

Editorial

The end of year events of 2019 called on Australians to reflect on uncertainty, and unpredictable, extreme incidents. They confirmed what we thought was the future is a lived reality. As extreme events, changing climates and shifting eco-systems intensify, so too are notions of certainty. Within the domain of cultural materials conservation, it is such uncertainties and shifting eco-systems that increasingly underscore our practice of conservation and collection risk assessments. When assessing, measuring and evaluating the environmental effects on the objects we preserve, we customarily employ predictive modelling processes that are based on past events and prior knowledge. Such backward-looking views however, do not account for what actually does occur and in such uncertain times, the mismatch between prediction and the actual is more striking. We have seen this with the end of year fires where many predictions and associated emergency plans, could not cope with the real events.

Mary Jo Lelyveld's paper 'Foresight for cultural materials preservation: the role of environmental scanning in conservation', acutely examines how current risk-based conservation cannot adequately account for the future. Her paper illustrates the need for alternative thought styles in cultural materials conservation. Utilising foresight as a discipline, Lelyveld explains how it has the 'predictive, anticipatory and critical dimensions' to address uncertainties and the 'most pressing issues for cultural material preservation policy and practice in our current context.' The paper proposes practical approaches and the theoretically complex dimensions of foresight. As such she argues for an environmental scanning approach that encompasses 'the wider heritage and cultural sectors and society more broadly'. In scanning beyond organisationally located activities, 'foresight' analysis allows for emergent trends to be systematically included and be made more salient. In essence, Lelyveld's paper argues that the sustainability and relevance of conservation lies in its ability to 'look back on itself' and 'increasing our circle of concern to include social and cultural goals'.

Similarly, Claire Rowson's paper entitled 'Dollars and sense: Integrating significance assessment, risk assessment and cost/benefit analysis in conservation management planning' stresses the importance of relevance and thinking beyond object-based risk assessments. It argues that linking and translating the outcomes of significance and risk assessments into economical terms, has greater traction to realise conservation plans. Rowson presents a clear case study of The Perth Mint and their master tooling collection, cognisant of the eco-system and 'the diverse role requirements of museum operations...in [a] non-museum collecting sector'. The study itself is grounded by the accepted methods of significance assessment, 'Quiskscan' devised by Agnes Brokerhof and Anna Bülow, and May Cassar's cost benefits analysis. Its contribution lies in the clear integration of these methods into a format that is easily understood and communicated.

In recognition of looking beyond conservation's 'organisationally located activities', Bronwyn Dunn, Robyn Sloggett and Wendy Draayers similarly 'report[s] on the health of traditional trade skills in Australia, and discusses recent initiatives to revitalise rare trades'. The paper entitled 'A Conservation Overview of Gaps in Traditional Trade Skills in Australia', examines how specialised skills and knowledge transfer 'are part of the conservation ecosystem that sits beside the expertise held by conservators'. It argues for alignment and 'interdependence' to ensure conservation ethics and values are mutually agreed upon and that deep practical trade skills are retained. The paper tightly historicises how both conservation and rare trade skills have been supported and developed in Australia and the recent initiatives such as the ISSI's Heritage Skills Initiative, the Lost Trades Fairs, the Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail to address future gaps in trade skills.

A key feature of these three papers is their capacity to gauge emerging trends, be critical and reflexive in their approach. Such is the case with Rosie Cook, Ioseba Sorraluze and Lu Chien-hua's paper on 'A whiter shade of pale: A case-study in treating water-damaged textiles in contemporary art'. The authors investigate stain removal techniques for unprimed canvas paintings and adapt new gel-based cleaning techniques with other cleaning approaches while modifying their use based on real time material responses. Such a mindful and somewhat experimental approach, embraces the physical dimensions of unanticipated changes. Parts of the treatment to remove water damage stains from unprimed canvas paintings may not have responded as predicted but a steady

critical reflection and re-adaption of treatment pathways allowed for the treatment to move forward and produce positive results. It is the paper's acceptance that interdisciplinary decision making and treatments in progress are just as valid as fully resolved treatments, that are important themes in this paper. We also know more about the real time use of new gel-based techniques.

While nothing can be more reflective and critical than publishing books and reviewing them. In this volume we feature two book reviews, one by Tom Dixon on Sabine Cotte's 2019, *Mirka Mora A Life Making Art* published by Thames & Hudson, and the other by Ian MacLeod on Virginia Costa's 2019, *Modern Metals in Cultural Heritage: understanding and characterization* published by the Getty Conservation Institute. Thank you to both reviewers and authors committed to knowledge and its translation. It is also a proud moment for the conservation discipline in Australia to have a book published by Sabine Cotte, and we look forward to many more as conservation research strengthens and PhDs graduate.

It is a pleasure to present these four papers and two reviews in the *AICCM Bulletin* and the Editorial Committee thanks the authors for their contributions and revisions. The *AICCM Bulletin* also thanks Albertine Hamilton, the guest editor of volume 40.1 in 2019 and the strong volume she steered. We welcome guest editorials to engage with diverse viewpoints and representations of knowledge.

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