

# COMMENTARIES TO THE GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC & ARTISTIC WORKS

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**Introductory Remarks:** These Commentaries, created by the AIC membership and approved by the Board of Directors, are intended to amplify the *Guidelines for Practice* so that they serve the needs of the different areas of specialization in the profession and accommodate growth and change in the field. They are designed to define current accepted practice for the conservation profession and to provide recommendations that will assist conservation professionals in pursuit of ethical practice. The Commentaries also serve as an educational tool and as an informational resource for improving professional practice. While the Commentaries strive to acknowledge variations in requirements for the different areas of specialization, the level of detail may not fulfill the need for guidance in all cases. AIC specialty groups are therefore encouraged to provide additional guidance to practitioners in their specialty.

## PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

### Guideline 1

**Conduct:** Adherence to the *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice* is a matter of personal responsibility. The conservation professional should always be guided by the intent of this document, recognizing that specific circumstances may legitimately affect professional decisions.

### Commentary 1—Conduct

Adherence to a *Code of Ethics* is one of the primary tenets of any profession. While the creation of such a Code may be accomplished by a group, it is the responsibility of all individuals in that group to “promote understanding of and adherence to this *Code of Ethics*” (*Code of Ethics*, XII). This is a fundamental responsibility owed by each individual to their colleagues. A code of ethics can only be effective when individuals within a profession take personal responsibility for its implementation.

#### A. RATIONALE ADHERENCE TO THE CODE OF ETHICS:

- Helps to make effective a mutually agreed upon set of standards of professional conduct.
- Provides a basis for ethical practice by conservation professionals
- Widespread adherence to the *Code of Ethics* provides a level of confidence in the profession that promotes beneficial interactions with allied professionals and the public.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional must read the *Code of Ethics* and *Guidelines for Practice*, along with the accompanying Commentaries, and be aware of the relevance to their practice.
- The *Code of Ethics* and *Guidelines for Practice* must be followed if the practice of the conservation professional is to be considered ethical.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- All conservation professionals should adhere to *Code of Ethics* and *Guidelines for Practice*.
- The conservation professional should familiarize allied professionals and the public with the *Code of Ethics* and *Guidelines for Practice*.
- The conservation professional should, within the provisions of the By-laws of AIC and the *Code of Ethics*, continue to evaluate the *Code of Ethics*, *Guidelines for Practice*, and especially the Commentaries.

#### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- Under special circumstances, strict adherence to the *Code of Ethics*, *Guidelines for Practice* and the Commentaries may not be possible, but the actions of the conservation professional must remain consistent with the intent of these documents. Examples of such situations are identified in the “Special Practices” sections of the commentaries that follow.

Approved by the AIC Board November 1999

### Guideline 2

**Disclosure:** In professional relationships, the conservation professional should share complete and accurate information relating to the efficacy and value of materials and procedures. In seeking and disclosing such information, and that relating to analysis and research, the conservation professional should recognize the importance of published information that has undergone formal peer review.

### Commentary 2-----Disclosure

In this guideline, disclosure refers to the open dissemination of information about materials and procedures to enable appropriate professional scrutiny and use. In the past this has not always been the case; secret formulas and proprietary procedures were common. Open exchange of ideas and

information is a fundamental characteristic of a profession. Because conservation is still an emerging profession, it is particularly important that conservation professionals continue to participate in such exchanges.

Disclosure is one facet of overall communication. See also Guidelines and Commentaries 5, 14, 16-19, 21, 22 for additional discussion of professional communication.

#### A. RATIONALE

Disclosure acts to:

- further professionalization in the field by demystifying conservation materials and procedures;
- ensure that the choice of materials and methods, as discussed in Guideline 22, is based on all pertinent information.

Publication in peer reviewed literature lends credence to the disclosed information.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- When introducing new materials and procedures for potential use in the profession, the conservation professional must disclose all information (e.g., composition, test results, analytic results) in appropriate forums.
- A conservation professional who holds a patent on a material or procedure must disclose the constituents of the patented item.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Disclosure should take place in peer reviewed literature.
- A conservation professional who holds a patent on a material should disclose the formula of the patented item.

### Guideline 3

**Laws and Regulations:** The conservation professional should be cognizant of laws and regulations that may have a bearing on professional activity. Among these laws and regulations are those concerning the rights of artists and their estates, occupational health and safety, sacred and religious material, excavated objects, endangered species, human remains, and stolen property.

### Commentary 3—Laws and Regulations

#### A. RATIONALE

- To avoid the unknowing violation of local, state and federal laws and regulations, and to avoid lawsuits and litigation.
- To help the conservation professional develop conservation procedures that are appropriate to the legal and regulatory status of certain cultural property.
- To avoid damaging or discrediting the reputation of the conservation profession.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals must abide by the laws and regulations applicable to their particular practices.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional should stay informed of applicable laws and regulations, especially as presented in conservation and allied professional literature.
- The conservation professional should seek advice from an attorney or relevant authority regarding applicable laws and regulations.
- It is recommended that conservation professionals report suspected violations of applicable laws to the proper authorities.
- Conservation professionals should be aware of and adhere to non-governmental charters and other recognized documents that have a bearing on professional activities (e.g. Venice Charter, New Orleans Charter, Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Preservation of Historic Buildings, ICCROM's Site Management Guidelines for World Heritage Sites) and Codes of Ethics of allied professional organizations (e.g. American Association of Museums, American Association for State and Local History, Society of American Archivists, Society for American Archaeology, Association of Art Museum Directors).

### Guideline 4a

**Health and Safety:** The conservation professional should be aware of issues concerning the safety of materials and procedures and should make this information available to others, as appropriate.

### Commentary 4a—Health and Safety

#### A. RATIONALE

- Conservation procedures often involve the use of materials or methods that may endanger the health and safety of conservation professionals, other persons involved in carrying out procedures, and the public. Since, in the past, this issue has not received the attention it demands, it is important that conservation professionals be aware of health and safety issues, and work closely with appropriate health and safety personnel.

## B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional must comply with all relevant federal, state, and local standards and regulations (e.g., OSHA, NIOSH). These may pertain to:
  - job safety and health;
  - use, storage, handling and disposal of hazardous materials;
  - fire prevention.
- The conservation professional must be aware of various hazards associated with cultural property. These include:
  - biological activity within or on cultural property (e.g., microbial, fungal);
  - chemical components of cultural property (e.g., lead, cellulose nitrate films, asbestos, radium);
  - chemicals used in past treatments (e.g., heavy metal compounds);
  - physical aspects of cultural property (e.g. weight, sharp edges, unstable building structures).
- The conservation professional must be aware of various hazards associated with the materials and methods that may be used in conservation procedures. These include:
  - solvents, pigments, dyes, pesticides and other chemicals;
  - radiogenic techniques (e.g., x-rays, beta radiography, ultraviolet radiation);
  - physical hazards (e.g. repetitive motions, eye strain, equipment usage).
- Conservation professionals must assure that all personnel working under them are informed about health and safety issues, including emergency procedures.

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional should:
  - use methods and materials that are the least harmful to health and to the environment;
  - remain current about health and safety issue by reading, appropriate material safety data sheets (MSDS), publications of the AIC Health and Safety Committee, and relevant newsletters;
  - use all appropriate health and safety equipment, including fume extraction units, protective clothing, respirators, on a routine basis;
  - use appropriately rated storage systems for solvents and other chemicals;
  - provide access to appropriate health and safety training for all personnel;
  - assure that all personnel are encouraged to raise questions regarding health and safety issues.

## D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

- Emergency and field work situations demand heightened awareness of health and safety issues.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

### Guideline 4b

Security: The conservation professional should provide working and storage conditions designed to protect cultural property.

### Commentary 4b—Security

#### A. RATIONALE

- To protect cultural property from loss, damage, or deterioration, when it is in the custody of the conservation professional and to encourage the conservation professional to collaborate with others who have responsibility for the protection of cultural property (e.g., security and fire prevention personnel).

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Work and storage areas must be equipped with conventional fire detection equipment and individual fire suppression devices to allow for localized emergency response.
- The conservation professional must provide protection against likely physical threats to the cultural property, including water intrusion (flood, leaks from plumbing and roofs, condensation), earthquake, and pests.
- All work and storage areas must be protected against unauthorized access by the use of conventional means (e.g., construction barriers and signage, security personnel, electronic intrusion warning devices, secure locks).
- The conservation professional must provide environmental conditions that are appropriate for the cultural property.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals should be familiar with the various aspects of insurance coverage, and should obtain appropriate insurance to cover the possible loss of or damage to a cultural property in their care.

#### D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

- Work done off premises (e.g., excavation areas, structures, temporary facilities, outdoor sculpture) may limit the degree to which work and storage areas can be secured and controlled, but a reasonable effort must be made to secure and protect the cultural property in the charge of the

conservation professional.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

## Guideline 4c

Contracts: The conservation professional may enter into contractual agreements with individuals, institutions, businesses, or government agencies provided that such agreements do not conflict with principles of the *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*.

### Commentary 4c—Contracts

- Contractual agreements are entered into by conservation professionals working in private practice and in institutional settings. In this Guideline:
  - contracts for conservation services (e.g., proposals for treatment or surveys) and letters of agreement are types of contractual agreements used by conservation professionals in private practice;
  - job descriptions, terms of employment and proposals for treatment are types of contractual agreements used by conservation professionals employed by institutions.

#### A. RATIONALE

- Contractual agreements document the obligations between the conservation professional and owners/custodians, provide legal protection for both parties, and are sound business practice. They help to insure that the conservation professional will not be placed in a position that compromises professional standards.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The contractual agreement must be in written form. Although elements of the contractual agreement may be distributed among several different documents, the agreement must include:
  - scope of work;
  - fee structure or salary;
  - terms of service;
  - approval for conservation services or delegation of authority for decision making with regard to conservation services;
  - signature(s) and date.
- When conservation service involves examination and treatment, the contractual agreement must also meet documentation requirements (see Guidelines 24–28).

