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Preventive conservation—more than ‘dusting objects’? An overview of the development of the preventive conservation profession

Keywords

preventive conservation; conservation profession; conservation education; conservation job market; sustainability; environmental management

Introduction

Over the past several years, the heritage field has been confronting environmental and financial sustainability challenges which have been impacting our understanding of the role of preventive conservation in the conservation profession. Established practices for maintaining climatic conditions for objects are under review—not only those imposed by institutions in international loan agreements, but also, more generally, for collections on (semi-) permanent display and in storage. This article first explores the evolution of preventive conservation within the conservation profession and continues by examining how the conservation community is dealing with the sustainability challenge and the opportunities it presents. It is time to revisit our concept of preventive conservation and how we define and practise it, in order to check if it needs reshaping. The ideas presented here are a reflection based on personal experience and an assessment of where we are and where we might go.

I was trained as a textile conservator more than 20 years ago at the then State Training School for Conservators in Amsterdam. After several years as a practising textile conservator, I found myself drawn to a more ‘hands-off’ approach. Collection management and preventive conservation seemed better suited to my interests, and also provided job opportunities at a time when positions for textile conservators were scarce. Having worked since in a variety of jobs dealing with preventive conservation projects, education and advocacy within different heritage sectors (museums, historic houses, libraries and archives), I became the project manager of the Getty Conservation Institute’s Managing Collection Environment (MCE) initiative in December 2013. This initiative is a programme of scientific research, field studies, education and information dissemination, designed to respond to issues related to the management and control of collection environments in museums.¹

Being confronted in my career with situations where a lack of preservation strategies resulted in inefficient or inappropriate use of resources and ad hoc, short-term problem-solving decisions, at times I felt that preventive conservation was perceived by the moveable cultural heritage sector as nothing more than ‘dusting objects’.² Times have changed, but exactly how much? Is the conservation field responding to the modern day challenges of climate change and economic pressure? How do our jobs reflect that? Has the job market changed, presenting new and expanded opportunities for conservators to engage with these issues? And how is conservation education addressing the evolving role of conservators working in the area of preventive conservation?

These questions arise from a sense that, while advances have been made in the status of preventive conservation in the profession, progress has not

1 The Getty Conservation Institute, ‘Managing Collection Environments Initiative’, http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/education/managing/ (accessed 5 March 2015).

2 This refers to a comment made by an academic that preventive conservation was ‘nothing more than dusting objects’ and as such, was not considered academic enough for inclusion in a university conservation training programme.

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always been even. Why do I feel that preventive conservation is still considered a kind of afterthought, rather than a starting point? Is it clear to our allied professional colleagues (and to ourselves for that matter) that preventive conservation is more than just 'dusting objects'.

Because I was curious about the changes in the role, position and scope of preventive conservation as currently practised in the field of conservation, I created a snapshot from available internet resources, to provide the basis for understanding the state of the field. This was not meant to be a comprehensive study of preventive conservation as currently practised (although such a survey may well be in order), but the information gathered was useful in showing trends. Given the information that was most easily accessible, the snapshot formed was largely of preventive conservation as practised in museums, libraries and archives of the English-speaking world, particularly in the US and Europe.

My starting point was the Conservation DistList (consdistlist) archives, which were searched for any listing with 'preventive conservation' or similar phrasing, such as 'preventative' or 'collection care' in the post.³ This resulted in an overview of announcements for job vacancies, workshops, courses and publications. In order to get a more complete overview of the job market, all advertised positions in the archive over the period 1995–2014 were searched for elements of preventive conservation in their role. The websites of professional organisations such as the International Council of Museums—Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and the Institute of Conservation (Icon) were also analysed and links from these websites were followed through for additional information. The searches were mainly undertaken in English and the results therefore reflect what has happened in the international setting (represented by ICOM-CC and IIC), as well as more specifically in the US and Europe, which are also the geographic areas where I have had personal working experience.

In this paper an overview of the development of preventive conservation in the conservation profession is given, as reflected in official documents from professional organisations such as ICOM-CC, IIC, AIC and Icon, followed by the development of conservation education in general and of preventive conservation within educational programmes. A review of the job market over the last two decades then illustrates the changes in the profession in the field.

An overview of the development of preventive conservation in the profession

The searches provided an overview of milestones that were influential for the professionalisation of the conservation field as a whole and specifically for preventive conservation. Recognising that others have published more extensive reviews of the history of the profession, only a few are described here, specifically those that deal with the introduction of the terminology into the profession. Establishing the professional language is seen as proof of the introduction and acceptance of preventive conservation by the field.⁴

To start with how the terminology entered the profession, it is noteworthy that in ICOM-CC's document defining the conservation profession (1984) the term preventive conservation is not used.⁵ It makes however the distinction between 'preservation' and 'restoration'. The term preventive conservation found its way into ICOM-CC's vocabulary by the 1990s when it was used to name the Working Group that was initiated around 1993 in an attempt to consolidate several smaller working groups. First the 'Lighting and Climate Control WG' and the 'Care of Works of Art in Transit WG' merged, later joined by the 'Control of Biodeterioration WG'. In 1993, the three-year programme of the general interest group 'Preventive

³ Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (FAIC), 'Conservation DistList Archives', <http://cool.conservation-us.org/byform/mailling-lists/cdl/> (accessed 5 March 2015).

⁴ Sarah Staniforth, ed., *Historical Perspectives on Preventive Conservation* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2013); Simon Lambert, 'The Early History of Preventive Conservation in Great Britain and the United States (1850–1950)', *CeROArt* 9 (2014), <http://ceroart.revues.org/3765> (accessed 5 March 2015); Jane Henderson, 'Preventive Conservation in the UK: The Past and the Future', *La conservation préventive. Une démarche évolutive 1990–2010*, *Techné*

Conservation’ was created—interestingly enough already listing as one of its topics: ‘Resource-saving construction of new buildings for the storage and display of museum collections’.⁶ In the autumn of 1995 the Working Group Preventive Conservation published its first newsletter.

