



Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:

Dunn, B;Sloggett, R;Draayers, W

Title:

A Conservation Overview of Gaps in Traditional Trade Skills in Australia

Date:

2019-07-03

Citation:

Dunn, B., Sloggett, R. & Draayers, W. (2019). A Conservation Overview of Gaps in Traditional Trade Skills in Australia. AICCM Bulletin, 40 (2), pp.88-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10344233.2019.1710943>.

Persistent Link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/308857>

THE CONSERVATION SKILLS GAP: ADDRESSING THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN TRADITIONAL TRADE SKILLS AND THE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL MATERIAL

BRONWYN DUNN^E, WENDY DRAAYERS², ROBYN SLOGGETT¹

¹ *Grimwade Centre for Cultural Material Conservation, University of Melbourne, Australia*

² *International Specialised Skills Institute, Carlton, Australia*

Abstract

In 2000 a Skills Gap Audit, which was conducted by the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) on behalf of the Heritage Collections Council (HCC) to investigate the skills gaps in conservation in Australia, concluded that many traditional trade skills required for the conservation of cultural material were being lost. No longer required within a trade, the knowledge and expertise embodied in these traditional trade skills was not being preserved or passed on by the few practitioners. In 2003, acknowledging the risk to this knowledge on a global scale, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003). Recognising that 'traditional craftsmanship is perhaps the most tangible manifestation of intangible heritage' (UNESCO 2003) the Convention highlighted that 'the importance of intangible cultural heritage is ... the wealth of knowledge and skills ... transmitted through it from one generation to the next' (UNESCO 2003, para. 3). Within this context, a survey was conducted in 2016 that examined whether there was a current perceived skills gap relating to traditional trades; what difficulties might conservators have in accessing these trades; and, how can the skills gap be addressed? This paper examines the results of this survey, which brought into focus the importance of traditional trades and the knowledge and expertise they can supply to conservators. It also examines current work in developing opportunities to build intergenerational knowledge transfer, support specialist practitioners, and generate solutions to address skill gaps in traditional trades and conservation.

Keywords: Traditional trade skills, conservation skills gap, lost trades, tangible heritage, intangible heritage, conservation training.

Introduction

The profession of cultural material conservation continues to develop with research, new technologies and an increasing range of objects requiring assessment and care. The history of conservation in Australia is characterised by the move to increased professionalism, with the formation of the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (ICCM) in 1973, the adoption of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) Code of Ethics and Code of Practice in 1987 (AICCM 2016), and professional accreditation. In 2000, the Collections Management and Conservation Working Party of the Heritage Collections Council (HCC) commissioned the AICCM to conduct a skills audit survey of specialist conservators in Australia (Heritage Collections Council 2000, p. 4). As an outcome of the National Conservation and Preservation Strategy for Australia's Heritage Collections, which 'recognises skills development as one of the major areas requiring strategic support' (Heritage Collections Council 2000, p. 4), the audit investigated what conservation skills were being practiced and what skill gaps existed for specialist conservators. It built on research undertaken for two earlier nation-wide assessment of museums; the Pigott Report (Pigott et al. 1975)ⁱ and the Anderson Report (Anderson 1991)ⁱⁱ. The audit raised a number of issues in relation to 'conservation of traditional trade skills', including the absence of skills, lack of access to skills training and, in some instances, inappropriate skills training, (Heritage Collections Council 2000, p. 11). Respondents also commented that

‘professionals with either trade and/or a technical skills base are often contracted to undertake the treatment of an item ... with no specific conservation training’ (Heritage Collections Council 2000, p. 11).

These outcomes highlight three important problems. First, in acknowledging that that traditional trade skills and the intangible heritage they represent are in danger of disappearing, conservators recognise that it is difficult to successfully conserve and care for heritage objects. This is because when necessary trade skills are not available, and at the same time there is a loss of the intangible heritage associated with the knowledge and expertise embodied in traditional trade skills. Second, conservators are sometimes required to rely on contractors to supply these traditional skills because the conservators themselves are not sufficiently trained in a specialised area. This in turn results in less able management of conservation treatments which may lead to objects being incorrectly treated or damaged. Third, although professionals providing traditional trade skills are highly skilled in their respective trades, they often do not understand conservation ethics and procedures, and there is the risk that they will undertake conservation treatments that do not comply with the AICCM Code of Ethics and Practice (AICCM 2002, p. 1). Similar concerns were raised in a report commissioned by Heritage Victoria on behalf of Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand (HCOANZ), which noted that

A key conclusion of the Industry Expert’s Workshop (March 2010) was the need for a national/Australasian policy for setting and maintaining standards in conservation practice. Heritage education and training will be an important part of implementing such a policy. (Goddon Mackay Logan 2010, p. 119).

In 2016, as part of thesis research at the Grimwade Centre, The University of Melbourne, a survey was undertaken to gain an understanding of traditional trade skills, and how such skills are accessed and opinions on how these skills can be best shared with conservators. ‘The Conservation Skills Gap: Addressing the disconnect between traditional trade skills and the conservation of cultural material’ surveyed conservation professionals, students and traditional trade skills professionals working in Australia with participants, who were approached through professional conservation and trade organisations, being asked to complete an online survey. The purpose of this survey was to obtain a ‘snapshot’ of what was happening currently in conservation practice in relation to traditional trade skills. The survey provided data about traditional trade skills and its findings demonstrated that conservation professionals continue to perceive a current skills gap, as suggested in the 2000 AICCM Skills Gap Audit. It indicated that the same issues such as lack of government interest and support, erosion of traditional trade skills training institutions and the difficulty conservators have accessing specialised training remained more or less unaddressed.