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- It is recommended that model contracts particular to a specialty be consulted as a basis for the contractual agreement, and that legal advice be obtained before a final form is used.

#### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- In emergency situations, a verbal agreement may initially substitute for a written one. However, a written contractual agreement should be signed as soon as possible. It is recommended that a standard contract form covering emergency situations be prepared in advance.
- In situations where the conservation professional, working in an institution, is functioning as a sub-contractor (e.g., archaeological site work, outreach consultancies) the services to be provided by the conservation professional should be clearly and completely defined in a contract between the conservation professional and the institution. This may be covered under existing contractual agreements, or by a separate letter of agreement. Requirements for contracts remain the same, as stated in B (above).

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

## Guideline 4d

Fees: Fees charged by the conservation professional should be commensurate with services rendered. The division of a fee is acceptable only when based on the division of service or responsibility.

### Commentary 4d—Fees

#### A. RATIONALE

- The conservation professional is primarily engaged in providing services, rather than goods or products. While conservation professionals should not overcharge for these services, they should not undervalue their education and expertise when setting fees.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Professional fees must relate directly to the provision of service, and must not be based on the value of the cultural property.
- A division of fees is appropriate when associates or sub-contractors are involved in providing project-related services such as scientific analysis, professional consultation, or specialized trade work.
- The paying or requesting of a referral fee, brokers fee, finders fee or commission by the conservation professional is an unethical practice.

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- When setting a fee, the conservation professional should consider:
  - education, experience, and expertise of the conservation professional;
  - difficulty of the service to be provided, including inherent risks both to the conservation professional and to the cultural property;
  - time required;
  - travel time;
  - expedited schedule;
  - direct costs (e.g., analytical services, rentals);
  - overhead.
- Other special circumstances may affect the fee (e.g., long-standing client relationship).

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998; amended by the AIC Board June 2002.

### Guideline 4e

**Advertising:** Advertising and other representations by the conservation professional should present an accurate description of credentials and services. Limitations concerning the use of the AIC name or membership status should be followed as stated in the AIC Bylaws, section II, 13.

### Commentary 4e—Advertising

#### A. RATIONALE

- The marketing of conservation services (e.g., print and electronic media advertising, public presentations) is an essential link between professional service providers and the variety of clients who have responsibility for the preservation of cultural property. Truthful and well-conceived marketing tools promote not only the individual or corporate practitioner, but also the profession as a whole. The use of membership in AIC as a professional credential is encouraged as a way to distinguish professional practitioners, but limited to those in the Professional Associate and Fellow membership categories, because these members have demonstrated appropriate educational preparation and experience, and have agreed in writing to abide by the AIC *Code of Ethics* and *Guidelines for Practice*.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Advertising and other marketing tools must not include any false, exaggerated or misleading claims regarding education, credentials, or work experience, and must not raise false expectations regarding services.

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Advertising may serve as both a marketing tool for the individual and an outreach tool for the profession. In giving public presentations, care should be exercised to avoid undue self-promotion.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

### Guideline 5

**Communication:** Communication between the conservation professional and the owner, custodian, or authorized agent of the cultural property is essential to ensure an agreement that reflects shared decisions and realistic expectations.

### Commentary 5—Communication

#### A. RATIONALE

Open exchange of information, ideas and considerations serves to:

- Ensure that the conservation professional is aware of any conditions which may have a bearing on the conservation action or recommendation.
- Ensure that any action which may cause change to a cultural property is undertaken with full knowledge, awareness, and agreement between the conservation professional and the owner, custodian or authorized agent (i.e. “responsible party”) whether a private individual or a public institution.
- Protect the interests and legal rights of the responsible party, conservation professional, and cultural property through an informed decision making process.
- Facilitate the identification and resolution of potential conflicts and unrealistic expectations.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The responsible party for the cultural property must be identified before any action is begun.
- The conservation professional must communicate to the responsible party the conservation professional’s need to review any previously prepared reports or other documentation, such as photographs and work records on the cultural property’s history, conditions and/or previous treatments.
- The conservation professional must endeavor to be fully informed about the responsible party’s expectations concerning the results of a proposed treatment.
- The conservation professional must communicate with the responsible party to assure that the relevant interests, rights and expectations of others

are considered. These may include the artist's/maker's rights and wishes, cultural beliefs that may affect treatment considerations, and the end use of the cultural property in question.

- The conservation professional must fully inform the responsible party of treatment procedures that may cause permanent change to the cultural property. (see Commentary 26)
- The conservation professional must keep the responsible party informed of any significant discoveries made during treatment, significant changes to the treatment plan (see Commentary 26,B) including treatment schedule, or any accidental damage that may have occurred to the cultural property during treatment.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional should be available for continued communication with the responsible party throughout the course of conservation work.
- In long or multi-phase projects, it may be advisable to keep the responsible party informed of progress at regular intervals.
- In communicating with the responsible party, the conservation professional should use non-technical language, where possible, and utilize mock-ups, test panels, or sample treatment areas where appropriate.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- In circumstances, such as an accident or a disaster, in which it is not feasible to establish communication with the responsible party, the conservation professional may act independently only to reduce the risk of further damage to the cultural property. Communication with the responsible party must be established as soon as possible.

Approved by the AIC Board January 2000.

## Guideline 6

**Consent:** The conservation professional should act only with the consent of the owner, custodian, or authorized agent. The owner, custodian, or agent should be informed of any circumstances that necessitate significant deviations from the agreement. When possible, notification should be made before such changes are made.

## Commentary 6—Consent

### A. RATIONALE

- To ensure that a formal agreement has been reached between the owner, custodian or authorized agent, whether private individual or public institution, and the conservation professional prior to commencement of a proposed action.
- To protect and support the legal rights and responsibilities of the parties involved in the care and preservation of cultural property, and prevent misunderstandings and disagreements.
- To ensure that deviations from a proposed course of action are formally acknowledged and agreed upon by the parties involved.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Before beginning treatment or other conservation action (e.g. sampling, mount making, x-radiography), the conservation professional must obtain the consent of the responsible party in the form of a written document as outlined in Commentaries 4c and 24-26.
- Any significant changes in the approved treatment or other conservation action (e.g., change in scope of work, estimated cost, schedule) must be submitted, in writing, by the conservation professional and approved, in writing, by the responsible party.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- In long or multi-phase projects, it may be advisable to review work periodically with the owner, custodian or authorized agent, and to obtain consent on subsequent phases.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- For certain situations involving many similar objects, such as those outlined in Commentary 26, D, written consent may be obtained for the group as a whole.
- In circumstances, such as an accident or a disaster, in which it is not feasible to obtain prior formal consent, the conservation professional may act without consent only to reduce the risk of further damage to the cultural property. The conservation professional must submit a written report to the responsible party for ex post facto consent.

Approved by the AIC Board, November 1999.

## Guideline 7

**Confidentiality:** Except as provided in the *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*, the conservation professional should consider relationships with an owner, custodian, or authorized agent as confidential. Information derived from examination, scientific investigation, or treatment of the cultural property should not be published or otherwise made public without written permission.

## Commentary 7—Confidentiality

Confidentiality covers all information derived from examination, scientific investigation or treatment of a cultural property, as well as the relationship with the owner, custodian or authorized agent.

### A. RATIONALE

Confidentiality is maintained to:

- Protect the interests, rights, and privacy of the owner, custodian, or authorized agent, whether private individual or public institution;
- Maintain the credibility of the profession by honoring the generally accepted practice of professional/client confidentiality.

Written permission to disseminate information is obtained to:

- Authorize conservation professionals to use otherwise confidential information in their professional activities (e.g., publications, scientific investigations, public presentations).
- Further evolution and growth in the profession by assuring access to otherwise confidential documentation of examination, treatment and scientific investigation. (see *Code of Ethics*, X)

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Information that is obtained or uncovered in the course of examination, treatment or scientific investigation conducted at the service of, and with the consent of the owner, custodian, or authorized agent, must be treated as confidential and must not be disclosed or otherwise made public without prior written consent.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional should include in contracts with the owner, custodian or authorized agent a clause giving permission for the use of documentation or other materials for educational and research purposes (e.g., publication, public presentations, training, archival research). However, the conservation professional must respect the right of the owner, custodian or authorized agent to refuse such permission.
- In publications and presentations, it is recommended that the identity of the owner, custodian or authorized agent should remain confidential unless otherwise authorized.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- In certain circumstances (e.g., life-safety situations, suspected stolen property, legal proceedings), the expectation of confidentiality is superceded by legal obligations of the conservation professional. The owner, custodian or authorized agent should be informed of impending breach of confidentiality, unless there is a legal reason not to do so.
- In presentations to colleagues or the public, the use of information not attributable by the audience to any specific cultural property is permissible, without prior written consent.

Approved by the AIC Board November 1999.

## Guideline 8

Supervision: The conservation professional is responsible for work delegated to other professionals, students, interns, volunteers, subordinates, or agents and assignees. Work should not be delegated or subcontracted unless the conservation professional can supervise the work directly, can ensure proper supervision, or has sufficient knowledge of the practitioner to be confident of the quality of the work. When appropriate, the owner, custodian, or agent should be informed if such delegation is to occur.

## Commentary 8—Supervision

The subject of this Guideline, work delegated to others that will be supervised by a conservation professional, is assumed to be conservation work only. Work subcontracted to other professional fields (architecture, engineering, etc) is included only in the aspects directly related to the conservation of cultural property.

