

I am so proud to be part of this growing profession and love learning about our history, including all the organizations around the world that have been formed to bring us together and strengthen our diverse professional communities all over the globe. It is true that there have been so many professional membership organizations over the years—some changing names or relocating or merging with other associations or simply disappearing—that mapping out this history ([which I have been attempting to do](#)) can look like a spider's web (or the pin board wall map of a crazed conspiracy theorist).

I can recall several discussions with colleagues who expressed how difficult it can be to keep many of the prominent international conservation and heritage organizations straight. Since many of the organization acronyms contain the same letters, they are easy to confuse, leaving us unsure what community they serve and which we can join as an individual, museum, or nation. So in this issue, I thought I'd have a go at identifying some of the most prominent (and nominally similar) organizations and explain the basic differences, to save us all a bit of our sanity.

ICOM (International Council of Museums)

Membership includes museum professionals and museums/collecting institutions from all over the world. ICOM has created an international forum of experts in order to establish collection-related standards, professional networking, international missions, and raise public awareness. ICOM has many committees which act like groups or clubs under the larger ICOM umbrella. The Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) is specifically related to our field, and if you join ICOM, chances are you'll gravitate toward this committee, but be sure to check out the dozens of other committees as well.

ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property)

This membership body is made up of "Member States" which are countries from all over the world. ICCROM partners with nations in safeguarding their heritage including working with and advising governments and institutions. They often work in tandem with larger worldwide aid and rescue organizations such as UNESCO, as well as the other heritage organizations discussed in this article.

While only nations can be registered members of ICCROM, this is an organization full of resources to be used by individual heritage preservation professionals as well, including programs, courses, and research. Be sure to take advantage of the ICCROM Library, in-person if you are in Rome, or through their online catalogue (*News in Conservation* highlights the latest acquisitions in the Library a couple times a year. [Take a look at the latest update here, p. 58](#)).

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites)

ICOMOS is a non-governmental international organization dedicated to improving the preservation of the world's monuments and heritage sites (think architectural and archeological heritage). Members include experts in the fields of architecture, (art) history, archeology, geography, anthropology, engineering, and town planning.

Institutions can also become members, and there are various national and international committees that members can join. ICOMOS also provides networking, meetings, workshops,

and inspections all over the world.

IIC (International institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works)

IIC is an international conservation membership organization. It offers membership for individuals, accommodating several different levels depending on experience as well as geographic location. IIC also includes membership for large Institutions as well as small studios.

IIC's purpose is to support professionals in cultural heritage preservation through networking, supporting research and publication, professional development, conferences and events, grants, awards and funding. IIC also has regional groups throughout the world and action committees supporting various objectives including Fellowship and emerging professionals.

ICA (International Council on Archives)

Individuals and institutions can become members of the ICA, which is dedicated to the preservation, management, and use of records and archival heritage on a global level, doing so through the support of its members. This Council also offers an international network where professionals can access news, exchange information, and seek help. They have special programing, events, and publications as well as regional branches.

INCCA (International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art)

This is a network of individual members (membership is free) including professionals specializing in modern and contemporary art and heritage preservation. INCCA is dedicated to developing, sharing and preserving knowledge needed for the conservation of modern and contemporary art. The organization website is an interactive platform and archive for sharing news, events, resources, and publications uploaded by members. It also contains groups and educational programming including talks, mentoring, and other projects.

The following are a few national conservation organizations which are often recognized on an international level and which are easy to confuse with one another as well as with the international organizations listed previously.

Icon (The Institute of Conservation)

Icon was a merger of five different British conservation organizations, including the UK-IIC Regional Group. Icon works to promote the preservation of cultural heritage through supporting its membership and providing networking, events, publications, accreditation, and other

resources. Icon is made up of individual professionals and institutions in professions related to, or in support of, cultural heritage preservation. While most members are UK-based, those working internationally are also welcome.

CCI (Canadian Conservation Institute)

I've heard conservators confuse the CCI and the IIC, but they are two very different organizations. The CCI is a staffed government agency in Canada and not a professional membership organization. CCI is a special operating agency within the Department of Canadian Heritage (part of the Canadian government) working with heritage institutions and professionals to ensure Canada's heritage collections are preserved and accessible to Canadians. The CCI produces publications and educational programming for professionals. It provides conservation, preventive care, research and scientific services for institutions and professionals throughout Canada.

AIC (American Institute for Conservation)

Originally a regional group of the IIC, the AIC is a national membership association in the USA for conservators and allied professionals who preserve cultural heritage. Membership is made up of individuals and institutions, and within AIC members can join an array of special interest groups. While membership is made up predominantly of USA citizens, international members are welcome. The AIC provides networking opportunities; establishes professional standards; promotes research and publications; and provides workshops, events, awards, and grants.

AICCM (Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Materials)

Also formerly a regional group of the IIC, AICCM is a professional organization for conservators in Australia. Membership includes individuals and organizations/institutions. While membership is primarily Australian, international members are welcome. AICCM works to promote conservation and facilitates cooperation and exchange through its membership, publications, events, conferences, and special interest groups.

I know there are likely other global and local organizations that get easily confused in your part of the world. Share how you manage the professional alphabet soup where you work and live. I look forward to hearing from you! news@iiconservation.org

Author Bio

Sharra Grow is editor in chief of *News in Conservation*, IIC's e-magazine and has been a member of the IIC Communications Team for over a decade. She is also a modern and contemporary paintings conservator and has worked in several NYC museums and private practices, having received a master's degree from the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. Sharra now works in the East Bay, just outside of San Francisco, California.