The ISSI led Heritage Skills Initiative; *Promoting Yesterdays Skills for Tomorrow* project began in July 2017 with the goal of developing a national network to connect the disparate ecosystem of artisans, conservators and heritage trades people across Australia. In January 2019 the results of a Sector Analysis undertaken as part of the Heritage Skills Initiative were published. Focussed by fifteen questions that related to the current status of the heritage trade skill, the risks to its sustainability, training and education, professional standing and networks, and areas of need, this survey received comments from a diverse range of 108 respondees, with little change from the previous surveys. Thus indicating that over the past twenty years little has been done to address the issue of the disconnect between the need for sustainable heritage skills as part of conservation, and the ability to access and include these skills in conservation.

Background

Conservation in Australia emerged as an institutionally-based profession built by practice leaders whose skills had been developed from their training in traditional trades or as artists (Scott 2016, p. XXXX). In recognition of the need for a professional body, the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials was formed in 1973 in Perth, Australia (AICCM 2016). The identification of the

need to train conservators in Australia arose from the 1975, the report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, the 'Pigott Report', which highlighted the pressing need for improved conservation practice in order to protect the considerable assets held in these institutions (Pigott et al. 1975, p. 62). In response, in 1978, a tertiary education program was established at the Canberra College of Advanced Education (CCAEC). By 1986, concerns were being expressed regarding the sustainability of traditional trade skills and traditional crafts, and the implications for conservation. In 'Conservation illiteracy-or conservation education' Don Ellesmore (1986, p. 24) called for the International Council on Museums and Sites (ICOMOS) in Australia to address serious fundamental problems in conservation, including the maintenance of traditional crafts and trades, and the training conservators. In particular, Ellesmore (1986, p. 26) expressed a deep concern for dwindling stonemasonry skills.

Within conservation, acknowledgement of critical skill gaps emerged from a decade of work on the conservation needs of what had become known as 'The Distributed National Collection' (The Anderson Report 1991; University of Canberra, 1993). This was focused by the work of the Heritage Collections Working Group and Heritage Collections Council, which resulted in the *National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy* (Cultural Ministers' Council 1998). The 2000 Skills Gap Audit, conducted by AICCM on behalf of the Collections Management and Conservation Working Party of the Heritage Collections Council, was a response to a key strategy, SD3, of the National Policy, which aimed to 'facilitate the development of a range of conservation and preservation education opportunities and support the development of professional codes of practice, codes of ethics, accreditation and standards for conservators and collection managers' (Heritage Collections Council 2000, p. 2).

The objectives of the audit were to:

- identify the major specialist areas where conservation skills are required or expected and possible shortfalls in availability of skills;
- identify areas where conservation work is being undertaken outside of professional conservation networks and/or by practitioners who are not regarded as professional conservators; and
- collect data to assist in the development and publication of a register of accredited conservators. (Heritage Collections Council 2000, p. 4)

The subsequent report *Attainable and Sustainable: Skill Gaps in Conservation in Australia*, identified the risk posed by the imminent loss of a number of traditional trade skill. As noted in the report,

the loss of traditional skills is a world-wide problem, and one to which individual professional groups should respond - it is not necessarily a conservation issue. The loss of many skills bases, however, will impact on the ability to properly conserve cultural material (Heritage Collections Council 2000, p. 19).

Similarly the mission of the International Council on Monuments and Sites Australia (Australia ICOMOS) considers this issue central to its aim 'to lead cultural heritage conservation in Australia by raising standards, encouraging debate and generating innovative ideas. The use of traditional trades is an essential part of achieving high quality conservation of culturally significant places and objects in accordance with the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 2013).

In 2010 Heritage Victoria commissioned Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd to identify and address perceived gaps in professional historic heritage and traditional trades training in Australia and New Zealand. This project, undertaken on behalf of the Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand (HCOANZ), 'documented and evaluated professional heritage and trades training and assessed community and industry requirements' through a literature review, an audit of training opportunities, and a survey and workshop with industry experts to assess skill needs in the sector.

Analyses of the data concluded that there was ‘a looming skills shortages’ and highlighted the need for consolidated and effective action (GML 2010).

As a response to these challenges ISSI, with a range of partners including artisans and heritage trade practitioners, industry peak bodies and network representatives, and educators and government organisations, commenced the Heritage Skills Initiative; *Promoting Yesterdays Skills for Tomorrow* in July 2017. The Initiative aimed to advance the profile, importance and long-term viability of heritage and lost trades and the artisans and organisations working in this space. The majority of the actions to date have been focused on intergenerational knowledge transfer, promoting awareness of the value of heritage skills and upskilling and supporting artisans and relevant industry peak bodies, as a secure base from which to move to advocacy and sustainability.

In striving to care for objects according to their professional principles, conservators are required to recognise when their skills are insufficient for the care of an object and to seek out other people who have those necessary skills (AICCM 2002, p. 3). The ICOM-CC Definition of the Conservator-Restorer, while noting the relationship between artists or craftspersons, states the importance that a conservator mediates decisions about what skills are required for a particular intervention.

