

2013 IIC STUDENT & EMERGING CONSERVATOR CONFERENCE

CONSERVATION: OBSTACLES OR OPPORTUNITIES?

TRANSCRIPTS – 1 of 3

Session 1, Thursday 12th September

Education and Employment Across Borders

Conservation is a small field and collaboration across borders is therefore essential to broaden one's work experience and strengthen one's professionalism. Globalisation has meant that it has become easier to find training and work placements abroad, which can also start conservators on an international career.

Moderator: Tine Louise Slotsgaard

Introduction

Mikkel Scharff ...and is rolling from now on. The conference here is a combination of the second conference for the IIC as well as a celebration for the 40-year anniversary of the setting up of the School of Conservation here at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture, Design and Conservation. I know it's a long name, and for that reason we usually use the shorter name "School of Conservation" and that may be how you will hear us referred to during the sessions here today. The reason I saluted you with "good morning, afternoon, evening and good night", is the fact that although we are assembled at an auditorium full of eager participants here in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, and the time is just past 1.30 PM here, we may have visitors and viewers from all over the world, since the session today as well as the two sessions tomorrow, is being broadcast via the web. So, we may, apart from Julian already being with us from Sydney in Australia, a few hours ahead of us here, also have viewers being up early in the Americas, and watching what is going on here today. So, welcome to all, whether it's morning, afternoon, evening or night. I'm not going to say much more, I would now, and we may repeat this at the end of the third session, like to thank very much a group of very, very dedicated students, here from the School of Conservation, who have been doing a hard work of setting up this conference over the last year it has been planned. Actually, two years ago, a group of the [Copenhagen] students participated in the first conference in London, and came back to Copenhagen and said to me: "We want to do this", and I said: "Yes, yes, yes...". But actually they did, and the result is what we have here now. And again I would like to thank you all very much for your hard work. And I would also like to thank our organisation, the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture, Design and Conservation, for the opportunity to use these rooms, and for all the dedicated staff here in our institution, who have helped us in organizing this event. And I would also like to thank our IIC partners, who have also been working very hard on organising this event.

And after all these thanks, I will stop, and I will give the platform to our moderator for all three sessions: Tine Slotsgaard. And she is going to come up here to the podium and will guide all of us through three very intriguing sessions I am sure. Thank you, Tine.

Introduction to the session and to the panel speakers

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Thank you Mikkel. Yes, hello everyone. I would like to say welcome to this first session which we will begin shortly. Please note that this session and the following two, that we will have tomorrow, is being filmed, this goes for both the panel and the audience as well.

The theme of the first session is Education and Employment across Borders:

Conservation is a small field and collaboration across borders is therefore essential to broaden one's work experience and strengthen one's professionalism. Globalisation has meant that it has become easier to find training and work placements abroad, which can also start conservators on an international career. – In relation to this the following three points has been taken into account:

a) What advantages and disadvantages are associated with attending conservation training courses at institutions in other countries? The network acquired in this way during one's training can greatly influence later work options. However, does an international education always benefit the student and does it lead to a loss of potential conservation work in the student's own country?

b) Internationalisation also requires linguistic and cultural adaptation for the student – at one's educational institution, one's work place and to enable the discussion of conservation matters in other countries. How do students whose first language is not English, for example, fare in comparison to native English speakers in regard to training and work abroad? Conversely, how are English speakers received in countries where English is not the first language?

c) How should links across linguistic, cultural and national borders be enhanced? Should we aim to some degree of commonality across borders? How do the efforts to create standardisation in conservation education/terminology help us students/the emerging conservators/the field? How does this help skills transfer from one place to the next and skills develop within a person?

The panel speakers are Meaghan Monaghan, Stina Ekelund, and Julian Bickersteth who will join us via the web. Unfortunately René Larsen, who was going to speak today, has not been able to make it.

After the presentations there will be time for questions and debate.

The first speaker is Meaghan Monaghan. Meaghan is a paintings conservator, with an MSc. from Queen's University in Canada in 2010. For the past year, she has been a Samuel H. Kress Paintings Conservation Fellow at the National Gallery of Denmark. Her previous fellowships and internships include Yale University Art Gallery, Canadian Conservation Institute, and Australian Museum.

Go ahead Meaghan.

Meaghan Monaghan Hello, I'll just quickly introduce a little bit more about my professional experience so far, and then I'm going to talk a bit about the process of getting a placement, internationally or abroad. I decided to sort of address the "leading up to the position", because it's hard to address both the "leading up" and once you are in a position, so maybe afterwards we can talk more about some of the challenges you face once you are in a position. But as Tine mentioned, I, when I started at Queen's, one of the things I was very interested in, about conservation, is that it's a very international field, so right away I started researching internships I could do in various countries, thought about what interested me, and what countries might be best for me to get the experience I wanted. And I decided to go to the Australian Museum for one of my internships, and I will explain a bit about why I did that, and after graduating from Queen's, I then spent two years working in the US, working at the Yale University Art Gallery, and now here in Denmark for a year. So, there were several reasons I sought international employment and placements in the first place:

First: I wanted the opportunity to work with a range of different objects and paintings; for example, in my degree I was learning about Australian bark paintings, I just thought that that was something that really interested me, and that is why I sought work in Australia, and ended up at the Australian Museum. Then after spending two years in the US, I realised I wanted more experience with old master paintings, so I looked for opportunities in Europe, and that's how I ended up in Denmark.

Secondly: I wanted to be exposed to different conservation philosophies and techniques. Every conservator you work with, every institute you go to, every country, has slightly different philosophies and techniques. And by going to those different places, and learning those techniques you can pick up a variety of approaches and broaden your toolbox of conservation ideas and approaches.

