

Protecting Heritage: Disaster and Risk Management in Conservation

Protecting Heritage: Disaster and Risk Management in Conservation Webinar series

Inspired by the experiences and work undertaken by IIC members and Regional Groups around the world, learn essential strategies in this webinar series to safeguard cultural heritage from natural and man-made threats through proactive disaster risk assessment and recovery planning.

Overview

Disaster and risk management in cultural conservation is essential to protect our heritage from various threats, both natural and man-made. Effective management involves risk assessment, emergency preparedness, and recovery planning to ensure the preservation of cultural assets. By implementing proactive measures and fostering collaboration among conservators, museum professionals, and heritage managers, we can mitigate potential damages and ensure swift recovery. Emphasizing best practices and continuous improvement in disaster and risk management is vital for the enduring protection of our cultural heritage.

These sessions explore strategies to protect cultural assets from natural and man-made threats, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Experts discuss case studies and best practices, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures and collaboration. Whether you're a conservator or museum professional, these sessions will provide valuable knowledge to enhance your disaster and risk management capabilities in cultural conservation.

The sessions are available on-demand to IIC members only for viewing on the [IIC Learning platform](#).

Session 1: Understanding disaster risk and response – Collections-based institutions

Wednesday 20 November 2024 from 12pm to 2pm GMT

[Access the recording on the IIC Learning Platform](#).

This webinar explores how institutions can assess and mitigate disaster risks. It will cover strategies for disaster preparedness, emergency response, and recovery to protect collections, ensuring long-term preservation and resilience.

Chair: Lisa Swedberg, **Chair IIC Nordic Group Sweden/Nordiska Konservatorförbundet Sverige (NKF-S)** and Head of the Department of Paper Conservation at the Kiruna Centre for Conservation of Cultural Property. In 2024, she initiated the IIC Nordic Group Sweden's Working Group on Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Confirmed speakers:

- **Corine Wegner** is the director of the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI), an outreach program dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage in crisis situations in the U.S. and abroad. SCRI's work includes projects in Syria, Iraq, Haiti, Nepal, and around the world.
Cori will speak about how successfully protecting collections from human and naturally caused disasters does not just happen – it requires thoughtful planning, training, and staff capacity building. Cori Wegener, Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, will speak about understanding risks and hazards, basic disaster planning for collecting institutions, and mounting an emergency response when prevention and mitigation measures fail.
- **Dr. Peter Stone** is the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace at Newcastle University in the UK (the only such Chair in the world) and president of the Blue Shield since 2023. He was previously Head of the School of Arts and Cultures and Professor of Heritage Studies at the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies at Newcastle University, UK.
Peter will give an overview of how the humanitarian sector plans to conserve cultural heritage during peacetime and ensure its protection during conflicts and natural disasters. Strategies and best practices for safeguarding cultural assets in various scenarios to preserve heritage for future generations.
- **Takeyuki OKUBO**, graduated from the Faculty of Engineering, Department of Architecture in 1991 and entered in the graduate school of Kyoto University. He became an associate professor of Kyoto University in 2002, and a professor at the Graduate School and College of Science and Engineering, Ritsumeikan University in 2007, and the director at the Institute of Disaster Mitigation for Urban Cultural Heritage (R-DMUCH) from 2013 to 2021 fiscal year. He is also a member of ICORP, board member of JP-ICOMOS and ICOMOS International.
Takeyuki speak about the reason why traditional buildings and cities have been able to survive so many disasters in long history, and become heritages at last. I will explain the new and old viewpoint as that design of heritage buildings and historic cities which were sophisticated with traditional, limited materials and technologies in the past is a kind of survival design for mitigation of unavoidable disasters with the case of Japan.

Session 2: Risk Management and Practical Applications in Conservation

Wednesday 27 November from 12pm to 2pm GMT

[Access the recording on the IIC Learning Platform.](#)

Chair: Žana Matulić Bila?, **President IIC Croatia Group/IIC Hrvatska Grupa**

This webinar focuses on identifying, assessing, and managing risks to cultural heritage. It will explore practical tools and strategies that conservation professionals can use to protect collections from potential threats.