### A. RATIONALE

Supervision helps to ensure that:

- delegated conservation work is carried out;
- conservation work carried out by those under the supervision of the conservation professional, including paid and unpaid assistants, is performed in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

Notifying the authorized agent of the delegation or subcontracting of work helps to ensure that the authorized agent can make an informed decision regarding the appropriate care of a cultural property.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals must ensure that persons under their supervision are able to carry out the delegated conservation work as instructed.
- The conservation professional must take all appropriate steps to ensure that work delegated to other conservation professionals is carried out in

accordance with the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

- Supervisors must share ethical responsibility for any violation of the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice by those being supervised.
- When directly supervising treatments carried out by students, interns and volunteers, the conservator must be qualified by training and experience in the applicable specialty.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals should limit their oversight of subcontractors to areas in which they are qualified by training and experience.
- When work is being subcontracted, the supervisor should be thoroughly familiar with the previous experience and practice of the subcontractor.
- When work is to be carried out by personnel not directly selected by the conservation professional, reservations about qualifications and a disclaimer of responsibility should be put in writing before work begins in order to protect both the cultural property and the conservation professional. Under these circumstances, close supervision is essential. If improper practices are observed, work should be stopped immediately.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

In emergency situations, it may be necessary for the conservation professional to delegate tasks to those immediately available and to proceed without notifying the custodian. Although the possibility of direct supervision may be limited, the conservation professional must make every effort to ensure that the work is being carried out in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

## Guideline 9

Education: Within the limits of knowledge, ability, time, and facilities, the conservation professional is encouraged to become involved in the education of conservation personnel. The objectives and obligations of the parties shall be agreed upon mutually.

### Commentary 9—Education

#### A. RATIONALE

- Conservation personnel include: conservators, conservation administrators, conservation educators, conservation scientists, conservation technicians, collections care specialists, and students of conservation.
- Participation in educational activities by conservation professionals with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences enriches the field. Such participation provides access to knowledge gained through practical experience as well as formal training.
- Mutual agreement is desirable to ensure that both parties have the same goals and expectations.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals must restrict their educational activities to areas in which they have appropriate knowledge, ability, time and facilities.
- In academic settings, objectives and obligations are established and mutually agreed upon through curricula, syllabi, and course outlines. When education is undertaken in a one to one situation, as in an apprenticeship, both parties must define and agree upon goals and expectations.
- Conservation professionals must avoid the exploitation of a one to one educational situation as a means of obtaining inexpensive labor.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- In one to one situations, both parties are encouraged to put their agreements in writing.

## Guideline 10

Consultation: Since no individual can be expert in every aspect of conservation, it may be appropriate to consult with colleagues or, in some instances, to refer the owner, custodian, or authorized agent to a professional who is more experienced or better equipped to accomplish the required work. If the owner requests a second opinion, this request must be respected.

### Commentary 10—Consultation

The conservation professional should view consultations or requests for second opinions as opportunities to ensure the appropriate level of care for the cultural property and to increase the knowledge of the owner, custodian or authorized agent. Such input should also be considered as opportunities for professional development.

#### A. RATIONALE

- To ensure that appropriate knowledge and skills are brought to bear on the conservation of cultural property.
- To support the admonition in the *Code of Ethics*, IV regarding practicing within the limits of personal capabilities, education or available facilities.
- To enhance the standing of the profession by acknowledging personal limits and recognizing the significance of the contributions of others.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- In order to provide an appropriate level of care, the conservation professional must consult with colleagues or allied professionals during the conservation process when it is necessary to complement one's own knowledge.
- Conservation professionals must recognize their limitations, and refer the owner, custodian or authorized agent to colleagues or allied

professionals when they can better provide the required service.

- When the owner, custodian or authorized agent seeks a second opinion, the conservation professional must cooperate with all reasonable requests. These may include providing referral information, or supplying the documented results of examination and analysis for which the conservation professional has been compensated.
- When providing a second opinion, the conservation professional must offer an objective opinion, even if this includes adverse commentary about the professional conduct of a colleague.
- After providing a second opinion, the conservation professional must refer the owner, custodian or authorized agent back to the original conservation professional, unless the conservation professional providing the second opinion believes this would endanger the cultural property.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional should be aware of allied and related professions and/or disciplines, in order to offer more informed recommendations or referrals.

Approved by the AIC Board November 1999.

### Guideline 11

**Recommendations and References:** The conservation professional should not provide recommendations without direct knowledge of a colleague's competence and experience. Any reference to the work of others must be based on facts and personal knowledge rather than on hearsay.

### Commentary 11—Recommendations and References

or the purposes of this Guideline, recommendations may include referrals, as well as statements regarding the capabilities of other conservation professionals. References are allusions to or citations of the work of other conservation professionals. Recommendations and references may be written or verbal.

#### A. RATIONALE

- Recommendations and references based on direct knowledge are more likely to provide accurate and useful information and reduce the spread of misinformation. This contributes to the credibility of the field.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Recommendations must be based on the conservation professional's direct knowledge, or on information obtained from a trusted colleague who has direct knowledge. The conservation professional must make clear the basis of this knowledge.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Whenever possible, the conservation professional should make recommendations based on direct knowledge. Conservation is a field based on the observation and interpretation of evidence (see Commentary 18). As in other activities of the conservation professional, recommendations based on direct knowledge are the most credible.
- When making recommendations based on information from others, the conservation professional should identify the source of the information.
- When conservation professionals employed by an institution are asked for referrals for conservation work, conflict of interest issues may be involved (see Commentary 14, D). In these cases information about the AIC Guide to Conservation Services and/or a list of names and contact information should be provided.

### Guideline 12

**Adverse Commentary:** A conservation professional may be required to testify in legal, regulatory, or administrative proceedings concerning allegations of unethical conduct. Testimony concerning such matters should be given at these proceedings or in connection with paragraph 13 of these *Guidelines*.

### Commentary 12—Adverse Commentary

Although a conservation professional may be uncomfortable providing adverse commentary about the professional conduct of a colleague, it is ethical to do so in appropriate proceedings. Such action contributes to the integrity of the field.

It is important to distinguish between substantiated adverse commentary, and gossip and innuendo. The conservation professional should be aware of the consequences and potential damage to an individual's professional reputation and to the profession as a whole that may result from gossip and innuendo.

#### A. RATIONALE

- To ensure that fair and true testimony is available in all appropriate proceedings concerning allegations of unethical conduct.
- To ensure that cultural property is protected from damage resulting from unethical conduct.

## B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Adverse commentary must be made in such a way that the individual will be notified of the allegation and have an opportunity to respond. The conservation professional offering adverse commentary must personally ensure that the individual is notified, unless notification is automatic (such as in proceedings under Guideline 13). Failure to do so is professional misconduct.
- The conservation professional must provide fair and true testimony when required to testify in proceedings concerning allegations of unethical conduct.
- The conservation professional must not offer unsubstantiated adverse commentary.

### Guideline 13

**Misconduct:** Allegations of unethical conduct should be reported in writing to the AIC president as described in the AIC Bylaws, section II, 12. As stated in the bylaws, all correspondence regarding alleged unethical conduct shall be held in the strictest confidence. Violations of the *Code* and *Guidelines* that constitute unethical conduct may result in disciplinary action.

### Commentary 13—Misconduct

In this Guideline, “misconduct” is failure to abide by the ethical standards of the conservation profession as defined in the *Code of Ethics* and *Guidelines for Practice*. Lack of knowledge or understanding of these standards is not a justification for misconduct.

Accidents resulting from the conservation professional’s lack of knowledge and experience are misconduct. Accidents resulting from unknowable conditions are not.

Conservation professionals are encouraged to report misconduct. However, such reporting should be done only after careful consideration, since allegations may result in serious consequences.

“Confidentiality” pertains to all relevant communication and associated proceedings.

## A. RATIONALE

- Misconduct should be reported to help ensure that cultural property receives appropriate ethical care and treatment.
- Misconduct should be reported to ensure that the high level of ethical behavior embodied in the *Code of Ethics* and *Guidelines for Practice* is maintained.
- Confidentiality is maintained during proceedings (as defined in the Bylaws) to protect all parties involved, as well as cultural property.

## B. MINIMUM REQUIRED PRACTICE

- An allegation of misconduct must be well substantiated. Such substantiation may include: documentation (as defined in Guidelines 24-27); direct examination of a cultural property; personal observation of procedures; knowledge of facilities, training or experience, relative to the conservation work undertaken (e.g., analysis, treatment, preventive conservation).
- All conservation professionals involved in misconduct proceedings must maintain confidentiality.

Approved by the AIC Board November 1999.

### Guideline 14

**Conflict of Interest:** The conservation professional should avoid situations in which there is a potential for a conflict of interest that may affect the quality of work, lead to the dissemination of false information, or give the appearance of impropriety.

### Commentary 14—Conflict of Interest

Conflicts of interest arise when the conservation professional is in a position to make decisions or representations which could promote goals, desires, opinions, or personal gain that come into opposition with the preservation of cultural property.

The conservation professional should be mindful that the appearance of a conflict of interest, or impropriety, can be as damaging to the credibility and integrity of the conservation profession as an actual act.

## A. RATIONALE

- To ensure that decisions made and actions taken by conservation professionals do not compromise the preservation of cultural property.
- To maintain the credibility and integrity of the conservation profession, particularly as it is viewed by allied professions and the public.

## B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals must remove themselves from situations in which the potential for a real or perceived conflict of interest exists. Such situations may include: monetary gain from the sale of a cultural property examined or treated by the conservation professional; providing an opinion on the suitability for loan of a cultural property to be loaned to the conservation professional’s institution; giving an opinion to a potential client about a colleague’s abilities when the colleague is also a competitor.
- Any direct vested interest in an endorsed product or procedure must be stated, and justification for the endorsement must be supported by

independent testing. The selection of a product or procedure must be governed by the needs of the cultural property. (See Commentaries 21 and 22)

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- If a conservation professional is asked to provide information about a colleague to an owner, custodian or authorized agent, the potential for a conflict of interest, real or perceived, may be created. In such circumstances the conservation professional should acknowledge the conflict and may recommend that another professional opinion be sought, as outlined in Commentary 10.
- Frequently institutions are contacted by members of the public for referrals for conservation work. A conflict of interest may arise if a conservation professional employed by an institution also has a private practice and, when asked for a referral, provides only a self-referral. The conflict is between the objectivity expected of one who holds a position in an institution and the self-interest of the same person acting as a private practitioner. The conflict can be resolved by providing more than one referral. It is recommended that a list of names and contact information be provided.