And, finally, the third reason was: I wanted to expand my professional network. Conservation is an international field, and therefore we need to network on an international level, and so, by getting out into different countries, you are meeting conservators from all over the place, and each of those conservators is an invaluable resource to you, everyone has different experience and has built up all this experience in the course of their employment, so eventually there is going to be a question that you'll have, and one person you met is going to know the answer, so you can use those people to help you in your career, your whole career, every time you meet someone new.

So I feel there are two approaches you can have when looking for conservation work abroad: you can figure out which areas you would like to live in, or how far you are willing to move, and then only look for jobs or contact institutions within that criterion for yourself. The other option is to make a clear idea for yourself of what kind of experience you want to gain, and what job description best fits your experience, and then look everywhere for jobs that fit that description. When I was finishing at Queens, I didn't have anything holding me to my location, so I decided to take the second approach, and I thought about what type of position I wanted, what I wanted to learn in that position and what kind of experience I wanted to gain - and I started looking for jobs with that description. And then throughout that process I wouldn't sort of pre-judge any location or institution, I would apply to the jobs that looked like they would fit me best, and then after, start doing some research about the location, and then you can start to see what's the cost of living there, how would I fit in to that community, would this be a good place for me? And then that research helps lead up to your interview. So, you know you are going to need to research the location, and know about it if you get interviewed, and then at that time, after you've done that research, you can decide if you still think it's the right position for you, after talking to the institution and doing the interview.

So I'm going to talk about some of the hurdles I feel that you have to get over, in your process of going through this application process for jobs abroad. The first is simply: are international applications being accepted? I think there is a general misconception that when institutions post a job, they don't want international applicants, and I think it's important not to make that decision without contacting the institution first. If it is not stated clearly in the application, then, from my experience, when you ask if they are accepting international applications they almost always reply yes. I think it is important that you let *them* decide if *you* are worth the hassle. As an international person, it does take a little bit more work to hire you, but if you are the right person for the position, they will feel like it is the right thing to do, and they will work with you to get there. And so I would just say that, when you write your cover letter to them, explain to them why you want to be in that location, why it is important to you to work internationally, you can even mention that you have done some research about visa options, so they can see that you are willing to work with them, to do the hard stuff. I would also say that when contacting individuals and institutions in the country that you are interested in working in, don't be afraid to ask about other available opportunities in the country, maybe they will not have something for you, but maybe they will know if there is other opportunities, and they can be a resource for you. Also ask about any financial assistance options, because if anyone is going to know, it will be the people working in that country. I have really been very lucky to find a lot of conservators that are more than willing to help me research other institutions outside their own. And even if it doesn't lead to anything, it never hurts to ask. Don't be afraid of asking questions, people like to give you information and help you - they want to help you.

The second hurdle is the long-distance interview. I think nowadays [this is less of a hurdle], because we have got videoconferencing as an option, and also telephone interviews and then, of course, you could also travel to the location. If you are applying for a lot of jobs abroad, travelling there is not usually an option for most people, but thankfully people understand that. I think the best thing to do is to really prepare yourself, I know it is important to prepare yourself for every interview, but I think with the long distance interview it is important, it is difficult to get a feel for someone's personality when you are not meeting face to face, so the advice that I would give, is to practice, maybe with a family member or a friend. Practice your tone of voice, make sure your connection is good - this is a big problem, I know people who feel that they haven't got positions simply because the people on the other line could not hear what they were saying, so that really is a factor in a long-distance interview. And then finally remember that not every employer will be comfortable with a videoconferencing-type interview, so make sure you always offer to make it by telephone *or* videoconferencing, whichever they are most comfortable with, and work from there, because if they are more comfortable, then your interaction will probably be easier.

The third hurdle is the visa and figuring out which visa is best for your position or your situation. When you are looking for work abroad a lot of applications will say things along the lines of: "you must be legally allowed to work in the country", sometimes they will state that you already need a visa. I wouldn't suggest applying for a visa before you get a job offer, because there are actually a lot of visas and a lot of the good ones, for students and young people, you can only apply for once. And if you apply and you don't get the position, then you have wasted your one chance of getting that visa, so I think the best approach is to do the research, make sure you are eligible for the visa, in your interview and in your cover letter you say which visa you are eligible for and why, so they know that you are legally able to work, as long as you apply for this visa, that way they see that you are a team member in the visa process, so you don't feel like they are going to go through all this trouble for you, that you are willing to be a participant and help in the process.

Another suggestion for visas is [that] universities, and museums associated with universities, will have a lot of experience with international visas because they have professors and students coming in internationally on a regular basis, so usually they are really quick with visas, they know the process really well, so if you are having trouble, sometimes it is good to try to find something within a university or with a university affiliation. And then once you have made your connection and you have that position, it is really important to start your visa process immediately! Of course it is ideal to get your visa before you depart for the country, but sometimes what you do is just hope that it is going to come, and you book your flight. I wouldn't say that is the best approach, for example my visa for Denmark took three months to process, so my advice is more to research the timeline, almost everywhere will give you a timeline, like one [or] three months, or six to twelve weeks, and make sure your employer knows the best and worst case scenario, and then you just

have to be flexible, so make sure. I think the biggest thing I have learned is that you need a flexible timeline, you need to have some leeway time to let the visa process [follow its course], you can't really have a set start date all the time, sometimes you will make it to the set start date and it will be great, but often you will need to push it a little bit one way or the other. So I think it is just important to make your employer aware of this, so they know what to expect - and you know what to expect - and I think that is the best way to keep everyone on the same page and flexible.

