryn has been working on 5 portraits (affectionately known as “Kathryn’s men”) for the exhibition “Advancing to Victory 1918”. All portraits required extensive surface cleaning. David Keany has returned to the lab for two days a week and has been working on frames for Kathryn’s men.

The Paper Lab’s undergone several changes in the last few months. We’ve been joined by **Nick Zihrul**, a recent graduate of Melbourne Uni’s CCMC program. Nick is relishing the opportunity to immerse himself in hands-on work.

Tania Riviere has completed her temporary transfer to the Memorial and returned to the National Archives; we hope she enjoyed her stint with us as much as we enjoyed having her.

Bernard Kertesz, Alana and Tania and were heavily involved in the organising committee for the recent Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium which was held at the Australian War Memorial. Despite her very large

conference workload, Tania injected some fun into the process. She was responsible for our wonderful conference beanies; an essential for visitors to mid-winter Canberra. At the symposium, **Sophie Lewincamp** presented a joint paper with curator **Di Rutherford** on the Memorial's papier mache terrain maps and Nick presented one on barrier layers for in-painting on paper objects.

Melanie Forward has started a 12 month internship with the Objects Lab. **Tessa Ivison** has joined the Textiles lab for 12 months, Tessa's expertise in natural history conservation will be greatly appreciated as we start to work on 'A is for Animals' an exhibition that will show case many of the taxidermied animals in the Memorial's collection.

National Archives of Australia (Canberra)

Lab news

Travis Taylor has been finalising the installation of the new compound microscope and digital camera, as well as general work around the lab. **Rachel McNally** and **Stephen Willet** have been preparing a large number of the HMAS Sydney plans for researcher requests. **Sally Kneebone** is currently working with a series of treaties to determine a practical approach to protecting those that include wax seals. **Rajani Rai** has been testing recycled paper to determine it's suitability for long-term use.

People news

Tharron Bloomfield commenced as Supervising Conservator, Preventive in July. **Alison McCrindle** continues working in preventive conservation as well as exhibitions conservation.

Jess Wignell is on a 6 month secondment with the National Museum of Australia. While there Jess will work on major exhibition changeovers and continue her research work on microclimate buffering has left the Archives and has taken a paintings conservation position with the AWM.

Kylie Roth is working on changeovers for the Memory of a Nation exhibition and an upcoming temporary exhibition, Armistice. Kylie is also working on an event at Parliament House showcasing the work of the NAA to parliamentarians. **Clair Murray** is on maternity leave and is the proud mother of a baby boy, Lennox, born on the 3rd of August; parents and baby are doing well. **Stephen Willet** now has an ongoing position in the Preservation laboratory as a conservation assistant. **Peter Shaw** started work in Conservation and is acting as the Supervising Conservator, Laboratory until the end of October. **Cheryl Jackson** is now resident in Jervis Bay with her family having started her 2 years LWOP. Cheryl will continue to provide a valuable contribution to Archives over this period.

National Gallery of Australia

The NGA Conservation staff have been active in managing aspects of the building project that impact on the care of the collection, and look forward to moving into their new quarantine and treatment rooms and mount cutting studio. This will be the first designated quarantine area for the NGA and once up and running will greatly assist all conservation staff in implementing effective preventive conservation. Preventive Conservation officer **Lisa Addison** has been actively involved in implementing risk management measures for the collection in Stage 1 of the building works.

A survey of the condition of the Asian Art collection is also underway, as well as the usual preparation for loans and exhibitions, and treatments from the permanent collection.

Things temporarily quietened down in Paintings Conservation after the opening of the *Richard Larter Retrospective* with most of the work since then being preparation for loans. **David Wise** and **Sheridan Roberts** have made courier trips to New Zealand and Cairns to check NGA travelling exhibitions. **Alan Byrne** has been busy removing varnish, extensive overpaint and an old lining from a nineteenth century portrait by Marshall Claxton. At the end of July, David Wise and **Sharon Alcock** attended the Wolbers workshop in Brisbane and have returned inspired to try some of Richard's new cleaning systems. **Greg Howard** and **Kassandra Coghlan** are continuing to work on the framing project, fitting new frames to selected paintings in the Australian Art Collection.

Textile Conservation warmly welcomes **Chandra Obie** from the USA. Chandra has recently graduated from the Textile Conservation Centre, in England and has studied costume design at Vassar College, New York. **Micheline Ford** continues to coordinate changes to the textile store during the Stage 1 of the building enhancement project. **Jane Wild**



Hot tip for the new website...

AICCM News

We would like to encourage all AICCM members to send items of general interest to the membership to the website editor, for inclusion in "AICCM News" (see About AICCM/AICCM News).

This might include AICCM event announcements and calls for papers, results of AICCM surveys, changes to National, State or SIG committees, or invitations for feedback on State, SIG or National issues.



has completed treatment on a painted Indian textile for the 2008 Masterpieces of the Nation Appeal. The textile conservation team continues to focus on its preparations for the *Ballets Russes: Designing Dance* exhibition scheduled for late 2009. **Carmella Mollica** and **Chandra Obie** are currently conserving costumes by **Baske and de Chirico**. Conservation technician **Blaide Lallemand** continues preparing mannequins for the *Ballets Russes* costumes. **Carmella Mollica**, **Chandra Obie** and **Jane Wild** attended the **Richard Wolbers** textile cleaning workshop in Melbourne.

