



Emerging  
Conservation  
Professionals  
Network

Each month, ECPN is proud to introduce one of our amazing Specialty Group Liaisons. Specialty Group Liaisons are volunteers who serve as an intermediary between emerging conservation professionals who are interested in or part of the specialty group they represent. To learn more about ECPN liaisons contact the ECPN Outreach Officers at [ecpn.aic.outreach@gmail.com](mailto:ecpn.aic.outreach@gmail.com) or visit [ECPN's website](#).

For May liaison highlight, we would like to introduce our Textiles Specialty Group (TSG) liaison, Kaelyn Garcia. Kaelyn graduated with an MA from the Fashion Institute of Technology's program, Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, and Museum Practice with a concentration in conservation in 2018. She is currently completing a postgraduate fellowship with the Costumes and Textiles conservation department at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Photo (right): Kaelyn Garcia completing a suction cleaning treatment on a 1954 debutante dress as a post-graduate fellow at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



**1. Of all the specializations, why did you decide to pursue wooden artifact conservation?**

I chose to study textile conservation because I have always been interested in costume and textile history. I studied fashion design and art history as an undergraduate student and continued to work as a designer and instructor after receiving my degree. Textile conservation allowed me to combine all my interests and hand skills into one discipline.

**2. Are there any particular skills that you feel are important or unique to your discipline?**

A strong knowledge of material structures, fiber identification, and hand skills are very important if you want to pursue textile or fashion conservation. I have also found my prior experience working with garment construction, pattern-making, and draping to be very useful when

preparing examination and treatment reports. I think exposing yourself to as many different techniques (even if it's just a basic entry-level class) like weaving, embroidery, lace, sewing, printing, dying, and garment construction can be extremely helpful before entering a conservation program if you have an interest in textile conservation. It's also important to know about the history of fashion and textiles to get acquainted with various styles, production techniques, and designers.

### **3. What has been your favorite treatment within your specialty?**

Wow, this is a tough question. During my last semester, I decided to take on an upholstery treatment as my term project. I had no previous experience with upholstery conservation and it was very challenging and different from other treatments I completed. Under the supervision of my advisor, Deborah Trupin, I stabilized the metal spring structure of the under upholstery. The primary purpose of this treatment was to stabilize and support the under upholstery (base cloth and springs) and prepare the seat, back, and arm pads for a new show cover.

The treatment involved many steps, the most challenging of which I'll describe. Partially attached materials were removed and documented before other layers were considered including loose upholstery tacks, webbing, and two layers of dust covers that were attached to the bottom of the seat rail below the springs. The original wooden frame was too unstable due to previous holes from three different show covers, and a wood sub frame was constructed and added for support. Support fabric was inserted under the springs to provide a support layer to the burlap material where loose filling was exposed. The springs were untangled and placed in their original positions. Using a buttonhole stitch as a support anchor, each spring was positioned and secured by three stitches at the base of each spring. The edges of the support fabric were aligned using a micro spatula along the wood frame and tacked in place to prevent any movement.

The springs were then tensioned using releasable Nylon cable ties. After each spring was compressed to the same height, a piece of Coroplast was cut and tied to secure the springs in position while the chair was turned over. This step was done to check that the springs were tensioned evenly and to ensure the profile of the seat was correct before applying the webbing. The Coroplast was removed afterwards.

Next, the polyester webbing was tensioned using a webbing stretcher and attached to the support frame with tacks. Three buttonhole stitches were sewn through each spring and corresponding strip to ensure the springs stay in their correct position and support the seat.

This treatment was very challenging and overall an incredibly rewarding experience. Working with upholstered objects pushed me to learn new skills that I don't often use as a textile or fashion conservator, such as wood working. I enjoyed learning about furniture and how upholstery is constructed and applied to objects- it was a really fun treatment!



*Under seat of upholstered armchair before treatment.*



*The under upholstery after the webbing was completed before the tacking stitches were applied.*

**4. Do you have any advice for someone interested in specializing in your discipline?**

Try to seek out opportunities where you can learn practical skills in addition to pre-program internships. Exposing yourself to as many skills as possible either through a class, workshop, or apprentice opportunity will be extremely beneficial when working with costume or textiles. Also, don't hesitate to reach out to conservators who are working within your area of specialization to learn more about what they do and any advice they may have.