The best way to help you through these hurdles I think is, and it is going to sound really simple, research and networking. The internet, of course, has a lot of information these days - you can find almost everything you need to know on there - but I would also suggest calling embassies and immigration offices, because your specific situation will always be different than everyone else's. Everyone's situation is slightly different. It is always good to talk to somebody about your specific situation and make sure that you are following the right protocol. And ask a lot of questions: I cannot stress this enough, you might feel like you are really annoying, but just write down every question you have and ask as many people as possible, because the more information you have the more smooth your process will be. I think it is really great to contact friends, family, colleagues, anyone you who has ever visited that country or worked in that country, because they can give you a feel for the cost of living, maybe they will have information about visas, they may not be in conservation, but they can provide you with some insight as to what the process might be like and what kind of things you should expect. And if you don't know anyone who has been to that country, [then use] Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs, there are so many places now where you can put questions out into the internet and people will come back with answers and comments and it is a really good resource in that sense. I also found it extremely helpful to contact previous interns or students who have done the same position as you or have gone to the same city as you have, for me it has led to places to live, knowing which areas to live in, they often know the visa process if they came from the same country as you, it is very, very helpful, so just ask the institution for contact information for previous interns, or students who have done internships there before.

I think the greatest lesson I have learned while working abroad is, you have to be flexible, you need to problem-solve and everything will not go perfectly but it always works out in the end, so you just have to roll with the punches, and know that you do need to have a little bit of flexibility -but just persist and it always works out, it just takes a little bit of time sometimes and you learn so much from the process. Never be ashamed to ask for help, you will be so surprised how supportive and helpful your international colleagues can be when you are in a situation; they will be there for you. So in addition to the professional benefits of working abroad you also get to see new places, meet new people, try new things and just have the adventure of living somewhere else.

Thanks.

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Thank you Meaghan. Stina Ekelund is the next speaker. Stina is a Furniture conservator with a BSc. from the Carl Malmsten Furniture Studies centre at Linköping University in Sweden and has an MSc. from the School of Conservation in Denmark. Stina is currently doing her PhD project, ‘Climate4Wood’ at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and [with] the Department of the Built Environment at Eindhoven University of Technology.

Stina Ekelund: I would also like to share some of my experiences from studying, living and being abroad. As mentioned before I am from Sweden but I haven’t lived there since 2003, so I have been away for quite some time. I had my practical education as a furniture/cabinet maker from Sweden, and then my Bachelor’s from Stockholm, and after finishing my Bachelor’s studies I moved to Copenhagen, or actually I came here for an internship, and I stayed for ten years, so things change. And since I couldn’t find a museum job after my internship, I decided to start my own workshop. It was a new language, a new market, and new expectations and that has caused some challenges I would say. And even if the Nordic languages are very similar, or it might seem so for other people, or actually because of the similarities, and the linguistic “false friends” in the languages, I decided to learn Danish and to get to know the culture. And then the museums started calling.

So after working five years in the museum workshop at the Royal Collections and Museum of National History, I decided to continue my education with a Master’s education at the School of Conservation here in Copenhagen. And I had a very clear goal, but not much time, so I did it as I wanted and I finished in 2010. During my studies and also between my studies I have had internships in other places, for example in Italy with a long tradition of conservation and restoration of objects, where I worked on interiors in Venice, but also more exotic places like Iceland. That might be a very odd place for a furniture conservator, since you almost don’t see any living trees there, but it was very nice anyway. And in 2012 I had something as unusual as a fixed position as a furniture conservator at one of the major museums here in Denmark, when I received a phone call from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, asking if I was still interested in a PhD position at the ‘Climate4Wood’ project, which is a multi-disciplinary project about climate-related damage to wood, and of course I was, so I packed my bags and I left again, and today my everyday life is in Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

So what are the advantages and disadvantages of attending training courses in conservation in other countries? I don’t know if I’m the right person to ask, since I was quite established in Denmark before I took my Master studies here, but I can just give you my experience from it. I always knew I wanted to continue my studies after my Bachelor’s, and I couldn’t get them in Stockholm so I knew I had to go someplace else, and, since I was living here and I had work experience and also I knew what I wanted to do, Copenhagen

was the right choice for me at that time. I had already learned the language, and was also kind of dealing with the Danes at that time, so I knew what I was getting in to. I think it is different if you come from outside and you just start at a new university where you don't really know anything about it. For me the advantages were much greater than the disadvantages: you learn a lot from changing institution or even country, There is not the same "this is the way we do it", it is more "but why?" if you come from the outside. And you can always ask that if you are newcomer; you are not expected to know the same things as everyone else. And the disadvantages for me are more on the personal level: you are always the newcomer, and you are always outside your safety zone. But it keeps you awake.

The change to the Netherlands and the Dutch frankness has sometimes been hard. I am still struggling with the language. As a part of my research project I'm searching through old conservation reports, archive information, trying to find information about objects, all in Dutch. So my technical language and reading reports and everything that is work related is ok in Dutch, but then we have the social part: irony, jokes, it's not that easy. But I still think it is very important to try to learn the local language, I have been there for four years, so I should and I will - I intend to! It is, as I said, mostly because of the social life, it's so much easier if you can communicate in the language of the country, and it is usually around the lunch table the most interesting stories pop up from your colleagues, and it's very sad to miss those. Today English is my working language and as a non-English speaker I know my English is far from perfect, but discussing conservation treatments, technical descriptions and things like that is a part of my everyday life, and I have learned to live with it. And I know that my texts will be corrected, in a very critical way sometimes, and it is of course hard to get your things back with red marks everywhere, but I have decided to see it in a positive way, and I've learned quite a bit.