The Paper Conservation section; **Andrea Wise**, **Fiona Kemp** and **James Ward** have just emerged from their *Picture Paradise* haze, having spent the last year working on the show. They were able to present their work at the recent AICCM Book and Paper Group Symposium, held at the War Memorial in Canberra. They can now say goodbye to the photographs and are looking forward to their next challenge.

Object conservators, **Beata Tworek-Matuszkiewicz**, **Cathy Collins** and **Sarah McHugh** are conserving the Pacific art collection, focusing on works which have not been conserved or displayed before. After several months of maintenance work in the Sculpture Garden, **Roy Marchant**, conservation technician has written a comprehensive manual for the treatment and maintenance of the *Nakaya: Fog Sculpture*.

Queensland

State Library of Queensland

Lab News

The rehousing of 250,000 glass plate negatives has been occupying **Hannah Nguyen**, **John Blindell**, **Gajendra Rawat**, **Shane Bell**, **Ray Geitz**, **Lesley Berg**, **Sidney Furber** and our volunteer **Terry Doherty** for many, many long hours. This important project will greatly improve the accessibility of the collection and has allowed for identification of negatives requiring treatment. Emulsion flaking and cracked glass have occurred on a number of plates, direct results of previous poor storage practices and dry environmental conditions.

The conservation exhibition team, **Jaishree Srinivasan**, **Rhiannon Walker**, **Lesley** and **Sidney** are busily working on three exhibitions, one based on the Library's extensive and diverse map collection, another celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Brisbane Women's Club and the third showcasing the Library's impressive panorama holdings.

On top of the rehousing project, **Ray**, **Hannah** and **Sandra Mellor** are working their way through the inspection of a huge influx of incoming donations in quarantine.

Elizabeth Barron and **Lydia Egunnike** are desperately trying to rewrite the Conservation website in the proper "web" style and are learning new terms such as "chunking".

Sally Golding has recently returned from an internship at the Anthology Film Archives in New York, where she investigated film treatment and storage methods.

Hee-Ung Park has just celebrated the half way mark of his two year internship with us. Hee-Ung is the Deputy Director of the International Affairs Division of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and is researching cultural heritage management methods in Australia.

People News

We welcome back our Exhibitions Conservator, **Rhiannon Walker**, who has returned from one year's maternity leave after producing a beautiful daughter, **Milla**. In **Rhiannon's** absence **Kim Barrett** was in the position until moving next door to the Queensland Art Gallery. **Jaishree Srinivasan** then took over the position and now job shares with **Rhiannon**. We would like to thank **Kim** for all her hard work and wish her all the very best at the gallery.



Hot tip for the new website...

Adding events to the new AICCM website

AICCM members can add events to the "Events" module on the new AICCM website.

- Log in, and go to the "Event" page
- Click on the "calendar" icon that appears at the upper right of the screen.
- Fill in the event title.
- Select a venue from the list (click on the "select" button), or add a new venue. If you are adding a new venue, the "description" area is a good spot to put information about parking, disability access or other special instructions.
- Choose a "category" for the event from the drop-down list – there are categories for each State and SIG group, as well as National Council and a "General Interest" category.

- Enter the "Date" and "End date" of the event, and start and end times, if applicable.
- You can choose to let people register for the event. This is not currently linked to any payment gateway, but allows the Secretariat to generate a list of RSVPs.
- In the "Description" area, provide any further information about the event – e.g. keynote speakers, program etc.
- If there is a website with more information (or an email address to contact), make a link to it by highlighting part of the text (e.g. "see the X website for more information") and click on the hyperlink button in the toolbar above, entering the website (or email) address and selecting "open in a new window". This is better than entering the website as text on the page – it looks better, and makes it harder for all that weird phishing and spam stuff to work.



An interview - Sarah Slade

Sarah Slade completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in the Conservation of Cultural Materials in 1985 and a Master of Business Administration in 1996. She has worked as a hands-on conservator, conservation manager and senior manager for the past 23 years in Australia and the United Kingdom for organisations including Artlab Australia, Scottish Museums Council, International Conservation Services, Australian National Maritime Museum and her own preventive conservation and conservation management consultancy, S. Slade Consulting. She is currently Manager – Storage, Preservation and Conservation at the State Library Victoria.

How has your career evolved?

I chose conservation in the first place because I wanted to find out how things were made; how they worked; and if they didn't work (or were damaged) how to fix them. In a sense this interest has been with me throughout all of my work in conservation – but the perspective has changed. To start with, working as an objects conservator, my interest related to individual objects. Then, during my time at Artlab Australia and by working with Artlab's large range of clients, I became more interested in these issues in relation to whole collections – effectively moving from hands-on objects conservation into preventive conservation.