Confirmed speakers:

- **José Luiz Pederzoli Jr.** from Brazil manages the Strategic Planning Unit at ICCROM, and a portfolio of projects on heritage collections, risk management, and sustainable development. Mr. Pederzoli has developed extensive expertise in heritage risk management, preventive conservation, and value assessment, having co-authored the ABC Risk Management Method for Cultural Heritage and advised various institutions from national heritage departments, archives, historic houses, and contemporary art museums on this topic.
José Luiz Pedersoli Jr. will speak about how cultural heritage is subjected to a variety of risks, from sudden and catastrophic events to gradual and cumulative detrimental processes. Given limited resources,

how to prioritize and address these risks to effectively reduce losses and help maximise the benefits of heritage over time? Risk management provides a powerful approach to do so. This presentation will introduce the principles and applications of a dedicated method developed by ICCROM and partners to manage risks to cultural heritage: The ABC Method.

- **Stephanie de Roemer** FIIC holds a BSc in Conservation and Restoration of Surface Decorations and an MA in Conservation of Historic Objects. Trained in Art History and classical Archaeology and conservation and restoration of surface decorations, and archaeological artefacts, Stephanie worked for the Glasgow Museums as conservator for sculpture and Installation Art prior to her role as conservator of objects for the Cambridge University Museums.

A member of the International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), Stephanie currently serves as vice chair on the Directory Board.

Stephanie will explore how the framework for Sustainable Development can be integrated, applied and implemented through training in the conservation risk assessment methodology as a collaborative practice for museum communities. Emphasis on People and Partnership will highlight the agency of individuals and the potential of conservation as a manifestation of sustainability ambitions in practice.

- **Gretchen Allen** is a Senior Book and Paper Conservator at the National Archives of Ireland. She has previously held conservation roles with Maynooth University and Cambridge University Library. Throughout her career she has been responsible for interventive conservation treatments, preventive collection care work on environmental monitoring and pest management, bespoke enclosure making, exhibitions, outreach, and disaster management. She has been a member of the Irish National Committee of the Blue Shield since 2023.

Gretchen will speak about how trafficking, theft, vandalism, and conflict are issues that have affected art collections of all kinds since time immemorial, and often it is conservators who are asked to pick up the pieces. While most conservators are familiar with the agents of destruction that threaten the work in their care, many are not asked to consider the criminal elements of the art market until they've been affected by it first-hand. This talk will briefly discuss the conservator's role in preparing for, spotting, and mitigating the harm done by crime and conflict.

- **Frederick Thomson** is the Programme Manager for the Network of Regional Hubs at Cultural Emergency Response (CER). The Network of Regional Hubs is CER's effort to decentralise emergency response work to a regional level, working with extraordinary local partners to protect culture during times of crisis. His previous experience includes grant management and programme design at the Arab arts and culture organisation Ettijahat – Independent Culture, consultancy on heritage research and cultural management in the Arab region, and research and analysis at the International Criminal Court, focusing on the destruction of cultural heritage as a war crime.

Session 3: Rebuilding Heritage

Wednesday 4 December 2024 from 12pm to 2.30pm GMT

[Access the recording on the IIC Learning Platform.](#)

This webinar addresses the challenges and strategies involved in conserving and preserving cultural heritage after disasters or conflicts. It will cover approaches to rebuilding damaged sites, education, and fostering community engagement in the recovery process, ensuring the continuity of cultural identity and historical significance.

Chair: Samantha Hamilton, **President Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM)**

- **Polly Christie** led the Glasgow School of Art Archives & Collections Recovery Project from 2015-2021, overseeing a programme of conservation, digitisation, collection management and collection development work, as well as leading on the Mac(k)cessibility Project. After the Recovery Project, Polly focussed on A&C's engagement activity, through managing user services, loans, exhibitions and display activities. In June 2022 she was appointed Manager.

Polly will speak about the Glasgow School of Art's Archives and Collections that, in 2014, were housed in the world famous Charles Rennie Mackintosh building in Garnethill. In May that year, a fire ripped through the west wing of the building, resulting in some fire and water damage, and the displacement of the whole collection. This presentation will discuss the School's approaches to recovering and rebuilding the School's heritage through a programme of collection management, digitisation and conservation.

