

**2011 IIC STUDENT & EMERGING CONSERVATOR CONFERENCE**

**CONSERVATION: FUTURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**TRANSCRIPTS – 1 of 3**

**Session 1, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September**

**“How do conservation students and emerging conservators really get started? Modern conservation education, the value of practical work experience, and issues of professional accreditation”**

**Moderator: Amber Kerr**

**Amber Kerr** Welcome to this first IIC Student and Emerging Conservator Conference. This is Session 1, *How do conservation students and emerging conservators really get started: the state of modern conservation education, the value of practical work experience, and issues of professional accreditation*. The speakers we have here today are: Elizabeth Pye from the Institute of Archaeology at UCL; Velson Horie, a private conservator and conservation advisor; Sonja Schvoll, self-employed or independent book conservator; Jocelyn Cuming of Camberwell College of Art and Robert Payton from the Museum of London. Our first speaker will be Elizabeth Pye. Elizabeth is professor of Archaeological and Museum Conservation at UCL's Institute of Archaeology. She has many years' experience of educating and training conservators, many of whom now occupy senior conservation posts throughout the world. The Master's programmes she's responsible for at UCL focus on conservation of archaeological, ethnographic and social history objects. She has also been associated with international conservation training programmes through ICCROM, notably on Sub-Saharan Africa. Her current research interests include conservation philosophy and professionalism, as well as physical access to objects through touch and handling. Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth Pye** Thank you very much and hello to all of you in the room and hello to all of you out there. I think this is a great occasion. I'm going to start off by saying a little bit about how I got started, but I warn you that I got started a long time ago. In fact, I taught five of the panellists who will appear today and tomorrow. I won't say who and they're not all here today. So I'm on borrowed time as it were. I started from an interest in archaeology and from being a member of a family of artists so I had an interest in 'making' and aesthetic aspects as well as archaeology. At that time there was no degree programme in conservation in this country. I went and took an archaeology degree first of all and started as an archaeologist and then trained here as a conservator where we even then had a diploma course in conservation. I worked at the British Museum and I was luckily enough to work on the Sutton Hoo material and as a very junior conservator was a huge privilege to work on that amazing material. And then I taught here for a long time - as you can tell if I'd taught five of the

panellists. One of the very formative influences, I think, in my development has been the work I've done in Africa through ICCROM that opened my eyes to an international dimension in a way that hadn't happened for me until then, although we'd had always had, and still do, a very international body of students.

Just one other quick bit of background and history. When I started, museum conservators were highly skilled and highly knowledgeable practitioners who largely learned on the job. Not entirely, though; they would perhaps have had training possibly as silversmiths or that kind of background.

Conservation amongst the rest of us, the staff in museums, was considered to be something that happened more or less invisibly in the basement. I am, of course, speaking largely from my own experience. And conservators had a fairly lowly status. They certainly weren't involved in the academic and decision-making aspects of collections. They didn't research and publish their work. And the reason I'm giving you this background is because all of that has influenced me in what I've tried to do while I've been working here.

So, moving on to modern education, although of course it's not the only way into the profession, I thoroughly advocate training at university level because I think that, quite apart from conservation understanding and knowledge, it teaches people to think. And we--I'm not saying that early conservators didn't think, but they thought in a different way, and we need, really, sort of broadly thinking conservators to identify and solve problems. It encourages communication skills, oral and written skills, and we put a lot of emphasis on this.

Research skills. How is conservation going to grow and develop even further than it has if we don't encourage and foster research? It provides generally a wider perspective. Well, that's what we hope university education is doing. And I hope that it gives conservators the status and confidence to communicate with the wider world in a way that the conservators I knew, who were then near to retirement when I was a very junior conservator, didn't - and I don't want to give the impression that I felt they were any the less valuable. They were extraordinary craftspeople, but it was a very different world. So all of that, I think, has fostered my thinking about how conservators should train. I feel that both preventive and remedial skills are essential, that understanding the wider context in which conservation takes place is also essential and work experience, and I mean outside somewhere like this, is absolutely invaluable.

So the final point I'm going to make is about the value of practical work experience. Although I just said to you that I completely value university education, we can only do so much. We can provide the academic background and what we do here is we provide a foundation of practical skills, but this is no substitute for a real life work experience. So with our MSc programme that we run, the second year of

that programme is an internship. So our students leave here and go off and work in museums like the Museum of London, for instance, with Robert Payton down at the other end of the table, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and they spend time being immersed in the real life experience of conservation practice. And that, I think, provides an understanding of the opportunities and constraints of practice. It hones their practical skills and, I think, very importantly, it prepares people for employment. And I know that now is not an easy time for employment, but having had that solid work experience is an invaluable step in that direction. Over the period of time that I've been involved in conservation, preventive conservation has become more and more appreciated and important and it is obviously vital and fundamental. But I also think that we still need to maintain practical skills. Objects will still deteriorate. There still will be a need for very high-quality practical skills, so we try to do both in our training here. That's largely what I wanted to say.

I will finish up by saying that I thoroughly support professional accreditation. The Institute of Conservation here has introduced professional accreditation and I believe that it sets and upholds standards. But I'm going to leave Velson, who knows a lot more about this than I do, to cover that when he comes to speak. So thank you very much.

**Amber Kerr**            Thank you. Our next speaker is Velson Horie, who is a collection care and conservation consultant. He is a past student of UCL's Institute of Archaeology and a current Council member of IIC. Velson worked at the Manchester Museum for many years and, subsequently, the British Library. He is closely involved with planning for the future of IIC and the ways in which he can help younger members of the conservation profession.

**Velson Horie**            Thank you. Liz. That's a useful introduction, too, and I shall try to disagree with you in a few points. The activity of a profession is defined by its practitioners, and so the history of the practitioners who evolved the profession defines what we do, what standards we're looking for, and how we do it. Liz has given some idea of what has driven her and what's driven her decades of inculcating those ideas into students. I have a completely different background. I came from chemistry and so didn't come from the arts. And one of the wonders of conservation is the diversity of people coming into the profession from all sorts of areas because those of you who try to cross the boundary between arts and sciences will find there're two different paradigms of thought. And if you can get it, if you can have a firm footing on both those sides, it enlarges your mind. It makes life much more difficult and interesting, and I don't believe in easy.

Well, just a bit on me: chemistry training, conservation here under Liz, Ione Gedye and Henry Hodges umpteen years ago, then three years of archaeological conservation in the north of England, twenty-seven years at the Manchester Museum, which is natural history and ethnography, and then three

years at British Library doing paper research, and in amongst it all, developing a use of whatever tools are available, whether they be science, arts, project management technology, people, academic institutions, societies, whatever, to do to achieve what I think was important. And, unlike Liz, I saw conservators when I started off and some of them were good and some of them were abysmal. Some of them were destroying objects and they were certainly doing it in front of my eyes. At that stage I realized that standards had to be improved. The damage that people were doing because they didn't understand what they were doing was obvious to me and it was obvious to the teachers of the Institute. Now, hopefully, those times have passed and things have moved on. But what's still driving me is what I learned when I was young, and the things that you learn when you're young and in training will drive you onwards, long past the need has gone. So, over the years I have adapted and you too will have to be flexible if you're going to be successful in changing conservation - as we have changed conservation from being craft-orientated and fairly low status, to having a high status in the museum world in this country; though that high status is dropping because museum fashions come and go.

