

## President's Report

Eric Archer

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I hope that you have had a refreshing and restful break, as I did in Tasmania. Welcome to the new and re-elected National Council members - I am looking forward to working with you in the year ahead. There has been one change to National Council since the October meeting - Kay Söderlund has not been able to continue her work with the Education portfolio due to time constraints and business commitments - she will, however, remain on National Council with Membership Services responsibilities. Many thanks to Kay for the work she has done, particularly during the closure of the University of Canberra course and the AICCM National Training Summit held in Canberra in March last year.

One year on from a hectic 2003 term - which included AICCM's response to the closure of the University of Canberra course; the National Training Summit in Canberra; AICCM's response to the war in Iraq and subsequent looting and damage to cultural property; the devastating bushfires in the ACT and Victoria; and supporting and developing SIG activities - National Council will focus on a strategic agenda based on sustainability; funding; accreditation; planning the October 2004 Meeting, and continued strengthening of SIG activities.

The topic of sustainability has preoccupied many of us involved in AICCM's day-to-day operations and strategic planning activities. As the profession matures and develops, and conservation achieves a growing profile and recognition in the community - the business of running National, State and Territory divisions becomes increasingly complex and time-consuming. During my first term as president I experienced, and observed at first hand the considerable workload that many conservators carry to support existing structures and processes - over and above responsible full-time jobs. Is AICCM making unreasonable calls on its members to deliver? Is there a better way for AICCM to conduct its business? They are not unreasonable questions to ask, and ones that I hear repeatedly from members. National Council has agreed to conduct a series of conversations with State and Territory divisions to discuss topics such as the efficacy of current administrative structures and, more broadly, to scope ideas about how members feel about regional identity and programs. The first conversation will be held in Canberra in late February with the ACT division where we will work on a format to take to all AICCM divisions. The outcomes of these conversations will be circulated to members, and any recommendations put to the vote, on or before the October 2004 Meeting.

National Council has been finalising the legal and technical requirements for the establishment of the AICCM Foundation, which we plan to officially launch at the October 2004 Meeting. Over the next few months, we will be working on membership of the Foundation and its relationship to National Council. The Foundation has been set up to raise funds through grants and donations, for AICCM activities such as the employment of project officers, scholarships for conservation students and practicing conservators, and SIG activities. The Foundation would also be used to advocate the case for conservation in the community, and to promote the science and significance of the conservation profession.

## from the editorial committee

In our feature article this issue, **Alison Wain** challenges our thinking with *To infinity and beyond*. Alison discusses ethics, intangibles, functionality and access, and accreditation. There is enough there to get the membership talking and discussing how these issues effect the conservation profession.

**Barbara Reeve**, Head of Collection Services at the Australian War Memorial has provided the Lab Profile. Barbara looks back to 1975 and the Pigott Report and then forward to the development of the conservation and storage facilities at the AWM.

**Suzi Shaw** (*Urushi 2003 – International Course on Conservation of Japanese Lacquer*) and **Katy Glen** (*A Guide to the Preventive Conservation of Photograph Collections by Bertrand Lavédrine*) have provided reviews.

**Marcelle Scott** keeps us up-to-date with the development of the conservation training programs at The Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation at The University of Melbourne. **Jan Lyall** reports on an oral history project of the National Library of Australia on the conservation profession in Australia.

As usual we bring a report from our President, SIG reports, People and Places and the ever informative Calendar. Enjoy the reading and please feel free to comment on the newsletter to the editorial committee.

**Jude Fraser, Katy Glen, Helen Privett**

In December 2003, AICCM and the New Zealand Professional Conservators Group Pu Manaaki Kahurangi (NZPCG) submitted an application to the Getty Grant Program to fund the development of a regional accreditation model for our countries. The project would involve joint AICCM-NZPCG research to assess relevant national and international accreditation data - the outcome of which would be the production of an issues paper for consultation with members. This would lead to separate voting to establish harmonised accreditation processes for both public and business sector conservators. This joint approach is aimed at developing relationships between professionals in the region and potentially linking continuing professional development programs.

Over the past couple of years there has been much discussion about AICCM's commitment to delivering conferences – should the annual meeting be a conference? Should there be a biennial conference? Should it be technical or philosophical or both? Special Interest Groups now provide an excellent forum for a range of specialist, scientific and technical meetings and conferences throughout the year. Considerable time and resources go into holding these events and they are invariably successful and well organised. Could we reduce the pain of trying to decide what we do every year by delivering the AICCM Annual Meeting - which could be big or small – depending on circumstances and resources? An Annual Meeting could follow a prescribed format to include themed general sessions, SIG sessions and workshops. During the course of the year Council will be developing this idea further and may trial this format for October 2004.

The year in summary will see National Council work to engage members in a discussion about sustainability issues; see the establishment of a Foundation that will potentially provide an additional funding stream; take an accreditation issues paper to members for consultation should the Getty application succeed; progress the October 2004 AICCM Meeting and continue developing excellence in SIG activities.

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## In the Next Issue of AICCM...

Jonathon Tse from the Central Conservation Section, Leisure & Cultural Services Department in Hong Kong will be our feature writer in the June edition. He is currently working on a project, which is to permanently display a 500-tonne steel fireboat on land. Jonathon will be discussing the planning and design process and update us on the progress of the project.

With the Paintings Symposium in Hobart in March and the Paper, Books and Photographic Materials Symposium in Sydney in April, we hope that we can bring you reviews from two participants. If anyone is keen to review these symposiums, please contact the editor – otherwise the editor will be out there canvassing people! If you have attended other workshops or conferences recently, please consider submitting reviews.

The deadline for the next issue is 1st May. Please contact the editor prior to that date if you wish to submit an article. Also if you are interested in submitting a feature article for a future issue, contact us in advance.

# To infinity and beyond!

## A little light crystal ball and navel gazing for the Conservation Profession

Alison Wain

Manager of Small Objects and Textiles Conservation

Australian War Memorial

The following article is a ramble through a bunch of ideas that have been slowly revolving and connecting themselves in my mind over the past few months. In some ways it takes up the baton where Julian Bickersteth left off in the September newsletter – I hope it inspires others to take up the baton – or a cudgel...

### What is conservation really about?

The ideas presented in this article were initially sparked by a remark made by Professor Joyce Kirk (Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at University of Technology Sydney) at the AICCM Visions seminar held in Canberra in 2003. She asked what are conservators trying to preserve – content, form or access? And she went on to comment that current codes of conservation ethics and practice did not support conservators in preserving access. And I thought - she's right, they don't. Current conservation codes of ethics explicitly focus on the preservation of original physical material, but they rarely mention preservation of content (except as it is encoded within the original physical material) or of access. (I will also add that they do not mention preservation of function.) As a consequence, every time I recommend a way to provide access to an object knowing that that access could potentially cause damage, a part of me feels guilty and worries what other conservators will think of me. I may know that the decision I have made is sensible and at one with the idea of providing access to collections, but it is not a decision which fulfils my code of ethics by putting the original physical material of the object above all else.

Although at first glance this seems a minor semantic point, I believe it is a key concept and one that is having a strong subconscious effect on the development of the conservation profession. I believe it is this emphasis on physical material in our ethical codes which led to the profession initially gaining a reputation for saying "no" to access to objects and despite great efforts to be seen in a more positive light, many other heritage professionals still see us this way. I believe this is in part because this emphasis on physical

material remains firmly grounded in our collective psyche; while we may not be so defensive about permitting access to objects these days, we are still conservative in our approach to access and rarely initiate it or develop new ways to provide it.

Barbara Reeve recently commented to me that preservation of content and access is implicit in conservation codes, as why else would you bother conserving the physical form of the object? However I believe that it is important to make these concepts explicit. The conservation profession tends to attract careful, precise people who try very hard to do the "right" thing. Their own codes of ethics say that the "right" thing is to focus on preserving physical material; the rest of the heritage industry says that the "right" thing is to provide as much access as possible to all aspects of heritage. There is no framework in the conservation codes of ethics for a considered alternative to preservation of physical material, no point of reference against which a conservator can measure their decision and feel justified that they have preserved an important aspect of heritage even though they may have allowed physical material to be damaged.

Time for a few quotes. The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM), defines conservation, preservation and restoration as follows:

**"CONSERVATION** The conservation profession is responsible for the care of cultural material. Conservation activities may include preservation, restoration, examination, documentation, research, advice, treatment, preventive conservation, training and education.

**PRESERVATION** The protection of cultural property through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage, and that prevent loss of information. The primary goal of conservation is to prolong the existence of cultural material.

**RESTORATION** The treatment of cultural property through minimal intervention to enhance its interpretation. Restoration may involve the reassembly of displaced components, removal of extraneous matter, or re-integration using new materials."

At the core of these three definitions are the words "cultural material" and "cultural property". Similar words are common to codes of conservation practice around the world. The UKIC Code of Ethics and Rules of Practice uses the term "cultural property" and further divides this term into "moveable objects" and "immoveable objects". The IIC Memorandum of Association is established to "protect and preserve...any *objects or structures* which...have a commonly accepted value and importance" (the italics are mine). The AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice says "The primary goal of conservation professionals...is the preservation of cultural property. Cultural property consists of individual objects, structures, or aggregate collections." All these statements reflect an emphasis on preserving the tangible aspects of heritage, the aspects which survive beyond the present moment and which survive by existing rather than by happening.

Some codes certainly reflect an awareness of potential tension between preservation of the physical material of an object and cultural use of that object – UKIC for example includes the following point in its Code of Ethics "Each Member must strive to preserve cultural property for the benefit of future generations but he/she must make every effort to maintain a balance between the preservation of cultural property and the need to use, understand and appreciate it". However none of the Codes I have looked at explicitly define the non-tangible aspects of an object as also requiring preservation and conservation. The heritage profession as a whole however has moved in the last 20 years to embrace a much wider view of what constitutes heritage than solely physical material, and a much more complex understanding of the relationship between people and heritage. I don't believe that conservation codes of ethics and practice around the world have yet caught up with these changes and I think conservators are constantly trying to reconcile out of date ethics with the needs of a rapidly changing industry sector.

## **Why should conservators bother with intangibles?**

To look first at the preservation of function - we must recognize that an object which is no longer able or allowed to function in its original way has already lost a huge part of its meaning and information, as well as a large part of its power to generate interest and emotional response. I am not talking merely of the objects commonly regarded as

functional – those which have engines and "go" – but of any object that is **used** as opposed to remaining static or untouched. Clothes can be worn for example, ceremonial objects can be handled, games can be played. Whatever the object however, preservation of original physical material and preservation of function are two ends of a see-saw. Lengthen the life of the original material and you almost inevitably reduce the time allowable for access to the functioning object: increase the amount of access to the functioning object and you equally inevitably shorten the life of the original physical material.

Conservators are uniquely qualified to optimise both ends of this see-saw - their in-depth understanding of the physical nature of objects enables them to devise ways to minimise the damage caused to the original material by preserving functionality. The important thing here is to make the decision up front as to whether the primary heritage significance of a particular object is material or function. The condition report for the object should explicitly document this decision, allowing treatment procedures to be developed to effectively conserve that aspect of the object. Accepting function as being in itself a legitimate thing to preserve (and altering the codes of ethics and practice to reflect this) will remove the guilt of accepting the damage that function inevitably causes.

Interestingly, ethnographic conservation has already established a precedent for the preservation of function in the conservation world. Ethnographic conservation specialists have developed techniques and a language to facilitate the preservation of function through use of cultural objects in culturally appropriate ways. But the reasonably high level of access and respect accorded to indigenous cultural owners is much less accepted when it comes to Western heritage objects. Western people are generally kept away from these objects unless they have a very specific claim – for example they are family of the original owner or donor, or they are a veteran of war with a connection to a particular war relic. The conservation attitudes and interactions developed to give indigenous peoples access to their cultural material could usefully cross over into conservation of Western objects, and would help to provide the conservation profession with the framework it needs for accommodating the current demand in the heritage industry for increased access to and interaction with collections.

The other area not embraced by conservation codes of ethics is conservation of information content independent of original physical form – the area primarily concerned with digitisation. Digitisation is going to be a key driver in the future of the heritage industry, a major funding attractor and a major point of engagement with the public. Huge amounts

of information are now "digital born" – i.e. like this article they were created electronically, manipulated and used without a hardcopy being necessary. The original object is the digital file, and the preservation of that digital file raises all the same ethical questions as are raised by tangible objects. Similarly much material is now digitally copied, both to provide an alternative resource if the original is damaged, and to increase accessibility. To develop effective preservation strategies for this material we need people who understand both conservation and computers, who are fully trained in preservation ethics and methods and yet also understand and can research development of appropriate new digital technologies and techniques. And these people will be as much conservators as those who preserve the tangible objects that make up our 3-D world.

