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On Advocacy: Building consensus in post-normal times

MaryJo Lelyveld

ABSTRACT

Following a 2016 survey of the AICCM membership, advocacy was one of the most critical areas in need of development by the profession and area in which most members would like AICCM to focus its efforts. This paper will provide an overview of advocacy efforts within the Australian context in the areas of community and legislative advocacy. Using the 1973 National Seminar on Conservation of Cultural Material and the 1975 Piggott Report as its starting point, this paper will examine the nature and drivers of cultural materials conservation advocacy and its main proponents and points of leverage over the past 50 years.

Describing the change that you seek is one of cornerstones of effective advocacy. To date, the main justification for conservation support has been the 'to maintain cultural material in its current condition for present and future generations', a goal that has been described as having 'limited credence...if it is to avoid becoming too idealistic' (Hutchings and Cassar, 2006). Using the analogy of climate change, the paper proposes that through its development and consolidation the conservation profession has been more concerned with building scientific and technical consensus rather than the social and ideological consensus that is required to maintain relevance.

Adopting the post-normal framework used by both the cultural futurist Ziauddin Sardar and conservation ethicist Marcelle Scott, the paper explores the current context for conservation advocacy, one that is marked by 'chaos, complexity and contradictions' (Sardar, 2011). Using the Causal Layered Analysis framework developed by critical futurist Sohail Inayatullah, the paper concludes with options for advocacy narratives with which to build a robust advocacy platform in post-normal times.

Hutchings, J. and Cassar, M. (2006) 'A Soft Systems Framework for the Conservation for the Conservation management of Material Cultural Heritage' in *Systems Practice Action Research*. Vol 19 pp. 201-216

Sardar, Z. (2010) 'Welcome to post-normal times' in *Futures*. Vol. 42. No. 5 June 2010
Scott, M

BIOGRAPHY

MaryJo Lelyveld is the Coordinating Conservator at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). She graduated from the University of Canberra in 2002 with a Bachelor of Applied Science in the Conservation of Cultural Materials specialising in Paintings and completed her Masters in Strategic Foresight at Swinburne University in 2013.