This perspective changed again during my time at the Scottish Museums Council, where, rather than just looking at whole collections, the same interest in finding out how things worked and if they didn't work how to fix them was applied to groups of Institutions. The Scottish Museums Council provides conservation advice and treatment services to over 600 member Museums, Galleries and Historic Houses. This started a broader interest in the management of collections and their care that saw me complete an MBA and which has remained with me during my time at International Conservation Services, the Australian National Maritime Museum, working for myself as a consultant, and now in my role as Storage, Preservation and Conservation Manager at the State Library of Victoria. It's all been about looking at how things worked and if they didn't work how best to fix them, whether individual objects, collections or collecting institutions.

How important is it for Australian conservators to get an international perspective?

I think that continually exposing yourself to other perspectives is the key. It may be an international perspective that causes you to compare how you were trained and with the approaches of other people, and to examine the assumptions you bring to treatments, collections care, display and access. However, other perspectives also come from working in conservation in the private, public or partly privatised public sectors, or working for different types of institutions: advisory bodies, National or State galleries, archives, museums or libraries. Exposure to any of these can challenge what you might take for granted as the appropriate level of treatment, level of access to collections or the best use of your skills. I think this is always positive as it forces continual questioning about what we do in conservation, what we are trying to achieve and whether we are succeeding.

I suppose that with the history of conservation training in Australia, there has been a risk that you would work mainly with people who went through the same training as you did, and naturally came out with a similar underlying approach. This does heighten the value of an international perspective – to see how conservators trained in other countries approach their work, how they are regarded by their Institutions or clients, and what these Institutions or clients expect from them.

What do you see as the challenges for the profession over the next ten years?

I think that the main challenge will be how we approach the need to be more environmentally sustainable. This would include the impact of organisations, or buildings, that still require full, tightly controlled air-conditioning in their collection areas and those who regularly impose strict environmental parameters for all loans. As the costs of the energy required to achieve these parameters is questioned, it will be interesting to see how we embrace passive control, zoning of collections, use of microclimates and other more energy efficient approaches that have been around for a while but not necessarily embraced by all. To a lesser extent it will also be interesting to see what impact the need to be more environmentally sustainable has on our use of plastics and chemicals.

While that is the challenge from the perspective of broader collections care, I think that there has also been a resurgence of the importance of skilled conservators undertaking interventive conservation treatments – and this is one that I think will, and should, continue for the overall health of the profession.

General News

Art Acquisition Form

Rose Peel

The Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW) recently developed a Proposed Acquisition Form to gather information on work coming into the collection. The data will not only document the materials and their suppliers, methods of construction, and preferred display methods, but people associated with its production. The artist's intent for the work is also of interest to curators and conservators at the time of acquisition, as it impacts on future exhibition and storage requirements.

Although the form may seem daunting to some artists who prefer to provide information through interview, there are others who keep comprehensive records of their working methods. Therefore this form is not seen as the only way of collecting information. The questions provide a structure for gaining specific information, and will be reviewed when necessary.

Conservators in public and private practice often spend time analysing a work of art. It is hopeful that a form such as this will fast forward research, particularly as technological development, in for example, digital imaging, rapidly changes. It may also assist in standardizing information nationally which could become more accessible for collectors, custodians and conservators.

The AGNSW Research Library and Archive has artist files which often include preparatory drawings, photographs and correspondence. Most of this material is acquired after the artist's death so it will be interesting to see if contemporary items will be deposited as the archive is a rich resource for researchers.

Please comment with suggestions for improvement.

Rose Peel (Former Senior Paper

Conservator with Natasha Bullock, Curator of Contemporary Art, AGNSW)

Stories from the files – 'Our man in Florence'

National Archives of Australia

The Commonwealth records held by the National Archives of Australia contain many fascinating stories. Ian Batterham has searched out a number of these stories which tell something of the history of conservation in Australia. It is hoped to present them here in the pages of the AICCM Newsletter over coming issues. The first story to be presented concerns the Australian response to the devastating Florence floods of 1966. All information presented comes from Department of External Affairs file: CRS A1838/266 Item 533/1/26/1 Part 1.

Our Man in Florence

On 4 November 1966 the Arno River, which flows through the city of Florence in Italy, flooded – the river's worst flood since 1557. Apart from killing many people, the floods devastated the city and its many libraries, archives and galleries. It was estimated at the time that the number of historical items damaged, including paintings, prints and rare books, would run into the millions.

One institution severely affected was the National Library in Florence. A team from the Courtauld Institute undertook a survey and determined that 300,000 of its books had been damaged.

On 15 November, the UNESCO Director-General launched an appeal to the 120 members of UNESCO 'to join in the efforts being made to restore the cultural properties that were damaged in the recent floods in Italy'. UNESCO also established a Committee to Rescue Italian Art, with Jacqueline Kennedy as its Honorary President. On 29

November 1966, she sent out a press release requesting international help.

Aid and assistance poured in from all around the world, from the Soviet Union and Canada to Austria and South Africa. In Australia, there were discussions about whether assistance should be provided, and if so, the form it should take.

The Australian Treasury was initially unsympathetic to the idea of Australia providing assistance, pointing out that no overseas country offered assistance when the Hunter River flooded in 1955, and suggesting that Australia should restrict its disaster relief to 'developing countries'. Likewise, the Prime Minister's Department and the Department of Trade apparently showed only 'half-hearted' interest.