My emphasis has been on raising standards. Accreditation, which I shall start with, was the occasion for huge debate. A large number of people said "We are not professionals, we are artists. We are 'making'. We have skills and we don't want that compromised by the idea of being in a strait-jacket of professionalism." And we can see a similar argument taking place in the United States of America, if you look at the cool and the interpretive discussions they've had. How does the United Kingdom achieve that? One of the things about the UK's Institute for Conservation's (Icon) accreditation method is that we try to bring everyone, whether they've come through a university education or the craft side to the same basic standard. Because if we're going to improve our standards as a profession, we have to make sure everyone's up to that standard. The standard of any profession is the standard of the worst professional operating within it. If there's a poor person, it's the bad apple in the barrel, it will destroy, in effect, fellow professionals and it will certainly send a bad signal to everyone outside the profession. This is how Icon, in the UK, is managing the skills, the methodology, the criteria and the way we wish to assess conservators. Now, since we developed accreditation some years ago, it's changed, evolved and we have something that is different from what it was originally. It will continue to change and evolve. So how do we do it? Who judges?

A profession is, as Bernard Shaw said, a conspiracy against the laity; so, the idea is that the 'experts' get together, decide what the standards are, and then tell the public what those standards are. What we have is a profession and professionals who define what the standards are, impose these on the up and coming ones and expect them to continue it. Things are a bit more open than they were and so Icon has to ensure that it is comparable to the other professions and they are. All the standards are then assessed essentially in a market economy in the UK, very different from other European countries,

which have a far more 'top-down' structure. The standards of professions rise as the professionals who come in to it increase standards they expect of the people coming after them. The professionals who are initially accredited have, I think probably in general, a lower standard than the professionals who are being accredited now. So the standard of the profession is gradually rising. What happens if people fall below that standard? We really don't want poor conservators telling the public they're conservators. We get rid of them through the disciplinary process. There needs to be in your minds, as you develop, a standard which is a rising target that you constantly aim for, which is beyond your grasp. However, 'people' standards are only part of the standards set, being developed at CEN, the international standards organisation for Europe. CEN is developing standards for how to do, how to measure, how to condition report, and to find a way to a common language, a common methodology of communicating and of working with objects. Until we have something written down, it's really difficult to define what standards should be, and thus to improve them. Our methods will only improve over time more generally if everyone is expected to achieve them. That will be made possible by applying accreditation across the profession - using Western standards, British standards, or CEN standards. So instead of having a number of really good people and a 'tail' of really poor people, we want to get rid of the really poor people, and really poor practice. The only way we can do that is to have standards by which to judge.

This approach is probably a reaction to my early experience. But my recommendation to you is to have high standards for yourself and have high standards for the people you work with and not allow people to fall below that, yourself or others. We're in the middle of developing a new business programme for the CEN, so I want to know from you what standards would be useful. What do you think would make your work, as you understand it now, easier if it was applied across the profession? What standards would you want to see that would make standards level up not level down?

**Amber Kerr** Our next speaker is Sonja Schwoll. Sonja is an accredited independent book conservator who has been working in private practice and on projects and institutions in the UK and the USA. Her recent work in the UK includes conservation projects funded by the Wellcome Trust and The National Manuscript Conservation Trust. Sonja is a liaison between Icon's Book & Paper Group and the Award Committee of the Clare Hampson Scholarship Fund and is also the secretary of their Award Committee. She teaches on book conservation courses at Camberwell College of Arts and West Dean College.

**Sonja Schwoll** Thank you and hello. Thank you very much for inviting me to be a speaker here. I see myself as the 'case study' as I think I'm the youngest here and my education is the closest to us [in terms of its recent completion]. I finished my MA at Camberwell in 2002 so I've only had 9 or 10 years of work, and have worked in my own studio for 2 years now; I have been teaching for 3

years at Camberwell and at West Dean. So the question of how to come through your education, what to do during and after, and to then find your way into the profession is very close to me and I deal with students every day who ask me these questions. So I'm very curious as to what your questions will be and what you want to know from me.

I'm going to tell you a bit about my education. First as Liz Pye also said, I come from art as my first study and I wanted to be a conservator so for this I came here to the UK. It's only a 2-year course of study for book conservation (I can only speak for book conservation), which is a very short time - so I was aware from the beginning that your studies by themselves aren't enough; so you need to do as much as you can around them. London very good for this; for book conservation it's not enough to just *do* conservation, but you need to be able to bind books - so one can learn bookbinding here and also there are so many societies to join and so many lectures which you can attend in addition. I think the point I want to make is that during your study it's not enough to just concentrate on your course but you have to take in as much as you can around you, take all the opportunities you can find. For example, engage in your professional body or take opportunities to go other countries; do internships in other countries, see how they work there.

As you hear from my accent, I'm German. Education works very differently there, but I was aware of what they were expecting so I now have a mixture of what people are doing here and what they are doing there, and thanks to my later work in the USA I saw how they do things over there. So with this range of experience one gets a better idea of what is necessary for yourself and these different experiences then later helped me to achieve accredited status quite early on in 2007. When you look at accreditation standards, you see all the abilities you are expected to have done and you can't fulfil these better than if you have done a lot of little things and worked in several workshops or private places and institutions, and maybe have the chance to give a little workshop of what you already can do to a group of students who are junior to you! I hope this comes up today because studying is difficult at the moment as some institutions are closing or are having problems. We can still exchange our knowledge, from people who have been in the profession a long time to people at my level. Whatever you are taught, you have a responsibility to hand this on and give to the next set of students. At the moment, as there is little money and little funding, it's quite difficult. It's all in our hands to do whatever we can, even for a little money, and try to survive until there will be better funding again.

I found the idea of accreditation a very good set of guidelines; when you look at what is required or what standards we are supposed to use or to want to fulfil, then you can see where you're missing some of the skills or abilities which will help you to become a good conservator. I always found that the conservation community was very helpful when you're energetic, when you want to meet people and you talk - then you often get chances and opportunities. At the beginning you often have to put in

a bit more time than you might like to, especially in your studies. You're all quite independent in most cases and you have quite a bit of time and so you should do extra things. Just use options and look for possibilities wherever you can. As a private conservator, I want to say there are not many jobs around at the moment and it's very tempting to think you can work independently when you come out of college. Actually, it's really difficult. Certain things like getting proper insurance, knowing how to run a business really come from experience after college when you have worked in other places and with other, more senior, conservators. I was lucky that during my studies I started working voluntarily with a private book conservator and, just by chance, I kept going with her and stayed with her for nine years. It's really only because of that experience with her, and all the other places I've worked at, that I could then open my own studio. You need the contacts and the legal background; insurance I have already mentioned. You need people who will help you when you have problems. You will be very much on your own as a private conservator. You won't have colleagues to discuss things with or a hierarchy within which you can work. So, you really need to a surrounding of people where you can keep in contact and tap into their knowledge and ask for help. And, usually, you get the help, but, only if you know where and when to ask.

This is just to give you a general idea of things and I hope there are many questions and that you will all say what you are expecting, what you want to do, and how you imagine you will go forward after you finish your studies. I assume from the audience that there are a lot of you who have just finished or are still in the middle of their studies.