4. Distinction from Related Professions

4.2 The recommendation as to whether intervention on any object of historic and/or artistic significance should be undertaken by an artist, a craftsman, or a conservator-restorer can be made only by a well-trained, well educated, experienced and highly sensitive conservator-restorer. This individual alone, in concert with the curator or other specialist, has the means to examine the object, determine its condition, and assess its material documentary significance.

This recognises that the responsibility of conservation is more than philosophy and principles but rather a nexus of scientific knowledge and hands-on skills. ‘Conservators must have a very close correspondence between their understanding and the reality of the objects they handle ... they will be judged on the “hands-on” work they produce’ (Caple 2000, p. 9).

This paper examines the findings of the 2016 survey and the 2018 survey, both of which suggest that many traditional trade skills are in danger of disappearing, and this in turn will affect conservation. It also explores the genesis of the ISSI Heritage Skills Initiative; *Promoting Yesterday’s Skills for Tomorrow* in order to assist in understanding what strategies may work to ameliorate this concern.

Methods and methodology

Both the Heritage Collections Council survey conducted in 2000 and the 2016 survey were driven by concerns within conservation that the loss of traditional trade skills would impact conservation. The qualitative methodology employed for both surveys was suited to the aim of gauging the opinions of conservators and allied stakeholders. In particular the 2016 survey aimed to:

1. understand current practice, feelings and perceptions
2. identify the current needs of conservators and allied stakeholders
3. assess whether there is still a perceived skills gap
4. determine if opinions have altered since the year 2000 survey
5. generate ideas and solutions to the problem of a skills gap in traditional trade skills
6. understand how conservators are solving skills issues in their day-to-day practice

An online survey method ensured availability to a large number of participants. To obtain statistically credible data, the aim was to obtain three hundred responses and from all states of Australia. In addition, personal interviews included a varied selection of participants representing traditional trades, conservation, and craft-based and conservation organisations. Responses were sought from representatives of six groups:

1. Qualified conservators (accredited or non-accredited who have obtained some form of conservation training at a tertiary level, either in Australia or overseas)
2. Student conservators (students currently enrolled in a cultural material conservation course)
3. Conservation educators (people involved in the teaching of cultural material conservation)
4. Traditional trade skill practitioners (people who currently practise or have practised traditional trade skills)
5. Teachers of traditional trade skills (people who are proficient in a traditional trade skill/s. These people may work in educational institutions or may teach their skills via small organisations like craft guilds, neighbourhood workshops or common interest groups)
6. Allied organisations (for example, ISSI, the Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (ADFAS), Australia ICOMOS)

These six categories were constructed to gauge opinions amongst people specifically involved with either conservation, traditional trade skills or both. Survey participation was voluntary and anonymous and was developed within the University of Melbourne Human Ethics research procedures. Participants could withdraw their responses and exit the survey at any point. The results of the survey were made available to any participant on completion of the survey and were accessible via the online survey website SurveyMonkey®.

The respondents were approached by:

1. emailing specific organisations which, in turn, circulated the website address for the survey to their members. Twenty organisations in total were contacted.
2. posting a message and the website address for the survey on specific Facebook conservation group websites.
3. posting a message and the website address for the survey on the professional website LinkedIn.
4. directly emailing individuals.
5. some individuals passing on the survey website address to other people they thought may be interested in participating.

Two methods were used to obtain opinions on the disconnect between traditional trade skills and cultural material conservation; the online survey and personal interviews. The survey was formulated consisting of six sections, specific to each of the respondent groups, with sixty-two

questions in total and no more than nineteen questions for any one section. It was made available online at SurveyMonkey®, a cloud-based software providing free, customizable surveys, as well as a suite of paid back-end programs that include data analysis, sample selection, bias elimination, and data representation tools. The survey consisted of a mixture of Likert Scale questions, yes/no answers, multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. The survey questionnaire also gave respondents the opportunity to add categories to lists by completing ‘Other’ boxes. The multiple-choice questions were used to obtain specific quantitative data, for example, the number of students enrolled in a traditional trade skills course. The quantitative data provided more detailed feedback in the form of percentages. The open-ended questions were utilised to gather opinions, reflections and suggestions and allowed respondents to either explain their answers or offer further information. Two hundred and eleven surveys were completed online.

Personal interviews were conducted to obtain further information on how traditional trade skills and conservation interact. Participants were selected in order to obtain representation from each of the categories included in the survey; conservator, conservation student, conservation educator, traditional trade skills practitioner, traditional trade skills educator and support organisation. The interviews sought opinions on whether traditional trade skills are difficult to access by conservators and how conservators rely on traditional trade skills to conduct conservation treatments. Possible solutions to addressing the conservation skills gap were also canvassed.

Some respondents chose to follow up with contact directly via email to expand on their responses to the online survey.

Findings and analysis

Two hundred and eleven respondents participated in the online survey ‘The Conservation Skills Gap: Addressing the disconnect between traditional trade skills and the conservation of cultural material’. For ease of analysis, percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

The percentage results by respondent type are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1. Respondents could choose more than one option and therefore answer more than one section. This accounts for the percentage total one hundred and twenty-four per cent. Four people did not answer this question.