### And who is a conservator anyway?

Whatever their particular skills, it is not the detailed specialist knowledge which identifies people as conservators, but the core ethics and practices which are common to all conservators. However, fragmentation of the profession into small, exclusive specialisations was identified as a problem by Jane Henderson and Diane Dollery in a paper presented at the Melbourne IIC Conference in 2000<sup>1</sup>. They note that conservation is such a small profession that it really cannot afford to divide its lobbying power and knowledge base into ever smaller technical specialisations. And this may well be counter-productive. How often has a technique developed in one area suddenly turned out to have a whole new application in another specialisation? Ever since conservation started, new specialisations have been developing – it's not going to stop here and we need to find a way to accommodate this diversity in our training, our meetings and our plans for the future. We need to value our common interests and use the creativity that linkages between specialisations and between generalists and specialists can bring.

Jane and Diane however, see accreditation as the future unifying force. I'm afraid I don't, at least not in Australia. As was noted at the October 2003 meeting, we have a far smaller population of conservators in Australia than in the UK and much larger distances, plus a more laid back attitude (otherwise known as "She'll be right mate"). It is simply not feasible for us to verify every conservator's currency and competency every year or even every five years, and most people – as we have seen – simply won't bother. I think we need to accept that accreditation is a valuable tool for people whose clients and employers do not have the ability to judge a conservator for themselves.

These are the people who need assurance that the conservator they have chosen demonstrates good training, recent experience and quality results, and these are the people who need someone to contact if they have doubts about a conservator's performance. However accreditation is never going to be much use for those working in a market that is conservation-literate, such as those working in public institutions. Such institutions usually have their own conservators, who will recruit new people based on the training and qualifications demonstrated through CVs, interviews and references. This type of selection process is never going to be replaced by reliance on accreditation because these institutions are not only looking for a good conservator, they are looking for a member of a team, and no accreditation scheme is going to tell them whether the conservator they are interviewing will fit their team.

I do however see training as being a key route to achieving both unity and knowledge management within conservation. But it is becoming increasingly evident that no one training course can provide in-depth teaching in all the specialisations now required within the conservation profession. This is firstly because there are so many specialisations, and secondly because only a handful of conservators are required in some of the smaller specialisations in a generation. So we need to rethink our model of training. A conversation was recently reported in the GCI Newsletter between May Cassar, Michele Marincola and Frank Matero<sup>2</sup>, three people who are all intimately engaged in training the conservators of the future. They note the explosion of information faced by most professional fields, and stress that the focus of good professional education in any field should not be to teach more and more about less and less, but to instil the expertise to think critically, to know what questions to ask and to continue learning throughout a career. They also note that conservation was developed in the first place from a crossover between humanities and sciences and that this breadth remains a key strength in the profession, which should not be lost.

I believe we need to adopt a training model where the key ethics and methods of conservation are taught in formal courses to all conservation students, specialists and generalists alike. This would include concepts such as a really long term preservation ethic, scientific method, rigorous testing of materials, thorough understanding of the physical form and composition of an object to guide treatment development, and thorough observation and documentation. These concepts could be taught using practical examples from the larger conservation

<sup>1</sup> J. Henderson and D. Dollery, "Growing pains – the development of a conservation profession in the UK" in *Tradition and Innovation: Advances in Conservation*, IIC Conference, Melbourne, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> "A lifetime of learning", edited by Kathleen Dardes and Jeremy Levin, GCI Newsletter, No. 3, 2003.

specialisations – for example paper, paintings, organic and inorganic objects. This would give all conservators a grounding in the most common physical materials they will encounter (and which will underlie their later specialist training), plus an idea of the techniques used in other specialisations which may one day be useful to them. Additional training via an apprenticeship or internship arrangement would be required to gain recognition as a specialist in a particular area (and suitable funding and placements would need to be identified), but bear in mind that these conservators would already be qualified and competent as generalists and able to work in that context if they so desired. Specialisation would lead on to more specific jobs – more in-depth work but in a narrower field.

One point I think we need to recognise is that our vast distances and sparse conservation population are problems commonly faced in developing countries, and we should perhaps be looking closely at the logistics of how training is delivered successfully in these countries instead of the training models adopted in densely populated Western countries. We must certainly take advantage of opportunities to supplement our face-to-face training structures with online teaching materials and information sharing. It is true that web-based teaching will never provide the same quality of teaching as a traditional teacher, but it is equally true that it may make the difference between a conservation course (particularly in a specialist area) being viable or cancelled.

So in conclusion I would like to summarise this all into three points:

- Conservators should not restrict themselves to looking after the physical aspects of objects – to do so places artificial barriers to the development of conservation as a broad and flexible discipline and alienates other cultural heritage professionals.
- Current conservation codes of ethics should be revised to explicitly define the preservation of content and function as legitimate and ethical aims, even where these conflict with preservation of physical material.
- Conservators should recognize that they have a core set of values and skills which are applied across all specialisations, and that it is this core that distinguishes and unites them, not their particular object-specific skill sets.

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

Tania Cleary's article on the Asialink Arts Management residency she undertook in Bangkok in 2003 highlighted the great opportunity such programs offer art professionals to develop cross-cultural skills and to work in challenging, stimulating environments. In 2004 Caroline Fry, Paintings Conservator from the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, will undertake the residency at the Hanoi Museum of Fine Arts referred to in Tania's article. Caroline did initial groundwork for this residency when she visited Vietnam in May 2002, eventually culminating in the development of the project for 2004.

The Asialink Arts Management Program offers opportunities for the development and sharing of skills, ideas and networks across and within Asia and Australia. These opportunities are available for arts managers working across all art form areas including visual and performing arts, literature, festivals and technology. Each year Asialink offers four Arts Management placements that are selected from all fields within the arts and linked to a host institution overseas. To my knowledge only two conservation residencies have been undertaken to date. I undertook the previous one at the Cultural Centre of the Philippines (CCP), Manila in 1998. The CCP collection ranges from modern paintings to ethnographic objects and textiles. The residency focussed on skills capacity training for collections management staff, preventive conservation workshops and undertaking a treatment program of panel paintings with the National Museum on the island of Bohol.

Applications for the 2005 program close on Friday 3rd September 2004. So check out the Asialink website ([www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au)) and if you have any further queries about the program, I am sure Swee Lim, Program Coordinator, would be able to assist you. Her contact details are:

Telephone: 613 8344 3581, Facsimile: 613 93471768, Email: [s.lim@asialink.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:s.lim@asialink.unimelb.edu.au)

Nicole Tse, Projects Conservator and PhD Student  
Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC)

# Lab Profile

## Australian War Memorial

Barbara Reeve, Head, Collection Services

The Conservation and Collection Management programs at the Australian War Memorial, as they have evolved over thirty years, are together one of the significant success stories of museology in Australia.

War Memorial conservators and collection managers have come full circle. From the 1970's and 1980's emphasis on collection preservation through good storage and documentation, through to the 1990's emphasis on often-complex conservation treatments in support of public access to collections, today we are building upon our accumulated knowledge and expertise to develop sophisticated collection documentation and digitisation programs. These programs will provide extensive public access to our collections through the web without giving public access to the items themselves. From basic storage and documentation to ultra-sophisticated storage and documentation: the ultimate preventive conservation technique.

## Background

In 1975 the Pigott Inquiry found the Australian War Memorial's collection to be in a critical state of deterioration. In common with those of other cultural collecting institutions of the day, the Memorial's collections were subject to "appalling" storage facilities and an almost total lack of conservation services. A single conservator working in a converted lavatory was responsible for looking after all of the collection's storage, treatment and exhibition needs.

In the AWM's Annual Report for 1975, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees took note of the Pigott Report and its recommendations for the care of the national collections: "...the War Memorial ... has been made aware that ... because it is not providing proper facilities, the collection is rapidly deteriorating. If the Board does not correct the present position, important parts of the collection will be beyond restoration. Even where remedial action is possible, it will be difficult and costly unless general deterioration is halted immediately.... Accordingly the Trustees seek the support of the government to correct the present position in the War Memorial without delay."

The Board set three tasks as the Memorial's conservation priorities for the period 1976-1978: the provision of appropriate storage and conservation facilities "in place of the existing primitive and crowded facilities"; the expansion of conservation and curatorial staff; and cataloguing to establish an effective means of collection control. From 1975 onwards the Memorial began to set the standard in Australia for the provision of state of the art storage, preservation and conservation facilities, professional staff, and programs for the documentation and care of its collection.

The first conservator to work at the Memorial was hired in 1973, the first registrar in 1983. By 1983 seventeen newly-hired conservators and two registration staff were caring for the collection in the newly opened War Memorial Annex for conservation and storage. In 2003-04, fifty-six permanent and contract conservation and collection management specialists support a wide range of conservation, preservation, and collection management and documentation programs for art, textiles and small objects, vehicles, aircraft and artillery, photographs, books and documents. Additional preservation experts working in (and under contract to) the Photographs, Sound and Film Section and the Research Centre are responsible for documentation, preservation copying, and digitization programs for the Memorial's vast photographic, sound, film, video and documents collections.

## Facilities

The Treloar Complex at Mitchell, comprising Treloars A, B, and C, was the first purpose-built conservation facility in the Southern Hemisphere. Each of the three buildings in the Complex reflects the museological standards and conservation needs of the era in which it was constructed.

Treloar A, known also as the War Memorial Annex, opened in 1980. It is the Memorial's principal facility for the conservation of textiles, small relics, art, documents and photographs. Core activities for staff in Treloar A are exhibition preparation and preservation programs. The building includes environmentally-controlled storage facilities for manuscripts, uniforms, flags, small relics, and art, a photographic studio, photographic processing and printing labs, a chemistry lab, and five conservation laboratories: one each for textiles, paper, photographs, paintings, and objects. Roughly half of Treloar A is a non-environmentally-controlled warehouse for larger relics.

Treloar B was erected 1986 to provide simple warehousing for the overflow, from Treloar A and from the Memorial's store at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, of existing and newly acquired large and environmentally robust relics and relic-handling equipment. Because it is the least environmentally stable of the three buildings in the Treloar Complex, small relics which need "constant cool or dry environments" are stored in de-humidified portable buildings within Treloar B.

Treloar C, the Treloar Technology Centre, was constructed in 1993-94 due to the imminent closure of the RMC Duntroon store. It is the Memorial's principal facility for the storage and conservation of its ever-growing collection of environmentally sensitive large relics. Long overdue recognition that large relics deteriorate as readily as small ones led to the incorporation of state-of-the-art environmental controls and an overhead crane, guaranteeing both a non-corrosive environment and safe handling for the relics. Treloar C contains a purpose-built spray booth, a metalwork shop and a vehicle-servicing pit. Exhibition preparation and preservation programs for large relics are the core activities for staff in this building. Although Treloar C was also designed to permit visitors to view the collections in storage, it is no longer open to the public.

## Conservation, Collection Management and Preservation Programs

In 1980 the Memorial began its first large-scale preservation programs at the newly opened and fully fitted out Annex: the transfer from Duntroon of some large technology items and Research Centre archives. In preparation for the move, technology items were steam-cleaned, and 1400 archival boxes were fumigated. Simultaneously, the painting, sculpture and works of art on paper collection was moved from the Main Building into the Annex's new climate-controlled Art Store. Uniforms, flags, other textiles, and all paper items were fumigated to prevent the spread of mould and insect pests to the Annex.

In the 25 years since Treloar A's construction the Memorial's collections have trebled in size. Conservation treatments, documentation, and collection management activity increased in keeping with collection development. Prior to 1994 the condition and preservation of the Memorial's large technology relics was determined by their condition on acquisition and the quality of off-site restoration by industry, government, or volunteer organizations. With the facilities of Treloar C at their disposal, the control and execution of conservation projects for technology relics rested exclusively with the Memorial's own conservation and curatorial staff. The construction of the Treloar Technology Centre marked also the beginning of systematic in-house

programs to improve large technology relic storage and maintenance. One of the first major improvements was the in-house development of specialized trolleys for aircraft storage and transport.