Approved by the AIC Board January 2000.

### Guideline 15

**Related Professional Activities:** The conservation professional should be especially mindful of the considerable potential for conflict of interest in activities such as authentication, appraisal, or art dealing.

### Commentary 15—Related Professional Activity

In this Commentary, the word “authentication” refers to an activity performed on tangible cultural property. It does not refer to verification activities related to digital files or analog signals.

#### A. RATIONALE

- The conservation activities carried out by conservation professionals may contribute to the authentication of cultural property, and may help to establish a value for a cultural property. There is a potential conflict of interest associated with these activities when the conservation professional stands to gain from increased value or heightened prestige of the cultural property. Directly appraising or dealing in cultural property significantly increases the potential for conflict of interest.
- The goals of art dealing (buying and selling cultural property for profit), authentication and appraisal may differ or conflict with the goals of preservation of cultural property in the following ways:
- These related professional activities may place the conservation professional in a situation where there is a conflict between the needs of the cultural property and the motive for profit. This may affect the choice of treatment, extent and nature of documentation, etc.
- The conservation professional carrying out authentication and condition assessment of cultural property may be influenced by the prestige imparted by association with cultural property that is rare, famous or of high monetary value. This may affect the interpretation of data, judgement of condition, etc.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- When acting in any of the above capacities, the conservation professional must always place the preservation needs of the cultural property first.
- When authenticating cultural property, the conservation professional must follow the requirements as stated in Commentary 18, “Interpretation.”
- The conservation professional must not provide a formal or informal appraisal of a cultural property when the same conservation professional may treat it.
- The conservation professional is in a unique position, through training and experience, to obtain technical information about a cultural property (e.g., condition, past treatment, materials). When acting as dealers, conservation professionals must disclose all such information they possess.
- When acting as both conservation professional and dealer, with the same cultural property, the conservation professional must not allow potential sale to compromise the choice of an appropriate treatment
- When acting as a representative of a company selling a particular product or procedure, the conservation professional must follow the Minimum Accepted Practice in Commentary 14, “Conflict of Interest.”

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals should not engage in the dealing of cultural property in their areas of specialization because conflicts of interest are likely to occur.
- The conservation professional should refer an owner’s/custodian’s request for authentication or appraisal of cultural property in the care of the conservation professional to an independent party.
- Conservation professionals should avoid the use of the terms “appraisal” and “authentication” in their conservation work. The word “assessment” better describes the process of determining quality, significance, or nature of a cultural property.
- When acting as a dealer or appraiser, the conservation professional should follow the laws and regulations governing those activities.

#### D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals who become expert in a particular artist/maker or genre/style may be uniquely qualified to be involved both in the authentication and treatment of a particular cultural property. In this situation the conservation professional must disclose the potential conflict of

interest to the owner/custodian, and must be mindful about the possible influence of one activity on the other.

- Cultural property that has been abandoned or is under a mechanics lien may be sold by the conservation professional, following all applicable laws and regulations. This is not considered dealing.

Approved by the AIC Board November 1999.

## EXAMINATION AND SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

### Guideline 16

Justification: Careful examination of cultural property forms the basis for all future action by the conservation professional. Before undertaking any examination or tests that may cause change to cultural property, the conservation professional should establish the necessity for such procedures.

### Commentary 16—Justification

#### A. RATIONALE

- Examination and scientific investigation involve procedures with consequences that are usually known and quantifiable. However, some procedures may have consequences which are not presently known or suspected. Thus, to prevent unnecessary procedures, and therefore, reduce risks, the conservation professional should establish the necessity of all such activities prior to carrying them out.
- Such procedures are commonly used to:
  - evaluate physical condition or perform a risk assessment;
  - design a conservation treatment;
  - support art historical, anthropological or historical research (e.g., artist's techniques and materials);
  - carry out provenance and authenticity studies;
  - characterize a previous conservation intervention;
  - understand the aging properties or alterations of materials.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Conservators routinely carry out examination procedures for condition assessment and for the preparation of a treatment plan. Many of these procedures may have a small physical effect on the cultural property, but are not considered to have sufficient effect to require separate justification.

These include:

- solvent testing of resinous surface coatings;
- pH testing of paper and textiles;
- removal of proportionately insignificant samples for visual inspection and micro chemical testing;
- temporary, non-destructive removal of an architectural element to allow inspection.

In these situations the conservator must exercise discretion in the extent and location of testing.

- The justification for examination/scientific investigation procedures must be documented in written form when there is a potential for significant alteration of the cultural property. This documentation must include:
  - all items as required in Guideline 24 (“Documentation”);
  - location on cultural property where examination/scientific investigation procedures are to be performed;
  - types of information sought;
  - a description of all procedures to be used, including all personnel involved;
  - rationale for choice of sample;
  - likelihood that selected procedures will provide information sought.
- If an invasive procedure (e.g., sampling) is to be used, the conservation professional must explain why a non-invasive procedure would be insufficient.
- If the proposed procedure is not in common use in conservation, a more complete description and justification is required.
- If any procedure used for examination or scientific investigation influences the validity of a possible subsequent procedure (e.g., effect of x-radiography on thermoluminescence dating), the need for the procedure must be justified in light of the hampered procedure.
- Justification for sampling, testing, or scientific investigation must be submitted in writing to the owner/custodian and written permission obtained prior to performance of the work. All justifications for examination and scientific investigation must become components of Documentation.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Justification for examination and scientific investigation should include references to techniques and protocols, preferably from a literature source.
- Justification for the use of experimental techniques or those less frequently encountered in the literature should also include a minimum of one “second opinion,” preferably from an expert in a relevant field.

## D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

- In rare circumstances when physical access is limited to a single opportunity, and unexpected materials are encountered, sampling may be carried out without prior written justification. In these circumstances, the sampling must still be justifiable under the criteria presented above, and a written justification should be prepared after the sampling.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

### Guideline 17

**Sampling and Testing:** Prior consent must be obtained from the owner, custodian, or agent before any material is removed from a cultural property. Only the minimum required should be removed, and a record of removal must be made. When appropriate, the material removed should be retained.

## Commentary 17—Sampling and Testing

### A. RATIONALE

Some information about a cultural property can only be obtained by removing and analyzing a sample. Consent is obtained to assure that the owner/custodian is aware of the need for and the impact of the sampling and testing on the cultural property. A minimum sample is taken to minimize the impact of sampling and testing on the cultural property. The removal is recorded to assure that the results of testing can be interpreted properly. The sample is retained to allow future testing of samples, to replicate results, utilize new techniques, or to derive additional information.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional must use non-invasive analytical methods where practical.
- The choice of testing techniques, the amount of sample required, and the expected value of the information gained, must be weighed against the effect of removal of the sample upon the cultural property.
- Cultural property must not be sampled for studies that could just as well be carried out on surrogates, standards or prepared samples.
- Cultural property must not be sampled for testing using a new technique unless there is a reasonable expectation for a significant contribution of new information by that technique.
- The size of the sample taken must be only the minimum required for current testing purposes. Experience has shown that the ideal sample size may in practice be difficult to achieve consistently. Therefore, the minimum required may be a slight excess of material, at the discretion of an experienced conservation professional, recognizing that all sampling represents a permanent alteration to the cultural property.
- Each sample taken must be labeled for reference and future identification.
- Documentation of sampling and testing must include:
  - all requirements listed in Commentary 24;
  - identification of each sample taken (e.g., ground layer, corrosion product, warp thread, mortar, wood sample);
  - the purpose of the sampling;
  - precise locations on the cultural property of each sample taken;
  - precise locations of areas tested with non-destructive techniques;
  - name and title of person taking sample or performing the testing;
  - a list of all procedures carried out on each sample or tested area;
  - storage location of sample, if sample is not consumed by testing.
- All data and results of testing must become part of the written record of the cultural property and must be made available to the owner/custodian.
- All sampling must be done in such a way as to minimize the impact on the cultural property (e.g., from an edge, damaged area, verso, broken edge, crevice)
- Samples remaining after testing must be retained with the cultural property, with the documentation, with the owner/custodian, or in a reference collection.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Sampling should meet the standards set by statistical methodologies, such as Single-Object Study Statistics (Reedy & Reedy, 1992).
- Sampling should be undertaken only by qualified personnel.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

### Guideline 18

**Interpretation:** Declarations of age, origin, or authenticity should be made only when based on sound evidence.

## Commentary 18—Interpretation

### A. RATIONALE

- The field of conservation deals with the physical aspect of cultural property and is valued in part for the information it provides through examination and scientific investigation. It is assumed that statements by a conservation professional regarding age, origin or authenticity of a cultural property are based on knowledge derived from the physical evidence. There is a risk that others will assume that all statements are

substantiated by physical evidence, even when this is not the case.

## B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Statements made by a conservation professional about age, origin or authenticity must be based on physical evidence derived directly from cultural property.
- Opinions not based on physical evidence must be clearly identified as such.
- With regard to age, provenance or authenticity studies, the conservation professional must explain that scientific data cannot provide definitive attribution, but can provide information that shows whether a particular cultural property is consistent with other cultural s
- In interpreting data derived from examination and scientific investigation, the conservation professional must conform to established norms of scientific integrity, and must indicate limitations of the data and the limitations of the interpretation method.
- The interpretation must become part of the permanent documentation.

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- A conservation professional should refrain from making statements based solely on opinions not rooted in physical evidence.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

### Guideline 19

Scientific Investigation: The conservation professional should follow accepted scientific standards and research protocols.