Nevertheless, the Department of External Affairs initially agreed to a grant of \$10,000 to the National Library of Italy for the rebinding of books.

Luckily other voices weighed in. Harold White, National Librarian, suggested to Hugh Gilchrist, Head of Information and Cultural Relations in the Department of External Affairs, that Bill Boustead, 'the leading picture-restorer in Australia', should be sent to Florence. Mr White stated that Mr Boustead 'has not been trained in Europe but is technically competent, has attended international conferences on picture restoration and has published a paper on the subject, and does all the National Library's restoration work, and is a member of an international body concerned with restoration'.

This suggestion was passed to First Assistant Secretary, KCO Shann, who conveyed it to the Right Hon. Paul Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs.

The Australian Embassy in Rome also encouraged a stronger response. The main reason given by the Embassy was to curtail certain accusations pervading at the time of Australia being anti-

Italian, particularly in the wake of the 'Santonastaso case' (the exact nature of this reference is unknown). It was also pointed out that Italy was a strong trading partner of Australia and therefore the assistance could be considered good for business. The Embassy had been in discussion with Dr Casamassima, Director of the National Library, and the idea put forward was for the establishment of an Australia Room in the Library. The room would be panelled with Australian woods and the damaged books within rebound with kangaroo leather and each would have the Australian coat of arms on its fly leaf. Dr Casamassima apparently displayed a 'very active interest' in these ideas.

These various arguments were apparently successful because a rough budget for the proposal was developed by the Prime Minister's Department – \$30,000 in aid from Australia, \$10,000 for the services of Mr Boustead and \$20,000 for the restoration of a room and its contents in the National Library in Florence. The Prime Minister announced this aid package on 10 March 1967 stating that, 'Australia was playing its part in helping preserve the cultural history of not only Italy but of Western Civilisation'.

The Italian Ambassador in Australia wrote to the Minister for External Affairs thanking the Government for the generous contribution, stating that it 'bears witness to the generosity of the people of Australia and their deep awareness of cultural and spiritual values'.

Hal Missingham, Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, was duly approached and he agreed to releasing Mr Boustead 'in 3–4 weeks, for a period of 4–5 months'. Apparently Mr Boustead's salary for his period in Florence would be paid by the NSW Government. Mr Boustead insisted that he be accompanied by his wife. This was reported as receiving 'sympathetic consideration' by both the Department of External Affairs and the Prime Minister's Department.

Mr Boustead and his wife departed Sydney on 10 May and arrived in Rome on 12 May.

Instructions were that on arrival in Florence Mr Boustead would develop 'a detailed programme for the expenditure of \$20,000 on the repair of a room in the Florence National Library and of its contents'. The program would be submitted to the Prime Minister's Department for approval.

However, on arrival Mr Boustead quickly found that the original proposal was not tenable. Apparently, the British Museum authorities had the book section of the National Library well in hand. They had begun a program of drying the books – a process they estimated would take a further three months. After this the books were to be rebound and catalogued (the original catalogue had been lost in the floods).

Also, as Mr Boustead pointed out, the National Library building was 'a modern one, built by Mussolini, of stone and marble. There is no panelling and restoration will merely consist of cleaning out the rooms and repainting them'. Clearly, there was no scope for the panelling in Australian timbers.

In discussions with Dr Casamassima, another plan for using the funds and Mr Boustead's expertise, presented itself – the money could be used to establish a print restoration laboratory. Mr Boustead stated that 'the British Museum authorities feel that our methods of print restoration are somewhat in advance of theirs and suggested that we could make a better contribution by installing and equipping a print restoration laboratory, and also to train Italians in our methods'.

The proposal involved the City of Florence supplying the laboratory space while the \$20,000 allocated to Mr Boustead would be used to fit out the laboratory with the necessary furniture, equipment and consumables. Mr Boustead could then use his extensive knowledge to train locals and international volunteers in modern restoration practices. In this way, on his departure Mr Boustead would leave a lasting legacy.

This new proposal was put to the Prime Minister's and External Affairs departments, and with the agreement of Mr Stirling, the Australian Ambassador in Rome, it was approved.

Mr Boustead quickly set about equipping the laboratory. The file gives a sketch plan of the proposed laboratory, which includes benches, large sinks, a fume cupboard and an ultraviolet darkroom.

Also given are extensive lists of his requirements for the laboratory. These include a humidity chamber, glassware, a microscope, hygrometers, a balance, screw presses, a steam iron, a micrometer, a moisture meter, a spray gun, a heated water bath, a hair dryer and cylinders of CO₂. Mr Boustead also requested a range of paper-testing equipment including an accelerated ageing tester, a tear tester and a burst strength tester. Unfortunately no list of chemicals is given.

Apparently there was some delay in making the \$20,000 available to Mr Boustead to commence work. A vitriolic letter is on the file from Ronald Millen, an Australian artist living in Florence,

Hot tip for the new website...

Need to send out a message to the membership?