Between 1997 and 2003 the Memorial re-designed many of its galleries, created a Travelling Exhibitions program, and constructed a new exhibition building, ANZAC Hall. Staff responsible for conservation, documentation and collection management rose magnificently to meet the challenge of preparing thousands of objects for display during this hectic seven year period. Since 1997 the Memorial's large technology conservators and relics officers have been redefining the art of safely conserving, handling, transporting and installing large objects. The most technically challenging projects in this period included: the HMT Ascot Gallipoli Boat and Japanese midget submarine; the M113A1 Fire Support Vehicle and Centurion, Renault and Mark IV tanks; the 9.2 inch Howitzer, the Flak 36 German anti-aircraft gun, and the naval guns from HMAS Sydney and SMS Emden; the Lancaster, Beaufort, Zero, Mosquito, Mustang, Spitfire, and Messerschmitt Bf 109 aircraft and the Iroquois helicopter, (the six last being either suspended from the roof or installed on poles over 2 metres high). The skills of this team are second to none in the world.

The Memorial's Large Technology Conservators and Relics Officers will be sharing their experience and knowledge at the conference, *BigStuff: Care of Large Technology Objects*. This three-day workshop, 29 September – 1 October 2004, devoted to the care and management of large technology objects will be hosted by the Australian War Memorial at the Treloar Technology Centre immediately before *Metals 2004: Triennial Metals Conservation Conference* of the Metals Working Group of ICOM-CC.

Conservation of the Memorial's photographic collection has always focused upon ensuring the longevity of original images through duplication. Programs to monitor the deterioration of photographs and negatives, and to reproduce the images as necessary, have been in place since the early 1960's. From the mid-1970's, curators of the sound collection also recognised the need to copy collection items for preservation and access. Copying sound recordings for "urgent preservation and public access" began in 1978. In 1985 the installation of a "basic but professional" sound transfer system enabled more efficient copying and transfer to archival quality tapes. In 2003, with the end of the commercial production of analogue sound tapes, the sound copying program moved to an entirely digitised format.



In common with photographic and film archivists around the world, by 1973 Memorial staff had implemented measures to deal with the severe problems associated with the aging of nitrate negatives. Within twelve years, having used both in-house and commercial copying facilities, the Memorial had copied its entire World War I nitrate negatives collection onto safety-base film. Copies made on early safety-base film have been found to have stability problems, and will require re-copying. A film-copying program established in the 1960's to copy nitrate-based films on to non-flammable 'safety' film eliminated nitrate-based film from the Memorial's archival holdings by 1975. Today, archival copies exist of the Memorial's entire film collection, with duplicate films available for study and public viewing.

As with the audio-visual collections, the major objective for keepers of printed and written records in the mid-1980's was to find a means by which the public, whose interest increased greatly over that time, could gain access to the information recorded in thousands of un-accessioned and uncatalogued documents housed in grossly overcrowded storage. To achieve these goals, Research Centre staff developed access and preservation programs to produce accurate catalogues and finding aids, and to duplicate records in easy-to-read formats. From the late 1980's, cataloguing programs for specific collections were run in tandem with remedial conservation, microfilming and re-housing projects. Huge strides in the care, re-housing, and digitisation of the most frequently accessed unit diaries, serials, aerial photographs, official and private records, maps and other documents have been made since 1990.

Especially in the past four years, with the advent of depreciation funding, the Memorial has developed large-scale documentation, preservation and digitization programs for the printed, written and audio-visual collections. This has enabled the Memorial to close the thirty-year conservation/ collection management loop: physical preservation through good storage and documentation.

## Obituary

Bettina Jessell, September 20, 1917 - October 26, 2003

On October 26th, 2003 Bettina Jessell died peacefully in San Jose, California. Bettina was well known to a generation of paintings conservators both in Australia and around the world. She was both a remarkable person and a fine conservator with a unique history. Born in Germany, Bettina (née Arndt) was raised in a family of extraordinary academic achievers. Her father left Germany in the early 1930s to avoid Nazi persecution, eventually making his way to England with his family. During this period Bettina worked with the renowned restorer Helmut Ruhemann of the National Gallery in London. Ruhemann was a vitally important restorer who was among the first to set modern standards of our profession based on the twin foundations of connoisseurship and high technical skill. Bettina remained faithful to Ruhemann's teachings and later wrote an article on Ruhemann's inpainting techniques ([http://aic.stanford.edu/jaic/articles/jaic17-01-001\\_1.html](http://aic.stanford.edu/jaic/articles/jaic17-01-001_1.html)). She worked as a private conservator in England for many years before moving to the USA with her husband, Hubert. They spent most of their years in America at Potomac near Washington DC, where Bettina continued to work in her home studio. Her curiosity for painting and conservation techniques saw her expand her interests to become an authority on early Spanish Colonial art and the structural treatment of panel paintings. She was a regular contributor to conservation journals and international paintings congresses. Bettina had close family links to Australia and she was a regular visitor here. Her brother taught at the Australian National University in Canberra while her son lived in Melbourne for many years. Professionally, Bettina cemented close ties with the National Gallery of Victoria. In 1992 she came to Melbourne to carry out the delicate structural treatment of *The Garden of Love*, an important fifteenth-century Venetian panel painting.

I was fortunate to work part-time with Bettina in Washington over a period of 18 months in the early 1990s. She made a strong impression on me with her depth of knowledge about painting, her confidence borne of many years of experience and her clear professional philosophy. More importantly, she was a person of great generosity and kindness who unselfishly helped many aspiring paintings conservators. She will be missed by the many people she helped and educated but her valuable lessons will not be forgotten by them and will hopefully be passed on to others who never knew her.

Carl Villis, Paintings Conservator, National Gallery of Victoria

# The Centre For Cultural Materials Conservation

Marcelle Scott, Manager, Academic Programs

As reported in previous editions of the newsletter, the University of Melbourne has established a new teaching and research centre focussed on the conservation of cultural materials. As we swing into our first year as an academic teaching centre, we are buoyed by the positive response we have received, from the conservation profession, the cultural heritage sector, both in Australia and internationally, and from intending students.

From 2004, the Centre is offering research programs at Masters and PhD level, and coursework programs at Graduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters levels. We aim to expand the range and content of programs in response to industry demand.

The Master of Arts (Cultural Material Conservation) by Coursework and Minor Thesis will include both theory and practical sessions and is intended to provide graduates with a professional qualification in materials conservation. The program will allow students to major in the conservation of objects, paper or paintings, with the possibility of specialisations in other streams.

Applications for the 2-year MA by Coursework and Minor Thesis far outnumbered available places, and we are really looking forward to engaging with the first intake of students to our Centre. We're excited at the opportunity to play such a formative role in the professional development of the conservators of the future. Some of the enrolling students elected to strengthen their chemistry knowledge during February and took a four-week Chemistry Bridging Course taught by Trinity College. The course was certainly an intensive way to study the topic, and we applaud the stamina and commitment of the students to developing their knowledge base.

We are especially pleased to welcome Penny Byrne as our first enrolled Research MA student. Penny is well known to many of you as an experienced conservator, specialising in glass and ceramics, and President of the AICCM Victorian Division. Penny's thesis will investigate the materials and techniques used by Leonard French in a number of his large public works. It's hoped the research will inform approaches to the conservation of many of the monumental public works produced by French and other artists working from the middle of the twentieth century onwards.

We are currently considering several applications, both nationally and internationally, from conservators wishing to

undertake their PhD within the Centre. The research foci in these proposals are a reflection of the truly multidisciplinary nature of cultural materials conservation, and promises to involve us in some unique and fascinating projects. We look forward to including short articles about their research in future newsletters. We really encourage conservators who are thinking of undertaking further study or research to contact us to discuss their ideas. The Postgraduate Diploma with thesis and the Research MA are both options that can provide a pathway into a PhD.

Information about the Centre and our programs can be found on the University of Melbourne website at [www.culturalconservation.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.culturalconservation.unimelb.edu.au)

Contact: Marcelle Scott, Manager, Academic Programs at the Centre, [mmscott@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:mmscott@unimelb.edu.au) or (03) 8344 7989 if you'd like to discuss our education programs.

# R S M

ART CONSERVATION

RESTORERS OF FINE ART

## POSITION VACANT

We are offering a unique opportunity for a graduate from the Materials Conservation Course to study and learn with us the skills required for a career in private conservation.

We estimate the training period to be for 12 months, and thence a career with RSM Art Conservation in Brisbane.

Please reply in the first instance with your reasons for pursuing a career in the private sector, and include your CV, to RSM Art Conservation, P.O. Box 75, Mapleton, QLD 4560

RSM Art Conservation was first established in Sydney in 1972, and then in Queensland and Brisbane in 1986.

# People & Places

## ACT

### Australian War Memorial

**Barbara Reeve** has been coordinating the AWM response to the proposed new Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage legislation. Work on the Treloar Storage and Accommodation Review is building up steam and will take much of Barbara's time in the next three months.

**Alison Wain** is still acting as the Manager of the Photography, Film and Sound Section, with **Cathy Challenor** acting as head of the Textile and Small Object Laboratory.

In the Small Objects lab, **Megan Jordan-Jones** has been waxing new roll of honour panels and amending the old ones, and treating more medals burnt in the bushfire. Megan has been organising a balloon basket project for professional practice student **Melanie Finlay**. **Skye Mitchell** is working on new acquisitions, and preparing objects for the New Acquisitions showcase. **Alayne Alvis** is preparing items for the exhibition War in Iraq, about the current conflict. **Eileen Procter** has been working on a Browning gun.

**Bridie Kirkpatrick** is currently conserving a rare South Australian Lancers Pith Helmet. **Sarah Clayton** is preparing items for the exhibition War in Iraq, including nuclear, biological and chemical suits. **Jessie Firth** continues to work on the freezer program one day a week. **Jo Francis** has joined the textiles lab to work on the Vulnerable Textile program, launching into the project with the conservation of 1880's Victorian Artillery tunic.

In the Paper Lab, **Gajendra Rawat** and **Dara Rome** prepared artworks for scheduled changeovers and framed photos for the Education Centre. Gajendra surveyed and prepared reports for loans to National Maritime Museum and Cowra Museum. **Kerry McInnes** commenced a short contract in January to undertake remedial conservation of the art works on paper collections and is currently working on watercolours by R. Malcolm Warner.

The Photo Development Group: **Ian Fulton**, **Paul Copping**, and **Matthew Cramp**, are treating C series negatives, many of these have been extremely water and alcohol soluble, so they have had interesting experiences and results.

**Adam Godijn** has departed the Painted Surfaces Lab for a job in private practice. **David Keany** is working on several

large exhibitions for this year and next. One exhibition includes a defiled large portrait of Saddam Hussein.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Australian National Maritime Museum

The ANMM conservation staff would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Head of Conservation, **James Engelbert**, who arrived from Canada late last year. James has been working on administrative tasks relating to the operation of the Conservation Unit as well as preliminary conservation work with the *TU DO* refugee vessel in the ANMM collection.

**Elizabeth Hadlow** returned from London in late November, after studying at The Centre for Photographic Conservation and investigating current storage and conservation practices in the United Kingdom. Elizabeth would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, the Ian Potter Foundation, and the ANMM in enabling her to undertake her studies.

**Sue Frost** is working on *Sailor Style*, coordinating the conservation efforts and preparing the costumes and textiles, including many loan items from overseas. The exhibition examines the influence of the naval uniform and "style" on our culture. **Jessica Blaxell** is preparing objects for the *Scrimshaw* exhibition and *Sailor Style*.

**Analiase Treacy** has just completed work on the newly refurbished Navy Gallery with objects conservator **Kerry Head**. Analiase is also preparing for the arrival of Douglas Annand, which is a travelling exhibition from the National Gallery of Australia. The exhibition includes works on paper, posters, acrylics, prints, sketchbooks, and photographs.

**Tasha Brown** and **Jan Begg** completed the installation of archaeological ceramics for *Sunken Treasures of Brunei Darussalam* in December. Tasha is currently working on an interesting array of objects for exhibition changeovers. Jan is re-visiting a survey of watercolours in the collection conducted in 1999, and preparing to deinstall the exhibition of World War II posters *Patriotism*, *Persuasion*, *Propaganda*.

**Jill Gurney** continues work on the Halvorsen collection of boat design plans, drawings and photograph albums. They have now been flattened and placed into polyester sleeves for handling, prior to accessioning. She will also be

assessing the condition of the rare book collection, and prioritising treatment programs.