**Amber Kerr**            Thank you, Sonja. Our next speaker is Jocelyn Cuming. Since 2007, Jocelyn has been based at Camberwell College of the Arts, University of the Arts, London, overseeing the teaching and development of the foundation degree in book conservation. She also teaches preventive conservation across all the Camberwell conservation degree courses. Prior to taking up the position, she was National Preservation Officer at the National Library of New Zealand and was responsible for bringing a wide range of training, both local and international, into the museum, library, and university sector in New Zealand. Jocelyn is also interested in research related to the delivery of preventive conservation within teaching organisations.

**Jocelyn Cuming**        Thank you, Amber. Well, as you will have heard from my background, I'm interested in the delivery of training programmes and so in just a very few minutes I will highlight a few points in relation to conservation education and some of the issues for you as emerging students and conservators. Now, I think it's great to see this conference taking place because it shows to conservators and students the pivotal importance of placing yourselves in the centre of shaping your own careers and also actually helping to form the emerging discipline of conservation itself, because

as you've heard from the others, conservation as a profession, is actually a relatively new discipline although, of course, conservation has had many permutations throughout history.

Now, you've already heard today that one of the hallmarks of a profession is the status of its training and education. At Camberwell, where a lot of you have studied, we have a long history of training conservators. And we are now focusing on postgraduate provision of a 2-year MA with a specialism in books and papers and continuing the one year of an extended MA. Now, the programmes over the 40 years of Camberwell's history of training in some ways reflect the demands of industry and also the demands of the profession. But sadly, as we all know, training programmes are also subject to the vagaries of the economic climate. You will all be aware that the UK government has cut funding from the humanities and arts and so this has left conservation programmes throughout the UK in a very vulnerable, difficult position. Similar funding cuts, of course, have occurred worldwide and I think the situation is made even more acute by the 'process nature' of conservation; by that, I mean, it's a discipline where students need to be taught a series of techniques and procedures as well as all the ethical and philosophical underpinnings. So that means that it is very resource heavy in comparison to other less vocational courses that have been taught in universities.

Now, at this point, I think it's crucial to talk of the dual role played by training institutions and industry in the formation of an embryonic conservator. Training institutions such as Camberwell have to respond to what industry wants and in equal measure industry has to help us to foster the skills and experience we wish to teach students. More and more, the demand for conservators is that they have a broad range of abilities rather than creating specific skills such as advocacy, for example. However, despite the need to broaden that education, it is extremely important that specialisms are maintained. I was really interested to hear Elizabeth underscore that importance that, no matter how much you want a broad approach in terms of preventive conservation, you *do* want to keep the practical skills. And I think that there's always been a danger of specialisms being diluted.

At Camberwell, and I know this also pertains to other training courses around the world, we have been immensely fortunate in having the input of industry. This takes many forms, ranging from one-day replacements to being part of our formally-structured learning. And I think it is important to see your experience as students and conservators as merged together, because from day 1 of your training you can start making workplace connections - and Sonja has talked about the importance of this. However, we also know that museums, archives in libraries and other heritage organisations are subject to funding cuts, which have meant a huge reduction in staff. And teaching institutions are very aware of the time and effort it takes to provide work experiences for student. We need constantly to be sensitive to the demands placed on the sector. However, it is absolutely crucial that we have the support of heritage organisations because it's not possible to give an all-round experience to students

in the sterile atmosphere of a classroom setting, one that has no connection. So we are completely and utterly dependent on the goodwill of heritage organisations. So from the outset students need and, indeed, you usually are extremely proactive in seeking out, all the opportunities you can of getting experience in the workplace. And as Sonja has said, no matter how small the task or how mundane it is, it's really important to grasp these opportunities. As well as providing the obvious benefits it means that you are making connections into the industry. And even if an experience may be negative, it's still really important, because it is still a learning opportunity.

So I know that you're probably already highly aware of this but it's really important to avail yourselves of all external lectures and seminars, short courses, and conferences such as this. And, often, these conferences or short courses may not be directly related to your specialisms, but it's still really important to do them because it's those courses and conferences and seminars or whatever that are going to broaden out your experience as a conservator. And, of course, today, we all recognise that it's very difficult for emerging conservators, and especially new graduates, to get positions - and I must underscore that it's never been easy. But the situation at the moment is extremely acute. And I think the move of ICON and individual heritage organisations to give internships has been a fantastic way forward, but we all know that getting these internships themselves are very difficult. But remember that all training courses, regardless of how good or otherwise they may be, can only ever, like Elizabeth said, be foundations. As one conservator recently put it, training courses are merely one rung on the ladder.

Perhaps a cliché, but conservation is definitely about lifelong learning and accreditation. It obviously makes an excellent goal to work towards. Sometimes students say "it's good to do anything that reduces the amount of things that you have to do to get accreditation", but I think that if accreditation was made any less a goal and the experience required was any less, that would greatly reduce the powerful validity of what it means to get accredited. When I started conservation a long time ago in New Zealand, there was no such thing as accreditation and there was just a constant, constant battle of trying to raise standards and get people to use conservators who had received a proper professional training. So I'd like to underscore again what a fantastic mechanism it is to have accreditation.

Just to quickly wind up, there are numerous routes that are open to the profession, even though we know that these are highly competitive. And even though the situation at the moment seems so difficult and you hear people talking about how difficult it is, how difficult it is to get jobs, etc., there are very exciting horizons opening up. For instance, all the things that are opening in the Middle East at the moment and, of course, the actual range of materials that we're going to be dealing with are constantly expanding. So in summary, conservation is, despite all the problems, a fantastic career. And for my own career, it's taken me--you can probably tell from my accent--it's taken me from New

Zealand with the production of students of conservation in the Pacific, to a lesser extent in Asia, then I had the great pleasure of working in Rome for a number of years and now, I've ended up here in the UK So it is a good profession. So good luck and keep going.

**Amber Kerr** Thank you, Jocelyn. Our final speaker is Robert Payton, Head of Conservation and Collection Care at the Museum of London. Robert has many years of experience in the museum conservation sector and, also, as part of the museum's outreach work he is closely involved in the museum's schools and colleges outreach programmes, encouraging those who wish to work in the museums and the conservation sectors.

**Robert Payton** Thank you. The current financial climate that's just been talked about has made many governments around the world think about their spending in radical ways. And it is fitting that that a conservation professional is able to assess in this forum his own future needs and, importantly, see how another generation of conservators can take forward the profession in what will be a new, challenging work environment. Our session was asked to look at how to get started in the profession and the state of modern conservation education. I feel that I'm able to add a useful perspective on these issues as I've had considerable experience of supervising students in my career within a number of countries. And as head of a conservation department of a large museum, I am able to comment on what the end-user of training courses needs from students who are emerging conservators. And throughout the presentation I'm using 'conservation' in its broadest aspect to cover conservators, collections care, and a whole range of allied professions, and 'student placements' to cover not only student placements but also internships.