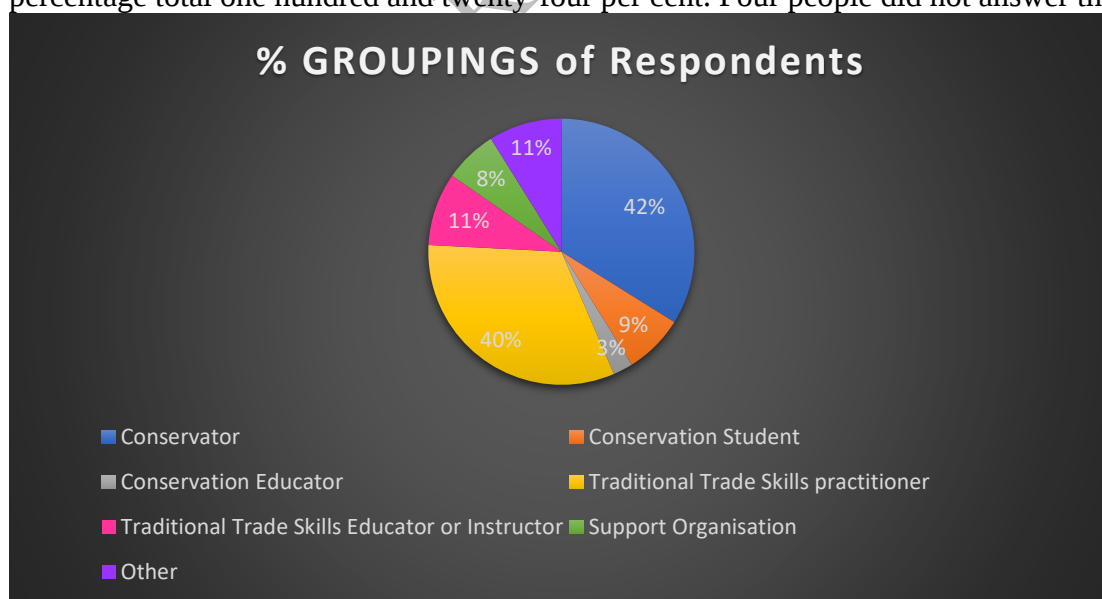


Figure 1: Percentage analysis of respondents to the survey ‘The Conservation Skills Gap: Addressing the disconnect between traditional trade skills and the conservation of cultural material’

Answer Choices	Responses	
Conservator	42%	89
Student of cultural material conservation	9%	20
Conservation educator	3%	7
Traditional trades skills practitioner	40%	84
Traditional trade skill trainer or instructor	11%	23
Support Organisation	8%	16
None of the above but I would like to respond to the survey (Please go to the section you consider most appropriate to your role)	11%	24
Total Respondents: 211		

Section A: Conservators and conservation students

Of the eighty-nine respondents who indicated they were conservators, seventy-two per cent stated they relied on traditional trade skills in their conservation practice, listing a large variety of trade skills including gilding, traditional picture frame making, furniture making, metalwork, bookbinding, stonemasonry, weaving, box making and button making. Twenty per cent of conservators said that more than half of their conservation work involved the use of traditional trade skills and sixty-two percent said their traditional trade skills were adequate to complete their work. Fifty-four per cent mentioned they also relied on other conservators or professionals to supply traditional trade skills knowledge and expertise. Although a large percentage of conservators said they felt they had the traditional trade skills to complete their conservation work, sixty-two per cent still said they found it difficult to access traditional trade skills.

Some general themes in responses were:

1. There are not many people left who have specific traditional trade skills.
2. It is difficult to access some traditional trade skills due to location.
3. There may be a lot of people with a particular traditional trade skill but not all of these people are experienced or proficient.
4. Lack of training of traditional trade skills in Australia.
5. Specialised skills command higher fees.
6. People with traditional trade skills are ageing.
7. Lack of access to traditional trade skills may not be an issue now but will be in a few years' time.

Sixty-six per cent of conservators felt that the standard or quality of traditional trade skills was changing for the worse due to a reduction in training courses, the number of people practising the traditional trade skills and a reduced demand for these traditional skills. Fewer practitioners means less competition, and with fewer practitioners to choose from, conservators felt compelled to accept what is available which in turn drives quality down. One respondent commented that:

The methods of training apprentices have changed over the decades and continue to do so. It is harder to get a good training in traditional skills ... increasingly the opportunities come down to the degree of persistence and enthusiasm of the person wanting to learn, and the willingness and interest of the skilled practitioner to mentor (not all skilled tradesmen want to be mentors), not to mention the availability of work at a good enough fee level to pay for the trainee as well as the trainer.

When asked if they were concerned that traditional trade skills are disappearing, ninety-three per cent of conservators responded 'yes'. Of those respondents who chose to qualify their response to this question, many said it was due to:

1. A breakdown in the apprenticeship system.
2. Greater costs involved in employing skilled tradespeople.
3. A lack of interest on the part of younger people in adopting traditional trade skills.
4. Globalisation-machine-made and mass-produced objects are cheaper and easier to access.
5. The skills are not being passed on by older practitioners who are either retiring or who do not choose to pass on their skills.

Seventy-four per cent of conservators believed they had a responsibility to help preserve traditional trade skills and seventy-one per cent also believed their conservation practice would be directly affected if traditional trade skills were no longer available.