It was not until 2008 at the 15th Triennial Conference in New Delhi that the resolution ‘Terminology to characterize the conservation of tangible cultural heritage’ was adopted by the ICOM-CC membership.⁷ In this declaration the terms preventive conservation, remedial conservation and restoration are explained as all being part of conservation. Preventive conservation is described as:

‘all measures and actions aimed at avoiding and minimizing future deterioration or loss. They are carried out within the context or on the surroundings of an item, but more often a group of items, whatever their age and condition. These measures and actions are indirect—they do not interfere with the materials and structures of the items. They do not modify their appearance. Examples of preventive conservation are appropriate measures and actions for registration, storage, handling, packing and transportation, security, environmental management (light, humidity, pollution and pest control), emergency planning, education of staff, public awareness, legal compliance.’⁸

When reviewing IIC’s official documents, the terminology used does not distinguish between different aspects of conservation. The IIC *Articles of Association* covers it all under the term conservation, which includes material research (of objects and materials used in their treatment or care), understanding and controlling degradation, and any action taken to improve the conditions in which collections are kept.⁹ However, IIC uses the term preventive conservation specifically in the title of what is often considered the first international conference on the topic, *Preventive Conservation: Practice, Theory and Research*, held in Ottawa in 1994.¹⁰

Looking more closely at preventive conservation history within the US and the UK, it is worthwhile mentioning IIC’s ‘Regional Groups’, which were developed soon after it was established in 1950. The first were those in the UK (first known as the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (UKIC), which merged with four other UK organisations in 2005 to form the Institute of Conservation (Icon)) and in the US (first known as IIC American Group, now the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC)).

It was the IIC American Group that created the Murray Peace report, published in 1964, which is seen as the first professional code concerned with the conservation of movable cultural heritage.¹¹ The report does not identify preventive conservation or preservation as a specific responsibility, but it was the base from which the AIC Code of Ethics was later developed. The most recent update of this code (1994) describes preventive conservation as one of the principles that guide conservation professionals and others who are involved in the care of cultural property:

‘The conservation professional shall recognize a responsibility for preventive conservation by endeavoring to limit damage or deterioration to cultural property, providing guidelines for continuing use and care, recommending appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and encouraging proper procedures for handling, packing, and transport.’¹²

The importance of preventive conservation for the profession was further acknowledged by AIC in 2003, when its Board ratified the document *Defining the Conservator: Essential Competencies*, which described the essential capacities of a conservator, and preventive care is defined as one of these.¹³ In 2012, the AIC Board approved the Collection Care Network

n° 34 (2011) : 76–85, https://www.academia.edu/11719330/Preventive_conservation_in_the_UK_the_past_and_the_future (accessed 18 June 2015).

5 International Council of Museums—Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), ‘The Conservator-Restorer. A Definition of the Profession’, <http://www.icom-cc.org/47/about-icom-cc/definition-of-profession/> (accessed 22 June 2015).

6 International Council of Museums—Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), ‘Working Group Programs 1993–1996’.

7 International Council of Museums—Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), ‘Terminology to Characterize the Conservation of Tangible Cultural Heritage. Resolution Adopted by the ICOM-CC Membership at the 15th Triennial Conference, New Delhi, 22–26 September 2008’, ICOM-CC, http://www.icom-cc.org/54/document/icom-cc-resolution-terminology-english/?id=744#VOS_3ubF98E (accessed 5 March 2015).

8 ICOM-CC, ‘Terminology to Characterize the Conservation’.

9 The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), ‘Articles of Association (As Adopted by Special Resolution of the Company Passed on January 18th 2012) of The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works’, IIC, https://www.iiconservation.org/system/files/core_docs/3915-articles-of-association-as-agreed-at-2012-agm.pdf (accessed 5 March 2015).

10 Roy Ashok and Perry Smith, eds, *IIC Ottawa Congress: Preventive Conservation—Practice, Theory and Research* (London: International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works).

11 IIC-AG, *The Murray Peace Report: Standards of Practice* (1968), <http://www.conservation-us.org/docs/default-source/governance/murray-peace-report.pdf> (accessed 15 January 2016).

12 The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, ‘Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice’, <http://www.conservation-us.org/about-us/core-documents/code-of-ethics#.VOJiebF98F> (accessed 5 March 2015).

13 The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 'Defining the Conservator: Essential Competencies', AIC, <http://www.conservation-us.org/docs/default-source/governance/defining-the-conservator-essential-competencies.pdf> (accessed 5 March 2015).

14 The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 'Collection Care Network', <http://www.conservation-us.org/publications-resources/collection-care#CCN> (accessed 5 March 2015).

15 American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 'Collection Care Network'.

16 United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (UKIC), 'Code of Ethics and Rules of Practice of the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works', http://www.nigelcopsey.com/reports/training/training_ukic_ethics.pdf (accessed 5 March 2015).

17 UKIC, 'Codes of Ethics'.

18 UKIC, 'Codes of Ethics'.

19 Icon, The Institute of Conservation, <http://www.icon.org.uk> (accessed 15 September 2015).

20 Icon, The Institute of Conservation, 'Professional Accreditation. How to Become an Accredited Conservator', Icon, <http://icon.org.uk/what-is-conservation/careers-training/professional-accreditation> (accessed 10 October 2015).

21 Icon, The Institute of Conservation, 'PACR Professional Standards', Icon, http://icon.org.uk/system/files/pacr_professional_standards_1.pdf (accessed 10 October 2015).

22 Icon, 'PACR Professional Standards', 6.

23 European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, 'ECCO Professional Guidelines', <http://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e.c.c.o./professional-guidelines.html> (accessed 5 March 2015).

(CCN), thereby recognising that preventive conservation is of critical importance 'as the most effective means of promoting the long-term preservation of cultural property'.¹⁴ This network was established to support the 'growing number of conservators and collection care professionals with strong preventive responsibilities and interests'.¹⁵

In the UK, IIC's regional working group UKIC created a 'Code of Ethics', combined in one document with the 'Rules of Practice', which described the professional standards expected.¹⁶ It distinguished preservation and preventive conservation with a slight nuance:

'Preservation: all actions taken to retard deterioration of or prevent damage to cultural property. It involves controlling the environment and conditions of use and may include treatment in order to maintain an object, as nearly as possible, in an unchanging state. In the case of archival material, moving image and sound, this may include transferring to another material.

Preventive conservation: all actions taken to retard deterioration and prevent damage to cultural material through the provision of optimum conditions of storage, exhibition, use, handling and transport.'¹⁷

The importance given to preventive conservation by UKIC was clear from its presence as one of the first points in the Code of Ethics: 'Each Member shall consider the relevance of preventive conservation as a means of promoting the long-term welfare of cultural property'. Additionally, the Rules of Practice further stipulate that: 'Each Member should take into account preventive conservation before carrying out treatment on the cultural property'.¹⁸ Another clear indicator of the inclusion of and attention to preventive conservation in the wider heritage field in the UK was the formation of the Care of Collections Forum (CCF), established in 1993, which connected the different professionals involved in collections care, including conservators, curators, engineers, architects'. In 2005 the Institute of Conservation (Icon) was created from the merger of several professional groups, including CCF and UKIC.¹⁹

Icon administers the Professional Accreditation Scheme for Conservator-Restorers (PACR), which was first introduced in the UK in 1999.²⁰ In the most recent version of the professional standards used in the PACR programme, it recognises preventive conservation as a specialisation in which a conservator can be accredited.²¹ It applies to those who are mainly involved in this area of expertise, however it also demands a knowledge of treatments 'to be sufficient to know what kind of treatments are available and when they are appropriate'.²² Accreditation of a profession helps to set and maintain standards and the specific accreditation in preventive conservation is a clear sign of recognising it as a speciality within the larger field of conservation.