**Jolanta Grzedzielska** returned to the lab in February to work with Kerry Head on preparation of the *Saltwater* exhibition of Indigenous bark paintings. Purpose designed crates have been constructed for the oversized works for the dual functions of storage and travel.

### Australian Museum

**Sue Valis** has been investigating the options for the relocation of large fish specimens and sourcing appropriate systems for suspending the specimens in storage. As part of the Outreach programme, she has been preparing for the presentation of a conservation workshop to be held at the Armidale Cultural Centre. Also for Outreach, Sue is preparing 40 objects to be displayed in the new Torres Strait Islands Cultural Centre in April. She has carried out treatment on mammals prior to display and has been monitoring the condition of loans to the *National Opal Collection* at Cody's Opals.

**Kate Jones** has been preparing loans from the anthropology collections to the Powerhouse Museum. She continues to monitor the environments in galleries and storage areas to find out which air conditioning systems are bearing up under the burden of the summer months. Kate and **Michael Kelly** have been working on the pack up of the *Gold and Sacrifice* exhibition from Peru. Michael is also working on the preparation of ornithological specimens for an exhibition about the nature illustrator, John Gould.

**Karina Palmer** continues to prepare a very diverse collection of ethnographic objects and mounting solutions for the upcoming exhibition, *Uncovered: Treasures of the Australian Museum*.

**Heather Bleechmore** is currently working on display techniques and mounting systems for selected specimens of marine invertebrates. Many of the specimens are very fragile, such as the feathered stars, sea fans and bryozoa (moss animals) requiring a lot of consideration and some innovation to come up with a suitable method of display. She has also just completed a survey of archaeological artefacts on long-term loan to the Nicholson Museum, University of Sydney.

**Megan Dean-Jones** has been condition checking the loans for the *Death* exhibition and has also been monitoring the pest activity in storage areas. **Colin Macgregor** is completing the Integrated Pest Management Plan and gathering material to write a Conservation Policy.

### Conservation Resources Pty Ltd

Conservation Resources is pleased to announce that we now have more products, a new web site and new premises. The new look Conservation Resources will be formally introduced to the conservation community at the Paper, Books and Photographic Materials Symposium in Sydney in April. While continuing the fine tradition of Harry Haxton and Conservation Resources International (Australia) - especially in sponsoring social events! - we are maintaining our preventive conservation work, as well as focusing on training, to further the concept of a broader approach to 'conservation resources'. Several training workshops are being developed, with the first for 2004 being on basic costume care for the Lachlan chapter of Museums Australia (NSW). The other major project currently underway is assisting the Department of Mineral Resources with the assessment, scanning and storage of their heritage maps, prior to their move to Maitland - along with the other 20,000 maps in their collection. So keep an eye out for the new web site ([www.conservationresources.com.au](http://www.conservationresources.com.au)), fabulous new logo and the new products - many of which should be available mid-March.

### ICS

**Julian Bickersteth** has spent three weeks in Antarctica developing strategies for artefact conservation for the historic huts of Scott and Shackleton, building on the work undertaken by Peter Maxwell, Andrew Viduka and Sarah Clayton.

**Oliver Hull** and **Lee Hardcastle** have completed the refinishing of the huon pine panels in the Prime Minister's Suite at Parliament House, Canberra. Back in the workshop, they have been treating a wide variety of wooden objects, including display cases, a walnut bureau requiring new drawer runners and some inset patches to the veneer, and a large 17th Century leather 6-fold screen, which required reseating of the hinges. The screen had first been cleaned and inpainted by **Arek Werstak**

Arek Werstak, **Maria Hromkova** and **Cathy Lillico-Thompson** have been carrying out investigations into original paint schemes in an art deco cinema in Rose Bay and a grand Victorian house in Glebe; conserving original signage and sample areas of original finishes on a column in the foyer of the old YMCA Building in Sydney; consolidating and laying down flaking as part of the regular maintenance of a Pixie O'Harris mural that had been removed from a building facing demolition seven years ago. Arek spent several weeks conserving a small ceiling painted on fine canvas stretched over tongue-in-groove boards in St Andrews College, University of Sydney. The ceiling had been water damaged and the expansion and contraction of the boards had caused the embrittled canvas to split.

In the Paintings Department **Michelle Wassall** has done a transparent loose lining using Tetex, on a painting inscribed as surviving the Great Fire of London. **Nicole Rowney** installed the *Surf Culture* exhibition in Melbourne and has since been engaging in some very difficult treatments of works by Ken Whisson, John Olsen, Marc Chagall and Cumbrae Stewart. Surrounded by boxes of moldy bones and bits of leather, **Anna Shepherd** continues to work on archeological collections.

**Miriam Wormleaton** has commenced work on conserving the textile collection of the Resource Centre, Historic Houses Trust of NSW. Also providing a challenge is the repair of a velvet Hussar saddlecloth with metallic embroidery.

**Fiona Tennant** has been carrying out a survey for the Dept. of Environment and Conservation, on the collections of the Hill End gold-miners cottage known as Haefliger's Cottage. Fiona and **Stuart Fereday** are working on a feasibility study for the Nolan Gallery at Lanyon, reviewing the suitability of the current gallery facility. Stuart has been managing the production of an exhibition of the archaeological artifacts collected from the early 19th Century abattoir site near Broadway, to be installed in an exhibition space in the new building developed on the site by Australand Developers.

## Museums and More

After 14 years at ICS, **Cath Akeroyd** has set up a new business, "Museums and More". She can be contacted at 44 Kens Rd, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086  
tel and fax: + 61 2 9401 9530, m: 0411 692 695,  
email: cathakeroyd@optusnet.com.au

## Powerhouse Museum

The Exhibitions Team of **Teresa Werstak, Gosia Dudek, Suzanne Chee, Keith Potter** and **Tim Morris** has been busy with our revolving exhibition schedule, both travelling and in-house. Teresa has been supervising our conservation student from UWS, **Rebecca Main** who has been working with us one day a week. Her main area of interest is in paper but she is being exposed to other areas as well.

The Collections Team of **Dave Rockell, Nadia de Wachter, Margaret Juraszek, Frances Fitzpatrick** and **Deidre McKillop** continue to work on the ongoing Jones Street relocation project, surveying and photodocumenting objects to be relocated within the museums stores.

In between this work Nadia surveyed a number of loan objects for the *Sport: more than heroes and legends exhibition* and helped to install paper objects in the *Treasures of Palestine* exhibition. She also assisted Frances

with the difficult installation of a Japanese suit of armour in the new Asian Gallery at the Art Gallery of NSW. Frances has begun the smelly and dirty task of rehousing wool samples, whilst Margaret has been giving a number of workshops in regional NSW on preventive paper conservation.

**Mary Gissing** is coordinating the preparation of a substantial section of our Indigenous cultural material for *Our Place - Indigenous Australia Now*, a co-sponsored exhibition from PHM and Museum Victoria which will form part of the Cultural Olympiad in Athens, Greece later this year. Mary also continues to assist in proposal development for Uma Fukun Timor in Dili.

## State Library of NSW

**Cecilia Harvey** coordinates the integrated pest management project and has recently had to confront pest related issues introduced through the interaction of staff. Cecilia has produced a poster to display in tearooms to raise general awareness about 'pests' in the Library as a means of adding humour to a potentially sensitive subject. She will be attending branch meetings to educate Library staff.

**Lang Ngo** has been working on the return of loans to the Global Arts Link in Ipswich and the Australian National Maritime Museum. Lang has also been working with **Dana Kahabka, Jessica O'Donnell** and **Silvana Volpato** on the upcoming *This Working Life* exhibition. This exhibition showcases aspects of work in Australia focusing on areas such as the Snowy River Hydro electric scheme and the introduction of the 8-hour day.

**Briony Pemberton** has been treating a selection of manuscripts by the 19th Century Australian poet Henry Kendall. The poems are written in iron gall ink and have, as a result, prompted a bit of research. According to current thinking, conservators should be cautious when humidifying iron gall ink manuscripts without prior washing, as the free iron content can migrate sideways and cause more widespread corrosion. For more information, see the postprints from the Iron Gall Ink Meeting, The University of Northumbria, 2001.

## Sydney Artefacts Conservation

At SAC work continues on the Fort Denison lighthouse. **Anne Cummins** has been co-ordinating the treatment (involving a multi-disciplinary crew of blacksmiths, glaziers, painters and riggers) and planning for the re-installation of the prominent harbour feature, while **MaryJo Lelyveld** has undertaken the stripping of several layers of lead and micaceous-based paints. Analytical testing of the lighthouse

to determine its metallurgical composition was carried out with the assistance of Chris Sorrell from the University of New South Wales. It was found that the considerably well-preserved body of the 1913 ferrous structure was in fact mild steel! We remain surprised that it has survived so well after 90 years in the harsh marine environment and are attributing it to the wonders of lead paint.

MaryJo has been mastering working in reverse with the treatment of some early painted pub signs on glass. The paintwork has suffered from extensive crazing and loss of adhesion, requiring consolidation and re-attachment of loose and detached paint flakes.

Anne has also been tending to a bronze sculpture that had been 'treated' by its owner. Upon recommendations by the dealer, the owner applied a furniture wax coating to the sculpture. This was followed by immersion in water to arrest what the owner had diagnosed to be bronze disease sitting beneath the wax. Solvent and mechanical methods used to remove the wax coating (believed to be silicone-based) to access the corrosion for treatment, have proved ineffective. This is an interesting example of the harm that can be caused to objects by the good intentions of their owners.

## QUEENSLAND

### Queensland Art Gallery

Conservation staff are focused on completing jobs for the exhibition and loans schedule, including completion of a major treatment of Giambologna's *The Flagellation of Christ* (**Amanda Pagliarino**) and an assessment of Belli's large painting of Queen Victoria (**Anne Carter**). **John Hook** is currently working on two paintings by Mark Dockree, a 19th century British artist.

**Robert Zilli** is collaborating with an external curator to develop a framing exhibition due to open in November this year. This exhibition will explore both the physical and conceptual functions of frames. Robert has also recently returned from a courier trip to Italy, which also included travel to Venice to carry out research for the display of the QAG's *Christo Risorgente* by Tintoretto.

Conservation is also focused on clearing the backlog of preventive conservation needs which were highlighted during the recent stocktake, and which are also part of preparations for Queensland Gallery of Modern Art (due to open 2005/6). Projects include assessment and treatment of some of the most vulnerable works in the collection: unframed contemporary paintings, bark paintings and installation works. **Nick Cosgrove** has continued with ongoing exhibition-focused work and preventive storage housings for works on paper, with assistance from **Pandy**

**Karavan. Mandy Smith** has continued her preventive work, housing paintings into new handling frames in anticipation for transport to the new Queensland Gallery of Modern Art.

In January, Conservation bid a sad farewell to the first of our paintings conservation trainees, **Alyssa Aleksanian** who returned to Sydney. Alyssa's significant contribution to the Old Master project and to the section, as well as to the Government Loans program, highlights the success of this traineeship program for QAG and for participants.

**Mervyn Brehmer** has joined Conservation, working as the Workshop Co-ordinator (Conservation). Merv is a cabinetmaker with many years experience in the Gallery and he is providing in-house manufacture of storage and travelling frames and boxes.

Amanda and **Liz Wild** are preparing documentation for the forthcoming *Story Place* (a large Cape York art exhibition at QAG in 2003) regional tour. They will be conducting research on the effects of fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity on cracking in greenwood sculptures. Amanda has also couriered Nam June Paik's TV cello to the Art Gallery of New South Wales for the Sydney Festival.

On top of the ongoing exhibition demands, paper conservation is busy with **Sam Shellard** preparing for an AICCM Paper SIG tape removal workshop, proposed to be held at QAG in August. The course is being sponsored as part of the annual series of mid-career professional development workshops Conservation plans to host as part of increased functions of the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### State Library of South Australia

A feature of the new State Library of South Australia is its range of permanent exhibitions. While the Preservation team has extensive experience in preparing items for temporary exhibit, staff are now involved in developing procedures and learning new skills relating to the installation and long-term maintenance of exhibitions.

To date, four exhibitions are in place. The Bradman Collection, which was 'refreshed' during the building redevelopment, includes cricket equipment and apparel and is maintained in conjunction with specialists from Artlab Australia. The new Newspaper Reading Area display focuses on the career of Rupert Murdoch's mentor Ray Boland. It is largely made up of one-dimensional text panels and includes a massive Intertype typesetting machine, used for newspaper production, sealed in a glass case. The Multimedia Wall is an audiovisual presentation comprising five screens.