Seventy per cent of conservators thought that it was possible for conservators to be suitably proficient in selected traditional trade skills in order to carry out their conservation work and seventy-five per cent expressed an interest in acquiring a traditional trade skill; with the most frequently mentioned being: bookbinding and repairing; paper conservation; frame making; gilding, and wood carving. Respondents commented that they would like to learn a traditional trade skill because they:

1. Felt it would assist their competence in conservation
2. Are interested
3. Believed they should be continually improving their skills set
4. Would need these skills at some point during their careers, and
5. Were concerned the skill is dying out.

When asked how these traditional trade skills could be acquired, respondents suggested a range of approaches including apprenticeships, mentoring, AICCM workshops and practical hands-on experience from competent trade skills practitioners. There was a strong emphasis on practical experience and mentoring.

Although sixty-four per cent of conservators said they attended AICCM workshops, many commented that the workshops were expensive, too difficult to attend due to location or could not afford the time away from their work to attend. When given the opportunity to comment to the question “Do you think AICCM workshops are a potential way to acquire traditional trade skills?”, thirty respondents replied. Forty-three per cent of these responses questioned the efficacy of AICCM workshops as a forum for learning of traditional trade skills, due to the short timeframe of the workshops and the improbability of learning a trade in a short time. In contradiction to this, sixty-three per cent still considered AICCM workshops as a possible arena for the learning of traditional trade skills.

Section B: Conservation educators

The seven responses to Section B reflected the limited number of conservation education programs in Australia. Of the conservation educators just over half said they included some form of traditional trade skills in their teaching while just under half said they did not. Of the traditional trade skills mentioned, book binding, gilding, wood working, metal working and textiles skills featured most commonly. Around half of conservation educators claimed that ten per cent of their syllabus included traditional trade skills but taught to a brief introductory level only, with a similar number indicating that they would like to incorporate traditional trade skills in their courses. Just over half believed it was feasible to include a mentor/trainee learning module in their course. Most believed that traditional trade skills were in danger of disappearing and offered the following suggestions for their preservation:

1. Implementation of apprenticeships and/or mentoring programs.
2. Beginning education about traditional trade skills at primary and secondary school levels.

3. Obtaining government support.
4. Renewing TAFE institutions.
5. Beginning a dialogue between AICCM and Guild or Craft Associations.
6. Incorporating more traditional trade skills into current curriculums.

Section C: Traditional trade skills practitioners

This section represented forty per cent of the total number of respondents, representing an extensive variety of traditional trades skills. Respondents were equally divided among fulltime, casual and volunteer practitioners and sixty-six per cent said they were actively passing on their skills to other people. There was a strong emphasis on TAFE courses, mentoring, workshops and individual tuition. Of those respondents who said they were not passing on their traditional trade skills to others, some commented that they either did not have the time or there were not enough people interested in learning. Sixty-three per cent said they did not work with conservators and sixty-eight per cent said they did not have any form of conservation training. Of those who stated they did have conservation training, the majority indicated they were tertiary level trained and eighty-eight per cent believed there was a direct connection between traditional trade skills and conservation. Several respondents stated that in order to conserve one must understand how to make. Eighty-one per cent believed that traditional trade skills were in danger of disappearing due to the following reasons:

1. Lack of financial support
2. Lack of government interest
3. Skilled artisans are retiring and dying
4. Mass-production and globalisation
5. Lack of interest-traditional trade skills are too labour and time-intensive
6. Destruction of TAFE courses
7. Courses are too expensive
8. Courses are inaccessible due to location

The vast majority, ninety per cent, also believed that it is possible to preserve these skills and most respondents provided further comments to this question. One respondent commented:

How do you sustain a livelihood with a trade skill that is no longer needed? This is a financial question that needs addressing ... who pays for the jobs that are no longer required to be done in society? Glass blowers were really needed 100 years ago - now there are machines - so many men have lost their jobs ... the skill is still alive in tourist centres, universities, and some factories - but with no-one buying items that are handmade, well - the workers cannot be paid - so the trade emerges out of a commercial demand ... once that demand disappears - how do you sustain the skill - government funding? But in Australia the government is reducing funding for the arts - so then who will pay to support the people that continue to 'preserve and actively participate as makers' within the community?

Section D: Traditional trade skills instructors or educators

Eleven per cent of all respondents indicated they were traditional trade skills instructors or educators, with the predominant traditional trade skills mentioned being spinning and weaving, building skills, textile skills, book binding, gilding and carpentry. When asked how these skills were obtained, most respondents identified multiple sources of learning, with the majority (at just under a third) stating they had learned their skills from either a specialised workshop or from a family member or friend.

When asked where they teach their skills, thirty-four per cent identified local community groups, twenty-three per cent specialised workshops and eleven per cent noted both 'on the-job' and at universities. None of the respondents taught apprenticeships. The most popular answer for class numbers was 0 to 20 with most traditional trade skills educators stating that this is the minimum

requirement for course viability and these numbers appear to be steady. Comments regarding how traditional trade skills can be preserved were diverse. Some respondents suggested a return to the Guild System, some suggested introducing traditional trade skills into primary or secondary schools with the aim of educating young people earlier in order to engage them. Others suggested national recognition of traditional trade skills through government support. One respondent commented 'I would like to see a register created of people who have a high level of skill in a traditional trade. So that this can be accessed by people like conservators who are wanting to conserve/recreate something in that trade'. Another respondent stated:

Traditional trade skills in engineering and carpentry are essential when conserving, stabilising or reconstructing objects such as transport, machinery and musical instruments. Understanding how an object has been manufactured to begin with helps to understand how it can be stabilised, even if further work is not required (i.e. to return to operation as a functional object). Loss of the skills to maintain and repair these objects is a loss of part of the social history around the object and reduces our understanding of it.