Looking at the wider European context, the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (ECCO) was established in 1991, composed of several national and international associations of conservator-restorers in the UK and Europe. The aim was to further professionalise conservation and its education in Europe. In 2002 the first ECCO Professional Guidelines were adopted by its General Assembly, in which it also confirmed the importance of preventive conservation as 'indirect action to retard deterioration and prevent damage by creating conditions optimal for the preservation of cultural heritage as far as is compatible with its social use'.²³ The 2003 ECCO Professional Guidelines (II): Code of Ethics adds to the previous guidelines the noteworthy article which describes that preventive conservation should be taken into account 'before carrying out physical work

on the cultural heritage and should limit the treatment to only that which is necessary’.²⁴

The milestones described here indicate that towards the turn of the century, preventive conservation was recognised as an important component of conservation by both national and international professional organisations. More importantly, in the UK it had even been recognised as a specialisation for which a conservator can be accredited. It was also recommended by professional organisations that preventive conservation should be one of the first considerations, and that it should strongly influence conservation treatment options. This vision was reflected in the strategic document created by a European group of conservation educators after a meeting held in Vantaa, Finland in 2000.²⁵ The *Vantaa Document Towards a European Preventive Conservation Strategy* states that ‘Preventive Conservation is a cornerstone of any European policy of heritage preservation’.²⁶ It sees preventive conservation as part of long-term institutional planning. In order to achieve this, it lobbies for museums to ‘designate staff responsibilities to preventive conservation, including them into job descriptions’. It also calls for establishing ‘end responsibility for preventive conservation at the senior management level’.²⁷ The *Vantaa Document* is not unique in its argument for the full inclusion of preventive conservation in the care of collections, but it goes further than the official documents produced by profession associations, as it actively addresses how this should be achieved at an organisational level.

Once established, how these documents, codes, guidelines and visions affected the development of conservation education is explored further, followed by the impact on the job market.

Reflections on the development of preventive conservation education

The evolution of conservation education in general is first reviewed in order to provide the background to reflect upon the status of preventive conservation education within conservation programmes. This is limited to the situation in Europe and North America, as the two main regions covered by my snapshot. In Europe, the 1997 Document of Pavia was influential for the professional development of conservation education. It was the result of a European effort to develop standards for the education and training of conservators, by defining the professional competencies of the conservator-restorer.²⁸ With regard to training and education, the document recommended that conservation is taught at ‘university level or recognised equivalent, with the possibility of a doctorate’.²⁹ Although some conservation programmes may already have been taught at academic level, many conservation training programmes have since migrated into academic education programmes.³⁰ In this context, ENCoRE (the European Network for Conservation/Restoration Education) was founded in 1997, with the aim of promoting education and research. Initiated by the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden, the Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Vienna) and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Conservation (Copenhagen), it now has member universities from all over Europe.³¹

The 1999 Bologna Declaration, adopted by ministers of education of 29 European countries, had a further impact on higher education in Europe.³² It aimed to improve efficiency by unifying the European higher education structure and demanded that each education programme is described in terms of the qualification it provides and its organisation. Over the next decade it resulted in the creation of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF), specifically for conservation education. This framework was incorporated in the 2011 ‘ECCO Competences for Access to the Conservation–Restoration Profession’ publication, which defined conservation as

24 European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers’ Organisations, ‘ECCO Professional Guidelines’.

25 European Commission, *The Vantaa Document, Towards a European Preventive Conservation Strategy* (Vantaa: EVTEK Institute of Art and Design, 2000). The document was adopted at the Vantaa Meeting, 21–22 September 2000 by ICCROM, EVTEK Institute of Art and Design Department of Conservation (Finland), Instituto Português de Conservação e Restauro (Portugal), Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France (France) and Ministry of Cultural Heritage (Hungary).

26 European Commission, *The Vantaa Document*, 9.

27 European Commission, *The Vantaa Document*, 11.

28 European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education, ‘The Document of Pavia’, <http://www.encore-edu.org/Pavia.html?tabindex=1&tabid=188> (accessed 5 March 2015).

29 European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education, ‘The Document of Pavia’.

30 As an example, the State Training School for Conservators in Amsterdam migrated to the University of Amsterdam, which now offers a MA in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage. Another example is the textile conservation programme at the Textile Conservation Centre in Hampton Court Palace, which became part of the University of Southampton and is now offered as a MPhil Textile Conservation at the University of Glasgow.

31 European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education, ‘Full Members of

ENCoRE', <http://www.encore-edu.org/fullmembers.htm> (accessed 5 March 2015).

32 The European Higher Education Area, 'The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education', http://www.magna-charta.org/resources/files/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.pdf (accessed 5 March 2015).

33 European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, 'Competencies for Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession, adopted by ECCO General Assembly June 13th, 2010, Brussels and Published in 2011', <http://www.ecco-eu.org/documents/ecco-documentation/index.php> (accessed 5 March 2015).

34 ECCO, 'Competencies for Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession', 19.

35 Icon, The Institute of Conservation, 'National Conservation Education and Skills Strategy 2012-2016', Icon, http://icon.org.uk/system/files/documents/ncess_strategy.pdf (accessed 18 December 2015).

36 Icon, The Institute of Conservation, 'Professional Guidelines', http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=121&Itemid (accessed 5 March 2015).

37 Icon, 'National Conservation Education and Skills Strategy 2012-2016', 5.

38 ANAGPIC, 'About', <http://cool.conservation-us.org/anagpic/about.htm> (accessed 5 March 2015).

39 ANAGPIC, 'Bylaws', <http://cool.conservation-us.org/anagpic/bylaws.htm> (accessed 5 March 2015).

a process and identified the level of competency required, using the EQF language.³³ Interestingly, the position of preventive conservation is not at the beginning of the process, but is part of the central step of 'carrying out ... a chosen course of action or treatment'. It also surfaces in the next step, after treatment, which evaluates 'the change in risk, success of treatment or activity' and 'includes identification of future actions required to sustain the cultural heritage'.³⁴ This somewhat deviates from earlier professional documents mentioned above, which advocated for the consideration of preventive conservation measures before carrying out treatment on the cultural property.