The Treasures Wall, in contrast, showcases about 20 important items at a time from the Library's heritage collections. These are typically paper-based manuscripts, artworks and publications requiring constant monitoring, page turning and rotation. By mid-year the main chamber of the former Jervis Wing will be opened as the Mortlock Building with ten thematic exhibitions highlighting collection strengths and featuring about 500 items.

The Treasures Wall is complemented by a website at [www.slsa.sa.gov.au/exhibitions/](http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/exhibitions/). The 'Preservation' link, which will be developed further, provides an introduction to the functions of the team and depicts the broad range of skills provided by staff. The 'Treasures of the State Library' link goes to photographs of each treasure and on to descriptions, background information and further links. In the case of a thirteenth century illuminated vellum manuscript, this includes a link to the Glorious Antiphonal website at [www.slsa.sa.gov.au/antiphonal/](http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/antiphonal/), which provides a detailed description of the conservation treatment undertaken jointly by the Library's conservators and Artlab Australia in the mid-1990s.

The Treasures Wall itself can be described as a treasure. Its façade is made of panels of South Australian raw materials and industrial products, ranging from steel and opal to grapevine prunings and cattle hide. The latter are sealed in shallow cases, and Conservation staff are keeping a watching brief on any preservation issues that might arise.

The Library's Conservation team and Artlab staff have specialised in the preparation and mounting of different categories of exhibition items. The task of installing the Bradman, Boland and Treasures exhibitions has been led by Thylacine, assisted by the State Library's newly formed installation team. Our team, led by Senior Conservator **Peter Zajicek**, now has full responsibility for the much larger Mortlock exhibition bays – about which more will be reported in due course.

## TASMANIA

### Archives Office and State Library of Tasmania

**Stephanie McDonald** attended the Advanced Conservation Treatment Methods Photographic Conservation echo workshop presented by Cobus van Breda. It was a session full of valuable information and a rare chance for Tasmania's paper conservators to get together for a whole day of discussion and information exchange. Stephanie has treated a number of silver gelatin photographs from around 1900, which were used as evidence in divorce proceedings. She has recently had to deal with a phial of

strychnine and a drinking glass with traces of strychnine found by a researcher in a box of inquest files.

We said "goodbye" to **Corinne Costello** who finished her contract in December (working one day per week in Conservation) and finished the job of rehousing almost 3000 photographs (1950s – 1970s) from filing cabinets to archive boxes. Corinne and her predecessor, **Fiona Lee** also treated about 1000 of the photos.

**Penny Carey Wells** worked with Jill Waters (Archivist) to mount a display to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Tasmania. Penny has continued to custom-make storage boxes for the Convict Registers as well as carry out treatments on a range of other archive materials. Penny prepared and mounted the recent exhibition *Feather and Flower* in the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, which included a mega-book support job to display volumes of Curtis's Botanical magazine 1787 - 1855. Penny is currently mounting a display in the Tasmaniana Library – *The Shape of Tasmania*, which includes a G-string, a chocolate freckle, apple labels and many posters.

### Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

The conservation department (**Cobus van Breda**, **Ray Prince** and **Erica Burgess**) has just packed the exhibition *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque* which now goes on tour with its first stop in Adelaide. There are 115 works in the show - oils, watercolours, prints and sketchbooks – borrowed from collections interstate and overseas. The exhibition was a huge success bringing in over 24,000 visitors in the two months it was on show (not bad for Tasmania!).

Our next big exhibition, *Eclectica*, opens at the end of March. It is the TMAG's contribution to the Bicentennial of Tasmania. It will show why and what the Museum and Art Gallery collects, the range of artefacts collected during the TMAG's 160 years and highlight treasures, curios and rare artefacts. Cobus and Ray have been preparing works on paper, and Erica has been preparing paintings for the exhibition. As this is predominantly a three-dimensional object-based exhibition, **Kylie Roth** has been helping us out, thank goodness, as we don't have an objects conservator on staff. So far she has been cleaning swords and guns and working out how to display a variety eclectic objects including a collector's cabinet of eggs which show signs of Byne's disease. Kylie has also been working with the Roman and Greek coin collection. She is surveying the coins, checking them for bronze disease and treating as necessary.

Cobus has been involved with the relocation of the collection to our 'new' off-site store. Finally the Decorative Arts collection has been moved from one of the numerous city buildings and is now beautifully stored. Erica has been involved in organising the Paintings Special Interest Group Symposium, which will be held in Hobart in March. **Tony Colman**, Heritage Furniture Restoration Unit, continues work on furniture for the House of Assembly as well as a large selection of other pieces from various collections.

## VICTORIA

### Abigail Hart Textile Conservation

The last 14 months have been extremely busy. In the early months of 2003, I project managed and undertook, along with Noel Turner, the re-installation of 41 Regimental and Queens colours into the crypt at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance. This was the project that motivated my attendance at last years NATCC conference in Albany, USA. This large project was followed by many other wonderful projects, treatments and talks.

The highlights of these were - condition surveys for the Melbourne Cricket Club and Australian Gallery of Sport collections, treatment of a textile sculpture for the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, treatment and public talks on Nellie Melba's gown (worn for the role of Violetta in *La Traviata*) for the Performing Arts Museum, treatment (along with Louise Bradley) of the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron's 1956 Olympic flag and treatment of a huge Tapa cloth (also with Louise Bradley and with much appreciated advice from Louise Wilson) for the Victorian Bar Association.

I have become temporarily popular with one of my nephews, having prepared Bradman's cap for its travelling exhibition (many thanks to Catherine Earley for her words of wisdom) and I have had the amazing experience of treating Ned Kelly's cummerbund for the Benalla Historic Society. The support provided by Robyn Sloggett and Jude Fraser really helped make this last project run smoothly.

Finally, 2004 has commenced with treatment of flood-damaged textiles (the result of Melbourne's December storms) for private and institutional clients, and another wonderful Nellie Melba garment, the Lohengrin cloak. It's always pleasant to be surrounded by textiles encrusted with jewels, metal thread, gold cloth and handpainted angels!

### The Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation

Photographs have recently been the focus of professional development and treatments in the Paper Laboratory.

**Sallyanne Gilchrist** has been treating a large work by Robert Rooney comprised of 107 black and white photographs of the artists' clothing. The work dates from the early 1970's and the spray adhesive used by the artist to attach the photographs to the backing board has failed. Sallyanne collaborated with the artist to establish the original positions of the numerous detached photographs, prior to undertaking treatment. **Louise Wilson** has been working on a collection of albumen prints taken by photographer C.W. Walker in the 1880's. The album was recently featured in 'The Australian' and on 'Stateline' on the ABC. The photographs include images of Melbourne University, various city markets and coffee palaces operating in Melbourne at the time. **Katy Glen** recently faced the challenges of treatments of an opalotype, a daguerreotype and a tintype. Shortly Katy will be leaving us to go on maternity leave. **Jude Fraser** and Katy recently conducted a workshop on the identification of 19th and early 20th century photographic prints with the assistance of **Angeletta Leggio** from the NGV. The workshop was a follow-up to the Getty-sponsored, Photon workshop they attended in 2003. Colleagues from the NGV, State Library of Victoria, Museum Victoria, and the Fine Art Conservation Centre attended.

Paintings conservation staff are consulting on large-scale projects at Spencer St Station and Melbourne's famous Grossi Florentino restaurant, as well as continuing their association with the recently opened Tarrawarra Museum of Art at Yarra Glen. **Cushla Hill** is treating a Pignenit painting onsite at the State Library of Tasmania in March and will also treat a work for a National Trust property in Hobart. **Carrie Thomas** and **Jocelyn Evans** have begun extensive treatment of two 18th Century portraits. **Vanessa Kowalski** and **Cushla Hill** completed a condition survey of the Ellis Rowan wall paintings at the Australian Club. **Caroline Fry** is treating works from some of Melbourne's old schools, including Lauriston and Geelong College. She is also treating a suite of Phillips Fox's from various clients.

Jocelyn and Vanessa have recently completed their internships in paintings conservation. Throughout the internship, Jocelyn and Vanessa have undertaken individual research projects and their findings will be presented at the forthcoming AICCM Paintings Symposium, to be held in Hobart. Jocelyn's research was an investigation into the use of dibasic esters in removing overpaint and Vanessa carried out analysis on the materials and techniques of Bauhaus artist, Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack. Jocelyn and Vanessa will be continuing in the paintings lab after completion of their internships.

Meanwhile **Lucy Harper** and **Nicole Tse** are continuing their PhD research. Nicole is setting up Electron Speckle Pattern



Interferometry (ESPI) in the School of Physics with Ann Roberts (her supervisor) to examine strain and stress deformations of canvas paintings in humid environments.

Caroline Fry will undertake a 3-month Arts Management residency at The Museum of Fine Arts, Hanoi. The residency is funded through Asialink and The Australia Council. The primary focus of the residency is the conservation treatment of a significant painting that has suffered extensive paint loss and other damages. During the residency Caroline will undertake a conservation survey of the condition of paintings in the collection, and conduct workshops on conservation and preservation issues for museum personnel, museum studies students and fine arts students.

**Holly Jones-Amin** has joined us to coordinate the objects fee for service program after spending two and a half years working for the Heritage Conservation Centre in Singapore. Since her arrival, Holly has been assisting **Marcelle Scott** with preparation for the new academic programs and the Telematics project, an on-line education program developed for regional galleries and museums, including writing and starring in a handling video with Jude Fraser. **Caroline Kyi** and **Denis Cahill** are assisting Marcelle with the teaching programs. Some of you may know that the Ian Potter Museum of Art is closed for 12 months to undertake building works. **Penny Byrne** has been appointed as Relocations Manager to coordinate a team of packers for the relocation of the entire collection. Finally, **Robyn Sloggett** and **Sally Carew-Reid** presented the Graduate Certificate in Art Authentication in February.

## The Fine Art Conservation Centre

**Andrew Thorn**, Artcare, has been working on exhibitions at the National Gallery of Victoria, State Library of Victoria and the Shrine of Remembrance.

**Caroline Kyi** has recently completed a preliminary investigation into the entrance hall wall painting scheme at Campaspe Park, Goornong, for Heritage Victoria. This was done with the view to providing recommendations for future conservation interventions and management of the scheme in situ. The investigation involved the scientific examination and identification of selected original materials (supported by Andrew Thorn), investigations into the art history and iconography of the scheme (supported by Louise Bradley), assessment of the condition and documentation of the nature and extent of the visible scheme and a program of treatment testing.

**Sabine Cotte** completed cleaning and consolidation of a 13th century Tibetan thangka before travelling to Delhi to prepare a workshop for UNESCO on conservation of

Tibetan paintings in the Himalayas. The workshop will probably take place in September/October 2005 in Sikkim, a Himalayan kingdom north of India. Sabine has now linked her personal life to India with the arrival of newly adopted daughter Anika, 19 months, welcomed by Sabine, David and son Basile.

**Louise Bradley** is preparing sink mounts for a collection of friable works on paper and standard mounts for a collection of photographs. She will be attending the conference *From Classicism to Expressionism: A Synthetic Approach to the Frame*, in New York in March. Anyone interested should go to the New York University website: [www.scps.nyu.com/frames](http://www.scps.nyu.com/frames).

## Museum Victoria

2004 sees the Conservation Department poised to deliver major projects in the Museum's 150th birthday year (1854 – 2004). To celebrate this milestone anniversary, a comprehensive illustrated publication describing the Museum's history, its research, collecting and exhibition achievements will be released. In addition, a series of complex, diverse exhibits will be installed sequentially in 2004 at Melbourne Museum, Scienceworks and the Immigration Museum. The exhibits will highlight iconic and favourite collection objects and unveil significant, unseen items from the indigenous, natural science, technology, social history and library (rare books and artworks) collections. **Michelle Berry** is working on this multi-phase, distributed exhibition, which is called *Treasures*.

In mid December 2003, a well-attended celebration was held to mark the completion of conservation and first public display (in a very long time) of the Australian Bus, Rail and Tramways' Union banner. The display of the banner also marked the 150th anniversary of founding of the Victorian Railways. Current and past union leaders, Harold Mitchell, Head of the Museum's Board and Dr. Patrick Greene, Chief Executive Officer of Museum Victoria addressed the gathering. Attendees praised the high standard of the treatment performed on the banner (which had highly complex issues and was completed in record time) and the documentation of its conservation.