This group of respondents were also asked which traditional trade skills they would like to teach but are not able to. Responses provided included gilding techniques, book binding, conservation of stained-glass windows, glass blowing, textile design, spinning, weaving and a variety of building skills such as traditional carpentry, joinery, lead burning and flashings, terrazzo, stonework, plastering, hedge work and dry stone wall making. The reasons they gave for this inability to teach these skills, in order of percentage replies, were:

1. Not enough students
2. No funding
3. No-one is interested
4. No facilities
5. No equipment
6. Not enough time

Seventy-three per cent said that traditional trade skills are in danger of disappearing and offered the following comments:

'They are under-appreciated, under-funded, under-promoted, under-required'

'Lack of TAFE Courses'

'A skill and trade disappears when it is no longer needed'

'I had the opportunity of attending a jacquard weaving workshop in Austria. It was held at a weaving school where students were learning techniques to prepare them for the textile industry. There was a museum of vintage looms and associated equipment including traditional items used in manufacturing linen. Could we perhaps use the Haslach example and bring together teachers and students in an effort to keep these skills from being lost.'

Section E: Support organisations

The final section of the survey was designed to capture the opinions of people involved in peripheral organisations that connect in some way to conservation or traditional trade skills but do not consider conservation or traditional trade skills their core direction. These included craft guilds, mentors, TAFE, designers, skill promoting organisations, small workshop instructors, museum staff and volunteers. Eighty per cent believed traditional trade skills were in danger of disappearing and fifty per cent believed that if traditional trade skills did disappear it would directly affect their organisation.

Recurring themes

Interdependence

In cultural materials conservation there is a direct connection between professional conservation and a large variety of traditional trade skills, that ranges from regular involvement with traditional trade skills to occasional participation. Some conservation specialisations such as textiles conservation are defined by the ability to master traditional trade skills such as sewing, embroidery, pattern making and the study of fibres in order to conserve textile objects. Frames conservation is heavily reliant on gilding skills, wood working, carving skills and frames construction. The 2016 survey has demonstrated that the relationship between traditional trade skills and cultural material conservation is significant and ongoing, but not necessarily interdependent. Traditional trade skills may be practiced in isolation to conservation as answers to Question 37 of the online survey “Do you work with conservators?” demonstrates, however conservators, at some point in time, are likely to rely on the knowledge and skills of a traditional tradesperson. Cultural material conservation is strongly reliant on and often deeply rooted in the specialised skills, knowledge and experience of master crafts people. As Hassard notes in his thesis on heritage, hermeneutics and hegemony ‘heritage is, in part, the product of generations of skilled labour. A sustainable future for our landscapes, habitats, buildings and artefacts depends upon the availability of people with a wide range of specialist craft and conservation skills. Skills that are themselves part of our heritage’ (Hassard 2006, p. 313). Although Hassard observes that there continues to be a disjunct between the practice of traditional trades and crafts and the science and theory of conservation.

Losing skills

The concerns expressed in the 2000 Skills Gap Audit were also identified in the 2016 survey, with little change in sixteen years. Conservators believe that traditional trade skills are in danger of disappearing. Responses from traditional trade practitioners and educators mirror these concerns. It is clear that some skills are becoming increasingly difficult to access, and that training workshops for conservators are difficult to access and that conservation practice and especially significant objects will suffer if traditional trade skills are lost.

The importance of the TAFE sector

Most respondents commented that a breakdown in the TAFE system of education is a problem, resulting in; the lack of traditional trade skills being taught, poor quality craftsmanship, and the withdrawal of facilities for the teaching of traditional trade skills. Craft guilds and associations who once taught at TAFE can no longer do so and have struggled to find suitable premises to teach their skills.

Education and community awareness

Education and awareness of traditional trade skills at all levels of learning is a strong theme. It has been suggested that an awareness of traditional trade skills and tangible and intangible heritage should begin in primary school, building on this foundation into secondary education. Many respondents believed that awareness, respect and value begin at an early age and are demonstrated through a comprehensive, supportive education system interested in traditional trade skills and conservation, with a strong component of hands-on skills learning.

Value and respect

Comments from survey participants indicated that heritage, both tangible and intangible, is not as highly valued in Australia as it is in some other countries. The ‘Living National Treasures’ initiative in Japan and the Société Nationale des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France, an organisation that conducts yearly competitions for the best trades apprentice in France, are both examples of valuing heritage trade skills. Harding (1999, p. 317) suggests that ‘cultural heritage is valuable precisely because it is an expression or intimate part of human experience’. Responses to the survey indicated that this proposition of the intrinsic value of cultural heritage as a practice-based aspect of national heritage is not effectively nor visible supported in government funding or policy.

Funding

Funding for sustainability is an ever-present issue, partnered with viable career paths for traditional trade skills practitioners. As one respondent remarked:

How do you sustain a livelihood with a trade skill that is no longer needed? Glass blowers were really needed 100 years ago - now there are machines - so many men have lost their jobs ... the skill is still alive in tourist centres, universities, and some factories - but with no one buying items that are handmade, well - the workers cannot be paid - so the trade emerges out of a commercial demand ... once that demand disappears - how do you sustain the skill - government funding? But in Australia the government is reducing funding for the arts - so then who will pay to support the people that continue to 'preserve and actively participate as makers within the community?