My English is improving, which is good. And also, I was thinking about this, when you are in a workshop with lots of non-English speaking people, or non-English natives, working together in English, we can develop or own language that the English-speakers have difficulty understanding, because it becomes natural for a German, Swedish and French person to talk about things that way. It is also a very interesting way of working together. And I think it is very important to see conservation institutions, private workshops and museums, either through internships, where you get behind the scene, or taking a year abroad, or taking a greater part of your education in another country, and after the Bologna process and the university changes, it should be easier to take certain courses, or a part of your education in another country. And since conservation is a very interdisciplinary field, exchange through faculties and universities locally or abroad should be possible and also is related to fields like archaeology or art history and material science, I think that it should be possible to take a course in something else, and I think that's really important for the conservation institutions and the schools to work on, to make it easier, to take any interesting course. During

my stay in different workshops, abroad and also locally, I have seen and learned techniques and also materials I will never use again; I think it is important to see and to know what is going on in the real world outside your conservation school, to better understand what is going on with the objects and to be able to read them, and to understand the conservation history, because one day they might end up on your table. So even if you don't approve with the technique, or the way you are doing it, it's good to know what is going on.

I don't know what I will do when I finish my PhD, if I return to my home country or if I continue my journey; I don't know. The objects we are handling are from many parts of the world and I think an international education will [allow me to] understand the craftsmanship and the materials and the techniques used then they produced the objects in another country and in another time, so I think it is very important to go abroad.

That's it.

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Thank you Stina. Our next speaker is Julian Bickersteth (who is with us via Skype). Julian received his education from Oxford University before completing a diploma in materials conservation, specialising in furniture. Before establishing International Conservation Services, he worked at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. Since 2009 Julian has been a Vice President and Director of Communications at IIC. Julian chairs the Australian Museums and Collections Committee and is a board member and past Deputy President of the National Trust of Australia (NSW). Julian you go ahead.

Julian Bickersteth Tina, hi, everybody! I am actually gazing at a blank wall with a sort of speaker in the corner, but I imagine somewhere behind me there are several ranks of eager conservators, and it is fantastic to be able to talk to you from Sydney. Tine, is that all coming through live and clear?

Tine: Yes you are very clear.

Julian: Good! It is useful from my point of view to be able to talk after Meaghan and Stina, from a slightly different context. I think they have both given a very useful perspective the extraordinary profession in which you have chosen to embark, and in which we are at various stages of our careers. It is indeed a truly international one, and with that comes all sorts of opportunities and I think the most useful thing I can do, is talk to you today about my journey, which has been international, because of the back of that, I hope it will give you some ideas about how you might pursue your own careers.

First of all I set up international conservation services in Sydney in 1986, not because I was planning to employ people from around the globe, but because I saw that, interestingly enough, Australia was a useful and possible springboard into international opportunities, to share and work with conservation projects

around the world. Ironically, or perhaps because of that, of the 25 staff that I employ, I have two English-trained conservators, one in furniture and one in paper conservation. I have an Irish-trained furniture conservator who has spent most of his career in Scotland. I have a Canadian-trained paper conservator who trained at Queen's University, where Meaghan trained. I have an Italian paintings conservator. I have a Polish paintings and a Polish sculpture conservator, both trained at Nicolas Copernicus University in Torun. And in the past I have employed Americans, Spaniards, Germans, Maltese and even New Zealanders. So what I say off the back of that is that each one has brought their own particular skill basis and background. Yes, as Meaghan says, we do have different philosophies and techniques but we do share very much a common language, all be it with lots of differences around what we mean by "conservation" and "preservation" and "restoration" and all these interesting terms we use. I am, obviously, from an Anglo-centric view which is one that you largely share in Denmark. [That is] The reason my view, a distinctly different view from what both the Italian or French conservators have, and it changes again when you get into central Europe; Polish conservator have more of a, what I call a sort of polymath view, they tend to have a much wider range of training. The Anglo-centric view largely covers the North American conservators, from that point of view.

[Thus,] The first point I want to make is that there are enormous opportunities with your training, to accentually take it and export it to anywhere around the world, and indeed not to hide behind your training, but to look outward to them from other, different approaches that different countries and cultures have trained conservators in.

Secondly I wanted to talk about the range of projects we have ended up being involved with in Australia, because one of the things that I have particularly enjoyed doing, is building a company that has a very wide range of disciplines, and I really do think that is an advantage in the way we work together, so that I employ paintings and paper conservators, and sculpture and furniture and objects conservators, metals conservators, architectural conservators. We are actually gunning into the whole area of digital conservation at the moment, and I am looking for digital conservators, so I have got to [what is] a very interesting debate I am involved in at the moment, an acquisition by the Cooper-Hewitt, Design Museum in New York, of a piece of software, which is going to be a very interesting, a whole new area we are going to need to get involved in. So they are buying software as collectables, and we all know already the problem of obsolescence in this modern age of technology in which we live.