**Penny Nolton** is working on outward loan of collection items to the Australian National Maritime Museum and the National Wool Museum, and redevelopment of various exhibitions at Melbourne Museum. Penny has also taken over Sally Groom's former role as conservator for the *Bugs Alive!* project, which will see multiple live insect specimens, as well as heritage entomology collections, on display at Melbourne Museum. **Sally Groom** and Paul Hunt became the parents of a baby boy, Gabriel, in December.

**John Clarke, Veegan McMasters** and **David Coxsedg** are maintaining the integrated pest management program across Museum Victoria's campuses, and assisting with laboratory management and environmental monitoring.

We are happy to have **Ian Miles** with us for the duration of 2004. Ian has been working on various exhibition re-developments involving the geoscience, social history and technology collections. He is currently scoping specialist contract and in-house work required for re-assembly of an over-sized Fergusson & Urie stained glass window, which will be displayed as part of *Treasures*, and treatments of historic computers for re-development of an exhibition about historic computing, including the iconic CSIRAC computer.

**Catherine Lovelock** is working on the exhibition *Our Place – Indigenous Australia Now* - a joint production with the Powerhouse Museum, which will be displayed in mid 2004 at the Benaki Museum, Athens, as part of combined Australian government contributions to the Olympics in 2004. In mid February, Catherine will be leaving the role of Acting Manager of Conservation after 14 months and commencing in the position of Senior Conservator.

**Trish Stokes** will also cease her own period of acting higher duties (as Head of Strategic Collections and Information Management) and return to her role as Manager of Conservation. Trish has managed (somehow!) to provide advice concerning conservation and display of paper-based objects while acting higher duties. We look forward to Trish's return and stable staffing arrangements for this year!

## National Archives of Australia - Melbourne Branch

In July last year **Elizabeth Donovan** took leave without pay for two years and returned to Europe. At the beginning of January **Detlev Lueth** filled her shoes as head of Preservation and is now getting a handle on the many projects in the Melbourne branch. His current focus is assisting the planning for the relocation of 5,000 shelf meters to North Melbourne. The new reading room, opening in April, is a joint facility with Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in North Melbourne. The NAA will be taking up some of the storage space vacated by the NGV in the Victorian Archives Centre repository. Detlev is also working on a small treasures exhibition as part of the opening celebrations of the reading room.

**Sally Kneebone** is currently project managing four large in-house repackaging projects. Last year the lab was upgraded and refurbished to provide a bigger and more flexible workspace, however the new lab is now slightly crowded with 15 contract staff working on repackaging. These contractors are working through a series of Alien

registration forms from 1916-1922, Navy correspondence files from 1918 - 1963, Aboriginal newspaper clippings from 1926 - 1972 and British Phosphate Commission photographs and negatives from 1887 - 1984.

**Chris Loretto** has been project managing two digitization projects as well as researching the preservation of NAA microfilm by direct duplication vs. digitizing. The main scanning project is one of several series. An outside service provider has completed the first series consisting of more than 40,000 records relating to the Register of Casualty forms of Enemy POWs and Internees held in camps in Australia from 1939 -1047. The second, slightly smaller, scanning project has been carried out in-house. The project consists of several series of large format records (maps, plans and poster) relating to Camouflage Posters, Army Defense Maps and Plans and Army Inventions (blueprints and tracings).

**Rosemary Reddick** has been project managing our ABC television film project. This project required inspecting for vinegar syndrome, rewinding and rehousing 40,000 items. A similar project was also carried out on our aerial film holdings, which included preservation-copying items at risk. One of the interesting findings of these two projects was that we have less vinegar affected films than our Sydney office and that it's mainly in the sound component of the collection.

**Libby Melzer** is still working as an AYAD volunteer in the Philippines but is expected back in April.

## National Gallery of Victoria

The past three months have seen the Paintings Conservation studio focused on gallery preparation for the December opening of NGV:International at St Kilda Road. This involved the completion of major treatments such as Tiepolo's *Banquet of Cleopatra* (by **John Payne** and **Carl Willis**), Valentin Prinsep's *The flight of Jane Shore* (**Michael Varcoe-Cocks**) and Mark Rothko's *No. 37, Red* (**Linda Waters**). Additionally, much time was spent in the galleries cleaning glass, dusting paintings and frames and assisting with the hanging of the collection. The Gallery opening festivities coincided with the launch of Professor Jaynie Anderson's large monograph of the *Banquet of Cleopatra*, to which John and Carl contributed a chapter on Tiepolo's painting technique. Michael has been cleaning Rupert Bunny's *Portrait of Dame Nellie Melba* and organising the upcoming AICCM Paintings SIG Symposium in Hobart. Carl is carrying out treatment on a group of 19th Century European paintings for display in the NGV's new Salon gallery.

Frames conservation has begun the 'next phase' with the development of a new work program, addressing

operational issues associated with two display venues and off-site storage, and completing the set-up of work spaces. Late last year **Noel Turner** completed the removal of bronze over-paint from the frieze-frame-section for the painting *The Wheel of Fortune* by Edward Burne-Jones. This was followed by skilful toning of the new gilding on the reproduction sections of this frame, completed in time for the opening of NGV:I. Also for the opening of NGV:I, **Holly McGowan-Jackson** undertook extensive consolidation and repair of losses for the frame on *The Pybus Family* by Nathaniel Dance (c.1769). Back in September, **Lisette Burgess** flew to Boston as a courier to collect two NGV paintings from the exhibition *Thomas Gainsborough 1727-1788*. The visit gave Lisette the opportunity to continue her research on the framing of Gainsborough paintings. Recently, Lisette has been cleaning and repairing an original Isaac Whitehead frame for a von Guerard painting. **Suzi Shaw** spent three weeks in Japan studying Japanese lacquer conservation (see course review). She has now stopped itching her lacquer rash and dreaming of the perfect sashimi and has since been working on furniture such as replacing missing veneers on a Thonet bentwood chair. Suzi has commenced phase 2 of the cover-making project for upholstered furniture in storage.

In the textiles lab, **Bronwyn Cosgrove** and **Kate Douglas** have been preparing for the next textiles show at NGV:Australia, entitled *Pins and Needles*, as well as settling into the new lab. *Pins and Needles* explores decorative techniques in the Australian textile collection and for the first time at NGV:A, the exhibition is breaking out of the showcases and onto the walls. After installing *Pins and Needles*, Bronwyn and Kate will be launching into the changeover show at NGV:I called *Passion for Fashion* which concentrates on works by Chanel, Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McClaren. Another project taking place is the set up of accessible study storage in the viewing room, which is next to the textiles store at NGV:I. This will be used to allow easy access for public wishing to see the lace and Coptic collections of the NGV. Bronwyn has continued to supervise the relocation of collections from North Melbourne to St Kilda Road.

Objects conservation welcomes new staff member **Marika Strohschieder**. Work in the objects lab has been focused on treatment, condition checking and mount making in preparation for the opening of NGV:I. Marika has worked on several polychrome sculptures, prepared mounts and treated outdoor sculpture, while **Trude Ellingsen** was involved in the maintenance of several contemporary artworks – a component of one being a living 6 foot tall bamboo! **Catherine Millikan** has been working on mount requirements, lighting issues and installation of the artworks at NGV:I.

The paper and photographic conservators have been settling into the new lab; a large, light and rather oddly shaped space that we are learning to love. **Lyndsay Knowles** has spent considerable time trying to get the lengthy defect list attended to and other aspects of the fitout completed. In addition she and **Angeletta Leggio** have been involved in relocating the collection from North Melbourne to St Kilda Rd. **Ruth Shervington** has been treating a Pierre Bonnard work – a 4-panel screen colour lithograph, for an upcoming exhibition. The treatment has involved reducing distortion of the primary support, some minor repairs and reframing. **Belinda Gourley** has undertaken the treatment of a number of nineteenth century French works on paper and has treated a folding fan made of paper. Angeletta has been preparing large colour photographs for framing, and completing minor treatments on a number of gelatin silver photographs. Angeletta has been selected to participate in the *Damaged and Deteriorated Photographic Print Materials: Compensation for Loss* workshop funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and hosted by the J.Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in March.

Exhibitions conservation has had a busy few months with *World Rush* and *Blue Poles* our opening exhibitions at NGV:I and *Lionel Lindsay: An Antipodean in Spain* and *Xin Nian* at NGV:A. **Helen Privett** has been pondering on whether artists have ever heard the expression 'less is more' after condition reporting two works on paper – one with 258 components, the other with 314. **Catherine Earley** has been on holidays and has returned refreshed for the coming (hectic!) year.

## State Library of Victoria

As part of the building and restoration project of the State Library of Victoria, the La Trobe Reading Room, housing the Australian collection, has been restored. Within the dome there will be two new galleries for exhibitions. The first will open in November 2004, housing a permanent exhibition titled *Views from the Dome: a history of Victoria*. Design and planning of the 600 square metre space is currently taking place, as is a lighting audit to identify and avoid potential lighting problems, now that the glass ceiling has been reinstated. An estimated 400 objects have been selected and will be supported by multimedia presentations. The conservation team is presently assessing treatment requirements for the items selected.

The Redmond Barry Reading Room, formerly known as McCoy Hall, has opened for general reference collections, serials, etc., which are on open access to the public. In its last incarnation this was the space used by the NGV on Russell Street.

Cowan Gallery has been refurbished, formerly a temporary reading room and Stawell Gallery. It now houses 150 items, largely paintings, from the Library's La Trobe Picture Collection, on display as a group for the first time. The paintings are a pictorial history of Victoria from the time of the separation of the states. They range from William Strutt's *Black Thursday*, a record of the major bushfires that raged through Victoria in February 1851, to bucolic scenes of exant country estates, and historical and contemporary depictions of Melbourne. **Virginia Dahlenburg** has spent the last 6 years coordinating the conservation of this unique collection through to the final installation in Cowan Gallery.

In Murdoch Gallery, *Australian Modern: the Architecture of Stephenson and Turner* comprises over 90 architectural drawings and photographs from the Library's collection, all of which required treatment to varying degrees.

**Jane Hinwood** coordinated the exhibition, ably assisted by **David Harris** and **Sarah Haselton**. Opening in July, *Age of Cartooning* celebrates 150 years of The Age newspaper cartoons. Over 100 objects have been selected for this exhibition. *Gardenesque cultivating the garden state* is the final show planned for Murdoch this year and will be opening at the same time as the Dome exhibition. It will be largely drawn from the SLV collection and will include books, manuscripts, posters, maps, and photographs. Our exhibition schedule has dramatically increased with the new gallery spaces coming on line. **Amanda Wild** is coordinating the exhibition and loans program.

**Shelley Jamieson** commenced as our Conservation Coordinator in January. She has the enviable task of planning the workflow through the lab. Shelley was previously in Canberra at the NAA and AIATSIS.

**Katrina Ben** returns from maternity leave in March.

**Jean Holland** and **Jacky Chapman** have been packaging of the Coles Myer archive prior to its move to improved storage facilities. The material is varied and includes documents, photographs, realia, ledgers and costumes. The highlights were Moomba costumes, a 1954 Gown of the Year, and a mauve 1865 wedding dress.

**Helen McPherson** is coordinating the stabilisation of collection material in the Arts library, prior to its move to a new home in the building redevelopment. Under Helen's direction, a team of three staff has assessed six kilometres of monographs, serials, pamphlets, microfiche, microfilm, records, cassettes, reel-to-reel tapes, videos, CDs, kits, posters and realia. Using a wide range of inert preservation materials, over 8,000 items have been packaged to the minimum standards that the State Library sets for its collections. One of the largest tasks involved constructing 800 phase boxes for fragile elephant folios.

And finally, after three years in our current space, conservators and some preservation technicians are on the move again to two sites within the Library, for an estimated period of two years. The move is planned to take place in February. Fit out and refurbishment of a long awaited purpose built Conservation lab space is now in planning.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Preservation Services

Preservation Services is a Western Australia based company undertaking a wide range of conservation activities. It is the only private conservation studio in Perth with a walk-in shop front and is engaged in undertaking treatments and provides services for private individuals as well as the corporate and institutional sector.

A lesson has been learnt recently about the value of the "professional conservator" when it comes to hanging valuable works of art. **Paul Malone** was called upon to remove and restore a large Adam Cullen work on canvas that an architect had given to his carpenter to hang. The carpenter drilled a hole in each corner (through the canvas and the stretcher bar) and screwed it to the wall using self-countersinking screws. He then proceeded to retouch the screw heads! Not surprisingly, the damage to the canvas and stretcher was quite extensive. Recovering the bell shape stretch at each corner of the canvas was not without difficulty, however the result was very satisfying. Client and work have now recovered and are looking most pleased.