Recent initiatives

In March 2014 Macedon Ranges Shire Council, and Kyneton Museum, supported local Kyneton chairmakers Rundell & Rundell Pty Ltd, to present the first Lost Trades Fair at the Museum. This brought around 7,000 visitors to Kyneton to watch local traditional makers, artisans and crafts men and women showcase their talents, which included 'chairmaking, coopering (barrel making), bucket making, letterpress printing, leather carving, French polishing, boot making, whipmaking, hedge laying, dry stone walling, stonemasonry, printmaking and spinning.' (MRSC 2014). By 2016 numbers had more than doubled and by 2018 this event was attracting over 100 artisans showcasing their skills, had expanded with a Lost Trades Fair held in Queensland at the Cobb & Co museum in Toowoomba, and had produced an associated publication *Lost Trades: The Artisans Magazine*. Developed by Lisa and Glen Rundell, Rundell & Rundell Chairmakers Pty Ltd. The aims of the Fair, highlighted on the Rundell & Rundell website are

to [provide] a platform for all rare, unusual and traditional trades and [build] a connection between the people that practise them with those that would love to learn or have found it hard to find these skills in Australia ...

Lost Trades Australia has been founded to act as a guardian to these trades; we hope that by uniting traditional crafters specialising in field and workshop crafts that we can inspire the next generation to embrace these skills and develop an interest or even a career a traditional trade.

In 2017 the inaugural Artisan Trade Trail (now the Heritage Trades Trail) was established as part of Heritage Week. This event showcases traditional heritage trades and crafts practiced in Bathurst and in its first year attracted more than 3,000 visitors, with large and increasing numbers of visitors in 2018 and 2019 (BRC 2017, p.95). In 2018 the festival celebrated a diverse range of trade skills, lost trades and artisan-based initiatives spread across various locations in the Bathurst region, offering traditional trade practitioners an arena for demonstrating and promoting their specialised skills.

In 2017 International Specialised Skills Institute received support from the Ian Potter Foundation for a project to develop a national network of artisans, conservators and heritage trades people. However, extensive consultation and the feedback received drove the project in a different direction. Our stakeholders perceive that the project has evolved into the fundamental first step in developing a national approach to skills advancement and preservation. The project reach has surpassed all expectations with a surprising level of unsolicited contact from aligned organisations and individuals from across several states offering their support, resources and encouragement. This clearly demonstrates both the need and passion for creating a cohesive approach to sustainable change across the sector bringing with it potential social, economic and cultural benefits.

In 2018 ISSI undertook the Heritage Skills Initiative - Sector Analysis survey. This attracted 108 respondents, from all states and territories in Australia, with fifty five percent from Victoria ranging down to close to one percent from the Northern Territory. The respondents represented a diverse

range of skills and interests including stonemasonry, picture framer, general commercial building, glass engraving, conservation, archaeology, heritage management and many more. Twenty seven percent of respondents identified their trade as either extinct (1.87%) or critically engendered (25.23), and 35.5% assessed their trade as rare. Most (53.40%) considered that a threat to their skill existed at national level and 28.16% at international level. Respondents claimed a broad range of training from 'none' to PhD, with only 21.9% considering that this training was sufficient. Sixty percent of the respondents worked alone, twenty percent employed one to two staff, 9.52% had three to ten staff, and 10.48% employed eleven staff or more. In regard to professional development, six respondents had not undertaken any professional development, and those who had engaged in a range of development from conferences to informal networking, with practical training being considered the most effective from of professional development and webinars the least effective. In response to the question: 'What are the broader issues that heritage skills lies within?' the majority of respondents identifying 'Education and training', followed by 'Raising the public profile of practitioners' and 'Research and innovation in industry' being the least relevant.

Conclusion

Recent initiatives demonstrate that the concerns raised in the 2000 AICCM Skills Gap Audit remain unaddressed other than through local and individual initiatives. Initiatives such as ISSI's Heritage Skills Initiative, the Lost Trades Fairs, the Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail and similar programs indicate a wide interest in understanding and preserving heritage trade skills, but practical solutions to a sustainable future for these skills remain elusive. It is still the case that any solution must be economically driven. The skills required by conservators in conservation programs need to be of the highest level, and this level is not achieved without considerable training and practice. The heritage trade skills which are necessary for conservation cannot be the purview of the hobbyist. This suggests the need for a national approach to the issue of heritage trades, and their value in Australia. Government heritage departments have legal responsibility for the delivery of building approvals and the development of related legislation and protocols, professional bodies have responsibility for standards and assessing of these standards, and the public has demonstrated a deep and continuing fascination with these skills.

Authors' Biographies

Bronwyn Dunn graduated from the University of Sydney majoring in Fine Arts and languages. After pursuing a career in the jewellery industry, she returned to the arts by enrolling in the Master of Cultural Material Conservation course at the University of Melbourne and graduated at the end of 2016, specialising in objects conservation. Bronwyn hopes to continue her research into traditional trade skills and how they impact cultural material conservation. Currently, Bronwyn is working as a conservator at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney, NSW.