### Commentary 19—Scientific Investigation

Scientific investigation may be carried out by a variety of conservation professionals, including scientists, conservators, and technicians. It uses data that may be derived directly from cultural property, from materials to be used for the conservation of cultural property, from materials replicating aspects of cultural property, or from the environments which surround them. It may also use data from related fields.

#### A. RATIONALE

- In order to insure the validity of the information derived from scientific investigation it is essential that long standing standards and protocols developed by the scientific community be employed. Failure to do this can lead to invalid, incomplete or useless results.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- As denoted in Guideline 19.
- All members of the research team, and their roles, must be accurately credited.

#### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The conservation professional should publish the results of scientific investigation in peer-reviewed literature.
- Raw data generated during scientific investigation should be suitably archived and preserved. When scientific investigation is carried out on a cultural property, information regarding the location of the data should become part of the permanent record of the cultural property.
- When scientific investigation is carried out on a cultural property, a written agreement should be made between the owner/custodian and the conservation professional carrying out the scientific investigation regarding the availability of the data to other researchers. (See Guideline 7 “Confidentiality.”)
- All data not of a confidential nature should be made available to other credible researchers.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1998.

## PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION

### Guideline 20

Preventive Conservation: The conservation professional should recognize the critical importance of preventive conservation as the most effective means of promoting the long-term preservation of cultural property. The conservation professional should provide guidelines for continuing use and care, recommend appropriate environmental conditions for storage and exhibition, and encourage proper procedures for handling, packing, and transport.

### Commentary 20—Preventive Conservation

Preventive Conservation is the mitigation of deterioration and damage to cultural property through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage, exhibition, packing, transport, and use; integrated pest management; emergency preparedness and response; and reformatting/duplication. Preventive conservation is an ongoing process that continues throughout the life of cultural property, and does not end with interventive treatment.

#### A. RATIONALE

- To extend the life of cultural property.
- To reduce the risk of catastrophic loss of cultural property.

- To defer, reduce, or eliminate the need for interventive treatment.
- To extend the effectiveness of interventive treatment.
- To provide a cost-effective method for the preservation of collections.
- To maximize impact of the conservation professional.
- To encourage the conservation professional to employ the broadest range of preservation strategies (e.g., risk management, long-range planning, site protection).
- To encourage the conservation professional to collaborate with others who have responsibility for the care of collections and cultural property (e.g., security and fire prevention personnel, facilities or site managers, collections managers, maintenance staffs).
- To encourage the participation of others in the preservation of cultural property.

## B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Before considering interventive treatment, the conservator must consider whether preventive conservation options are more appropriate.
- In the process of developing and implementing preventive conservation, the conservation professional must collaborate with appropriate personnel.
- Before making recommendations for preventive conservation measures, the conservation professional must be conversant with the preservation-related conditions (e.g., temperature, relative humidity, pests, light, pollutants, housing materials) in which the cultural property or collection currently exists.
- Because many preventive conservation actions are carried out by others, the conservation professional must be responsible for setting the standards under which these measures are carried out and for periodically reviewing their implementation. These standards must be in writing.
- The conservation professional must employ or recommend only those preventive conservation measures that are currently accepted practice in the profession.

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Recommendations for preventive conservation should be in written form and supported by illustrative material where appropriate (format and level of detail may vary). These should specify:
  - methods, procedures, and suitable materials;
  - personnel requirements and qualifications (e.g., for in-house staff, contractor, volunteer).
- Recommendations for preventive conservation should be integrated into an organization's operating procedures and be consistent with its long-range plans (for non-moveable cultural property, a Master Preservation Plan).
- Following treatment, recommendations for preventive conservation measures should be included in the treatment report.
- The conservation professional should participate in the education and training of others involved in preventive conservation.

## D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

- Special cultural or contextual considerations may influence preventive conservation measures taken for a specific cultural property (e.g., sacred, contemporary, conceptual). In some cases a decision to allow deterioration to occur by avoiding certain preservation practices may be appropriate. Such decisions should be made only in collaboration with appropriate individuals connected with the cultural property.
- The relocation of immovable or site-specific cultural property should be used only as a "last resort" preventive conservation measure (e.g., when moving a building will prevent its destruction).

Approved by the AIC Board October 1997.

# TREATMENT

## Guideline 21

**Suitability:** The conservation professional performs within a continuum of care and will rarely be the last entrusted with the conservation of a cultural property. The conservation professional should only recommend or undertake treatment that is judged suitable to the preservation of the aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics of the cultural property. When nonintervention best serves to promote the preservation of the cultural property, it may be appropriate to recommend that no treatment be performed.

## Commentary 21—Suitability

The understanding of what constitutes responsible care for cultural property has broadened as the conservation profession has matured. This has led to the recognition that there is a range of possible appropriate treatments for any one cultural property or collection of cultural properties, no one of which is the sole "correct" treatment. The choice of a suitable treatment results from a thoughtful and informed consideration by the conservator, working in collaboration with appropriate individuals connected with the cultural property.

## A. RATIONALE

- To promote an open-minded, flexible approach on the part of the conservator.
- To encourage consideration of a broad spectrum of possible actions, ranging from no treatment to extensive intervention.
- To promote treatments that are responsive and appropriate to the condition and needs of the specific cultural property, and to the cultural property in its context.

- To promote treatments which anticipate possible future developments in the field while addressing the immediate needs of the cultural property.
- To discourage fad-driven or formulaic treatments.
- To prevent unnecessary treatment.
- To encourage consideration of other factors that may have a bearing on the choice of treatment, including limits of personal competence, available resources, owner/custodial/institutional priorities, exhibit or loan requirements, and cost.

## B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The primary goal of a suitable treatment is the preservation of the cultural property itself.
- In selecting a suitable treatment, the conservator must thoroughly consider the following:
  - the physical characteristics, condition, and specific needs of the cultural property;
  - context and use of the cultural property (historical, cultural, institutional, current, and anticipated);
  - the physical environment in which the cultural property will be located and the likelihood of continuing care;
  - the immediate and long-term consequences of treatment, including the effect on possible future examination, treatment, research, and use;
  - the potential risks of treatment to the cultural property weighed against the anticipated benefits;
  - limits of personal competence;
  - available resources, including personnel, facilities, equipment, and funds;
  - safety of treatment personnel, the environment, and the public.
- A suitable treatment addresses existing structural instability as the first priority.
- In selecting a suitable treatment, the conservator must first consider treatments that have been published in peer-reviewed literature and are currently accepted practice in the field. In special cases (see Commentary 22, Section D), other treatments may be considered, but they must be tested before general application.

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- When resources are limited, the conservator should consider a phased approach to the implementation of a treatment. Each phase may be completed as resources become available. Phased treatment is especially relevant to large-scale or complex projects and large collections.
- Treatments should be evaluated for suitability upon completion, and periodically over time. This process should be documented to provide information to the profession, and should be published when appropriate.

## D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- When appropriate (e.g., large-scale projects, unusual applications and situations) testing should be carried out on mock-ups or discrete, representative portions of the cultural property to determine suitability.
- When considering the treatment of large groups of similar objects (e.g., archaeological finds, archival collections, systematics collection), a representative sample of the group should be treated to confirm suitability, and an untreated control sample should be retained.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1997.

## Guideline 22

**Materials and Methods:** The conservation professional is responsible for choosing materials and methods appropriate to the objectives of each specific treatment and consistent with currently accepted practice. The advantages of the materials and methods chosen must be balanced against their potential adverse effects on future examination, scientific investigation, treatment, and function.

## Commentary 22—Materials and Methods

### A. RATIONALE

- Some materials and methods used in the past have had a detrimental effect on cultural property, sometimes causing further deterioration and interfering with use of newly developed analytical techniques and treatments. Often the selection of materials and methods was formulaic, and not made on the basis of appropriateness to the individual cultural property being treated. It is therefore important that materials and methods be chosen that both meet the specific needs of the cultural property being treated and take into consideration the future availability of better analytical and treatment techniques.
- Using materials and methods that are consistent with “currently accepted practice” will help the conservation professional to avoid the adoption of insufficiently tested materials and methods and to determine whether the use of existing materials and methods is appropriate in new treatment situations. Materials and methods become recognized as currently accepted practice through appropriate testing and publication in peer-reviewed literature. This process provides an understanding of the characteristics and properties of the materials and methods, especially their aging properties. Although selecting only those materials and methods that are “accepted” limits the conservation professional’s repertoire, it enhances the possibility of successful future retreatment or analysis.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Currently accepted practice is not static. Because of the changing and advancing nature of knowledge and practice in the field, all conservation professionals must continue to review the literature, monitor and review past treatments, and share with colleagues their experiences — both practical and experimental — through discussion and publication.

