

Report by the Secretary-General 2009

The year ending June 2009 might in theory have been a quieter year, between the Munich and the London Congresses. Today, however, we can reflect that the London event held in September was a considerable success, with good attendance, excellent papers and debate, a superb venue, a successful trade show, and – not least - a notable publication in the form of the Congress Preprints (copies still available). All this resulted from the work in this intermediate year by the Technical Committee, chaired by Jonathan Ashley-Smith, the local Organising Committee, chaired by Christopher Collins, the Editorial Committee, chaired by David Saunders and of course supported throughout by Graham Voce and Valerie Compton-Taylor in the IIC Office. To cap it all, the Congress made a modest financial surplus.

The year saw us consolidating earlier changes in the working and public face of IIC. The website was re-launched with a much-needed revamp in its visual appearance and improvements to its navigation and other features. Our new communication, *News in Conservation* continued to build on its successful start, under its editor Christina Rozeik, who has also been our web manager, every issue bringing more plaudits which convince us of the rightness of its launch and the need to strengthen what is proving to be a vital channel of communication among the worldwide conservation community

We continued to maintain the throughput and the quality of papers in our prestigious publications *Studies in Conservation* and *Reviews in Conservation*. It is hard to over-emphasise the contribution of the Editors and Editorial Advisory Board of the latter and the Editors of the former who continue to give their time and expertise so generously, under the overall direction of David Saunders, IIC's outgoing Director of Publications. The range of authors and of topics covered in these publications is impressive and their quality continues to ensure IIC's pre-eminence as the international publisher of peer reviewed conservation research and practice.

IIC Council continues to operate effectively, with good attendance by Council members either in person or by teleconferencing. This year saw the first meeting of Council outside the UK when we were welcomed to a particularly fruitful meeting at Vienna University's Institut für Konservierung und Restaurierung where we were also warmly welcomed by the IIC Austrian Section. It was at this meeting that Council resolved to strive harder to widen the benefits which IIC offers to conservators in those many countries where the subscription cost is currently unaffordable. This continues to be the aim as we explore how this can be brought about without placing undue burden on existing members who would in effect be subsidising others.

We remain committed to closer involvement with the IIC regional and national groups, to which end Vice-President Gabriela Krist has been taking a coordinating role, culminating in a very encouraging meeting of Group representatives at the London Congress. We have also been looking for ways to enhance the involvement of students. Mikkel Scharff has taken this on in a co-ordinating role, resulting – again – in a lively and positive meeting within the London congress.

We continue to maintain good relations with ICCROM and with ICOM-CC and were pleased that our two conferences both managed to attract large numbers of delegates, despite running in adjacent weeks in distant parts of the world, theirs being in New Delhi.

This year saw the successful launch of the scholarship scheme for sculpture conservators, jointly operated with the Gabo Trust. Two conservators benefited: Ksenija Skaric of Croatia, who was able to travel to Vienna and Graz to research outdoor wooden sculpture and Catarina Alarcão of Portugal, who travelled to London and New York to study polychrome sculpture.

Among the strengths of IIC has been its body of Fellows, elected by their peers for their significant contribution to heritage conservation. We have this year moved to a simpler, partly-electronic scheme for the nominating of new Fellows, and this is showing signs of working well, providing more of our members with the recognition their efforts merit.

The Council of IIC believes in judicious intervention when necessary, such as this year when the President wrote to Southampton University to protest at the closure of the Textile Conservation Centre (TCC) in Winchester, England. As of today (30 January 2009) there is still cause for hope that the TCC may yet find a new home, in which pursuit we wish it success for the ultimate good of the world's heritage of textiles.

IIC Council has identified the need for debate on serious, urgent issues affecting the conservation of the world's cultural heritage and to this end launched a series of *Dialogues for the New Century: Round Table discussions on the conservation of cultural heritage in a changing world*. One of the most pressing such topics was addressed at the inaugural event in this series held during the London congress: *Climate change and museum collections*. Council believes this topic requires its continued attention and is aiming to collaborate with other organisations addressing the question of how we can care for collections without undue use of technological solutions which add to the carbon burden of the planet, which may in turn require a fresh look at the environmental criteria that have been decreed for storage and display.

In these and other ways IIC Council continues to focus on its primary purpose which, by informing, supporting and encouraging its members, is to ensure the safekeeping of cultural heritage and its continued enjoyment by future generations

David Leigh, Secretary-General