Wendy Draayers is Chief Executive Officer of International Specialised Skills Institute and has worked for over 30 years in senior roles across the education, not-for-profit and community sectors within Victoria, nationally and internationally. International Specialised Skills Institute was founded over 27 years ago by Sir James Gobbo AC CVO QC, former Governor of Victoria, to encourage investment in the development of Australia's specialised skills. Its international Fellowship program has supported over 350 Australians across a broad cross-section of industries to undertake applied research that will benefit economic development through vocational training, industry innovation and advancement. As CEO Wendy is passionate about supporting artisans and heritage trades people to successfully pursue their craft.

Robyn Sloggett is a Director of the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, which delivers industry-focused teaching, research and consultancy programs related to cultural preservation. Her current research incorporates art authentication, the scientific and cultural analysis of painting and medium used in Australia, art market development and the impact of art fraud, cultural conservation

in South East Asia, and the preservation of cultural material and archives held in remote and regional communities.

References

- AICCM 2002, *Code of ethics and code of practice*, Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials, viewed 19 April 2016, <<https://aiccm.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/AICCMBusinessDocs/CODE%20OF%20ETHICS%20AND%20CODE%20OF%20PRACTICE%20Australian%20Institute%20for%20Conservation%20of%20Cultural%20Material.pdf>>.
- https://www.bathurst.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/council/annual%20reports/Annual_Report_2016-2017.pdf AICCM 2016, *AICCM history*, Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials, viewed 18 April 2016, <<https://aiccm.org.au/about/who-we-are/aiccm-history>>.
- Anderson, M 1991, *Heritage collections in Australia*, National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University.
- Australia ICOMOS 2013, *Burra Charter The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Significance*, Burwood Australia
- Bathurst Regional Council (BRC) 2017, *2016/2017 Annual Report*, Bathurst, viewed 16 February 2018, <https://www.bathurst.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/council/annual%20reports/Annual_Report_2016-2017.pdf>
- Caple, C 2000, *Conservation skills: judgement, method and decision making*, Routledge, New York.
- Cultural Ministers' Council (Australia), Heritage Collections Council of Australia, Department of Communications and the Arts & Cultural Ministers Council (Australia) 1998, *National conservation and preservation policy and strategy: Australia's heritage collections*, produced by the Commonwealth Dept. of Communications and the Arts, Canberra.
- Ellesmore, D 1986, 'Conservation illiteracy-or conservation education?', *Historic Environment*, vol. 5, no. 4.
- Godden Mackay Logan (GML) 2010, *Heritage Trades and Professional Training Project—Final Report*, viewed at <<https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/research-and-publications/heritage-trades-and-professional-training-project>>.
- Griffin, D & Paroissien, L (eds.) 2011, *Understanding museums: Australian museums and museology*, National Museum of Australia, viewed 24 May 2016, <http://nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/_lib/pdf/Understanding_Museums_whole_2011.pdf>.
- Harding, S 1999, 'Value, obligation and cultural heritage', *Arizona State Law Journal*, vol. 31, pp. 291–354.
- Hassard, F 2006, *Heritage, hermeneutics and hegemony: a study of ideological division in the field of conservation-restoration*, PhD Thesis, Brunel University, London.
- Heritage Collections Council 2000, *Attainable and sustainable: skill gaps in conservation in Australia. Skills gap audit of specialist conservators and conservation specialisation in Australia*, Heritage Collections Council, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, viewed 17 March 2016, <<https://aiccm.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/AICCMBusinessDocs/Attain%26Sustain.doc>>.
- ICOM-CC (International Council of Museums-Committee for Conservation) 1984, 'The conservator-restorer: a definition of the profession', viewed 26 August 2018, <www.icom-cc.org/47/history-of-icom-cc/definition-of-profession-1984/#.V7elBph942w>
- International Specialised Skills Institute 2016, 'International Specialised Skills Institute: a better skilled Australia', viewed 20 August 2016, <<http://www.issinstitute.org.au>>.
- International Specialised Skills Institute 2018, Heritage Skills Initiative; *Promoting Yesterdays Skills for Tomorrow*

Macedon Ranges Shire Council (MSRC) 2014, *Annual Report 2013/14*, Kyneton
Pigott, PH, Blainey, GN, Boswell, RW, Clayton, A, Mulvaney, FH, Talbot, FH, Waterhouse, DF, Waters, FJ & Payne, EE 1975, *Museums in Australia 1975: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra,
Rundell and Rundell Pty Ltd 2012, 'Lost Trades Fair', viewed 2 November 2018, <<https://www.rundellandrundell.com.au/lost-trades-australia>>
Scott, M 2016, 'Re-examining conservation precepts: implications for interdisciplinarity', PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
UNESCO 2003, *Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris, viewed 18 April 2016, <<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/traditional-craftsmanship-00057>>
University of Canberra 1993, 'Conservation training: future strategies', Proceedings of the Workshop, National Centre for Cultural Heritage Science Studies, Faculty of Applied Science, University of Canberra, November 18-19.

Endnotes

ⁱ *Museums in Australia 1975*, (known as 'The Pigott Report'), Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, 1975. In 1974 the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, engaged Peter Pigott to review museums in Australia. The report encompassed all aspects of museums function and addressed the needs of new museums making recommendations for new initiatives and training courses (Griffin and Paroissien 2011, p. 7).

ⁱⁱ Anderson, M & Heritage Collections Working Group & Monash University, National Centre for Australian Studies, 1991, *Heritage Collections in Australia: report*, National Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria.