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This special issue of the *Journal* on the use of Erbium:YAG lasers in conservation came about after a conversation in late November 2018 between the Editor and Gerry Alabone, the UK National Trust's Senior Conservator for Furniture and Frames at Knole House, Kent. Gerry suggested that now seems to be 'the moment when [the use of] Er:YAG [lasers] is becoming more accepted for treatment in the US and UK, and on a variety of materials' and although more established in Italy 'there too it seems to be increasing in its applications for treatment'. Because of Gerry's positivism and abundant knowledge, both of the subject and of various teams working with Er:YAG lasers, both in the UK and abroad, the idea of making a canonical special issue on their use in conservation quickly gained traction. Ed Teppo's embracing of the role of Guest Editor was another fundamental step—Ed is well known in conservation as a laser pioneer and philanthropist, a generous supporter, along with his wife Anne, of many of the teams represented in this issue.

Ed's clear and precise Introduction to the technique, and his summary of the seven articles in the issue, is key to understanding the pioneering work presented here. This work is collaborative by nature, with teams of conservators and scientists stimulated by the various theoretical and empirical impacts effected by using Er:YAG lasers on a huge variety of materials. By consolidating this important research in this issue of the *Journal*, not only is it hoped that it will galvanise and embolden others to engineer research projects around the technique—some of the authors here indicate where further work could be fruitful—but also provide impetus for further close knit collaborations whose outputs can be disseminated at critically important conferences such as LACONA (Lasers in the Conservation of Artwork), APLAR (Applicazioni laser nel restauro) and beyond!

Lastly, before we begin, I would like to say a big thank you to all the researchers who have generously shared their work; to Gerry Alabone for his inspiration and input in compiling this issue; to Ed Teppo, not only for applying himself to the task of Guest Editor with aplomb, but for all his support and work with various people involved with lasers in conservation over the years; and to Hohi Ikeda for her insightful and precise editorial assistance.

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