Getting started in conservation today is something that is very difficult to generalise for an international audience. However, I would start off by saying that you must have a sincere vocational interest in the subject. People do not go into the conservation profession to get rich, though they invariably stay in the profession because of the rich experience it provides. Although our professional buddies are doing their best to inform and engage a new generation of prospective conservators, we still have a very long way to go. The best way to get started is talking to trained conservators about profession and this conference is excellent in fulfilling that. To educate the new generation of our profession we have run, at the Museum of London, workshops for school pupils wanting to see what conservation is about. We also host school visits or visit schools to run conservation events there. A recent initiative that was very successful was contributing towards a careers advice evening where staff and students were able to offer advice on the profession and how to get into it. This was very successful as a number of students and people wishing to get into the profession came along and we were able to offer advice and not only that, we also had students talking to the people coming along. Our UK professional body, Icon, has very useful information on its webpages. Another route for assessing the profession as a career is by volunteering. We have run over 10 very large volunteer

programmes where collections care, for example repackaging, is carried out. Other establishments may well offer volunteering opportunities and it is well worthwhile checking these out.

I, in my own time, also run a young archaeologist club and I start 8 year olds, as well as younger, with conservation and they thoroughly enjoy it. Race, age, gender, and disability should not be a barrier to you. In fact it is illegal for this to be so. And in most modern recruitment application forms, this information is removed when short-listing for interviews. It therefore goes on merit alone. However, there is a need to engage our profession with the strata of society who feel dispossessed and alienated from the culture of their country. In addition to the merit factor, it will be interesting to see if positive discrimination is used in the future to recruit a more balanced profession representing the population.

However, this cannot take place until the training courses themselves take a lead on this. The number of different conservation specialisations, training courses and, at our level, for example, BSc or Master's, makes choosing the right course very difficult. Once on a course, students often spend time placed in host environments and this can be described by one course as a placement or by another as an internship. It gets even more complicated when one considers the conservation training in many European countries which often feature much longer training courses that are needed as a prerequisite for getting jobs there. If it is confusing for the students and it is equally difficult for an employer to compare and contrast the professional standards of the students that are coming from all these courses. And this is something that does need better clarification. For recruitment, what I would therefore be looking for are good practical experience and technical skills, a good understanding of the material side of conservation, and signs of initiative and flair as evidenced in a good application form, and interviews framed by a good portfolio-led presentation. In placement opportunities at the Museum of London, we try and host anything between 6 and 8 conservation placements a year from a variety of courses for one month minimum up to a year's length in our special sections. Although this constitutes a significant amount of time for us, it is only a drop in the ocean for the number of students seeking placements.

Therefore, one area that is very difficult to manage is the demand for placement opportunities. To solve this dilemma, we are preparing a higher education strategy that will determine a more focused approach to offering placement opportunities to courses, trying to maintain quality rather than quantity. I also insist that applications are made via the course tutor rather than by students direct. They after all are in the best situation to match student expectations with potential venues. On the majority of occasions, we interview students too and, with a combination of these strategies, we're able to provide a very satisfactory match of student and placement. Within the placement, we give students a well-rounded experience. Traditionally, students carry out a conservation treatment during their placements. And as has been said by the other speakers, this constitutes, and quite rightly so, a

significant part of what they do. Quite often, training courses are just not able to offer the variety of objects to work on nor is the time as you are studying during the course. However, we encourage students from different courses placed with us to work on treatment projects together. Students really enjoy learning from their colleagues and the team aspects of this work.

We also encourage students to get involved with front-of-house interfacing with the public through events. Some courses hold student seminars for the students to talk to their colleagues and peers. At the Museum we try and open this out to students talking to the public. Some courses, for example, the RCA/V&A course was even encourage this by holding courses and presentations actually in gallery environments. Student outreach is an important aspect of engaging the public and future conservators. We have deliberately carried out some large conservation projects in the galleries, and so that that the work can proceed unhindered, we have used students to interpret what is going on to the public. Many other museums have also used this format very successfully. We've taken this further by allowing students to design their own events to be run in the galleries, sometimes using work experience volunteers: "here's your student on a work experience volunteer together".

One interesting example that shows the way that we are thinking about using students and outreach in general has been the cleaning of a Roman mosaic in the gallery. In the 1980s, conservators used to clean this floor surface out of hours, hidden away from the public. In the 1990s, we started to incorporate students in the cleaning process, but, again, out of hours. More recently, however, we do the same work but have been using staff and students to supervise children and school kids during the school holidays where the work is done in the full gaze of the public. The extreme example of using students for outreach has seen a couple events in the galleries that were totally designed, produced, and run by students to coincide with the events in the galleries. One was on pests and the other on disaster planning. Both were very high quality and were extremely well received. Students go on placements to learn but an equally positive reason for taking students is that these days many senior conservators or managers are not able to find the time to undertake the practical work themselves. Supervising student treatments is a way of carrying out the work by proxy and is beneficial to the supervisor in keeping them up to date with treatment knowledge.

In the museum, we run a number of specific training sessions that we open out to the students we have at the time and even to those from outside courses. This is one that I ran on a very frequent basis, on solvent gel cleaning and we get in students from as many courses as we have available at the time. More rarely, we run training placements specifically for emerging professionals from other countries. These can be difficult and time consuming to prepare for, but they are extremely rewarding. Our students are given a very broad experience as broad as we'd expect from a student applying for a position in our museum, and they participate in all the departmental activities including emergency

planning pest and environmental monitoring, gallery cleaning, stores work and on-going projects, for example, assessing hazardous collections. Although this is generally very successful and the students have gone on to be shortlisted for our one student of the year awards at the museum, it does require considerable resources to manage – as has just been alluded to by the previous speaker. I'm concerned that with the reduction in the size of many conservation departments across the UK the capacity to sustain their supervision of students may be reduced. Organisational managers are scrutinizing their budgets, for example, and are surprised that most placement training is carried out for free. There may be increasing pressures to pass on the real cost of training students to the courses.

Finishing on a positive note, the dropout rate from this profession is extremely low. The employment of placements certainly from the Museum of London is very, very high. And it is perhaps one of the most fulfilling professions to be part of. These are just some of the courses that we've taken students from over the last few years. And I would just like to end by posing a few questions. Should there be a more strategic approach across the training courses as to what they produce? Should we, as a profession, try better to engage potential students from all backgrounds in order to better reflect our cultural environment? Should training courses tailor their courses more to meet market needs? Should courses pay institutions for placement opportunities? And should the profession be helping the next generation of school kids or students to be better informed about conservation as a profession? Thank you.

### **Question and Answer Section**

**Amber Kerr** Thank you. If you can now join me please in thanking the speakers today for everything they've contributed. With that let's take the first question from the audience.

**Twitter Moderator** It's a short question to Velson. Someone wants to know if it's possible for conservators based in Asia to become accredited.

**Velson Horie** I'll pass this to Alison Richmond to talk to, if I may.

**Alison Richmond (Chief Executive of Icon)** Thank you very much. I'd like to answer that question by saying “yes it is”. In theory and in practice, we have accredited a conservator in Canada, and we are in the process of, hopefully, accrediting some conservators in Singapore, although we don't have the results from that yet so I don't want to be too definite on that case but yes indeed, it is possible. So, if somebody is interested in becoming accredited through the PACR scheme, they would be best to contact Icon.

**Audience member**      How long does it take to become accredited?

**Velson Horie**              It depends what you mean by 'long'. What do you mean? From when you become trained to when you get accredited or from when you start the process of applying for accreditation?