**Kate Papierniak** was challenged by the restoration of a miniature prayer book with acetate / paper laminated covers. The difficulties in dealing with deteriorated plastic were not lost on her, with the problem further compounded by the addition of many generations of pressure sensitive tapes. The frustration in dealing with the miniature was relieved by spending a week in Broome mixing business with pleasure. Kate was surveying the Broome Historical Society and Museum collection to develop a Preservation and Disaster Management Plan. Despite the fact that it was the middle of the wet season, some pleasure was had.

# Urushi 2003 - International Course on Conservation of Japanese Lacquer

16th September – 3rd October 2003, Tokyo & Kiso region, Japan

Suzi Shaw, Conservator of Frames and Furniture, National Gallery of Victoria

*Urushi*, the Japanese term for the tree sap collected from *Rhus verniciflua*, has been an interest of mine since my university research project. So it was with great excitement that I was selected to attend a course devoted to *urushi* in Japan over September and October last year. *Urushi 2003*, the third workshop jointly organised by ICCROM and the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (Tokyo), was attended by seven conservators, two conservation scientists, and a Museum director. The three weeks were spent attending lectures and workshops presented by scientists, artists and conservators, and included a three-day excursion to the mountainous region of Kiso to observe lacquerware workshops.

We were an enthusiastic group of participants from Iran, Italy, UK, USA (2), Romania, Thailand, Vietnam, and Germany, with several Japanese students also observing lectures and workshops. Several participants had never been overseas, so the generally high-tech world of Tokyo was both a shock and constant source of amazement. Every evening was spent mastering chopsticks and trying new foods. As I was the only participant who spoke some Japanese, I benefited from much needed language practice ordering food, sake and beer. Other than eating, we managed to squeeze in visits to art galleries, paulownia box shops, lacquer supply shops and the famed Tokyu Hands – 7 floors of art and craft supplies!

Similar to the ICCROM course on Japanese paper conservation (also run by the Institute), the average day was impeccably organised and structured with lectures held in the morning, followed by practical workshops in the afternoon. The lectures covered the topics of lacquer history, packing and handling (mostly traditional methods), the chemistry of *urushi*, the concept of Japanese *urushi* restoration, digital x-radiography of lacquerware, reproduction of ancient techniques, and the restoration of various *urushi* objects as part of the *Project of Conservation of Works of Japanese Art in Foreign Collections*. The workshops gave participants the opportunity to produce three items of *shikki* (lacquerware) and appreciate the skills required for both their manufacture and repair. A sample board was made showing the various ground layers before decoration is applied, and two panels learning decorative *makie* techniques such as *hiramakie*, inlaying *raden*

(abalone shell), *nashiji*, and polishing.

Skin contact with *urushi* can have varying reactions depending on the individual's susceptibility to allergies, previous contact with *urushi*, and, lets face it, genes. We heard many, and sometimes conflicting stories about how to treat the rash, how to build up immunity by drinking *urushi* in soup, and conversely, how immunity cannot be obtained. Half of our class, including myself, managed to get a very minor lacquer rash. Two participants unfortunately ended up briefly visiting hospital as the rash had spread to their chests, feet and eyes – their rash would start throbbing whenever they walked past a room containing liquid *urushi*. Apart from not scratching while the rash disappears over approximately two weeks, the final treatment option is the use of cortisone creams (although some claim this prolongs and intensifies the symptoms).

While in Tokyo I visited, unannounced, the temple of the 500 Arhats (*Gohyaku Rakanji*), which held lacquered sculptures that were the focus of my University research project. To my surprise, I was greeted by the Abbot of the temple, who was holding a copy of my project under his arm. For two hours a Japanese friend and I were shown past treatments on the 282 remaining sculptures and told the history of the temple. Finally, I was shown how to pray so that I could return to Australia to pray in front of the two lacquer sculptures from this temple owned by the National Gallery of Australia. It was, without a doubt, one of the most memorable and spiritual moments of my trip.

The final few workshops were devoted to Japanese conservation treatments. These included processes such as

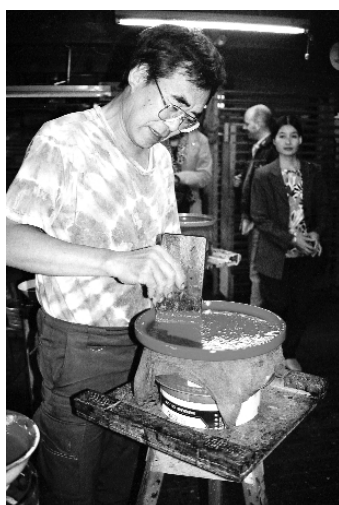


Participants getting the feel for the required consistency of a lacquer ground layer. Suzi Shaw third from left.

cleaning with brushes and water, and applying Japanese *Gampi* paper strips with wheat starch paste to temporarily secure lifting or cracked lacquer. We also tried the process of *urushi gatame* where diluted *urushi* is wiped repeatedly over a deteriorated surface to retard further deterioration of either the surface or the foundation. The most useful workshop was learning the use of the *shimbari*, a framework into which the object is placed and thin bamboo sticks are spanned between the object and framework to apply pressure onto an area where a consolidant has been introduced. This was one of the many devices created by Yoshihiko Yamashita whose unique and exceptional treatments (and his use of the word 'magic' to mean 'after treatment') earned him the nickname "The Magician".

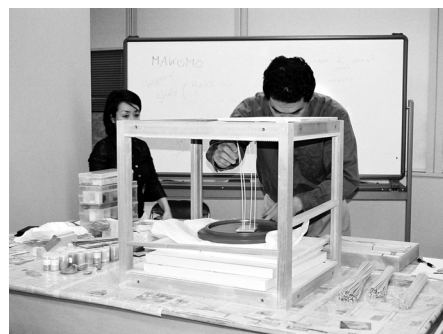
A panel of specialists, who follow a similar code of ethics to our own, closely monitors the treatments carried out at the Institute on important cultural property. One distinct difference was that the majority of the conservation treatments included the use of *urushi*, an insoluble material once cured. Although the Institute is not averse to using synthetic materials, they find the characteristics of *urushi* superior. The tension was palpable whenever one of the participants raised the issue of reversibility. Personally, I still have reservations about using *urushi* in treatments, however I am eager to use this material due to its established excellent aging qualities (when kept in a museum environment) and sympathy to the original materials. One promising technique developed by Yamashita-san was the ability to form thin films of *urushi* on glass, peel them off and then adhere them to the object using Paraloid B72. However, this treatment has only been attempted a few times.

In the middle of the course, we spent three days in the Kiso region of Nagano prefecture visiting lacquer museums, workshops and processing centres as well as national parks. This trip really put everything into context by seeing



Artist applying red *urushi* to a plate decorated in *tsuishu* technique.

so many steps in the manufacturing process such as the *kurome* process of preparing lacquer for use, identifying trees used for the wood cores, as well as a variety of lacquer techniques – *chinkin*, *magemono*, *tsuishu*. We were fortunate to stay in a small inn with *tatami* mat rooms, *futons* to sleep on, communal hot baths, with evenings filled with delicious local foods and *sake* donated by the *Urushi* Workers Union. Also of



*Shimbari* being used to lay down lifting lacquer on a plate.

interest were the 1998 Winter Olympic medals, which were made in Kiso by coating metal with *urushi* and *makie* designs. We also learnt how to shop Japanese style, i.e. very quickly, for lacquerware.

At the end of the course we were handed a 15 page feedback form. As a result of our comments, they are likely to include two Japanese participants in the next course to be held in 2005. We gained a lot of insight from the several Japanese students who observed the workshops and thought the class would benefit greatly from their active participation. As with the Japanese Paper Conservation course, the NRICP are hoping to organise a follow-up course in a year's time for participants to discuss how they have been able to apply what they have learnt. And finally, although we all acknowledged the importance of learning how lacquerware is constructed, we hoped that the practical conservation treatment component of the course would be increased, as it had done from the last course held in 2001.

I would like to thank the NRICP (Tokyo) for their generosity (I came home with about 10kg of books), in particular Hiroshi Kato, and also for their extraordinary organisation with ICCROM of such an inspiring and informative course. I sincerely thank them for awarding me a scholarship that covered the majority of course costs. We could not have learnt so much if not for the wonderful translating skills of Michiko Matsubara and the assistance of Ryoko Sudo and Shiomi Saito during the workshops (and for plying me with cold & flu tablets!). I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Ian Potter Foundation and National Gallery of Victoria for jointly funding my participation, and to the NGV Conservation Department who were generous to allow me leave at such a busy time.



# **Book Review: A Guide to the Preventive Conservation of Photograph Collections**

## **By Bertrand Lavédrine (The Getty Conservation Institute: Los Angeles, 2003)**

Katy Glen, The Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation

The Getty have published the English version of this comprehensive book by the director of the Centre de Recherches sur la Conservation des Documents Graphiques, Bertrand Lavédrine, in collaboration with Jean-Paul Gandolfo and Sibylle Monod. It was originally published in 2000, in French. The authors systematically cover the basic tenets of the preventive conservation of photographic material. An abundance of images throughout are used to illustrate points from the text and are often accompanied by lengthy boxes of extra information.

Part One, entitled 'Understanding,' proposes that we need to understand the vulnerability of objects in order to have an impact on their future. The first chapter is aimed at collection managers, to teach them how to identify symptoms of deterioration. A short paragraph each on the causes of image fading, sulfiding and staining, yellowing, redox spots and silver mirroring, accompanied by excellent images of examples, provides useful preliminary information. The section on colour photographs concentrates on dye fading and looks at the deleterious effects of light as well as dark storage, and links the rate of dye deterioration to processing quality and environmental conditions, and the rate of fading to light intensity and UV content. For binder degradation only the problems associated with gelatin and its hygroscopic nature (curling, mould) are discussed. The section on bases is more expansive, listing the five stages of deterioration of both cellulose nitrate and cellulose acetate as well as a useful table for identifying film bases. A discussion of cellulose triacetate and the autocatalytic deterioration phenomenon is embellished by reference to the accelerated aging tests that allow approximate determinations to be made as to the rate of vinegar syndrome occurring in certain environmental conditions. The characteristics and drawbacks of polyester, which has a lifespan of several hundred years, are examined, with a final note on a new type of polyester, poly(ethylene naphthalate).

A second chapter on 'Standards' explains national and international standards relevant to photography and

audiovisual material, which now also encompass digital information and computer hardcopy. The concept of 'life expectancy' is introduced, whereby material can be assigned a life expectancy, or LE, value that represents the estimated time for which information remains accessible at 23°C and 50% RH when the material is stored in the dark. The Arrhenius relationship on which this concept is based is explained, complete with a formula that establishes the correlation between temperature and time. The limitations of this model are also briefly explored. The specific problems of computer print-outs, such as ink jet prints, are mentioned, calling for the need for appropriate test methods that address various issues such as humidity-fastness and gas fading. The development of the PAT test for selecting preservation materials for photographs is covered in some detail. A list of standards for storage of archive and library documents is provided to guide those responsible for setting up photographic archives.

Part Two is entitled 'Protection' and tackles practical issues related to enclosures, environment and monitoring collections. This is the longest part of the book and is packed with comprehensive information. Contact materials, such as filing envelopes and boxes, are called level 1 in terms of protection. Of particular interest are the comments regarding alkaline reserve in paper products used for storing photographs. While the standards have recommended storing colour photographs in paper with no alkaline reserve, no damage has yet been reported when papers with an alkaline reserve that have passed the PAT are used under normal storage conditions. The use of glassine is also discussed. It was banned by ISO Standard 18902 for archiving purposes after being used for many decades, due to concerns about the glassine becoming acidic, possibly containing plasticisers and the degradation of adhesives used to cement the seam of enclosures. A higher quality glassine is now being offered, however the author will not condone the appropriateness of its use. One problem that remains is that in the event of flood, glassine paper adheres permanently to the emulsion if left to dry. Polyester, polyethylene, polypropylene and polystyrene are

listed as the few usable polymers for the storage of photographs, provided they have not undergone any chemical surface treatment.

Gas-solid interactions are explained in some detail to demonstrate the actions of pollutants on a silver image. Adsorption phenomena are also explained by way of introducing a discussion on the use of pre-conditioned silica gel in small airtight enclosures, as well as acid scavenging materials such as zeolites and oxygen scavenging materials such as Ageless®, which are both widely used. Microchamber® papers and boards (also Alphamat® and Artcare®) are composed of paper layers, with activated charcoal and molecular sieves in the middle. Preliminary tests are positive as these materials appear to be effective at eliminating corrosive products and filtering airborne pollutants. Useful advice is provided on the types of enclosures, augmented by a flow chart that aims to aid the choice of an enclosure material depending on the object, its environment and frequency of use. In terms of storage facilities, a few basic principles are reviewed with the essential factors highlighted. A table lists the materials, such as paint, floor coverings, and furniture, that are recommended and those that are not. Aspects of environmental engineering, including thermal insulation, ventilation and climate control are discussed broadly.

A section on 'Environment' looks at the impact of air quality, temperature and relative humidity on the life expectancy of photographs, and their synergic relationship. Humidity has varying effects on each component of a photograph, depending on its moisture content. Gelatin can absorb up to 20% of its weight in water vapour whereas polyester bases show little reaction to relative humidity variations. Dyes deteriorate four times faster at 60% than at 15% RH, while halving the relative humidity level at which cellulose triacetate bases are stored doubles their life expectancy. Desiccation of materials in a low RH environment can cause problems such as loss of flexibility and curling. A table is provided with the recommended temperature and humidity conditions for various photographic materials. While the difficulty of determining an appropriate relative humidity level for a mixed collection containing prints, film and glass plates is acknowledged, 30-40% RH may be considered safe for the majority of photographic records. Methods of dehumidification and humidification are suggested, alongside diagrams and tables, and the measuring of relative humidity is also discussed. The speed of a chemical reaction is exponentially linked to temperature. A table provides a calculation for the increase in the longevity of materials as a function of the drop in temperature, and demonstrates the advantage of storing film and colour photographs at low temperatures. The importance of relative humidity control and acclimatising chambers when

using cold storage is emphasised. An informative section on air pollutants – sources, effects and how to achieve, monitor and maintain good air quality concludes the section on environment.

A chapter on 'Monitoring Collections' begins with the basic tenets of collection management. An assessment of the environment and the condition of the collection can lead to priorities for action. In the section on disaster response, information on preliminary salvage operations and recovery appears alongside a flow chart on the emergency treatment procedure for photograph collections after a flood. This leads to a comprehensive section on mould with the conditions required for mould growth succinctly explained. Developing a fumigation treatment that is effective against microorganisms and harmless to humans and the environment seems to be impossible. The author wonders whether using effective curative strategies leads to a lack of attention to preventive strategies. Information on insects covers detection and methods of eradication, such as anoxia, or oxygen deprivation, and air enriched with carbon dioxide. An integrated pest management is lauded as the best approach to effect long-term change while avoiding or minimizing the use of pesticides. A checklist is provided as a starting point for building an IPM program.

Part Three, entitled 'Exhibition', devotes a chapter to light and one to mounting and exhibition. A fairly complex introduction to methods of qualifying and quantifying light leads to practical information on the UV emission of various light sources. The chapter on mounting and exhibition goes into the specifics of the deleterious effects of light. A table is provided listing maximum recommended lighting values for objects depending on their sensitivity to light, with photographs classified as particularly light-sensitive. Spectral composition and the tools with which components can be measured are mentioned, as well as ways to filter radiation without excessively altering the quality of the light. The 'total light exposure' system is explained with respect to two basic laws – the law of reciprocity, whereby briefly exposing a photograph to very strong luminous intensity is the same as long exposure at weak intensity, and the cumulative effects of light. A table is provided that divides photographs into three categories of light sensitivity and offers recommendations for annual total light exposure. The section on mounting looks at the issue of overall mounting which is common with large contemporary photographs.

Part Four, 'Dissemination and Access,' is introduced with the startling statistic that an estimated 90% of silent films and 50% of sound films produced before 1950 have been lost. Copies become a necessity when uncontrolled or excessive use is leading to their deterioration or when material is intrinsically unstable. Analog reformatting is given scant



coverage due to the spread of digital technology and the enthusiasm it has aroused. The author argues that digital media cannot be considered a substitute for purposes of long-term preservation, and preservation of the original must take precedence. Hardware or format obsolescence is cited as the main problem and the preservation of 'digital cultural heritage' must be a dynamic process involving technology watching and ongoing financing for data transfer to new systems and updating of information. An interesting discussion of authenticity of digital files introduces the idea of 'allographic' and 'autographic' art. For autographic art, authenticity rests in the material object itself, whereas authentic allographic art can be considered the unaltered transmission of the original. It follows that authenticity has different meanings for analog and digital material. Some advice is also provided on the technicalities of digital image capture, particularly resolution and compression. Magnetic and optical storage formats are compared, covering their structure as well as physical and chemical deterioration. Optical digital disks have a greater life expectancy than magnetic media. There are still lots of unknowns with regard to natural aging however, due to the various qualities available and their relatively recent dominance of the market. Recommendations for storage conditions are provided.

The final section deals with technical and practical information, with several pages devoted to the processing of black and white photographs for permanence followed by a shorter section on colour photographs, as processing is fairly standardized and automated. 'Computer Output Printing' is dealt with last. The technique involved in the three basic categories of printer, ink jet, electrostatic and thermal, are explained with an emphasis on ink jet which is illustrated by clear diagrams and photomicrographs. The author concedes that while extensive studies are yet to appear, it may be that the dark stability of some ink jet prints can rival that of chromogenic colour prints. Nevertheless there are also some alarming lightfastness results for particular ink and paper combinations. Several factors that contribute to print longevity are succinctly summarised leaving the reader with some idea of the complexity of the stability issue.

Although much of the information covered in this book will be familiar to conservators, the author also grapples with the more complex technical aspects of many issues related to preventive conservation, aided by plentiful images and clear presentation of tables and charts. The length of this review perhaps attests to the wealth of useful information offered by the book, which would be a valuable resource to those dedicated to the care of photographic collections.

## **BIGSTUFF: CARE OF LARGE TECHNOLOGY OBJECTS**

Australian War Memorial

Canberra, Australia

**29 September – 1 October 2004**

**BigStuff: Care of Large Technology Objects** - a three day workshop devoted to the care and management of large technology objects. For the convenience of delegates it will take place immediately before Metals 2004: Triennial Metals Conservation Conference of the Metals Working Group of ICOM-CC and will be hosted by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, Australia.

### **Program**

**Day 1:** Registration and welcome

Papers

Tours of workshop and storage areas in the Memorial's Treloar large technology facility

**Day 2:** Poster presentations and trade displays

Papers

Tour of Memorial large technology displays

**Day 3:** Open discussion – Future directions in large technology conservation and management

Papers

Summary and farewell.

### **Registration and contact information:**

The cost of the workshop will be \$AU132. For more information and registration forms contact Alison Wain, Australian War Memorial, GPO Box 345, ACT 2601, Australia  
alison.wain@awm.gov.au

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## Objects

### CALL FOR PAPERS

AICCM Objects SIG Symposium + Workshop 2005  
Mid 2005 (Date to be confirmed)  
Venue: Melbourne Museum, Carlton Gardens, Melbourne, Victoria

This symposium aims to bring together conservators with a specialisation in the broad area of Objects Conservation. It is planned that the symposium will comprise a lecture program including general and themed papers and a keynote address. The symposium will be followed by hands-on workshop program(s), with limited registration numbers, focusing on plastics and polymers in conservation.

Abstracts of up to 400 words are invited for the lecture program on either general objects conservation issues or the focus theme of polymers and synthetic materials. Please submit abstracts for papers by 31st May 2004 to:

Amanda Pagliarino  
Queensland Art Gallery  
PO Box 3686  
South Brisbane Qld 4101  
Email: amanda.pagliarino@qag.qld.gov.au

### Book & Paper and Photon

Sydney Symposium 2004  
A reminder to all Book & Paper and Photon colleagues that Collaboration and Connections is very close now: Thursday 1 - Saturday 3 April 2004 (with registration and welcome

reception at the Art Gallery of NSW on the evening of Wednesday 31 March). If you have not registered already please get in quickly as there is a limited number of places available.

As you will have seen from the program there is an exciting array of speakers, presentations and workshops on offer. Check out the website for registration and latest details at [www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/aiccm](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/aiccm)

Looking forward to seeing you in Sydney.

### Tape Removal Workshop – to be confirmed

A proposed tape removal workshop is planned to be held at the Queensland Art Gallery in August 2004. The workshop presenters are Linda Stiber, Library of Congress and Elissa O'Loughlin, Walters Art Gallery. Both Linda and Elissa are the authors of *A closer look at pressure sensitive adhesive tapes: update on conservation strategies* in the Manchester 1992 Papers, The Institute of Paper Conservation.

This workshop will examine issues such as degradation patterns and identification of acrylic and rubber based tapes, technical and instrumental analysis and current innovative methods of removal. Both Linda and Elissa have taught similar tape removal master classes America, Europe and Britain. Refer to following reviews of previous workshops; Paper Conservation News No 92 December 1999 pp 8-9 and Paper Conservation News No 100 December 2001 pp 8-9.

The workshop will take place over 5 days. Contact: [samantha.shellard@qag.qld.gov.au](mailto:samantha.shellard@qag.qld.gov.au)

# An oral history of the conservation and preservation of movable cultural heritage profession in Australia.

Jan Lyall

As part of the Oral History Program of the National Library of Australia, Jan Lyall is conducting a series of interviews that aims to document the history of the conservation and preservation of movable cultural heritage profession in Australia.

## Background

The trend, observed in most developed countries, for the conservation and preservation profession to grow significantly over the past fifty years, is also apparent in Australia. From its rudimentary beginnings in the late nineteenth century, through the slow but steady activity in the 1960's, to the rapid expansion from the late 1970's onwards, there has been a remarkable development of this profession, which embraces both the arts and the sciences. There are now between three and four hundred conservators of movable cultural heritage working in Australia. In addition to holding key positions in Australia, Australian conservation and preservation experts are recognised internationally and many have helped shape international programs and organisations.

Already some key players in this development have died and many individuals who have played leading roles in the development of the profession are already retired or will be retiring shortly.

## Introduction

Very few of the very early professionals, who set up what were most frequently called restoration studios or workshops, are still alive today. However, the National Library of Australia holds an important interview with William Boustead (1912-1999), which was recorded by Hazel de Berg on November 12, 1975. Many view Boustead, who established the conservation program at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and who set up a cadetship program to train conservators, as the father of conservation in Australia.

There is no doubt that the issues raised and the recommendations made in the Pigott Report *Museums in Australia*, 1975, were instrumental in the development of conservation training, conservation facilities and the conservation profession in Australia.

These two documents will be used to divide the group of interviewees into two groups: those who were active in the formative years 1960 - 1980 and those who are or were active in the rapid growth period 1980 - present. Many of the early players are still active today and so their stories will span both periods.

## Discussion

The issues raised in the de Berg interview are being explored further with the interviewees as is the situation before and after many recommendations from the Pigott Report were implemented. To obtain a balanced history it has been necessary to include, in addition to conservators, others such as activists, administrators, educators, librarians, archivists and curators who were closely associated with the profession. The challenge is to contain the number only to those who can make a significant contribution to the history. To date out of an initial list of about 50 key individuals, 10 have been interviewed.

The issues being addressed in the interviews are:

- Personal reason for involvement in profession: awareness of profession, employment, personal satisfaction, training, and ambition.
- Political action: on all levels - within an institution, with public servants and politicians, importance of events such as the Bicentennial, Centenary of Federation. Fighting for recognition and funding.
- Establishing laboratories: difficulties, conditions, hazards, staffing.
- Establishing the professional organisation: its growth and effectiveness.
- Education and training: in-house, formal tertiary training, volunteers, need for overseas training.
- Research: role in profession, importance of science and scientific knowledge, difficulties in obtaining resources for research.
- Ethics: value of existing Code of Ethics. Changes over time, changes between practice within an institution and in the private sector.
- International activity: relevance, support for participation, role in.
- Community awareness: importance, strategies for achieving, difficulties.
- Growth of profession: rise of preservation programs, advances in techniques, professional status, role within institutions, rise of private conservators, increase in training programs.
- Reflections on past and future: major achievements, personal recognition, regrets, predictions for the future.

It will not be necessary to cover all of these issues with each individual. Areas to be covered will depend on each individual's role in the profession.

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