From that background of a great range of skills, we have undertaken major mural and sculpture and paintings and archival projects, all over Australia, and we have built, and centred our reputation on that. The international nature of how we could bring those skills to bear is one that has been enormously interesting to

me. From the start we were working in New Zealand, which I can say in the confines of this meeting that some people treat it as another state of Australia - I hope there are no Kiwis here - but one of the interesting projects that has come out of that, is that we, as a commercial private conservation organisation, we are providing conservation services to a museum, which used to have quite a large conservation department and has now decided to contract all of that to us. And New Zealand has been very good to us, because it has been a springboard into a major project we have been involved in, concerning the historic houses of explorers in Antarctica. Now that is truly an international project, I have been a technical adviser on that project from the start. Initially I provided all the staff, who spent six months there during the winter working in one of the Antarctic bases or six months during the summer, working on the house itself, and we have employed an enormous number of conservators from around the world, some of whom, interestingly enough have chosen to spend another six months there, which when you've had 24 hour darkness for four months of the year, is a big ask. Ironically we are also working in a very hot climate at the moment; we are working in a big military museum in the United Arab Emirates, in which we are dealing with a vast number of different types of materials in a very different climate. We are also working in a tropical climate in Singapore; I got back from Brunei last week where we are doing a big project, and in each case the language is the same, I mean, we run in to conservators from all over the world in all those places, and we can get in to a huddle and basically talk the same language.

So what off the back of that is my advice to you? First of all, do see yourself as having international careers, even though you may end up spending most of it in one place in one country, you are always going to have an internationally transferable qualification and career. Now off the back of that I am a great fan of engagement in the wider area of cultural heritage. I am an active member of conservation organisations, the American Institute of Conservation, Icon in the UK, I am a vice president of IIC, with my friend and colleague Mikkel (Scharff), who is so valued, but I am also heavily involved in ICOM-CC, I am on the organising committee for its next conference in Melbourne in 2014 - do come, but come to Hong Kong for IIC as well! I am involved more widely in ICOM, I've sat on the ICOM committee in Australia, been involved in Museums of Australia, the equivalent in the UK's Museums Association, and what is now called the American Alliance of Museums in the US. I have sat on the council of ICOMOS in Australia, and I am actually President of one of the international scientific committees, the ICOMOS International Polar Heritage Committee, which has just signed up the National Museum of Denmark as a co-host for our next conference in May next year - that is where Polar heritage specialists, including conservators, get together. And then I am also a great fan of the work of National Trust [in the UK], although I speak mostly of Australia, but I am a key member of the National Trust in the UK as well. So do look at the context in which we as conservators work, it is a vital part of where we are setting off.

Secondly: get to as many conferences as you can afford, there is no greater way of meeting other conservators and learning from other ones. You are having a session tomorrow on networking, but gosh conferences are useful! I think in Australia, because geographically we are isolated we probably make more effort than we might otherwise, despite the costs, to get to conferences, but they are so useful in terms of building that wider fraternity and understanding.

Thirdly: stick up your hand and get involved in organisations, whether it is the local conservation group in your country, or your city, or whether it is the big international ones. Principally obviously the two umbrella organisations, the IIC and ICOM-CC. Mikkel [Scharff] is a walking and living example of how you can bridge the two, having been on the directory boards of both IIC and ICOM-CC. I have tended to focus more on IIC; however I was on the organising committee for ICOM-CC in Sydney In 1987 and, as I said, I am on the current one in Melbourne in 2014. I was the chair of the organising committee for IIC in Melbourne in 2000, and I have been on the board of IIC's Council and I am now a Vice President of IIC. My friend Amber is with you at the moment and [look to her] for a great example of how she has become so involved in the international profession, through her operation of IIC's social media. But separately with IIC I have gained great satisfaction from a leading the Opportunities Fund; this is a component of IIC which we see as enormously important, which is reaching out to conservators working across the world where there is much less support for them; so we have a dozen organisations in central Europe and eastern Europe, in South America and in Vietnam, where we support conservators and encourage them to benefit from a dialogue with IIC and enter our congresses and use our applications. The other area that I have become very interested in is the whole dialogue around environmental standards in museums. , I have a view that conservators have been overtaken by other components of the museum world and IIC and ICOM-CC have now looped together and formed a taskforce, eventually to get back into a position of leadership and discuss quite what environmental standards should be looking like and how sustainable they are, and we are particularly looking for how we can help our brethren in less developed parts of the world as they grapple with the issue of increasing museum knowledge and wanting to understand where they should go [forward]

So, in summary I suppose I want to say: "seize your opportunities, seize your opportunities to go anywhere! Talk to as many people as you can, join as many chat groups as you can, and you will find that the opportunities do flow from that." So I think Tine, that on that basis I will stop. I am very happy to talk further as questions may come. Thank you!

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Thank you Julian. I would like to thank all the speakers and the session is now open for questions and any comments you may have. If you have a question, raise your hand and we will bring you a microphone. We kindly ask that before you ask the question you state your name and where you

are from. Participants watching this session over the web are also welcome to ask questions or comment via the web-stream or Twitter. Participants using Twitter to post questions please use the hash tag, which can be viewed on the IIC Facebook page.

Any questions?

Questioner: Stina mentions about the language barrier problem, that you had moving to a different country, and then you obviously knew English already, but then you had to learn Danish. Do you think there is the same problem for English speakers moving, if I use here [Copenhagen] as an example, would that be a problem do you think that your application would be less likely to be looked at [in Denmark], because obviously people in England are not very good at learning languages?

Meaghan K Monaghan: I guess I'll address that as I am an English speaker and I went to a non-English speaking country. Well it is pretty hard to say this is a non-English speaking country, seeing as everybody is very fluent in English. But I was worried about coming at first but I definitely would suggest trying to learn the language. You might not make it far enough for it to help you in the workplace, but it is a great way to meet people who are going through the same thing that you are. They are new to the country; they are struggling with the difficult language. But also just because you will start to recognize things and it will make you feel like you are more a part of the culture. You may not really understand, but you will be so proud of yourself when you recognize a phrase or you know what someone just asked you at the groceries store, you know this feeling of being a part of the country, that helps you on a personal level. And here absolutely you are fine as an English speaker - in this country, everyone speaks English very well and in the workplace it is very simple. I think in some other counties it may not be the same but I would assume that if some of your colleagues, probably more specifically your supervisor, needs to be able to communicate with you at a certain level, and I would say that at the working level that would be the most important [thing]. Whether or not you think that you can struggle through your day to day life in a country without the language, that is a personal thing. Some people are very good at languages, some people aren't. But I think you do need a certain level of communication within job - it can be very difficult to work at the level you want to if you can't communicate with your supervisor.

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Again please state your name and where you come from before asking your question. Is Julian with us? If there are no questions from the room, I have a question for Julian. Meaghan was talking about how, from an applicant's situation, about the visa and I was just wondering if you could elaborate a bit, you mentioned it shortly, about how you approach it as an employer when you want to hire someone from outside the country?

Julian Bickersteth I can. I am afraid I have missed the conversation about language barrier; can I just make a comment about that first?

It matters on a certain level to us. We have just appointed a senior paper conservator, where there is a lot of interface with the public, and we had, amongst a number of international applicants, a Columbian and a Spanish conservator both of whose English was not good enough for them to take the role, and we couldn't consider them ultimately because of that. Conversely we appointed our Italian paintings conservator three years ago, and he had virtually no English and that didn't matter because he was in an assistant conservator role, where his interface with the public was limited. He has now advanced enormously, his English is fantastic, he writes very well in English. So it depends on what stage of your career you are at I think, how important that language is, from our point of view.

Coming to your next question about visas; it is an issue, Australia operates one - the process is called a '457 visa' process, [Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (subclass 457)] whereby you can get a four-year visa to work in the country relatively easily. Getting permanent residency in Australia is a big drama. But you can either get a six month [visa], which we then go for, [...] we have had some interns for six months, but we mostly try and apply for four year visas for our international staff, and we generally have no problem getting those. We have to prove that nobody in Australia is able to fill that role, which actually is relatively easy; by tailoring specifically to the person we are trying to bring into the country. So we play an active role in that, it is an expensive process, just to give you some idea we are sponsoring some 457 visas for one of our incoming staff members and its costing us 7,000 Australian dollars, which is about the same in US dollars, 7,000 US dollars, which we as an employer have chosen to cover. In museums in Australia, the person filling that role would need to cover themselves; the government public museums wouldn't cover that. So does that answer the question?

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Yes I think so, I found that I have been looking at jobs in different parts of the world, and I find it, and I am sure that is really so for everyone here, that it is a problem. You really need to find that one - if you are not able to pay it yourself, if you are a student and maybe don't have a lot of money, you need to find that one - where they are willing to pay and to do that effort for you also, and engage in that commitment that it is, you working for them and their hiring you and making the visa come through, I think that is important.

Graham Voce: Stina I just wanted to ask you, you mentioned that you were on your third language, as you obviously did your first [work / degree] in Swedish, and then you said you decided to learn Danish and now you are working in Amsterdam. But we are very aware within IIC as we are based in

London, that we are very Anglo-centric and one of the questions was: you are using four languages, has English actually helped or do you find you still have to dive in, you mentioned learning Danish, are you having to dive in and learn Dutch as well, to properly do your job?

Stina Ekelund: Yes in a way I do, since I do sit with lots of old reports and I go back in archives, and if I didn't do that, if I was just working in the workshop or doing some other work at the Rijksmuseum, I wouldn't need to learn Dutch, so it is more my specific job. And then I would say it is more for the social part, understanding people, but most Dutch people speak very good English and they prefer speaking English if you are not really good at speaking Dutch, so therefore it is really hard to learn to speak Dutch.

Graham Voce Have you thought of looking for work in other parts of Europe where English perhaps isn't quite so widely spoken?

Stina Ekelund Yes that would also be fine. I have been looking for PhD positions also in France for example.

Marthe Aambø I have studied in Sweden and in Denmark, and I have a question about ethics. As a student do you conform to the ethics of the country you come to? As an employer do you impose your own ethics to the people who come to work for you?

Meaghan K Monaghan I think it is important to be sensitive to the possibility that your ethics are not exactly the same as the country you are going in to. I have never felt that it is forced on me but part for the reason you are working abroad is to learn different approaches and different ideas, and so, as Stina mentioned in her talk, you have the advantage where you can say "yeah well, why do you do it that way?", because you are allowed to be a bit naïve to this situation, you are allowed to discuss with them – "I have never seen this before, I have never done it that way, could you explain to me why you approach it this way?". I think it is important to try to learn from the new experiences! It can lead to a very awkward situation, I think, if you try to press your ethics on anyone, when you are coming in to a different country. Of course you have ideas about what you are willing to do and not willing to do, but by entering a new environment and a new country, you do have to have some flexibility, as I said and some openness to new things and new ideas about the field.

Marthe Aambø [to Julian Bickersteth] As an employer, how do you handle the different ethics? Do you force your ethics on them, or are you comfortable with them using their own ethics in their work?

Julian Bickersteth ... I am hesitating, because.... Ethics? I have to say, from my point of view, having worked in conservation for almost 30 years, it is not an issue. And that may shock you, but don't be shocked by it. Ultimately we have very, very few ethical issues that we come up against in terms of disagreement. That doesn't mean that we don't have a very strong ethic about the way we approach conservation but I find we have different approaches, and as I have mentioned to you, I think, simply what I call the 'central, eastern European view' does have certainly a different approach to aspects of conservation, but in terms of being ethically challenged, it very rarely happens, from our point of view where we sit down and say, "we have a very different value base under which we are judging how we proceed with the conservation". Where the question does arise I would suggest, is in east Asia. We are running the IIC Congress in Hong Kong in 2014, around the basis of ultimately the enormous continuity of Asian traditions. I can tell this group, that I put up a plea that one of the themes for the Congress, when [IIC's] Council was considering what to theme that Congress, would be to try and tease out the very different approaches, and we could call it in this instant, ethics, between the Asian view of conservation and the European one. For those of you who have been to China, it is mad, it is. You go to some of these places and it looks like brand new, I mean their approach is probably best described as 'renovation', I suppose. We as conservators would be very ethically challenged with a lot of that. They tend not to employ conservators; they employ ultimately artisans to re-make components that have been damaged. Now that is a very broad statement and there is a lot of good conservation going on in Asia, but that is where some of the challenges occur. I can turn up into Brunei, as I did last week, and we are all on the same page. I was looking at a large collection of Qur'ans, and their approach in that instance is very close to how we would approach them. It is very important to have a strong ethic behind us, but I wouldn't say that I as an employer find ethical questions, the things that challenge us on a daily or even monthly basis.

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Anyone else, you can also free if you just have a comment or something you would like to [share]. Yes.

Questioner I only wanted to say, on the subject of language, going back to that. I am one of those unusual English persons who speak fluent French - they do exist! But I think it is really important to look at language as a tool as well. I went to France, I didn't speak French, but by working there I learned the language, and I can do bookkeeping in French but not in English. So it is not ever a question of translating, it is not something to be afraid of either. It is a huge problem in England because people see it as a barrier and not as a tool, I know I am speaking to the converted here, but that is my own point of view and I did it, I spent 25 years abroad and I went back to England to do conservation, but it is very important for English people to step out and use languages. I just wanted to say because I know that it is an unusual point of view for an English person.

Louise Tiedemann As a student, and soon to be newly-educated conservator, I am also considering if I should go abroad and take internships and it is something that really interests me as well, but then I have started to think about what if I want to have a family at home, and how would you balance the two things if you don't want to move them around but you do want to go abroad? I don't know if you have any thoughts on that?

Stina Ekelund My answer is that I don't have family - I don't have a family of my own with kids and so, and my family back in Sweden - they don't expect me back I think. But it is of course, you miss your friends and you miss being surrounded by your family. And then when you are out you meet people from other countries having their kids abroad with them, you meet it everywhere. I don't see it as a problem actually.

Meaghan K Monaghan I agree, I think you can make it work in a lot of different ways, I also don't have a family right now but I would like one. And I see, as you said when you are out, you see so many different situations, like people who take a sabbatical year, where they are only apart from their family for a year, say. Or you can do things like bring your kids with you, which you also see often, or you can decide on a timeline for yourself. Personally I decided that I will spend the first five years of my career just trying to keep consistent experience and in that case I am willing to go abroad right now, but after the five years, I have decided I would like to make a decision about some stability in my life. So I think it is a very personal choice, but you can definitely make it work in a number of different ways, I don't think that there is any, like if you want to work abroad you can't have a family or vice versa.

Talitha Wachtelborn I just graduated from Camberwell College of Art [UK], in book conservation. I am definitely interested in going to other countries and working in other countries but I am wondering, I am willing to learn the language, but I am wondering how many countries are writing their reports in English, is that something that happens, or how much technical knowledge I would have to undertake, because I think going to the shop and doing my groceries shopping, running errands in a different language is one thing, but writing a technically correct report in another language is something quite different, so maybe Julian or someone else here who is attending could give some perspective on which countries use English predominantly and which don't and how much more of a huddle that would incur?

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Julian?

Julian Bickersteth Yes as I understand it the question is [about] how important it is to have the ability to write well in English or indeed a foreign language, in terms of where you are working. Look it is a

good question and it is one that we do struggle with. I would have to say that my Polish employees really struggle with writing in English still, and a couple of them I have employed for almost 20 years, whereas my Italian paintings conservator is writing fluently in English and is giving a paper in to our national conference in Adelaide in two months' time. I have come to the view that I employ conservators at two levels, one is, I employ a number of people who are really very good practitioners and can do enough to get away with the documentation and the reporting that goes with that, where it is not so important. Then I employ conservators who take in a sense a broader view and want to publish, and to do that their English really does need to be a lot better. We have undertaken some training and we have had external people, as in report writing for non-first language English speakers, we have done some training to help them with that. Ultimately if you really want to do it I think there are lots of tools and courses out there to get you writing in your non-native language and that needs pursuing. But perhaps the other thing I have to say around that is that if you do want to be seen internationally you do need to publish and give papers at conferences and that is a challenge if that conference is not in your native language, obviously.

Julia Brandt I am from Germany and I study at the Technical University in Munich, and I wanted to say something to your question [Talitha], because I just did an internship in the Netherlands- and afterwards in Peru - and in the Netherlands for example English is as widely spoken as here in Denmark and the work language was English, but when it came to the reports they were always in Dutch, at least the ones that were for the clients because it was a restoration centre, so I would write, and I speak, some Dutch but I am not able to write a report in Dutch, so I would write my reports in German or English and then somebody else had to translate them. I don't know [about] in Germany but I actually never came across any English reports, I think, but obviously almost everybody understands English so maybe if you work in a museum and it is for their personal archive I think that would be fine. I don't know, I have never worked in Spain but I can say in Peru nobody really speaks English and I don't think that they would have accepted English reports.

Cornelia Weyer My I just add something, I am Cornelia Weyer from Düsseldorf, so from Germany too, and we have international interns, like at the moment we have two people from other countries, one from Portugal and one from Japan. And we heard [earlier today] about lunch conversations that you couldn't follow when you first came to the new country. My observation is that there are also some meetings within our team that we mostly speak in German and sometimes we have some inserts in English to have our colleagues from the other countries incorporated but we certainly cannot speak two hours in English, when 19 people are German and two are not German, and some of my colleagues do not feel so positive and so free to speak English for two hours, so I think it is something that you would have to consider if you plan to go to a country, like to Germany and you are not a German-speaking person. You will meet

people who speak English and you can ask those questions in English but you will have to overcome situations that are clearly German-speaking situations, and you will have to be patient for a while.

Sarah Ferry Hi my name is Sarah Ferry, I am American and I live in Denmark, so I have kind of gone through a lot of hurdles. And to answer your question about reports, when I moved here they gave me a “cheat-sheet” with Danish-English translations of technical words to write in the reports and then I just printed off a couple of examples of the texts that they used to explain things and that was really, really helpful. So I kind of did my own little investigative research into it, and I obviously had them check it, and a lot of the time it was very, very wrong - and Google Translate is horrible - so learning the language and taking classes can really help you with simplifying everyday conversations and lunchtime talk and meetings and trying to have a social life when you move to a new country. And Louise, you can do what I did and move to a new country and start your family there, so there are many different ways to do it and I definitely encourage going abroad. I did part of my undergraduate [study] in Italy and worked there and then I went to the UK and graduated from Northumbria 2012, last year, and now I am in Denmark and now starting a family, so maybe we will move abroad, who knows - the future is kind of up in the air, but going abroad will definitely just help you and broaden your knowledge and your conservation knowledge. And keeping in contact with those people that you meet is very, very valuable, so you can call on them later when you have questions.

Amber Kerr Hi, my name is Amber Kerr, and I am a paintings conservator at the Smithsonian, and one of your speakers tomorrow. But I wanted to interject and say that, definitely going internationally for internships, especially early on, that people love students, they are very patient with students, so getting that experience in your student years is fabulous. I was fortunate to spend a summer with some students at the University of Paris-Sorbonne, at a chateau and we were able to learn each other’s languages a little better. I spoke some French but it had definitely improved by the end of the summer and we actually assisted each other in creating bilingual reports. So we actually took the advantage of each other’s languages and created these bilingual reports so that future students who went to the chateau could actually speak different languages and be able to use the same report-format, but be able to see all the words in different languages. So you can proactively take your language somewhere and assist them in making their lab[oratory]s bilingual or trilingual or whatever. But adding these, adding our languages to what they have too, if they are open and receptive to that. And I find that a lot of places, especially internationally usually are. So that is just an added comment I’d put into this.

Anton Bachs Hello, my name is Anton, and I am from Sweden, and I was wondering if you want to go and work, for example, in the future in Syria after the war, and with that kind of questions, if you

want to go to Congo, these kind of places, how would you do that and where do you search [for] that kind of work, so to speak? Because it feels like right now we are all [very] much focused on the European world heritage and they have so many problems in other countries - and is this a question for the UN? Do they have any conservation issues or questions or those kinds of things?

Tine Louise Slotsgaard Does anyone in the room have a comment?

Julia Brandt Okay it is me again from Germany. Yes I had the same problem, because I also wanted to go outside of Europe and I wanted to go to Peru, which is also a bit [far]. And I just tried to search via the internet, and I made the experience that especially in these countries, so to say, people are really helpful, if you just find a museum and then write them, they will in general write back and be really happy that somebody from Europe is actually interested in working there. But you always have to say straight away that you don't want to be paid because afterwards I discovered that somebody didn't write back because they thought that I wanted to be paid - then they just stopped writing. You can do an internship at the UNESCO world heritage, but that is a really specific application process, but you can Google it and find it on the internet and they will guide you through. You can actually choose the country where you want to go, and maybe you can contact somebody there.

Julian Bickersteth: If I could just leap in there, it is interesting to look at IIC membership to understand where, basically conservators (as *we* see [define] 'conservation') do work. There are incredibly few throughout Africa, South America is slightly more possible and indeed I talked earlier about the Opportunities Fund IIC is running. We are actively engaged in creating a Latin American group for IIC, which will be based in Lima in Peru, and we are hopeful that will open up dialogue with conservators working in South America. [In] Africa, really the best way in is through South Africa, there are a number of conservators working there and they are members of IIC. Coming back to Syria, the route in probably is either through Turkish conservators, and again IIC has some members in Turkey, or through Egypt and there are a growing number of conservators working in the Gulf region in Abu Dhabi and Qatar and in Dubai, as well as in Egypt, so I would suggest you turn to the two international bodies, ICOM-CC and IIC in particular who probably could provide instructions.

Tine Louise Slotsgaard: Thank you.

Sanne Spile Hi, my name is Sanne and I am a student at the Danish School of Conservation. I lived in Thailand for six months and did some conservation work and some projects. My experience is that we are very fortunate in our field, because we have so much documentation. In Thailand there were very few

people speaking English in the field of conservation and the way we got around it was through documentation, that you can understand each other, and the damage ... you can look at a picture and say, "what does this mean? - can you see this over here?". It worked out, but it is difficult but I think documentation helps a lot!

Tine Louise Slotsgaard If there are no more questions or comments, I think we should, we also were missing a speaker, so that is why we are a little early, we should close the first session. Soon there will be coffee in the next room for the people here present; people at home will have to make their own coffee. Also this evening there will be a conference dinner, which will take place at the School of Conservation – the same place as we were this morning for registration. So I will see you then and please feel to move around and get some coffee. Thank you. Before we end the session totally I would like to thank the speakers one more time, and we have a little thing for you to thank you for participating.

End of Session 1