There are two things. First of all, "a professional" is really quite difficult to define. It can be a really general term: "I'm a professional" or it can be that you comply with professional standards. Now, Icon has produced PACR which has professional standards and if you become a professional by those standards in the same way you would become a professional doctor or engineer or architect you comply with professional standards. All of those require quite a rigorous assessment method and that takes time. It takes time to document that you have come to those standards. It takes time for people to assess whether your documentation and your practice actually comes up to those standards. That's why it takes so long. That's why it costs so much. And I can tell you, Icon is far, far cheaper than most other professions. Most of the work is given voluntarily by the other members of the profession. You try to become a doctor, you won't do it for the price you get to become a professional conservator. That's why it takes long, it's done by volunteers. That's why it's expensive, because we actually have to go through rigorous examination. So, you could do it the short way, you could take the short cut and you can call yourself "a professional" but you won't be.

**Liz Ralph**                  Liz Ralph [a student] from Camberwell. Would there be a possibility in the future now that education is becoming much more expensive to integrate accreditation or some of the points of accreditation into the curriculum for conservation courses because after paying for your three-year course or your MA or whatever you then go on to have to pay for accreditation. Could it possibly be combined so that you start off slightly earlier and with more input?

**Elizabeth Pye**              Can I comment on that? We try to incorporate elements of accreditation in our training. In fact, in our final year, we actually get people to use the standards as set out by Icon for accreditation to measure themselves and we use them as well to measure them against those standards. I'm a great believer in there being a period after finishing training before applying for accreditation because consolidating your knowledge and your skills and your confidence as well is very important. But the way we try to prepare students is to give them a flavour of what they're aiming to achieve. I've just revamped part of what we do for our fine art students and I've asked them to consider what they need to do to get themselves from the position they're in now to what's called 'expert' on the scheme as presented by Icon. So that doesn't quite incorporate accreditation but it gives them a leg up for accreditation.

**Velson Horie** May I just carry on with that? Is education enough for any of the professions? A profession is not just someone who practices the profession - until you can demonstrate that you can practice proficiently, professionally you cannot be given the freedom to practice without supervision. So, you become a professional by practising the activity. And when you demonstrated that you can practice the activity *proficiently*, you can become a professional. There are quite few people who are really quite good academically in a field and never make the grade as professionals because they cannot practise professionally for one reason or another. Some may be really good at craftwork, but they don't have the professional aspects - and I've seen this happen. So that is why there's a period of assessment: self-assessment and assessment by your peers, and eventually assessment by the profession itself-. So there has to be this time of growth. As you can see from the diagram, the growth from where you leave off the training and then you actually have to prove to yourself and others that you can do it competently, at least proficiently, not as an expert.

**Robert Payton** Could I just also add from a museum Conservation Department point of view that most enlightened museums will give staff time to actually undertake accreditation and I even actually pay for people in my department to go through the accreditation process as well. It's worthwhile if you are working in an organization after you have graduated and worked your way through to talk to your Human Resources Department, to see whether they will actually pay for this and you may be surprised that they will. **Velson Horie** And it's tax deductible.

**Rebecca Shindel** I just had a comment on that as well. I attend Northumbria University's Conservation Programme as an international student, American, and I do paper conservation. American conservators don't have an accreditation process so, perhaps for other international students, and I can't obviously speak for everyone, having the Icon British accreditation system worked into the education process might actually not be helpful for us if we intend on going back to our original countries. It might in the long run, but I think it shouldn't be looked on as a British thing. I think we either need to integrate some kind of accreditation worldwide or it could be confusing.

**Elizabeth Pye** Can I comment from the point of view that we incorporate this into our training course. Our student body is entirely international. We have actually more students from overseas than from the UK very often. I think that these standards are useful universally and if people have thought about where they are now and how they will achieve acceptance into the conservation profession, whether there's more accreditation or not, it gives you something to aim for, a shape that you can work on yourself in the future. However, this is an International Institute for Conservation meeting, and I was wearing an Icon hat for a moment there which I shouldn't, but IIC, the fellows of IIC, and we are all, more or less, the same sort of professionals. We have our individual missions but we all have the same idea of standards of quality. So the qualities of a good professional are the same

all over the world. The route by which you get there is different in different parts of the world but what we put into place in the Icon PACR process is fairly universally accepted and you cannot teach to accreditation processes because actually if you are worked towards that process of become a professional, you're not professional yet. You haven't got yet that ability.

**Twitter Moderator** Velson, I've got a question on Twitter: "How should organisations such as the IIC, AIC, and ICCROM get to buy-in for accreditation from those already practicing in the fields?"

**Velson Horie** It's really difficult. Culturally, there are very different expectations of how professions work in different cultures and, being British it is really quite an interesting to study how different professions are seen by themselves and by their societies. Different cultures have different professions. Additionally there has to be an acceptance of the profession and professionals themselves in each country. In Britain we compared ourselves with the other professions in this country and we said "We're as good as they are. They're paid more than us. They're respected more than us. But we're as good as them. What do we need to establish parity in our own minds, our own self-respect and also in respect of other people?" We, therefore, went for Accreditation and it took probably 15 or 20 years development for that process of self-learning, self-evaluation to happen. Other countries are going through this and have -and have not- come to that same conclusion. It may be that they have a complete different culture, a different attitude to their own self-worth and they don't see themselves in that that definition of professionalism. I think that if you don't have something to judge yourself by, there will be poor standards and it will lead to a tale of very poor practice.

A little dream that I have is that I would like to somehow get together a way of collaborating and co-ordinating the professionalisation efforts of different countries such as the ECCO standards, as well as the [Icon] PACR standards that are divergent. There are other potential professional standards that are available and I think there is a piece of work that needs to be done to bring those together. But it took 15 years in UK. It's going to be a generational change worldwide. So you [the younger generation] can do it!

**Carol Peacock** I am just coming to the end of an Icon internship at the British museum. I would like to ask what the panel's opinions are about the number of student conservators that are coming out of various training courses, particularly now when there is such a dearth of jobs and how student conservationists should approach by the jobs which are also being applied for by far more experienced conservationist who, rightly, have a lot of experience in their fields and because of the current climate have lost their jobs. And how also how we should approach voluntary placements and institutions where conservationists are losing their jobs?

**Robert Payton** I could start off at the panel's discussion on that very good question. I, too, feel, personally speaking that there are too many courses producing too many conservators as there's a glut of conservation students compared to the amount of jobs that are going available and I think there has been a situation, even when we've not got this current financial climate, that perhaps needs to be a strategic look at conservation education and Icon, and Alison, you're talking about this tomorrow? But our professional body is looking at this through its educational strategy document. I don't know what the answer is from the end-user point of view, but we are faced with the situation where we advertise our, very rare, jobs and we get several hundred applications. A lot of those we can quite often disregard, because they are people speculatively trying to go for a conservation job and they have absolutely no experience whatsoever. But I do sympathize with you students trying to go for jobs currently. We're just about to advertise one and it'd be interesting to see how many people we get for this one. But from an end-user point of view, there's not a great deal we can do. We have to go on merit for each of the jobs that is advertised. The only thing I would say is sometimes for some of our jobs that are advertised, we don't want somebody with 30 years' experience quite often. We want somebody fresh with new ideas, straight from college. So, although we do go on merit, sometimes the fact that we've got fresh ideas from students coming from colleges is a bonus for us. The other thing I'd just like to finish up by saying is I think the current financial climate and the dearth of jobs at the moment is a low point and my view is it can only get better.

**Jocelyn Cuming** I think that it is a very real problem that you brought up and it's a problem that's always concerned me. Actually, I've been in the UK for about 3½ years. One of the problems, and I don't know whether you have that at UCL, is this tremendous pressure on the universities to recruit numbers - because if you don't recruit a certain number of students, the courses are simply not viable. And one of the things that's going to become an increasing problem for conservation courses is that in the past, certainly at the University of the Arts, the conservation courses have been to a certain extent subsidised, particularly the undergraduate programmes. Now, as you all probably aware, by 2012 those subsidies will have completely gone so that the only money coming into the university will be directly from the student fees. So the university is - I'm sorry, this is but long winded - no longer prepared to subsidise conservation courses. I know sometimes for students at Camberwell, it seems improbable that the courses are being heavily subsidized because the fees are so high, but then the fees have to go to things like to libraries, IT and administration that cut the actual space that you're occupying. So, I do think it is a very real problem that we are taking too many students, in relationship to the number of jobs that are out there.

And it's not just a recent phenomenon, it's a general phenomenon. And you've raised an extremely interesting ethical issue too and that's the whole issue of students taking unpaid work. When you look at the Conservation DistList and you're reading a job and you think, "Ooh, that sounds really

interesting," but then at the bottom it says "this is a volunteer position." So I think that is a very big ethical issue. I'm sorry I'm not really answering but I do absolutely agree with you. The only positive thing to be said sometimes about the big number of students that go through is that not everybody might specifically want to take a conservation route afterwards. They might want to go into different directions - for instance, a lot of conservation students end up going into collection management so that even though you might have trained in one specialism, you might go into a wider aspect of it.

**Elizabeth Pye** Can I add to that too? I think these are important questions. We've always tried to keep our student numbers in balance as far as we can but for exactly that reason - but it is true that universities are under huge pressure to increase student numbers, particularly in this day and age. We also attract very international students, many of whom, almost all of whom, go back to jobs in their home countries so the number of students we are producing for jobs in this country is comparatively small or it's a smaller proportion. The question of volunteers, I think is also very important question. But one thing I would say is that there's never really been the capacity to employ as many conservators as museums would like to employ, particularly outside the major national museums, and volunteers have always played an important role in many museums. It is different now, I agree, when people perhaps are losing jobs but I think if you gain useful experience, it gives you a way of deciding what you want to do in the future. Is this the kind of conservation you want to do or not? We used to have the same kind of question when - and this still happens - with short-term jobs, maternity-cover jobs: are these useful career-development stages. I'd have questions from students: is it useful to take up a six-month post, and what happens to me after six months, which is a perfectly reasonable question. I've always said "go for it" because you learn a lot in those six months. You may decide that's not the kind of conservation you want to do next time around. You're not tied to it, you can move on. Now there are ethical problems about the voluntary side, and when people are losing their jobs, but I would just say to all of you, have a go at taking on whatever you can.

**Sonia Schwoell** Can I say something to this subject regarding book conservation: you have this issue that there is so much work out there. I find that the work that people who come out of training do wouldn't endanger my job because I can do more. So I would still get work on the more specific problems and bigger projects. And actually, I do look for volunteers who are happy to do some work experience for little or no money because I know they will learn and then for them it's the first step to get into work and a few more books will be repaired - which will otherwise never be dealt with because there are endless amounts of objects that need the help or treatment. And so, I would encourage you to take on voluntary work.

**Twitter Moderator** We've got a question online, a request for practical suggestions for students wanting to initiate their career after finishing training, and volunteering is simply impossible for

students, particularly students who are supporting a family. And we've had another student saying, "Very few conferences and short courses are affordable for students, how can we expand our knowledge if we're unable to afford this?" I think they want practical suggestions rather than sympathy.

**Robert Payton**            There are actually a number of grant-giving bodies in the UK that I'm aware of - and I'm sure in many other countries - that would be very willing to support conferences for volunteers and I could name several in England but perhaps not in this forum now.

**Elizabeth Pye**            Can I add something that I've quite often advised students to say: "can I come if I help"? If I'm willing to take my time to, as we're seeing here, take Microphones serve tea or whatever. Sometimes, getting perhaps a reduced fee for a conference at least.

**Hannah Clare**            Hi, my name is Hannah Clare and I was wanting to know what your views on specialism were and how concerned we should be about it as early in our careers. I know a lot of you have talked about where you've began and how you have actually managed to switch about quite a lot but I'm finding it quite difficult to switch and I just wondered what your views were on that.

**Jocelyn Cumming**        I think it was a very interesting question because what you're saying is you're currently working as a preventive conservator but you are also concerned about getting a job and you see jobs advertised that have got specialism and how much you should be doing this specialism and how much you should look elsewhere. Because it is quite interesting, when you look at people's professional careers as often you'll see people who've had really successful career but they've got a niche position. There are some who specialize in papyrus or there's a wonderful conservator who specialize just in doing a specific thing and so that ensures that the person has and is going to have some on-going job. I suppose it's a question really of asking yourself what it is that you really like doing because Elizabeth underscored this and, of course, I've underscored the profound importance of preventive conservation. But preventive conservation has to be really important in specialisms because if you're doing, say, photographic conservation, you've still got to have a really wide knowledge of preventive conservation. I'm always looking at the jobs for students and a lot of the jobs now are preventive conservation. Are there particular specialisms that you're really passionate about and interested in?

**Hannah Clare**            Quite often when you speak to people, they've started off in one area, say textiles for example. And then at some point in their career something else has come along and they've been able to go in a different direction. And I don't really know how realistic that is or whether you see it as a problem or not and also whether there is a difference between museums and archives.

So when you're this early in your career, if you pigeonhole yourself basically you seal your fate into going in a particular direction.

**Velson Horie**            If I may, again, using my experience from the past - if you see yourself as pigeonholed, you're pigeonholed. As soon as you see that what you're doing is conservation and you're doing those bits that interest and enthuse you, then in most jobs there's sufficient flexibility to branch out. Very few jobs actually have their 40 hours a week defined, and in employment if you show that you have skills and abilities and enthusiasm that go slightly outside, you can, amoeba-like, put the tentacles out and then bud out in on other skills. And of course, you don't have to do this only in work. We had a discussion about 25 years ago on why no-one ever published their conservation work and I said I would never allow someone to write a paper while at work. I want to see demonstrated ability before I let them do it and they can do that in their own time. If someone is enthusiastic, they'll do it until 2 o'clock in the morning.

**Robert Payton**            Certainly, at the Museum of London we try and give the interns a full broad aspect of training as part of the internship or placement and that enables the student at the end to go out with a multiplicity of skills that enables them to go for a number of jobs. My recommendation to students always has been is not to pigeonhole yourself too soon in your career because there are always going to be opportunities in years to come to then branch out, whereas if you go down one line, then it's very difficult, from what I've seen, for those people to change jobs to another specialisation. It's quite a challenge for example, going down a textile conservation route and then suddenly deciding you want to become a metals conservator. It would be almost impossible.

**Twitter Moderator**        Another Twitter question: do you think that conservation should only be taught at post-graduate level as it is becoming increasingly the case? The Camberwell undergraduate course is closing soon. What advice do you give to someone interested in getting into conservation without an undergraduate degree?

**Robert Payton**            Very interesting question. I found this quite a fascinating subject over the last few years because of the nature of the courses that exist and of the courses that we take people from some of the courses are undergraduate level, others are MSc level. And if you are looking at those courses and what they provide, it could be construed as being very complex because some of the Master's levels, for example, you're getting one year of theory and on another a placement with practical experience. Some other undergraduate courses are providing three years of theory and practical but it's very difficult from an end-user point of view to know what we're getting from students because courses are often very difficult to compare with others.

**Velson Horie** Just say that the courses that are available provide for a very, very small number of specialisms. There's a huge amount of stuff out there which is not dealt with under the courses. So, if you wanted, at least a few years ago, to become a natural history conservator, you couldn't possibly have done a conservation course. You would have to have done some form of apprenticeship in a museum in natural history as a technician or something like that at the Natural History Museum and work your way up and work yourself into the conservation department or whatever. So if you have a passion for something, you do it in that area. The PACR process allows for professionalism that's been gained to be recognized in some areas where there is nothing that's been codified, unlike such areas as painting conservation or archival conservation, which have been going on for years, and everyone knows how to do it. You go through the course and everyone knows what's expected. In other fields, no one has defined what's expected. No one has defined what you do and it has to be invented. For some disciplines no one has even started the process. So a lot of these things have to be invented and they have to evolve. And there you have to choose a non-traditional route. If you try to get into painting conservation or photographic conservation without it [a course], you'll have a hard job because you're competing against something that has an established route.

**Alison Richmond** I just wanted to go back to the thorny issue of unpaid volunteer work and wondered whether it might be useful, I don't know whether the panel agrees, to define internships and student placements that happen when students are actually on courses, distinguish between an internship which might be from 6 to say 12 months, or a year, or 2 years against a short student placement when students are actually on courses. And in regard to the idea of unpaid volunteer work, it might be helpful to think about internships and student placements as real learning experiences, real development experiences, whereas unpaid volunteer work could be not so developmental. I mean, it could be that you're just chipping in. So I just wondered whether the panel had any thoughts on how we might come to an agreement as a profession about distinguishing between these three areas.

**Sonia Schvoll** I just have one example of one option how it could be dealt with. We just had one project where it was about preparation for move for library and there was box-making to be done and at first you learn to make your boxes - but then it becomes very repetitive. We couldn't pay the students but we could tie it in into teaching. And so we started a collaboration with the course, private conservators and students, it was unpaid work but it became part of their curriculum. And in this way, when you ask them to do work which isn't paid, then at least give them more experience than they would just gain from making the boxes. I think this could be a way of paying back. Anyway, it's paid because it's time off for the people who organize the project or work at the institution anyway. So if that could be more emphasized and people are made aware of that and prepare, have these things ready, that could teach a talk, I think that would be very helpful.

**Elizabeth Pye** Can I just comment on Alison Richmond's point about some way of defining internships? When we were developing our internship strategy here, by which I mean incorporating internships into Master's courses, I was also at the same time involved in the scheme in this country, in the UK, which was developing what were then called graduate apprenticeships. They died out almost as soon as they started, but the exercise in defining those was extremely useful and much of it was translatable into defining an internship and we have quite a tight definition of what we expect in an internship both of us and of the student, as well as what we ask of the internship host and we provide this as a structured document and it has helped us a lot to understand what we're trying to do. And I think from comments that some of our internship hosts have said, it's also quite useful as a model that could be extended. And I don't take the entire credit for it because a graduate apprenticeship set me on the way. I would like to add at that stage how important, I reiterate, how important the involvement of the internship post is. I was very touched to see that several of the students enrolled actually are our student interns which was really nice to see. Can I just also say a little bit about the question of why are we trying to train people at Master's level. I think maybe what's driven me in my career as a teacher has been to try and raise the status of conservation and my view is that at least some training should be at Master's level because it does convey a status in terms of ability of attainment and so on. Having worked for a long time, starting with undergraduates and moving on to postgraduate training, I do think the quality of the student input and output at Master's level is really excellent and I'm really pleased about that and I think that feeds into the profession.

**Jocelyn Cuming** I also think that, as courses are being cut, it makes sense probably to run courses at postgraduate level. And one of the reasons that Camberwell decided to cut undergraduate provision was that those schools was being recruiting as well as postgraduate courses. But just going back to Alison's thing about the paid and unpaid issue, I think a distinction needs to be made between internships that are post-graduation and internships that are part of the training. Because Bernard was running the FDA which was for book conservation and had a very formal work placement of 12 weeks in total - which was fantastic generosity from the museums to give that time - and there'd be no expectation, either on the institutions' or the students' part, that they would be in any way paid. But I think the difficulty comes when students have graduated and they're not doing internships because the post-graduation ones, not the ICON ones, are unpaid -they just had a really difficult time. I did also think that you mentioned that there could become a point, particularly in this economic climate, where industry might start charging the training institutions for those placements. That would be completely drastic because there simply would be the inability of those training courses; I think I can speak probably for UCL as well, to in any way actually formally pay for those placements.

**Velson Horie** In my 27 years at the Manchester Museum we often took students, we often took placements, and it took months before we started to make a profit out of the effort that we had put in to supporting the students. It is really time-consuming. We have to supervise them, we can't trust them. They don't know the systems, it takes a long time to get them up to speed and that is a real cost. It means we are not doing something else and so the point is, who do we charge? And actually, we charge the student because the time they're working after they start making profit is the time when they are repaying and after then they go and we've lost them. And if they go at the point at which we suddenly make that movement from loss to profit, it's a complete loss to us. But – it's really good for our soul, and it's really bad for the institution.

**Sara VanSnick** I'm Sara VanSnick from the National Archives here in the UK and I just wanted to pose a question that's perhaps a bit outside of the box. I'd like to know what skills you think can be gained outside the profession and brought back in for those students who, for reasons of money or time or whatever it happens to be, cannot manage to get their first job in a conservation studio, or in a museum, or gallery, or archive.

**Elizabeth Pye** Can I comment on that? One of the things that, speaking for myself, we don't do well enough is management, budgeting, those kinds of skills and we, partly, we haven't got the scope and time to fit it into our training courses. I think it is a gap and that's one area, I think, you could definitely benefit from.

**Velson Horie** I'll continue that idea. One of the things that happens when you learn and you get more experience is that you get to know the complexity of things and you couldn't possibly cope with the complexity of life when you first come into training or even if you come out of it. A little bit of history, I managed a £21 million project for a museum development and I went to the British Museum and asked for their advice at the beginning - and they gave me some advice - and I didn't understand it because I hadn't been through the process to understand the advice that they were giving me. On a much smaller scale, when you come out of university, you just have no concept of the complexities that you have to manage. It'd be really good to have some experience of other sorts of life, the complexities that apply to those and then bring those back into conservation, for project management and for making your horizons bigger.

**Larisa Allen** Hi, I'm Larisa Allen, a student at UMass Boston, I'm also employed by the National Park Service in the USA in a student temporary employment position, so I actually get to get paid in my job - which is great. It sounds like in the USA we only have basically one undergraduate programme for conservation and everything else is a Master's programme. And I'm wondering if that helps address the issues of glut that we were talking about by weeding out less interested

undergraduate students and if you think that that's a positive benefit or a negative, or if you think it's better to get people involved earlier or wait until they're a little bit more mature and they've actually already gone through some work. I know that in the USA we generally acquire an art history and chemistry minor, what you think about that?

**Jocelyn Cuming** I think that's a really interesting observation because when I ran an undergraduate programme in books, the majority of the students because they wanted to do book conservation actually came as graduates. By and large, the students who have made the best students were the students who already came with the degree. So I think that your observation is saying that in an ideal world there would be undergraduates, but because you want students that are really high-calibre, because as you all know from having started conservational it does call upon a high intellectual, practical ability. And so, for that reason, I do think a postgraduate programme is, speaking from my personal experience, the best way of providing conservation education. And having to start weeding out quality, as you were pointing out, even though it's sad at some levels, is really on the whole a positive thing.

**Elizabeth Pye** Can I say I had the same experience when we were teaching at undergraduate level; a very large number of our students came in as graduates. They discovered conservation was what they wanted to do from perhaps having done something else sometimes very different before and they made very strong applicants and very strong students.

**Robert Payton** Studying at university and then having to go through the cost of a Master's course isn't cheap. So, so in a real world that is a major factor to think about.

**Velson Horie** Unfortunately, some weeding is done not by interest as much as by money. And I don't know how that applies in the USA but in this country, Master's are mostly self-funded nowadays. There are very few grants. **Alison Richmond** And then get an unpaid internship.

**Velson Horie** And we're talking about widening diversity and it really narrows it.

**Robert Payton** Which is why I talked about earlier on about the Museum of London. We've done some very, very interesting volunteer programmes which loosely could be called Collections Care and these have actually won awards, international awards, for the fact that we've been trying to include the dispossessed, people from very disadvantaged backgrounds, some who haven't got jobs and we've got this people involved with repackaging archaeological items in our stores. We've got 17 kilometres of items to repackage. So, this is a way of doing that. In fact, we do give them small amounts of financial help as well but that does take a lot of time to organise and to supervise as well. We have, I forget, two, possibly three people involved with those projects each time we run them.

**Velson Horie** Can we turn Alison Richmond's question back to you? What would make it possible for you to become conservators? What methodology would you like to see, whether it's practicable or not, what do you need, to take the next step. What are the barriers that you have and, though you could say money, what are the barriers that you have? What should be cleared to make the process much more sensible? There are, there have always been, far more people wanting to do conservation than ever can get into it so there will always be quite an attrition rate. Do we make the process more sensible? I don't need an answer now. Think about it for tomorrow; when the discussions come tomorrow, think about what plans that you would like to see because we can preach to you until the cows come home but we'll be gone in a few years.

**Liz Ralph** Hi, Liz Ralph from Camberwell. There's very much to the point that you made, Velson. It seems like you're quite resentful of the students that you had in your museum at some point and actually students can pick up on that, which makes it quite uncomfortable to work in places where people realise that the people who train them don't have the time to help them. And it feels like in some cases that you do not wish to see [staff] taking time out of their busy work place and work schedule to help you, which is what we need. We need that help to go forward. Would it not be a good idea to set aside some of the budget for museums to put towards training new members of staff or training students to come in for work placements so that can be got rid of?

**Velson Horie** It wasn't resentment per se, the resentment was with students who sloped off halfway through. The students who stayed, most of them went into the profession and I'm really proud of them. The ones who took and didn't give back were the ones that I'm resentful of, in retrospect.

**Liz Ralph** But would it not be a good idea for institutions to have in their budgets some time set aside for that, for the training of students to come in and do work placements?

**Velson Horie** It'd be wonderful.

**Jocelyn Cuming** I think a lot of places utterly depend on, are totally dependent on the support of the museums. The difficulty is that museums themselves have had to cut as much as the training institutions. The museums themselves have experienced huge funding cuts. So, for them to actually set aside specific budgets is becoming increasingly difficult. But by and large, I'm just talking about being London-based. The generosity of institutions has been absolutely extreme. I wouldn't even like to start picking out institutions because it would mean that I left out others. I think, by and large, museum professionals realize that in order for us to have a vibrant on-going conservation community, we utterly depend on those replaced experiences.

**Amanda Eyre** Hi, I'm Amanda Eyre from the University of Lincoln. In trying to answer your question, Velson, about what I would want to see ... As an international student I pay almost three times what UK or EU students pay and it's a struggle to pay that but I would still be willing to pay a little extra if my course included an internship. If in some way that could be worked out, I would pay for that because that's invaluable experience. You really need it.

**Velson Horie** I agree.

**Yu Xing** I am Yu Xing and I'm at the Hamilton Kerr Institute [University of Cambridge], I would like to change the subject completely. I wanted to know if there is anywhere I can get guidelines to set up my own company and what insurance we can get and what aspects of law, what legal things we have to go through and that kind of thing.

**Velson Horie** I'm outside my comfort zone having worked mainly in institutions, but there are a number of initiatives to support small companies and these are run through banks. They will know better.

**Barbara Borghese** Thank you. I am Barbara Borghese, the editor of *News in Conservation* and an independent paper conservator. In an answering what you were asking for, it's not necessarily related only conservation but in fact the business centre of the British Library runs free workshops that help you set up your own company, and which I myself have used to when I set up my own. They are independent, it's free. So we pay through our taxes for that, use it, just go and use it. It's not specific to conservation, but a business is a business and most of the requirements would be there and you will be able to use them and other things about, for example, insurance etc. There is information on that you can find and you can even talk to other private conservators.

**Amber Kerr** Okay, we have time for one more question, one last question.

**Melanie Keable** Hi, I'm Melanie Keable and I'm currently an Icon intern at the British Museum. I'm just wondering, Professor Pye, in answer to your question I was wondering do you think it would be possible for discussion between different institutions to teach conservation to students about the definition of what would go into an undergraduate course as opposed to what would go into a Master's course, because I came straight from my A levels to do an undergraduate course because I knew that conservation was something I was very passionate about and I definitely wanted to do. I did go on to do a Master's course, but I was very restricted in what Master's course I could do because there was so much overlap between things that were taught in the undergraduate courses and things

that were taught in the Master's courses, because you've got people coming in from different backgrounds and everything. So do you think it would be possible to discuss between institutions and clarify that definition?

**Elizabeth Pye** Can I comment on that briefly? Rather a long time ago, we in the predecessor of Icon, the UKIC, defined a basic syllabus for various courses and one was a fundamental syllabus and then on top of that there were additional bits for different specialisms. But one of the difficulties is that each of our institutions will want to have a view on what we teach. They are not going to be terribly receptive to the idea that we actually all teach the same thing. I think our best hope is at the accreditation level, which is how professionals generally work. My daughter is an architect, for instance. She was at different universities through her learning stage. Accreditation is a universal level and that is the same with many professions. I see your problem, but I don't see that we can realistically have a standard syllabus at that level, I'm afraid. Our basic syllabus didn't catch on in other words.

**Amber Kerr** Thank you all. I think you should give yourselves a round of applause, and our speakers today.

**End of Session 1**