- The goals of treatment must be clearly defined so that appropriate methods and materials can be chosen. The materials chosen must be:
  - chemically and physically compatible with the cultural property;
  - distinguishable from the materials of the cultural property (see Commentary 23, Section B);
  - removable with the least damage to the cultural property when removing the material becomes necessary;
  - the most chemically and physically stable of those appropriate; and
  - should not preclude retreatment or future analysis of the cultural property.
- The methods chosen must be within the range of competence of the conservation professional. If an appropriate method does not fall within the competency of the conservation professional, then the treatment of the cultural property should be referred to a properly qualified conservation professional.
- When no currently accepted material or method is available, treatment must be deferred and preventive conservation approaches used to stabilize the cultural property.
- The conservation professional must distinguish among those materials and methods that are part of currently accepted practice, those that have been superseded, and those which are still experimental. Materials and methods become part of currently accepted practice through:
  - replicable research;
  - objective review of past practices;
  - professional consultation and open discussion at professional meetings;
  - industrial information (e.g., ASTM, ANSI); and
  - publication in peer-reviewed literature.
- Where the wholesale application of a material or method to cultural property is contemplated, testing must be conducted on a small, unobtrusive section of the cultural property, or on mock-ups.
- Representative samples of original material of the cultural property removed during treatment must be retained with the cultural property, in a file, or with the owner/custodian.
- All material removed from the cultural property must be documented.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- When considering a newly published or unfamiliar material or method, the conservation professional should become informed through discussion with colleagues, personal education, field testing, and consultation with other appropriate professionals.
- Conservation professionals should be conservative in embracing the use of new materials and methods, and it is their responsibility to understand the consequences involved in their use.
- Conservation professionals should participate in experimental evaluation of materials and methods in the laboratory or in field tests using mock-ups or original materials commonly considered to be historically, culturally, and aesthetically insignificant. The experimental use of materials and methods on significant cultural property is a topic requiring further discussion and debate within the field.
- Representative samples of significant non-original material of the cultural property removed during treatment should be retained with the cultural property, in a file, or with the owner/custodian.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICE

- In emergency situations, when there is a possibility of imminent loss of the cultural property, it may be necessary to use materials or methods which are not currently accepted practice.
- In situations where there is active deterioration and preventive conservation measures will not prevent imminent loss, it may be necessary to use experimental materials or methods.
- When treating certain sacred objects, it may be necessary to employ traditional materials and methods that may not be recognized as currently accepted practice.
- In some circumstances it may be advisable to employ materials and methods that are sustainable by local communities, even if they are not recognized as currently accepted practice.
- In some cases it may be necessary to use materials indistinguishable from the original materials of the cultural property (e.g., hide glue, wheat starch paste, lime mortar, gold leaf). These cases require more extensive documentation.
- In situations where materials will not be removable from a cultural property (e.g., consolidants), where there will be substantial chemical alteration of the cultural property (e.g., image enhancement of photographs, bleaching, patination), or where the cultural property will be used, thus requiring more robust materials (e.g., carriages, automatons, industrial machines, books), most careful consideration should be given to the choice of materials and methods, in collaboration with the owner/custodian. These situations require more extensive documentation.
- If it is not feasible to retain all removed material, representative samples should be retained and well documented.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1997.

### Guideline 23

**Compensation for Loss:** Any intervention to compensate for loss should be documented in treatment records and reports and should be detectable by common examination methods. Such compensation should be reversible and should not falsely modify the known aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics of the cultural property, especially by removing or obscuring original material.

## Commentary 23—Compensation for Loss

This guideline refers to physical loss to the material of a cultural property or loss of original appearance through chemical change. Loss may have a structural and/or visual effect. The baseline for determining the nature and extent of loss is the point at which the cultural property was generally accepted as completed, although compensation need not return the cultural property to this state. The original completed state (what the artist/maker actually did) takes precedence over the artist's/maker's original intent in guiding the nature and extent of compensation for loss.

### A. RATIONALE

To restore:

- structural stability;
- visual unity; and/or
- function and use.

To facilitate the understanding and appreciation of the cultural property. (e.g., sounds of a musical instrument, shape of a broken vase, movement of an automaton).

Compensation for loss must be detectable because:

- the viewer may otherwise be deceived as to the nature and extent of compensation, and the condition of the cultural property, which may affect evidential and monetary value; and
- conservation professionals must be able to differentiate between original material and later additions when carrying out research and treatment

Compensation for loss must be reversible because:

- more appropriate materials used for compensation may become available;
- compensation is the aspect of treatment most often based on supposition;
- new information may indicate that the compensation should be modified;
- taste and fashion in presentation will change; and
- damage to the cultural property is minimized during retreatment.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

Compensation must be documented in written and graphic form. Location of compensation and materials used must be clearly identified.

Compensation must be detectable using at least one common examination method. These methods (as employed by conservation professionals) are presently considered to include:

- examination in visible light;
- examination in UV radiation; and
- examination under low-power magnification.

Compensation must be reversible, using chemical and/or mechanical methods that will not adversely affect the remaining original material, unless this jeopardizes structural stability. An isolating layer often facilitates reversibility.

- While all compensation covers some original material, compensation must cover as little of the original surface as possible.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- The method of detecting and the means of reversing the compensation should be specified in the documentation.
- Compensation should be detectable by the educated viewer.
- If compensation is so extensive that it forms a substantial portion of the cultural property, then the compensation should be visually apparent to all viewers. In some cases, where long-standing traditional compensation techniques produce results that are not readily apparent (e.g., tapestry re-weaving, replacement carvings, furniture veneers), then thorough documentation is especially important.
- If compensation is based on supposition because sufficient historical documentation or contextual evidence is unavailable, then compensation should be readily apparent to all viewers.
- In some cases a better aesthetic result may be achieved by compensation that removes or covers substantial original material or surface. However, the conservation professional should select a method of compensation that favors retention of original material over marginal aesthetic improvement.
- Significant non-original material that is removed prior to compensation should be documented, and representative samples should be retained.
- Materials used for compensation should be clearly distinguished, physically or chemically, as an addition (e.g., dots on replacement shells, stamps on new watch parts, barium in gesso fills, marks on replacement windows).

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- In the treatment of contemporary cultural property, the aesthetic requirements of the maker/artist may necessitate compensation practices that sacrifice original material and surface to obtain a specified result. The conservation professional should document the rationale for such a treatment.
- Compensation for losses to some sacred and ceremonial cultural property of living cultures may require more extensive intervention to restore conceptual meaning. The conservation professional should document the rationale for such treatments.
- Some compensation processes may not be reversible. These include:

- repatination;
- re-dyeing;
- chemical enhancement of photographs;
- inpainting of watercolors on paper;
- epoxy fills; and
- replastering of walls and the application of cementitious materials.

These compensation processes should not be used until all reversible options have been considered. The rationale for the use of non-reversible processes should be well-documented.

- If compensation is so extensive that it covers a substantial portion of the original surface, a representative example of the historic surface(s) should be retained in situ (e.g., architectural finishes, repatination).
- In some cases (e.g., period rooms, vehicles, monuments) where the surface is very badly damaged or substantially covered, the cost of retaining or revealing the surface may be prohibitive. Although the conservation of original surface is usually of paramount importance, in such cases as much of the original surface as possible should be retained and isolated even if it is to be completely overpainted.
- In some instances the use of a new material that obscures or replaces the original surface may be necessary (e.g., leaf casting, repatination, architectural finishes), and may not be detectable by common examination methods. Documentation of the original surface is essential, and photographs (e.g., before and after treatment) and other graphic documentation must show the extent of compensation. The rationale for the sacrifice of original surface should also be well-documented.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1997.

## DOCUMENTATION

### Guideline 24

Documentation: The conservation professional has an obligation to produce and maintain accurate, complete, and permanent records of examination, sampling, scientific investigation, and treatment. When appropriate, the records should be both written and pictorial. The kind and extent of documentation may vary according to the circumstances, the nature of the object, or whether an individual object or a collection is to be documented. The purposes of such documentation are:

- to establish the condition of cultural property;
- to aid in the care of cultural property by providing information helpful to future treatment and by adding to the profession's body of knowledge;
- to aid the owner, custodian, or authorized agent and society as a whole in the appreciation and use of cultural property by increasing understanding of an object's aesthetic, conceptual, and physical characteristics; and
- to aid the conservation professional by providing a reference that can assist in the continued development of knowledge and by supplying records that can help avoid misunderstanding and unnecessary litigation.

### Commentary 24—Documentation

#### A. RATIONALE

(as denoted in *Guidelines for Practice 24*)

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The obligation to produce documentation cannot be waived for any reason.
- All records should include:
  - the purpose of the documentation;
  - the name of the documentor;
  - the date of the document.
- A written record should be made any time that cultural property is examined, analyzed, sampled, treated, altered, and/or damaged and when cultural property is temporarily under the care or study of the conservation professional. Formats of these written records may vary from complete narratives to annotated graphics. Records may be combined where appropriate. This written record must include information that uniquely identifies the cultural property. Examples of such information are:
  - accession number, registration number, or street address;
  - owner/custodian;
  - maker/origin;
  - subject/title/scientific classification;
  - measurements;
  - marks/labels/prominent site features;
  - date of creation;
  - site location and boundaries.
- All components of the documentation (written and graphic) should be clearly labeled to identify them as part of this record. For digital files, such

identifying information can be added to the file's metadata for clarification. *The AIC Guide to Digital Photography and Conservation Documentation* provides recommendations on the use of metadata for digital image files. Media containing digital files should also be appropriately marked externally to indicate the content.

- In determining appropriate format for and content of documentation, the conservation professional should follow recommendations developed by AIC specialty groups and may also wish to consult an attorney.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- In determining the extent of documentation (both written and graphic), the conservation professional, in consultation with the owner/custodian, should consider the nature of the conservation activity, the significance of the cultural property, available resources, and any relevant legal requirements.
- In written documentation and labeling of graphic documentation, the conservation professional should use terminology generally accepted within the profession and should amplify the record as necessary to make it understandable to the owner/custodian.
  - Associated records (e.g., previous conservation documents, curatorial records, Historic Structure Reports, excavation reports) should be incorporated into or cited in the documentation created.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- Certain circumstances may affect the extent or form of documentation as described above. Among these are:
  - disaster response;
  - impending destruction;
  - emergency treatment;
  - minor remedial treatment;
  - mass treatment (i.e., identical or similar routine treatment carried out on batches of collection materials);
  - collection assessments and surveys;
  - preventive care/cyclical maintenance.

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### Guideline 25

Documentation of Examination: Before any intervention, the conservation professional should make a thorough examination of the cultural property and create appropriate records. These records and the reports derived from them must identify the cultural property and include the date of examination and the name of the examiner. They also should include, as appropriate, a description of structure, materials, condition, and pertinent history.

### Commentary 25—Documentation of Examination

#### A. RATIONALE

- To record information obtained through direct observation and testing concerning the materials, structure, history, current condition, and environment of the cultural property.
- This record:
  - preserves information that may be obscured or lost through use, during treatment, or over time;
  - establishes a benchmark against which to assess change of the cultural property through use, during treatment, or over time;
  - articulates the need for conservation measures (e.g., treatment, preventive care);
  - serves as a reference for additional study or decision making (e.g., acquisition, exhibition, loan, site management planning, scholarly research);
  - facilitates communication about the nature, care, deterioration patterns, and use of the cultural property.

#### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- While the form of the record of examination may vary as appropriate (e.g., laboratory notes, annotated photographs, checklist, work log), it must include:
  - information required in Commentary 24, Section B;
  - data obtained through direct observation and testing (distinguish clearly between observation and interpretation);
  - notation of accessory materials or associated elements (e.g., components of cased photographs, dependencies/outbuildings, stretchers and frames, mounts and fixtures, original housings);
  - the purposes and circumstances of the examination that place the record in context;
  - methods of examination and testing.
- If examination is in preparation for treatment, the record of examination must also document in written form:
  - present condition, especially those aspects that are to be addressed by the treatment;
  - evidence of past treatment, including references to documentation of previous conservation activities related to the cultural property.
- If examination is in preparation for treatment whereby the appearance of the cultural property may change, the record of examination must also include dated graphic documentation that illustrates:

- present condition, especially those aspects that may be altered by the treatment (e.g., “before-treatment” photograph).

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- All examination records should include:
  - graphic documentation (e.g., photographs, diagrams, drawings, architectural plans) necessary to illustrate condition and relevant details accurately;
  - information that uniquely identifies the cultural property (see Commentary 24, Section B).
- Graphic documentation should include:
  - size scales, as appropriate.
- Photographs should include:
  - color and gray scales;
  - a light direction indicator;
  - photogrammetric and point-of-view indicators, if required.
- The conservator should endeavor to consult all available documentation of conservation activities related to the cultural property.

## D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- Certain situations may require less documentation of examination. Nevertheless, documentation must always identify the cultural property being examined, and must include the name of the examiner and the date of examination.
- These situations include:
  - Emergencies that may require intervention before examination can be fully recorded. Some record (e.g., audiotape, videotape, field notes) should be made at the time of intervention so that accurate documentation can be made when circumstances permit.
  - Examination of large groups of similar objects/elements (e.g., archaeological finds, library collections, systematics collection) for which documentation may be for the group as a whole. Unique conditions of individual objects/elements should also be documented.
  - Surveys, when representational documentation and/or group reports may be used. If all objects/elements in the surveyed collection or site are not examined, the sample size and methodology for selection (systematic, random, haphazard) should be stated.
  - Examination of an object/element made of many similar components (e.g., book, feather cloak, balustrade), when documentation may be for the object/element as a whole. Unique conditions of individual components should also be documented. For example, for books, photographic documentation may include: binding, title page or colophon, a representative opening in the text, and representative damage.
  - Examination of components (e.g., windows of a building, wheels of a railroad engine) of a large, complex cultural property, when documentation may be limited to representative examples, but the representative examples must be located and identified.
  - Examination of cultural property in situations of heightened risk (e.g., transport, loan, or proximity to construction zone), when documentation may concentrate on features that may change or conditions that may cause concern.
  - Routine maintenance, where limited examination (e.g., visual inspection) is carried out in preparation for routine activities (documentation of examination may not be necessary in such cases).

Approved by the AIC Board October 1996.

## Guideline 26

Treatment Plan: Following examination and before treatment, the conservation professional should prepare a plan describing the course of treatment. This plan should also include the justification for and the objectives of treatment, alternative approaches, if feasible, and the potential risks. When appropriate, this plan should be submitted as a proposal to the owner, custodian, or authorized agent.

## Commentary 26—Treatment Plan

### A. RATIONALE

- To organize the thinking of the conservator in planning a full course of treatment.
- To clarify the goals of treatment and the sequence of steps necessary to reach them.
- To help ensure that relevant logistical factors are considered (e.g., time, materials, cost, facilities).
- This treatment plan:
  - serves as a basis of communication and discussion between the conservator and custodian/owner, regarding expectations, potential benefits, costs, and risks;
  - provides a clear statement to the custodian/owner of the proposed treatment and may serve as the basis for both a scope-of-work and a contract;
  - serves as a basis of communication with colleagues.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- The treatment plan must be put into written form.
- The treatment plan must include:

- the information required in Commentary 24, Section B;
- proposed course of treatment;
- materials to be used;
- time estimate;
- cost estimate, if used as a basis for contract.
- Unless a previous written understanding exists between the conservator and the owner/custodian concerning responsibilities for treatment decisions (e.g., job description, general letter of understanding, contract), the treatment plan, with accompanying examination report, must be presented to the owner/custodian for written approval. Similar approval must be obtained for significant revisions to, or deviations from, the approved treatment plan.
- If the custodian is not also the owner, the conservator must establish that the custodian has the authority to approve the treatment plan.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Even if a previous written understanding exists, written approval for the treatment should be obtained. If only verbal approval has been obtained, such approval should be noted in the conservator's records.
- The written treatment plan should include:
  - the minimum requirements cited above;
  - objectives and limitations of the treatment;
  - benefits and risks;
  - general description of the properties of materials to be used;
  - alternatives to the proposed treatment, if appropriate;
  - statement that information revealed during treatment may require minor variations from the approved treatment plan.
- When a partial treatment is necessary before the complete course of treatment can be determined, a written plan for this partial treatment should be prepared and approval obtained from the owner/custodian.
- For long-term or large-scale projects, special consideration should be given to documenting the decision-making process that underlies the treatment plan.
- If the approved treatment is to be carried out by someone other than the conservator who prepared the treatment plan, then significant changes to the plan should be approved by the original conservator.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- Emergencies may require intervention before a treatment plan can be prepared and/or approved (see Commentary 24, Section D).
- Treatment plans for large groups of similar objects/elements (e.g., archaeological finds, library collections, systematics collection) may be for the group as a whole. Significant variations for individual objects/elements should be indicated.
- Treatment plans for an object/element made of many similar components (e.g., book, feather cloak, balustrade) may be for the object/element as a whole. Significant variations for individual components should be indicated.
- Treatment plans for components (e.g., windows of a building, wheels of a railroad engine) of a large, complex cultural property may be limited to the components.
- For routine maintenance and minor remedial treatment, a general statement of procedures or policy may substitute for a treatment plan.

Approved by the AIC Board October 1996.

### Guideline 27

**Documentation of Treatment:** During treatment, the conservation professional should maintain dated documentation that includes a record or description of techniques or procedures involved, materials used and their composition, the nature and extent of all alterations, and any additional information revealed or otherwise ascertained. A report prepared from these records should summarize this information and provide, as necessary, recommendations for subsequent care.

### Commentary 27—Documentation of Treatment

#### A. RATIONALE

- To ensure that information about the treatment and information obtained during that treatment are preserved.
- Dated documentation (e.g., laboratory notes, photographs, work logs) and the report prepared from these records:
  - document procedures used during treatment, and variations from the treatment plan;
  - document materials added to or removed from the cultural property;
  - document changes in the cultural property as a result of treatment, including its state after treatment;
  - document new information about the cultural property;
  - serve to prevent unnecessary future analysis and treatment;
  - serve as a basis for planning future treatments of the cultural property, including preventive care;
  - serve as a basis for evaluating the safety and efficacy of materials, techniques, and procedures;
  - provide evidence of the actions of the conservation professional.

## B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- A dated record of all treatment actions and the name(s) of those performing those actions must be maintained during the course of treatment. The form of this record may vary as appropriate (e.g., laboratory notes, annotated photographs, work log). Information recorded only on audiotape, videotape, or computer must be transferred to hard copy in a timely manner.
- In addition to dated graphic documentation produced during examination (e.g., “before-treatment” photograph, see Commentary 25, Section B), dated graphic documentation must be produced to record:
  - all aspects revealed during treatment that will be obscured after treatment (e.g., “during treatment” photograph);
  - the final appearance of the cultural property after treatment (e.g., “after treatment” photograph).
- A treatment report must be prepared from these records. While the form of this treatment report may vary, it must include:
  - name of conservator responsible for the treatment;
  - date of report;
  - date of completion of treatment;
  - information that uniquely identifies the cultural property (see Commentary 24, Section B);
  - accurate and complete description of all procedures used;
  - deviations from the proposed treatment;
  - a list of all added materials that remain with the cultural property after treatment, cited by manufacturer and proprietary name, and, if known, by chemical name or composition;
  - composition of materials used in treatment that do not become part of the cultural property but may have a bearing on future examination, maintenance, and treatment (e.g., cleaning agents, solvents, bleaching agents, surfactants, enzymes, electrolyte solutions, poultices) which also must be listed in the log and included in the report. (Sources of these materials, cited by manufacturer and proprietary name, and by chemical name or composition (if known) should be included where appropriate.)
  - description of material removed during treatment or obscured by treatment;
  - new information about the cultural property revealed during treatment;
  - all appropriate dated graphic documentation (e.g., “before-treatment,” “during-treatment,” “after-treatment” photographs).

## C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Treatment procedures and materials considered, but not chosen, should be discussed in the treatment report, particularly if the reasons for their rejection may aid in future treatment decisions.
- Treatment procedures undertaken but limited in application by time, by circumstance, or by the characteristics of the cultural property should be discussed in the treatment report.
- Recommendations should be made for subsequent preventive care and maintenance.
- All graphic documentation should include:
  - information that uniquely identifies the cultural property;
  - date;
  - size scale.
- In addition to the above, all photographic documentation should include:
  - color and gray scales;
  - a light direction indicator;
  - photogrammetric and point-of-view indicators, if required.
- So that changes in the appearance of the cultural property due to treatment are accurately depicted, graphic documentation produced for comparative purposes should be produced under conditions that minimize variations in illumination, image size, background, point of view, etc.
- Assisting conservators, other conservation professionals, consultants, and contractors should be cited in the treatment report.
- A summary of the treatment time and costs may be included.