Now all messages, SIG or State, are sent out to all members, via the Secretariat. This includes messages about upcoming events. Please send your message text to the Secretariat at secretariat@aiccm.org.au

If we find that there are increasing numbers of such messages, we may look at setting up a mailing list in the future.



to Mervyn Horton, Editor of Art and Australia, complaining about this delay in no uncertain terms and laying the blame for it on both the bureaucrats in Canberra and the Australian Ambassador in Italy. Mr Millen stated that 'Australia has become the big laugh, the provincial outpost, fussing in a bilious, constipated manner about its prestige and prerogatives'. He was particularly critical of the ideas about placing the Australian seal on the door of the laboratory and the proposal to mount a kangaroo skin on the wall.

Apparently Mr Horton had sent out an appeal for funds in his magazine, which were to be forwarded to Mr Millen in Florence for onward transmission. Mr Millen was employed at the time as a restorer in the National Library. The appeal was a 'fizzer' and an exchange of letters with Canberra on the subject apparently moved the aggrieved Mr Millen to write the vitriolic letter.

The money finally began flowing and the laboratory was established. Before leaving Italy, Mr Boustead provided a report on the establishment of what he describes as the 'Print Conservation Department' at the National Library.

In the report he stated that, 'Despite many difficulties encountered in the purchase of essential equipment and of the installation of laboratory fixtures, we are pleased to report that our plans have been realised, with the department well-organised and in full production'. He went on to say, 'We were fortunate indeed to be able to recruit five intelligent, enthusiastic, young Italians with a high degree of natural ability for training as print restorers. Their progress has been exceptional and at their present rate it will not be long before they will be able to carry on without any outside supervision. Much still depends on the thorough experience of these people, but they now have the basic knowledge and scientific tools at their disposal to enable them to carry out restoration processes which formerly were not thought possible.'

The suggestion was put that a plaque with Australia's coat of arms be installed

in the laboratory with an inscription stating that the laboratory was donated by the Australian Government.

And so the time came for Mr Boustead to leave Italy on 6 November 1967, two days after the 12-month anniversary of the floods. Before leaving Dr Casamassima requested, via the Australian Embassy, whether Mr Boustead could be funded to return to Florence for four weeks in the European summer of 1968.

Mr Boustead's trip home also caused some bureaucratic consternation. He initially requested additional funding and time to visit institutions in New Delhi, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Java, Bangkok and Hong Kong to provide advice on problems relating to art conservation. A note on the file described Mr Boustead as 'having a tendency to be a bit independent' and apparently it was difficult for the various departments back in Australia to get details on his travel plans. It seems that funding for these stopovers was not forthcoming and information on the file gives a strong feeling that it was felt that commitment to the project and Mr Boustead's trip was at an end.

The Print Conservation Department was left in the hands of two British print restorers, Robert Geddes and Gillian Moodie. Unfortunately, it seems that available funds were sufficient to pay their salaries for only a few months. Mr Boustead also mentioned that an Indian conservator, Annand Singh Bisht,

who had trained with Mr Boustead in Australia, was seeking funding to travel to Florence to take over the department. On finding that the Indian Government could not fund this, Mr Boustead requested that the Australian Government fund his expenses for a period of three months. Unfortunately this suggestion was quickly quashed.

Little apparently happened through much of 1968. However, late in the year it was reported that there was still some of the initial \$30,000 left over – as much as \$5000. In addition, a sum of \$4000 had been raised by the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales for the upkeep of the laboratory. The suggestion was put that, with a little extra Australian Government funding, Mr Boustead could go to Florence for three weeks to check on the Print Conservation Department and present the \$4000.

Again voices were raised in objection, stating that the laboratory was running smoothly and that the trip would simply be a 'joy ride' for Mr Boustead. Unfortunately, in this instance the bureaucrats seem to have been successful. The file peters out in 1971 and Mr Boustead had not returned to Florence.

Having heard the beginnings of this story, we are keen to know what happened next – did the laboratory continue to function? Who took over its running? Where did the funding come from? And is the plaque still on the wall?

 Hot tip for the new website...

AICCM Procedures Manual

The new AICCM website features a section containing information on how to manage AICCM affairs. If you are interested in becoming an AICCM office holder, you can go to this area of the site (About AICCM/National Council/AICCM Procedures Manual) to see what roles and responsibilities you would have.

If you are already an AICCM office holder and can contribute advice to this section, please send your comments and text to the AICCM Secretariat at secretariat@aiccm.org.au



Conference Review

Conference Report

5th AICCM Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium Australian War Memorial, Canberra 23-25 July 2008

Felicity Turner, Paper Conservator

I attended the 5th Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium, held at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, which consisted of two days of papers and a day of workshops. The Symposium was attended by about 80 conservators from Australia and New Zealand, as well as a number of students from both Melbourne University and Canberra University, and a few people from other heritage professions.

With the orientation pack, the organising committee included preprints of all the papers, published with colour photographs, which was very welcome indeed. The Symposium opened with an address from Major General Steve Gower, Director of the Australian War Memorial, who made some interesting remarks on the career progression options for conservators and the daily challenges that face the profession. This was followed by a fascinating Keynote address from artist, eX de Medici. De Medici has, among many other projects, spent years collaborating with a client to first graphically tattoo, and then develop a plan to preserve, the skin of an entire adult man. While the art itself was breathtaking, the extreme and unusual nature of the plan to preserve this man's skin, following his death, was intriguing to say the least, and brought a very different perspective to the theme of conservation.

The papers that followed over the next day and a half were not arranged in thematic blocks, but rather allowed one's attention to shift between a variety of subjects, including both scientific and historical research, treatment case studies and general conservation

experience. In general the papers were very interesting and well presented. The ones that caught my attention on the first day were predominately research based. Prue McKay's preliminary research into the effectiveness of white cotton gloves in protecting paper based artefacts from transfer of perspiration and dirt from hands seems to show that they are not as effective as we would think, which might be the beginning of a revolution away from the stereotypical white-gloved conservator. Ian Batterham and Jess Wignell's research into the mitigating effects of packaging on temperature and humidity fluctuations, which revealed that both paperboard and polypropylene boxes have a noticeable buffering effect on environmental conditions for records stored inside the boxes, even when the outside conditions show moderate fluctuations. Nick Zihrul, a recently graduated student from the Melbourne University conservation program, presented his Masters research into the reversibility of inpainting when barrier layers such as methylcellulose and gelatine are applied prior to application. It was interesting to note that a significant degree of reversibility can be achieved when several layers of these materials, and especially methylcellulose, are applied, giving some credibility to conservators claims of reversibility of inpainting procedures.

On the first evening all delegates were invited to a reception and exhibition viewing of the National Gallery of Australia's Picture Paradise: the first century of Asia-Pacific photography 1840s – 1940s. The exhibition floor talk by NGA Curator Gael Newton was very informative and provided interesting insights into the challenges faced by the entire exhibitions team, from choosing the pieces to be included, to designing the layout of the exhibition, preparing the artworks for exhibition and then installing nearly five hundred objects, including the almost ten meter long Panorama of Sydney Harbour and

suburbs from the north shore by Bernard Otto Holtermann and Charles Bayliss.

The second day of talks was equally as enjoyable as the first day. The morning was particularly full with an interesting talk on the treatment of a large collection of rare Russian magazines, to the introduction of the new Undergraduate conservation program to begin at Canberra University from next year and the launch of Ian Batterham's book, *The Office Copying Revolution*.

The afternoon sessions were a little more relaxed and contained two very interesting talks on conservation experience. Phillipa Durkin gave some fascinating insights into the challenges of working for six months in the very hostile Antarctic environment with few resources, very tight deadlines and some very difficult objects to preserve for posterity. From the other end of the spectrum, Kim Morris presented an overview into the challenges of a private conservation business, where badly damaged artworks are routinely encountered and the sentimental value is frequently far greater than the monetary value. In both cases conservation solutions must be found where the artefact is treated to best possible standards, within budget and to the client's satisfaction. Not an easy task!

The second day concluded with the Symposium Dinner, held in the ANZAC Hall at the Australian War Museum. Amongst World War II planes and submarines suspended from the ceiling, about 40 delegates enjoyed a very pleasant three course meal, followed by some enthusiastic karaoke, until the early hours of the morning.

The final day comprised a number of workshops covering topics including Letterbooks, disaster recovery of audio visual materials, parchment stretching techniques and computerised mount cutting machines. In the morning I

attended a tour of the National Library's Photographic Store and saw many beautiful works as well as the NLA's enviable copying and digitising facilities. For the afternoon session I made the trip out to Gold Creek, to view the Alternative photography exhibition. It was fascinating to see the remarkable images produced by a wide range of historical photographic processes, including both invention of new angles on the traditional processes and the

fusion of some techniques.

I finished the three days very tired in mind, but also stimulated by the many interesting talks that had been presented, the enthusiasm of my colleagues for their work and the dedication of the organisers to bringing it to the attention of paper-based materials conservators Australia (and New Zealand) wide. Unfortunately we had to leave the Symposium without any volunteers to host the next one. I am sure you will all agree that sharing

research and experience is vital to the development of our profession, especially as in Australia we are more isolated from learning than our counterparts in Europe and America. Thus I would encourage everyone to have a chat to their colleagues and put forward a proposal to host the 2010 AICCM Book, Paper and Photographic Materials Symposium.

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Hot tip for the new website...

Can you contribute to the new website?

- Once you've had a chance to explore the new site, you might feel you'd like to contribute. We're hoping the website will become an example of "many hands make light work", as well as a fabulous professional resource.
- In particular, you might like to contribute the following (send these to the Website Editor):
- Images of conservators at work, or a series of images showing a treatment project from beginning to end (see "About Conservation/Conservators at Work")
- Links to useful research tools online (see "Links")
- Images that illustrate a word we use to describe damage (we are missing some from the current glossary, and there are bound to be other definitions we haven't included – see "About Conservation/Visual Glossary")
- Examples of remedies gone wrong – maybe you have found an old quilt that was dunked in bleach, an antique chair mended with rusty nails or superglue, or a painting cleaned with Windex (see "About Conservation/Remedies Gone Wrong")
- Links to media items about conservators or conservation in the news (see "About Conservation/In the media")
- New material for State or SIG pages (see headings under "About AICCM")
- Advice for other AICCM members planning events or preparing job applications (see "Events/Event Planning" and "Jobs/Career Development")

You might just even notice a typo...



Conservation Matters – What do YOU think

Comments from the last issue



In the last edition we reprinted part of an article from the UK Institute of Conservation's ICON magazine, on the perceived failings of British conservators. We received a variety of responses, some agreeing, some vehemently disagreeing and some seeing both sides of the argument.

These responses raised a host of further questions about how we view ourselves and how the broader cultural heritage world in which we work perceives us. The Editors believe that an open forum for discussing such issues is vital to our continuing growth as a profession. We therefore do encourage you to pick up your metaphorical pen and voice your views on any matters raised in these responses.

In a world where we are often too busy to think straight, I had to stop and read the article from Helen Hughes through twice. It really is relevant to so much of what I do as a heritage adviser.

We get very bound up in reciting old tenets without re thinking the relevance—especially about 'minimal intervention'. When owners of houses want to add their layer of modern living, so relevant to themselves, heritage can be so defensive, so crushing, and yet we look back and marvel about the layers of history we can read in the past alterations and additions...

A very good article.

Barbara Hickson
Heritage Adviser Bathurst and Orange.

After 37 years in conservation practice I feel I have some comments on this particular article by Helen Hughes:

Helen Hughes' article left me somewhat amazed and bewildered. It sounded more like sour grapes rather than constructive and positive criticism and condemns a whole profession through – as it appears to me – lack of useful communication and productive consultation. Unfortunately, this happens all too often, I have to say, and not only in the UK. As a result you get articles like that of Helen Hughes' which may be based on misunderstanding, or ignorance, or both.

I cannot comment on the general attitude of English conservators towards conservation matters in England and it is

therefore difficult to tackle what Helen so vigorously attacks. But since I am a professional I feel somewhat offended by her global attack on practices that may not be fully understood, and which people in positions like hers may find difficult to accept as a result.

Helen appears not to comprehend as to why conservators aim at 'reversible' procedures and why they indeed may become irreversible, nor does she understand 'minimal intervention' which aims purely at maintaining the integrity of a particular object. I have yet to see a professional conservator who 'happily engages in aesthetic infilling and retouching' unless there is a very valid reason and prior discussion. May be these subtle differences need to be explained to Helen.

My perception as to why owners of objects 'they want to use or enjoy' take them to conservators, is because they want to get professional advice on how to best look after and protect them, and to be able to make an informed decision about the treatment and level of intervention they want.

Helen fails to specify her knowledge and perception of 'dramatic developments in the field of conservation' and it is therefore difficult to evaluate her comment on the 'British conservators' lack of engagement' with those developments. Going by publications on conservation research and conservation practice in a multitude of internationally respected journals, it is hard to believe that British conservators could completely ignore them. For Australian conservators who are members of the

AICCM, it is indeed a requirement of the Code of Ethics to keep up with new developments and in the WA Museum the 'Ability to incorporate new methods and to critically assess or modify existing procedures' is essential selection criteria for conservators.

Despite long distances and relative isolation, Australian conservators have – and use – the many opportunities to engage in debate promoted by organisations such as the AICCM, through conferences, special interest groups, publications, workshops and its website, and I cannot imagine that this should be vastly different in England.

What should be addressed is the status of conservators in the various institutions they work in. Not everywhere are conservators valued as educated professionals with extensive knowledge, experience and the ability to make our material culture and history survive for generations to come. Not always are they included in the decision making process. Conservators may only be called in after objects have been selected for display or exhibitions for the sole purpose to 'fix' them and to make them presentable without prior consultation and without respect of professional standards. This may cause the conflict that Helen describes as 'presenting conservation as old fashioned and obstructive'. Maybe people in decision making positions should have a good look at their own values and procedures and treat conservators as 'allies and partners' and not as the enemy. The result may surprise.

Ulli Broeze-Hornemann WA Museum

The following are some comments on an excerpt from the recent article in the UK Institute of Conservation's ICON magazine, by Helen Hughes, Head of Historic Interiors Research & Conservation at English Heritage: Friends, Romans and Country.....

Helen Hughes has voiced her concerns about British conservators' lack of engagement with dramatic developments in the field of conservation during the last twenty years. My experience with the Australian scene is significantly different, but this is no reason for the Australian profession not to heed Hughes's wake-up call.

It's four years since I left Artlab and looking back over my nineteen years in Adelaide there were times when I was frustrated by the narrow thinking of some people on some issues; however, it was not my overriding experience. The Artlab experience, for the majority of people who worked there during those years was most often, creative and outgoing in terms balancing the challenges of public and private sector practice, and engagement with the heritage sector more broadly. This was associated with relationships with organisations such as the Heritage Collections Council, SACON International, with strong interests in the built heritage sector, and AusHeritage with its focus on engagement with Asia.

If my experience is relevant to a broader Australian one, I can say with confidence that conservators all over the country have been exposed to multiple value systems not just those associated with cultural heritage, but those linked as Hughes states, to the 'wide range of global values which direct conservation management'. World approaches to public sector financial management, risk mitigation, global warming, and the energy crisis spring to mind. Approaches to conservation thinking in Australia can be partly attributed to a GP perspective that was preeminent in the 70s and 80s.

Nowadays there is growing discussion in Australia about the value and meaning of objects, context, and developing

appropriate responses to conservation with regard to individual treatments as well as the broader management of collections.

Many conservators working across one or more of the four collecting domains – archives, galleries, libraries and museums are aware of the issues and ideas put forward in the Burra Charter (The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance) first adopted in 1979 and some conservators are participating in the Collections Council of Australia's project to develop a new edition of the influential handbook (significance) A guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections, 2001.

The concept of subjectivity is closely associated with post-modernism which while fading rather quickly into the philosophical twilight, still has currency for the practicing conservator. This is so because context is fundamental to the development of relevant approaches to conservation treatments or broader preventive strategies.

And now let's explore Hughes's reference to three of the myths of late twentieth-century conservation:

- *the concept of 'minimal intervention' . – (minimal intervention to achieve what exactly?)*
- *the idea of 'one standard of work' which is based on a taboo of any value judgements; and*
- *the lie of 'irreversibility' (please name a reversible procedure).*

I look at the idea of 'minimal intervention' as symbolic – as embracing the notion of respect, respect for the object's creator, its physical integrity, for the context out of which the object has come and for those responsible for its care. For me 'minimal intervention' is about a commitment to caring and thoughtfulness.

The idea of 'one standard of work' is an aspiration. We carry with us histories, views, beliefs and psychological responses to what we do and how we engage with places and things. Skills vary, even among the most outstanding practitioners. In

reality there is a spectrum of behaviours and outcomes in any work place that impact on the quality of work.

Standards are about trying to encourage consistency, trying to define quality and also promoting repeatability in practice. The pursuit of quality control has been driven to some extent by the cavalier approaches of some practitioners in the past – the early days of conservation. The idea of 'one standard of work' as Helen Hughes discusses had currency in Australia in the seventies and early eighties but not much anymore. Most conservators working in Australia have moved on.

There has been a strong tradition of preventive conservation in Australia and this has influenced much of the thinking of conservators here. How does the idea of 'one standard of work' apply for risk management, pest control and preventive conservation more generally? Pragmatism is a key feature when you manage collections in real life. You do the best you can with what you have.

And now for 'reversibility'; a topic that could easily fill a book of its own. In absolute terms one could argue that there is no such thing; the universe does not function that way. For chemical systems, the topic has been examined as part of equilibrium studies and has well established theories.

From another perspective, no object is the same at the atomic level from one nano-second to the next. When most of us talk about reversibility we are thinking about processes at a macro not micro level. In this sense, some processes can be undone so that they can be redone again, but the concept isn't applicable at the molecular level. This is one of the most fascinating topics in conservation philosophy and deserves greater attention from the academics.

I am rapidly running out of space, I was only allowed a page, so perhaps I won't comment too enthusiastically about 'Conservators, entrapped by vocabularies and terminologies' and 'owners' who in terms of my history have always been called 'clients', even when I started in

the Pictorial Section at the National Library at the end of 1969.

If you work in the private sector or for a government business enterprise, clients aren't 'the enemy', they're the ones that help pay the mortgage at the end of the month! And you love every one of them when they walk through the door. Professional conservatism can stifle new ideas and new approaches and I am not suggesting that the conservation profession in Australia is totally free from 'outmoded concepts', but I am arguing that the situation is not black and white and that sometimes slow change is better than change responding to whims and fashion.

What I find stimulating about Hughes's comments is that they make me think about the *raison d'être* of conservation; they encourage ongoing analysis of the concepts of context, value, meanings, significance and even reversibility as they apply to objects and conservation practice. This is a good thing. So good on you Helen!

If you want to have a look at some basic Australian thinking on conservation policy and social context have a look at the National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy for Australia's Heritage Collections, Heritage Collections Council, 1998. You can access an on-line version on the CAN website, see page 2 of the lists under the Sector info banner.

Ian Cook

Collections Australia Network

The *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries* are now available online at Collections Australia Network (CAN) http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/sector_info_item/107

Collecting organisations of all kinds are invited to use the National Standards framework as a resource.

The National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries have been produced collaboratively by the National Standards Taskforce, representing:

- ACT Museums and Galleries
- Arts Tasmania
- Collections Council of Australia Ltd
- History Trust of South Australia
- Museum and Gallery Services Queensland Ltd
- Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
- Museums & Galleries NSW
- Museums Australia (Victoria)
- Western Australian Museum

The Ian Potter Foundation has kindly supported this project by providing funds for the development, copy-editing and design of the National Standards document.

St George's Cathedral, Perth

Ian Hocking of Hocking Planning and Architects in Subiaco, Perth has won the most prestigious George Temple Poole Heritage Award for the conservation and restoration of St. Georges Cathedral in Perth.

It was designed by Blakett and involved Ian MacLeod doing a complete survey of the salt levels in the stone and brickwork of the 125 year old building. As a result of the survey, they produced a salinity map of the building, with very high salt levels recorded even 25 metres up the south-western wall of the south transept.

The worst affected areas were poulticed with a papier Mache paste and treated for four to six weeks. This resulted in 90-95% removal of the offending salts and saved dozens of Donnybrook stone window sills and corbels from being replaced. It also saved more than 120,000 bricks from ultimate destruction.

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

Contributions are welcomed and should be sent to:

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