- **Mohammad Fahim Rahimi** was appointed Curator of the National Museum of Afghanistan in 2007, rising to Chief Curator in 2012. For more than three decades, the continuous state of warfare in Afghanistan has completely destroyed every facet of the country, including the country's rich cultural heritage. Throughout this time, Fahim has been a witness to the whole-scale loss of Afghanistan's music tradition, festivals, theatre, and of course, the country's museum collections, which have been looted and deliberately destroyed. Fahim will speak about how they have learnt from different training programs and what they have implemented in the past years. A few examples will illustrate the projects in the past 10 years and also how they worked locally.
- **Richard Mulholland** is Senior Lecturer on the Conservation of Fine Art MA programme at Northumbria University. A Paper Conservator and Technical Art Historian, his research is primarily concerned with analysis of the materials, technique, and studio processes of artists from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, particularly focusing on artists' use of modern synthetic materials in modern drawing. For a number of years, Richard has also been engaged in research on the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage collections at risk in conflict zones, particularly focused on Afghanistan, prior to the withdrawal of international forces in 2021. He has spent time working on site in Kabul on a number of projects funded by the British Council Cultural Protection Fund, looking at critical conservation pedagogies and carrying out education and training in collections care and conservation for colleagues in heritage institutions from across the region. Richard's lecture will focus on this aspect of his work, and considers the changing status of cultural heritage in conflict zones, lessons from the past in equipping collections care staff with the right tools to respond to crises, and who needs to be part of the conversation. The lecture reflects on the success and pitfalls of training programmes in Afghanistan between 2018 and 2021, and on the future of cultural heritage in an increasingly fraught region.
- **Kerstin Khalife** graduated from the State Academy of Art and Design in Stuttgart, Germany with a degree in the restoration of paintings and polychrome sculptures. She has worked in Lebanon since 2003 for several institutions and private collections in a freelance capacity including the Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock Museum. Since 2017, she serves as the Head of Conservation at the Beirut Museum of Art - BeMA. During her presentation, she will discuss the impact of the Beirut port blast on Lebanon's modern cultural heritage, with a focus on UNESCO's support for BeMA's painting restoration department. This includes the restoration of works by renowned Lebanese artists and the training of Lebanese conservators in emergency response techniques to safeguard Lebanon's cultural assets in future crises.
- **Mirta Pavic** is the Head of the Conservation Department of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MSU) in Zagreb, Croatia. Mirta teaches a course on modern and contemporary art conservation at the Conservation Department of the Arts Academy, University of Split and is a visiting lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana.
- **Valentina Ljubi? Tobisch** graduated in metal conservation from the Institute of Conservation and Restoration at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. She gained early experience at the university's Department of Archaeometry and, in 2003, joined the Technisches Museum Wien. There, she became

Head of the Conservation-Restoration Department in 2005, a role she held until 2017. Her work spans practical and preventive conservation and conservation science. Valentina completed her doctorate at the University of Vienna's Institute of Physical Chemistry. Currently, she is a heritage science researcher at the X-Ray Center of the Technische Universität Wien.

Mirta and Valentina will speak about the devastating earthquakes in Zagreb and Croatia's Banovina region in 2020 and 2021 which prompted critical preservation initiatives. The Croatian Group of the International Institute for the Conservation of Historical and Artistic Works (IIC) launched a comprehensive risk management study RIZIK for museums across Croatia. Additionally, in collaboration with the Section of Conservators-Restorers of the Croatian Museums Association (HMD), the IIC-Croatian Group developed a professional guidebook for the Preventive Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage against Earthquakes. This manual provides essential strategies to safeguard Croatia's cultural heritage from seismic threats.

- **Sarah-Jane Rennie**, Chair of the AICCM's Disaster Preparedness Committee and Coordinator of Collections Care at Museums of History New South Wales (NSW), oversees conservation, pest management, disaster response, and storage across 12 historic sites. With experience at Museums & Galleries NSW and in conservation roles, she has contributed to various training initiatives. Sarah-Jane's talk will explore Australia's disaster response to recent challenges, including bushfires, floods, and pandemics, focusing on supporting regional communities and tools enhancing disaster preparedness in a changing climate.