## D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- During emergencies, a log should be maintained as circumstances permit (see Commentary 24, Section D). A complete treatment report must be prepared subsequently.
- Treatment logs for large groups of similar objects/elements (e.g., archaeological finds, library collections, systematics collection) should record the general treatments and any variations. The treatment report may cover the group as a whole, but variations applied to individual objects/elements should be stated. Graphic documentation may be of representative objects/elements and treatments.
- Treatment logs and reports for an individual object/element made of many similar components (e.g., books, feather cloaks, balustrade) should record variations applied to individual components. Graphic documentation may be of representative components.
- Treatment logs and reports for components (e.g., windows of a building, wheels of a railroad engine) of a large, complex cultural property may be limited to the components treated, but the components must be clearly located and identified.
- For minor remedial treatment, brief notes may suffice for a treatment log and report, but they must include:
  - information that uniquely identifies the cultural property;
  - date;
  - name of person performing treatment;

- a general description of treatment.
  - Routine maintenance procedures (e.g., dusting, refolding documents) covered by written policy, additional documentation may not be required.
  - Experimental, unusual, and high-risk treatments may require more extensive documentation.
  - Decision-making processes crucial to understanding the treatment of the cultural property should be documented.
- Approved by the AIC Board October 1996.

## Guideline 28

Preservation of Documentation: Documentation is an invaluable part of the history of cultural property and should be produced and maintained in as permanent a manner as practicable. Copies of reports of examination and treatment must be given to the owner, custodian, or authorized agent, who should be advised of the importance of maintaining these materials with the cultural property. Documentation is also an important part of the profession's body of knowledge. The conservation professional should strive to preserve these records and give other professionals appropriate access to them, when access does not contravene agreements regarding confidentiality.

## Commentary 28—Preservation of Documentation

### A. RATIONALE

- Documentation is an integral part of the conservation process; therefore, it must be preserved so that the information it contains is later available to conservators and others.
- For a specific cultural property, documentation may be used to:
  - evaluate the cultural property's present condition;
  - plan its further treatment;
  - expand appreciation and understanding of it;
  - study it even if it is lost, destroyed, or otherwise made inaccessible.
- More generally, the documentation may be used to:
  - evaluate treatment methods and materials;
  - support scholarly research;
  - provide a record of "current accepted practice";
  - study the history of the conservation profession and the thought processes and rationales applied to the care of cultural property.
- Documentation:
  - reduces the need for direct intervention (e.g., sampling, handling, re-excavation, pretreatment testing) when future study and treatment are undertaken;
  - serves as an important educational tool for owners/custodians, students, scholars, and the general public;
  - serves as a record that can help avoid misunderstanding and unnecessary litigation;
  - enhances the credibility of the conservation profession by setting a positive example for allied professionals and the public.
  - promotes effective preservation and conservation strategies.
- Documentation may be created and preserved in human readable (hard copy) form and/or electronic form. The advantages of each form are:
  1. Hard copy documentation
    - does not require complex storage measures to maintain for its expected lifespan;
    - requires no special equipment to view or access;
    - can be physically stored with related object information and supporting materials (e.g., sampled material, labels, handwritten notations).
  2. Electronic Documentation:
    - provides the most easily accessed documentation record when properly managed and organized;
    - can provide the most informative photographic record when electronically displayed, if created properly;
    - has the ability to maintain, preserve, and reproduce the photographic documentation without image degradation, given appropriate digital preservation strategies.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Handwritten and printed documentation must be produced on and with permanent, stable media, and be legible. If film is used for the graphic component, the most permanent photographic systems reasonably available must be utilized (such as properly stored and labeled color transparency film).
- If documentation is created using electronic media, the conservation professional must recognize that the long-term maintenance of these records requires regular proactive measures. A comprehensive plan for long-term storage of digital records must be established. Such plans involve (but are not limited to):
  - the creation and maintenance of at least two copies of the electronic records kept in different locations;
  - the regular monitoring of records (i.e., make sure they open correctly);
  - the regular migration of records to new electronic media;

-the conversion to new file formats when necessary to keep current with changes in technology and thus ensure long-term access to the records.

The conservation professional must also recognize that, unlike traditional hard copy records, the long-term survival of digital files is at present unproven over time.

- If databases or other electronic record keeping systems are used in the course of maintaining image files and other digital documentation, then these supporting electronic records must also be preserved with equal attention to planning and care.
- If such measures for the maintenance of electronic documentation records cannot be achieved, the conservation professional must create and maintain hard copies of the documentation on the most permanent materials available. Recommended storage conditions should be followed for hard copy material.
- Electronic conservation record files, both photographic- and text-based, should be stored in a file format that is as universally accessible as is reasonably possible.
- Records should be organized and maintained to ensure their preservation and their retrieval in a timely manner, by appropriate individuals. The records must be stored under the best environmental conditions feasible.
- Multiple copies of the documentation must exist: one (the “record copy”) with the owner/custodian (curatorial office or registration department in an institution), the other with the conservation professional. For electronic records, the conservation professional must create and maintain at least two copies on separate storage media in different locations. The conservation professional must stress to the owner/custodian the importance of storing these records properly and maintaining them with the cultural property, even if ownership changes.
- To allow access to the documentation without violating confidentiality, the owner/custodian should be asked to sign a written agreement governing access to the information by conservation and allied professionals and by future owners/custodians. Conservation professionals working in public institutions may not need to obtain such an agreement, since access to documentation created within such institutions is governed by federal and state statutes.
- When requested, copies of documentation should be provided to future owners/custodians or conservation professionals in a timely fashion.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Written and graphic documentation other than photographic should be executed on paper that meets ANSI Standard Z39.48-1992. (R2002) (ISO 9706:1994).
- The conservation professional should retain an original photographic record (e.g., negative, original color transparency, or electronic file) so the highest quality of graphic information is available.
- Both electronic documentation and hard copy of electronic documentation should be created and maintained whenever possible in order to maximize long-term stability and provide widest accessibility.
- Multiple copies of documentation files in electronic form should be maintained and physically stored in multiple locations.
- Whenever possible, digital photographic files should be created and maintained in an uncompressed format. If it is necessary to create or maintain files in compressed form, the minimum level of compression should be used. Lossless compression is preferable to lossy compression.
- Electronically or magnetically recorded documentation and documentation requiring the use of other specialized retrieval apparatus (e.g., videotape or optical disk) can be useful adjuncts to the permanent record but should not be relied upon as permanent records unless a comprehensive plan for long-term management of the digital file(s) or analog medium is in place (see section B above).
- Recommendations should be made to the owner/custodian regarding the maintenance and use of the documentation. Attaching a summary of critical information (e.g., name of conservation professional, identification or job number, treatment summary) to the cultural property may be a useful way to ensure that documentation accompanies the cultural property over time.
- Within institutions, conservation documentation should be regarded as part of the institutional archives, and conservation professionals should work with archivists and records managers to develop sound policies for their permanent retention.
- Private practitioners should maintain and monitor documentation throughout the lifetime of their practice. If ownership of a practice changes hands, the documentation should be included in the transfer. If the practice closes, the conservation professional should make an effort to place documentation in an institutional archives. (AIC provides information on how to identify archives and place collections.) If this proves impossible and records must be discarded, their final disposition should be reported to AIC for future reference.
- The conservation professional should strive to keep informed about and to follow practices for the preservation and organization of records currently recommended by archives professionals.

### D. SPECIAL PRACTICES

- In certain situations when no substitutes are available, nonpermanent materials (e.g., color Polaroid®, blueprints, or AutoCAD®) may be used for documentation. Efforts should be made to transfer the information to a more permanent medium.
- It is advisable to obtain legal and other professional advice when establishing records policies.

Approved by the AIC Board September 2008.

## EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

### Guideline 29

Emergency Situations: Emergency situations can pose serious risks of damage to or loss of cultural property that may warrant immediate intervention on the part of the conservation professional. In an emergency that threatens cultural property, the conservation

professional should take all reasonable action to preserve the cultural property, recognizing that strict adherence to the Guidelines for Practice may not be possible.

## Commentary 29—Emergency Situations

### A. RATIONALE

- In emergency situations, immediate response by a conservation professional may be required to save cultural property. Adherence to certain minimum accepted practices may actually endanger cultural property when resources, working conditions, staffing, time, and/or the normal chain of command are compromised by the urgency of an emergency.

### B. MINIMUM ACCEPTED PRACTICE

- Conservation professionals working within an institution must be familiar with any existing preparedness and response plans.
- The conservation professional must be an advocate for the creation and updating of emergency preparedness and response plans to protect cultural property.
- In taking action to preserve cultural property, the first concern of the conservation professional must always be the safety of human life.
- The Code of Ethics, clause IV directs conservation professionals to practice within their area of competence and education. In an emergency, conservation professionals must recognize that they may bring important general knowledge to the situation, even when working outside their field of specialization.
- In emergency situations, the conservation professional must abide by the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice as modified in the Special Practices, section D of Commentaries 4a, 4c, 4d, 5, 6, 7, 8, 22, 24, 25, 26, and 27.
- In performing triage during an emergency situation, the conservation professional must be especially mindful of the importance of working with available allied professionals to make decisions.
- Following an emergency situation the conservation professional must prepare a report documenting the situation, all decisions made, and actions taken to preserve cultural property.

### C. RECOMMENDED PRACTICE

- Because emergencies can become disasters through improper planning or training, the conservation professional should be familiar with the literature on emergency situations and gain knowledge and experience through activities such as training workshops.
- In institutions, conservation professionals should take an active role in the preparation of emergency preparedness plans.

Approved by the AIC Board of Directors, May 2001

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