ECCO agreed that entry level into the conservation profession should correspond to EQF level 7 (Master's degree). In 2012, Icon presented its National Conservation Education and Skills Strategy, a national strategy setting the direction for conservation education over the next five years.³⁵ This document reflected that the UK took a different course to mainland Europe when Icon ceased to be a member of ECCO in 2007. Icon's members no longer conform to the statement in the ECCO Code of Ethics about the entry level of education, which ECCO requires be at master's level, with a minimum of five years full-time study at a university (or recognised equivalent).³⁶ Icon's strategy lobbies for 'a framework of sustainable career paths that is accessible, coherent, responsive, resilient, and quality assured'. It argues that there 'are more opportunities of a recognised standard that combine the academic education, research and practical training that are essential to the effective conservation practitioner'.³⁷

In North America, it was the initiative of the staff of the conservation programmes themselves to collaborate, and the Association of North American Graduate Programs in the Conservation of Cultural Property (ANAGPIC) was founded in 1984.³⁸ The general purpose of ANAGPIC is to 'help serve the need of the conservation field for well-trained professional conservators by aiding its member training programs to attain their educational objectives'.³⁹

From recent meetings with educators in preventive conservation at several of the North American conservation programmes (including Buffalo State College, New York University IFA, Queen's University, the University of California Los Angeles/Getty and the University of Delaware/Winterthur) it became clear that preventive conservation as a subject has become well embedded in their course programmes. Even though the approach to teaching preventive conservation may be different, a considerable similarity is seen in the core topics, which include the agents of deterioration, object handling, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and environmental monitoring. Several supervisors of recent interns and graduates have mentioned to me that they observe young professionals being better equipped to perform preventive conservation tasks in their work than in the past. However, at present it is not yet possible to graduate in preventive conservation from any of the North American programmes. Students seem apprehensive to specialise in preventive conservation, possibly because jobs with this specialisation are limited in North America. In the UK, specialisation is possible and there are also positions for preventive conservators.

The situation for preventive conservation within European university programmes appears to be similar to the situation observed in North America. Based on a search of European university websites, many conservation programmes at (post)graduate level have included preventive conservation in their curriculum, although there are differences in the weight and extent of the topic between programmes.

Masters programmes that are entirely dedicated to preventive conservation appear to be rare.⁴⁰

In some European countries, preventive conservation is also taught at vocational level, in an attempt to address a lack of skilled staff working in the care of collections. Examples of these are the three-year collection care programme in the Netherlands and the one-year certificate course in collection care at the Library Studies programme in Ghent.⁴¹ In the UK, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) granted Icon substantial funding from 2005 to 2015 towards a scheme creating over 100 paid work-based training placements in conservation, of 12–24 months in duration. Participants did not have to have prior conservation training: ‘at least half of the scheme’s placements are “new entry”—open to applicants without conservation training’.⁴² Through this programme Icon hoped to address, amongst other conservation issues, that of a ‘lack of people with skills in preventive conservation and environment work’.⁴³ Another example is ‘The Heritage Skills Passport’ of the National Trust (NT), a structured training programme which teaches the required skills and provides the experience to work at NT houses and collections.⁴⁴

Apart from conservation education programmes, there are other fields in which preventive conservation is taught as part of a degree study, mainly in museum studies and library preservation programmes. An area for future research is how graduates from these programmes potentially compete with conservation graduates in preventive conservation jobs.

Job market

The information above demonstrates that professional associations on national and international levels recognise preventive conservation as a crucial component of the profession and that the topic has been included, be it at different levels, in conservation education programmes. But how has the job market responded to these changes? I searched the consdistlist archives of 1995–2014 for job postings for conservators. Even though the archives of the consdistlist go back to 1987, it was felt that postings prior to 1995 were too limited to be used as a realistic representation of the job market. The starting date of 1995 may appear slightly disconnected from the earlier milestones given in the historical overview, but it can be argued that the job market would need time to adjust to trends in professional development. The 20 years of the archive covered by the search therefore presents a valid basis for the exploration of trends in the job market.

The postings were gathered and, independent of the type of employment (part-time, full-time, temporary or permanent), each posting was counted as one. If a posting was for several positions without distinguishing the number of positions available, it was counted as for two positions. The following postings were excluded: internships and fellowships; jobs such as preservation librarian or preservation manager (which, for example in the US, require a Master of Library Science (MLS)/ Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) degree from an American Library Association (ALA)-accredited library school); conservation scientist; architectural conservator; lecturer or professor; technician, preparator or art handler. However, if these postings specifically mentioned that a candidate with a conservation degree would also be considered, they were included.

Although this was a quick assessment, the overall results provide a fair representation of the job market for conservators, especially in the English-speaking world. Postings from non-English-speaking countries are under-represented, which is possibly due to the fact that institutions from these countries do not use the consdistlist for job postings, unless they are looking for candidates with international experience.

⁴⁰ Some examples are the MSc Collections Care at Cardiff University in 1999, the MA Preventive Conservation at Northumbria University and the Master in Preventive Conservation at l’Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

⁴¹ HMC MBO-vakschool, ‘Collectiebeheer’, <http://www.hmcollege.nl/hmc-mbo-vakschool/opleidingen/meubelhout/collectiebeheer.aspx> (accessed 5 March 2015); VSPW Gent, ‘Behoudsmedewerker, Erfgoed’, http://www.vspw.be/opleidingen/bibliotheekschool/behoudsmedewerker_erfgoed (accessed 5 March 2015).

⁴² Icon, The Institute of Conservation, ‘Icon’s HLF Training Bursaries Scheme—Key Facts, Questions & Answers’, http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=293&Itemid=165 (accessed 5 March 2015).

⁴³ Icon, ‘Icon’s HLF Training Bursaries Scheme’.

⁴⁴ National Trust, ‘The Heritage Skills Passport’, http://yourfutureyourhands.org.uk/the_training_programme/the_heritage_skills_passport/ (accessed 5 March 2015).

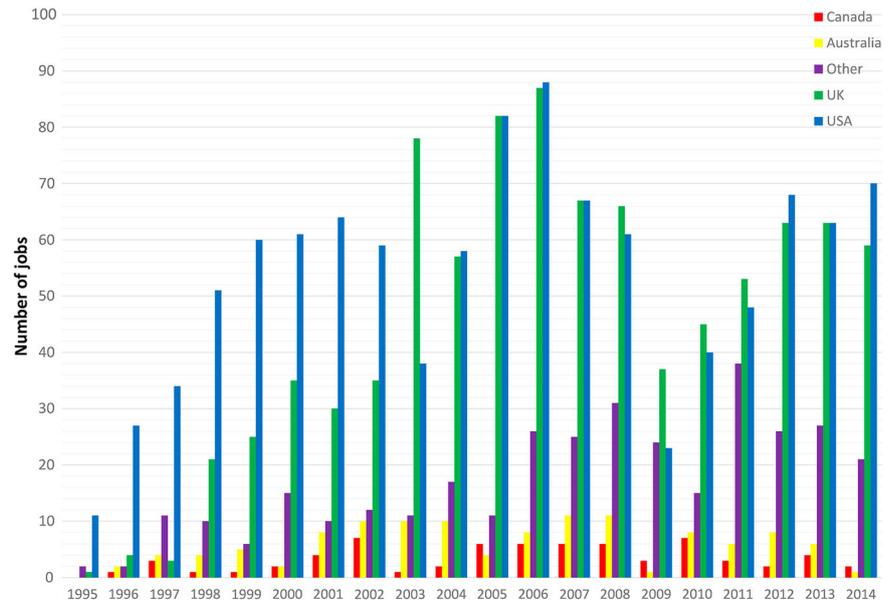


Fig. 1 Geographic distribution of positions for conservators advertised on consdistlist (1995–2014).

In total, 2510 jobs were advertised for conservators; 1143 in North America, 1091 in Europe, 184 in Oceania, 83 in Asia and nine in Africa. The vast majority of the job postings were from the USA (1073) and the UK (911), followed by Australia (119), reflecting the size of the country and its cultural heritage sector of employment. Job postings were at their peak in 2006. During the 2009 recession, job opportunities more than halved, and by 2014 had not recovered to pre-recession levels. All geographic areas showed the same pattern, which suggests the impact of the economic crisis was felt worldwide in the conservation sector (Fig. 1, Table 1).

Of these identified job postings, a total of 214 jobs were found for which the primary emphasis was on preventive conservation (either in the job title or in the job description), reflecting 8.5% of the total number of jobs. The number of positions in preventive conservation broadly followed the ups and downs in the overall conservation job market (Fig. 2). It is, however, surprising to see that the ratio of preventive conservation jobs has not increased significantly over the years, as one would expect with the perceived increased emphasis on preventive conservation, illustrated by its inclusion in official documents from professional associations. This may be because most 'standard' conservation job postings include some preventive conservation tasks, such as environmental monitoring, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), material testing, and so forth. However, because the main task of these jobs was advertised as carrying out treatments, these postings were not counted as specific preventive conservation jobs.

The majority of the preventive conservation jobs were posted from Europe (120), mainly the UK (113). There were 70 postings from the US and five from Canada.

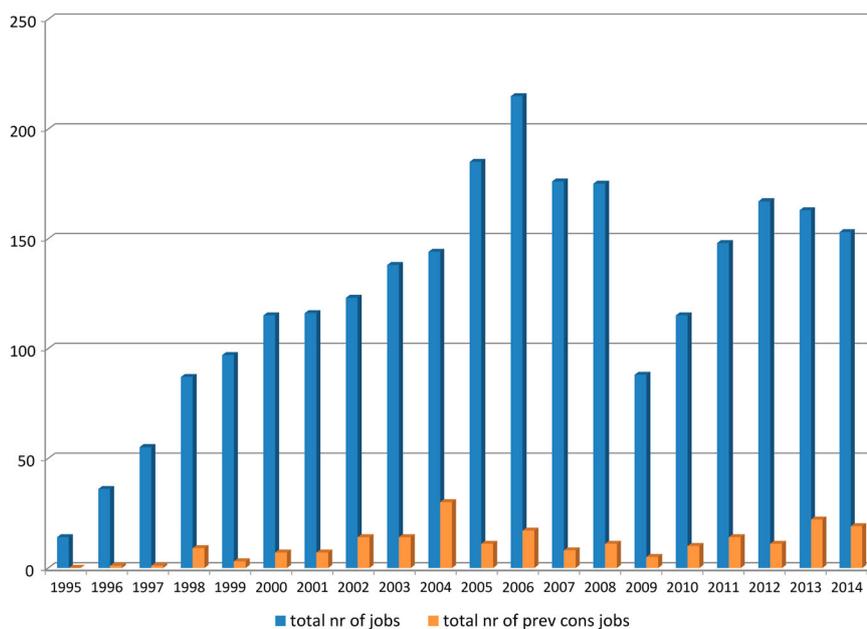
In order to further explore the kinds of institutions that were employing preventive conservation experts, the data were broken down further according to types of heritage employers (Historic House—historic properties with interiors that are open to the public, such as those in the care of the National Trust in the UK; Library & Archives; Museums; or others, such as historical societies, regional conservation centres, private businesses, etc.).

Table 1 Geographic distribution of positions for conservators advertised on consdistlist (1995–2014).

| | Australia | Canada | Other | UK | USA | Total per year |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|-------|-----|------|----------------|
| 1995 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 14 |
| 1996 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 27 | 36 |
| 1997 | 4 | 3 | 11 | 3 | 34 | 55 |
| 1998 | 4 | 1 | 10 | 21 | 51 | 87 |
| 1999 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 25 | 60 | 97 |
| 2000 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 35 | 61 | 115 |
| 2001 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 30 | 64 | 116 |
| 2002 | 10 | 7 | 12 | 35 | 59 | 123 |
| 2003 | 10 | 1 | 11 | 78 | 38 | 138 |
| 2004 | 10 | 2 | 17 | 57 | 58 | 144 |
| 2005 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 82 | 82 | 185 |
| 2006 | 8 | 6 | 26 | 87 | 88 | 215 |
| 2007 | 11 | 6 | 25 | 67 | 67 | 176 |
| 2008 | 11 | 6 | 31 | 66 | 61 | 175 |
| 2009 | 1 | 3 | 24 | 37 | 23 | 88 |
| 2010 | 8 | 7 | 15 | 45 | 40 | 115 |
| 2011 | 6 | 3 | 38 | 53 | 48 | 148 |
| 2012 | 8 | 2 | 26 | 63 | 68 | 167 |
| 2013 | 6 | 4 | 27 | 63 | 63 | 163 |
| 2014 | 1 | 2 | 21 | 59 | 70 | 153 |
| Total per country | 119 | 67 | 340 | 911 | 1073 | 2510 |

In the UK, preventive conservators are mainly employed in museums and historic houses, whereas in the US they are more often found in museums and in libraries and archives (Fig. 3).

An attempt was made to further distinguish between the selected preventive conservation job postings by sorting them into seven different categories according to their main task. The general category included job postings that described a variety of tasks and responsibilities, such as implementing preventive conservation strategies, environmental monitoring, IPM, materials testing as well as providing preventive conservation

**Fig. 2** The number of preventive conservation jobs, compared to the total number of jobs advertised on consdistlist (1995–2014).

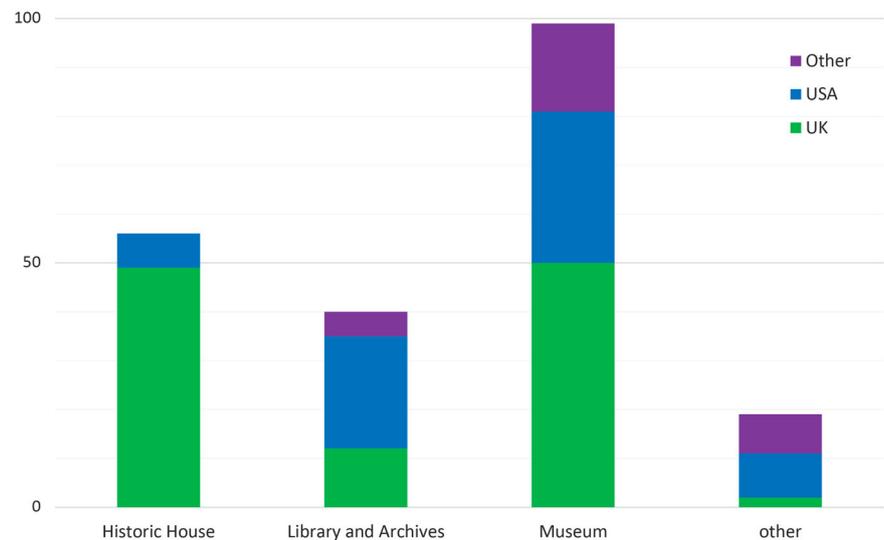


Fig. 3 Geographic distribution of preventive conservation positions by type of institution (condistlist 1995–214).

advice, supervising and coordinating remedial treatments (by outside contractors), emergency preparedness. Jobs in this category often included outreach and fundraising. These jobs differed from the larger group of conservation jobs (which also often list some preventive conservation tasks as part of the job), because they excluded remedial conservation work. The second category was maintenance, which included jobs that were more hands-on, such as cleaning and repacking. The building/relocation category included jobs created to support a new building or renovation project, and often included temporarily moving collections. The exhibits/loans category included jobs that were specifically linked to the exhibition or loan programmes of an institution. The monitoring category included jobs that were primarily focussing on environmental monitoring or condition surveying. The IPM group included jobs that dealt primarily with designing and implementing an IPM strategy. The risk and emergency group included specific jobs that asked for a risk assessment or the development of an emergency preparedness plan. The final category was leadership, for jobs that asked for leadership, preparing policies, and higher management tasks (Table 2).

The majority of positions in any of the institutions listed a mix of tasks and were therefore categorised in the general group. Most of the mainten-

Table 2 Categorising the preventive conservation jobs by their main responsibility and the types of institutions recruiting them.

| | Museum | Historic House | Library and Archives | Other | Total | Comment |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------|----------------------|-------|-------|-------------------------------|
| General | 39 | 37 | 25 | 14 | 115 | First position in 1997 |
| Maintenance | 5 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 21 | First position in 1998 |
| Building/ relocation | 17 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 20 | First position in 2000 |
| Exhibits/ loans | 13 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 16 | First position in 2000 |
| Monitoring | 16 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 19 | First position in 1999 |
| IPM | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | Positions in 1996, 2002, 2012 |
| Risk and emergency | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | Both positions in 2004 |
| Leadership | 5 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 18 | First position in 2001 |

ance jobs appeared in the historic house sector; most of the jobs to do with loans and exhibitions are in the museum sector. There were only a few positions for monitoring and IPM and almost all within museums. One explanation could be is that monitoring and IPM are often seen as one of the responsibilities of a conservator or other members of staff. Even though risk management and emergency preparedness have been given much attention over the last few years, these data demonstrate that it has not resulted in the creation of specific jobs.⁴⁵ Most likely it is often a project carried out by an outside consultant or it is added to the task list of an institution’s staff member.

These job listings also show that there is not a distinct job title for a conservator specialising in preventive conservation. Instead, the job titles found included Collections Care Conservator or Collections Care Specialist; Collections Move Manager or Collections Move Conservator; Conservation Housekeeper; Conservator for Exhibitions or Loan Conservator; Preservation and Conservation Manager; Preventative Conservation Manager; and last but not least Preventive Conservator or Preventative Conservator.

Interpretation of the findings

Based on this initial research, it can be concluded that preventive conservation is established within the professional field of conservation, mostly as part of a conservator’s responsibilities, and occasionally as a specialisation. Specific jobs for preventive conservation were found in the data gathered from 1995 onwards, but their numbers remain limited. Reflected by its presence in the description of the profession, in conservation education programmes as well as in job descriptions, preventive conservation is recognised as an integral part of conservation. This is an important achievement, which follows on from statements in the professional bodies’ documents that advocate for preventive conservation to be integrated in all the work a conservator undertakes.

But there is also some concern to this author. Even though it can be argued that the different job titles used in the field possibly reflect the specific needs of the heritage organisation, I feel that they are perhaps also an indicator that we still struggle within our own profession to clearly identify preventive conservation and its place within conservation. A screenshot of ICOM-CC’s website ‘Conservation: who, what & why?’ can be used as an example (Fig. 4).⁴⁶ This interactive tool is a way to promote conservation to allied professionals and the larger public. By moving the cursor over one of the aspects of the conservation process, it is possible for the viewer to see which expertise is partially (light blue) or fully (dark blue) involved. When selecting preventive conservation (marked in grey), the website shows that preventive conservation is part of the ‘action’ phase (a kind of ‘treatment’) in a way similar to the ‘chosen course of action or treatment’ in the ‘ECCO Competences for Access to the Conservation–Restoration Profession’.⁴⁷ As such, it does not fully represent the concept of it being one of the main principles that guide conservation professionals, as expressed by, for example, the AIC in its Code of Ethics. The ICOM-CC website illustrates the full involvement of the conservator, the conservation scientist and the collection manager in preventive conservation, and only part involvement of the owner, curator, photographer and the health and safety officer. But in fact all of the roles listed on this website should be part of implementing a preventive conservation strategy.

If preventive conservation sits within the ‘treatment’ process step of conservation work, perhaps this explains why, even if it is integrated, in my experience it remains under-represented and its importance undervalued.

45 Refer to the work by Robert Waller, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) in developing and teaching risk management around the world. ICCROM has identified Disaster and Risk Management as one of the key programmatic areas. See Aparna Tandon, ‘ICCROM Programme on Disaster and Risk Management, a Background Paper’ (2013), http://www.iccrom.org/wp-content/uploads/RDRM-Background-paper_AT_REV_30-April-2.pdf (accessed 11 October 2015).

46 International Council of Museums—Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), ‘Conservation: Who, What & Why?’, <http://www.icom-cc.org/330/about-icom-cc/what-is-conservation/conservation-who-what-amp-why/#.VOYyZebF98F> (accessed 5 March 2015).

47 ECCO, ‘Competencies for Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession’.

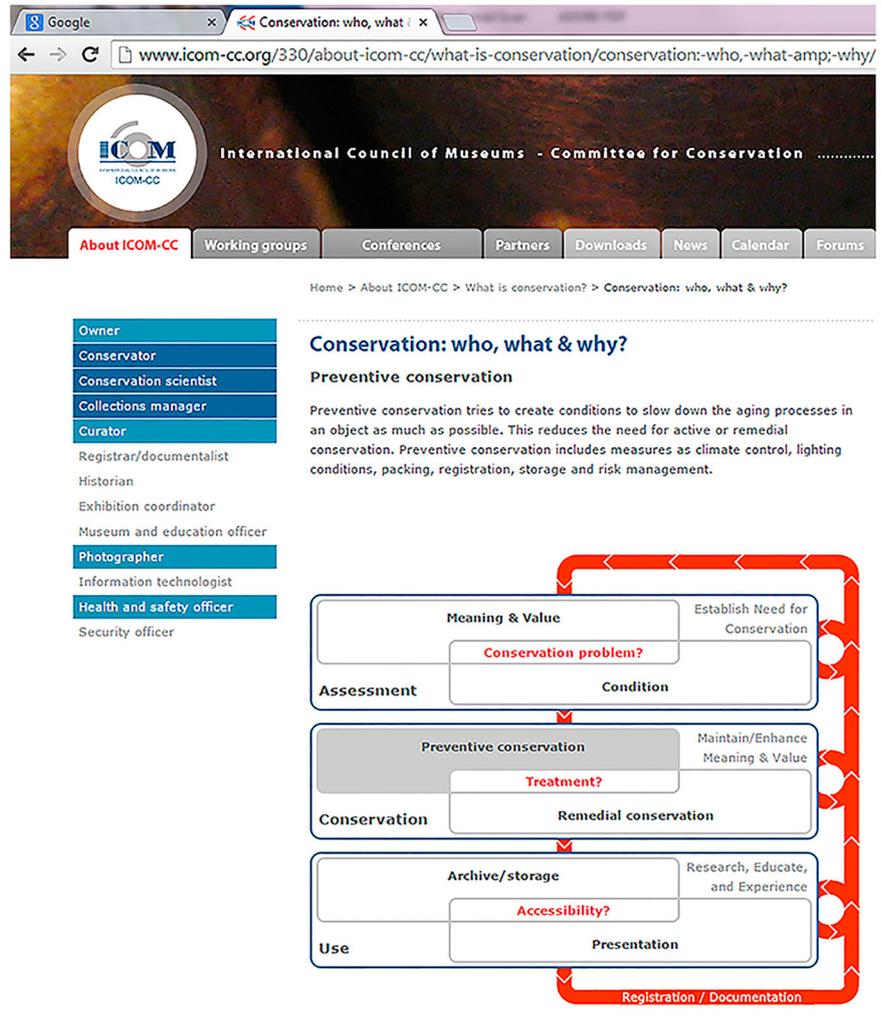


Fig. 4 Screenshot of the ICOM-CC website 'Conservation: who, what & why?', when selecting preventive conservation.

The job market research revealed that positions for preventive conservation specialists in the US are limited, which is a disincentive for current conservation students to specialise in it. It would be interesting to explore in a follow-up study whether in the UK, where the necessary components appear to be in place for preventive conservation to be a true specialisation (it is addressed by specialised education programmes, recognised through professional accreditation and with opportunities for jobs and internships in the field), this has led to the implementation of more sustainable strategies for the care of collections.

Taking the UK as the leading example, it is necessary for the field elsewhere to decide whether a specialised preventive conservator is needed and what it is that sets this professional apart. It is my personal opinion that the profession should reconfirm preventive conservation as the main guiding principle in our profession—moving it back to the start of the process, as was established by national and international professional associations, rather than being merely a treatment option.

This is particularly timely in the current debate on sustainability, which demands conservators rise to the challenge and actively claim their role as a key stakeholder in decision making. The fact that preventive conserva-



Fig. 5 '#The conservator' (facebook.com/TheConservator).

tion has not yet developed as a specialisation in most countries may specifically hamper the implementation of more sustainable strategies for the care of collections. This specific challenge needs input from conservators specialised in the principles of preventive conservation, those experts with an holistic approach to collection care and management and who can discuss pragmatic solutions with allied professionals such as architects and engineers.

Since developing environmental management strategies is a specialised topic requiring specific knowledge and skills, it provides the opportunity for those who are passionate about preventive conservation to have an impact on their development and implementation. This would have to be supported in a number of ways and not only by conservation education programmes allowing for specialisation at different levels, including masters. In other words, the conservation field would have to create specific post-graduate internships or fellowships in preventive conservation to provide the necessary opportunities for recent graduates to gain more work experience. For conservators already working in the field and wishing to specialise, continuing professional development programmes could also be the vehicle for specialisation. All of these efforts taken in tandem may then result in more specific jobs for preventive conservators, which I feel are needed to address the present day challenges.

The conservation profession can lead in the implementation of new guidelines for environmental control, as advocated in the ICOM-CC and IIC declaration on environmental guidelines, released in the fall of 2014:

‘Care of collections should be achieved in a way that does not assume air conditioning (HVAC). Passive methods, simple technology that is easy to maintain, air circulation and lower energy solutions should be considered. . . . It is acknowledged that the issue of collection and material environmental requirements is complex, and conservators/conservation scientists should actively seek to explain and unpack these complexities.’⁴⁸

48 International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), and the International Council of Museums—Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), 'Environmental Guidelines—IIC and ICOM-CC Declaration' (2014), https://www.iiconservation.org/sites/default/files/news/attachments/5681-2014_declaration_on_environmental_guidelines.pdf (accessed 5 March 2015).

49 Bizot Green Protocol, Bizot Group, New York, 13–15 November 2014—paper 7 (unpublished).

The Bizot Group (also known as the International Group of Organizers of Large Scale Exhibitions) highlights the important role of the conservator in their most recent 'Bizot Green Protocol', created in November 2014.⁴⁹ Their statement that 'a conservator's evaluation is essential in establishing the appropriate environmental conditions for works of art requested for loan', should in fact be expanded to require conservators' involvement in implementing new environmental control strategies for entire collections, not just loans.

In a world in which museums and other collecting institutions arguably should be implementing such sustainable strategies, where the control of indoor climates is through the realistic assessment of both collection needs and risks, or that passive building programmes are implemented sympathetic to local climates, then the role of the conservator becomes ever more crucial in the development of what will need to be both pragmatic and creative solutions. I would therefore conclude that it is at this juncture that we, as a profession, should take the opportunity to firmly stake our claim in this debate.

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Abstract

This article revisits our concept of preventive conservation and how we define and practise it given the context of those present day challenges to both environmental and financial sustainability. In an attempt to get a better understanding of the role, scope and position of preventive conservation within the conservation profession, the author explores how the concept was first introduced within professional associations, and how it has subsequently found its way into conservation education. A snapshot of the development of preventive conservation in the job market in the English-speaking world (specifically in the UK and the US) over the last two decades was created. It is concluded that even though preventive conservation is now integrated into the profession, the opportunities for conservators to specialise in preventive conservation are limited. The current debate on sustainability demands conservators rise to the challenge and actively claim their role as a key stakeholder in decision making, creating the need and opportunities for specialised preventive conservators.

Résumé

«La conservation préventive—plus qu'un 'dépoussiérage d'objets' ? Un aperçu de l'évolution de la conservation préventive en tant que profession

Cet article revisite notre concept de conservation préventive et la façon dont nous le définissons et le pratiquons, dans le contexte des défis actuels pour le développement durable environnemental et financier. Avec la volonté de mieux comprendre le rôle, la portée et la place de la conservation préventive au sein de la profession de la conservation, l'auteur explore comment le concept a été introduit au sein des associations professionnelles et comment il a trouvé sa place dans l'enseignement de la conservation. Un aperçu du développement de la conservation préventive sur le marché de l'emploi dans le monde anglophone (au Royaume-Uni et aux États-Unis en particulier) au cours des deux dernières décennies a été dressé. On en conclut que, même si la conservation préventive est désormais intégrée dans la profession, les possibilités pour les restaurateurs de se spécialiser dans la conservation préventive sont limitées. Le débat actuel sur le développement durable exige des restaurateurs de relever le défi et de revendi-

quer activement leur rôle d'acteur clé dans la prise de décision, en créant le besoin et des opportunités pour les restaurateurs spécialisés.

Zusammenfassung

„Präventive Konservierung—mehr als das Abstauben von Objekten? Eine Zusammenfassung der Entwicklung der Profession der präventiven Konservierung“

Dieser Artikel schaut zurück auf unser Konzept von präventiver Konservierung und wie wir es unter den heutigen Herausforderungen von Umweltverträglichkeit und finanzieller Nachhaltigkeit definieren und ausführen. In einem Versuch ein besseres Verständnis der Rolle, des Rahmens und der Position der präventiven Konservierung in der Profession der Restauratoren zu entwickeln, untersucht der Autor, wie das Konzept ursprünglich in die Berufsbildungsvereinigungen eingeführt wurde und wie es seinen Weg in die Studienprogramme gefunden hat. Es wird ein Snapshot der letzten zwei Dekaden der Entwicklung des Arbeitsmarktes für die präventive Konservierung, insbesondere in den Vereinigten Staaten und in Großbritannien, präsentiert. Es ergibt sich die Schlussfolgerung, dass, obwohl präventive Konservierung jetzt im Berufsbild integriert ist, die Möglichkeiten für Restauratoren sich auf präventive Konservierung zu spezialisieren, limitiert sind. Die gegenwärtige Diskussion über Nachhaltigkeit fordert, dass sich Restauratoren der Herausforderung stellen und sich aktiv eine Rolle als Schlüsselstakeholder in Entscheidungsfindung einfordern, um so den Bedarf und die Möglichkeiten für Spezialisten in präventiver Konservierung zu schaffen.

Resumen

“La conservación preventiva—¿es más que quitar el polvo a objetos? Un repaso al desarrollo de la profesión de conservación preventiva”

En este artículo se revisa nuestro concepto de conservación preventiva, cómo la definimos y practicamos en el contexto de los retos actuales de sostenibilidad ambiental y financiera. Con el propósito de obtener una mejor comprensión de la función, el alcance y la posición de la conservación preventiva dentro de la profesión de conservación, el autor examina cómo se introdujo este concepto por primera vez dentro de los colegios profesionales, y cómo llegó a implantarse en la enseñanza como materia de conservación. Se hace un resumen del desarrollo de la conservación preventiva en el mercado laboral del mundo de habla inglesa durante las últimas dos décadas (específicamente en el Reino Unido y los

EE.UU.). Se concluye que a pesar de que actualmente la conservación preventiva está integrada en la profesión, las oportunidades para los conservadores que se especializan en la conservación preventiva son limitadas. El actual debate sobre la sostenibilidad exige que los conservadores acepten el reto y reclamen activamente su papel como parte clave en la toma de decisiones, creando la necesidad y las oportunidades para los conservadores especializados en conservación preventiva.

摘要

预防性保护仅仅是超越“给物品除尘”吗? —预防性保护职业发展概述

本文以我们当前面临的环境与经济可持续发展双重挑战为背景,重新探讨预防性保护的概念,以及我们是如何定义与实施预防性保护的。为了能够更好的了解预防性保护在保存修复职业中所处的角色、范围和定位,作者将探索它的概念是如何首次被引进这个行业,以及它是如何融入到保存修复教育中来的。本文还将简述在过去二十多年里,英语国家(尤其是英国与美国)的就业市场里预防性保护的发展,并得出尽管现在预防性保护已经职业化了,但给予专门从事预防性保护的修护师的机会依然有限的结论。而近期有关可持续发展的探讨显示出需要修护师敢于迎接挑战,并积极强调自己作为关键权益相关者在决策和为专业预防性保护师创造需求和机会中的作用。

Biography

Foekje Boersma, a Senior Project Specialist in the GCI Education Department since December 2013, is the project manager of the Managing Collection Environments Initiative. Originally trained as a textile conservator, her expertise is in preventive conservation. Foekje has recently worked at the Dutch National Archives on preventive conservation education projects and coordinating a preservation programme of archives of national importance. Between 2006 and 2009 she worked at the GCI as a Project Specialist and developed a number a preventive conservation projects. Prior to that she spent several years managing large-scale preventive conservation activities for Helicon, a company in the Netherlands.

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