

DOCUMENTATION WORKING GROUP

ICOM
international council
of museums – committee
for conservation

ICOM-CC



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ICOM-CC DOCUMENTATION WORKING GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Layout and Design: Aija Pince

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Cover picture:

Detail of ***Fern Blossom****, 1984
Wool, hand-woven tapestry
by Oleksandr Sayenko and Nina Sayenko.
Currently on exhibition at Khanenko Museum,
Kyiv, Ukraine.

* It is believed that ferns bloom on
Midsummer night. In Ukrainian folklore
finding fern blossom may bring good luck and
even magic powers

©Nina Sayenko.

NOTE FROM THE COORDINATOR

Dear Members, Friends, and Colleagues,

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of the 2023-2026 triennium for the ICOM-CC Documentation Working Group. As the new Working Group Coordinator, it is my pleasure to address you and share our plans for the upcoming years.

First and foremost, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Anil Dwivedi, our former Coordinator, whose dedicated leadership and resilience helped steer our group. I also want to acknowledge the previous team of Assistant Coordinators for their valuable contributions and support. I am deeply committed to continuing our efforts and advancing the group's objectives.

Our agenda for the 2023-2026 triennium focuses on three key objectives, which are further discussed in the newsletter. The newsletter also involves articles from members, which highlights the requirement of digitisation, digital documentation, and the importance of heritage documentation and awareness.

In the coming months, we will focus on enhancing our communication with the group members by organising seminars, online sessions and lectures. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm. I look forward to collaborating with all of you to advance our field and make meaningful contributions to the conservation community.



Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aditi Nagar". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'A'.

Aditi Nagar

Coordinator, ICOM-CC Documentation Working Group

THE DOCUMENTATION WORKING GROUP

The Documentation Working Group focuses on the critical task of documenting tangible cultural heritage for conservation. The group aims to enhance the documentation of cultural heritage through the use of advanced and emerging technologies. These technologies not only create new ways of documenting, but can also enhance existing documentary archives. The principal areas of activity are in the fields of 2D and 3D digital imaging, and in the field of semantics and data interoperability. Three main objectives are essentially: to develop and promote digital technology for documenting artifacts for conservation; to foster co-operation, system interoperability and the free exchange of data between institutions; and to promote the development and use of new or advanced techniques in imaging (multispectral imaging/HDR/3D scanning, etc.).

We invite you to check for the programme, to follow us through our website using the QR code.



THE TEAM

Aija Héloïse Pince - Latvia

My museum career spanned some twenty years with the al-Sabah Collection of Islamic Art/Kuwait National Museum, largely with, though not confined to, exhibition design and preparing or publications for print including English language editing. These roles suited me as I had arrived at Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah through a previous career in advertising design and the media in Kuwait and consultant to the Sultanate of Oman's state newspaper and time as project manager for the 50/20 project at the British Embassy, Kuwait.



In semi-retirement, having followed Stephanie de Roemer's recommendation that Conservation Conferences were the most fun – she was 100% correct - I currently serve on the editorial board of ICOM-CC, producing *On Board* as well as pursuing EXARC and Support Ukraine Network initiatives on my personal account as well as through the above organisations.

Through my experience of the museum, diplomatic world and inter-government liaison I am a strong advocate of international networking for the benefit of culture.

I am reasonably well travelled, largely throughout Europe including Ukraine recently for the purpose of documentation and much of the Middle-East/Arab world.

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Anil Dwivedi - India

I am Anil Dwivedi, and I am excited to introduce myself as the Assistant Coordinator of the ICOM-CC Documentation Working Group. I completed my Master's in Conservation of Works of Arts from the Indian Institute of Heritage, NOIDA, formerly known as the National Museum Institute, New Delhi. I was honoured to receive the Mellon Foundation Fellowship, which allowed me to work for six months at Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg (SRAL) in The Netherlands, focusing on the conservation of paintings and painted objects.



I have been actively involved in the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and had the privilege of serving as the Coordinator of the ICOM-CC Documentation Working Group for two triennia (2017-2020, and 2020-2023).

My career has provided me with various opportunities to visit conservation laboratories and institutions across Europe, Asia, and the USA. I currently teach the Post Graduate Diploma Course in Preventive Conservation at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and am also an adjunct faculty member at the Indian Institute of Heritage. Additionally, I am involved with the ICCROM Reorganisation of Museum Project, where I impart training in India.

I have worked with several renowned institutions in India and abroad, including a decade-long tenure at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. Presently, I serve as the Senior Manager (Corporate Archives and Museum) at Dharampal Satyapal Group Headquarters, NOIDA.

I look forward to contributing to the ICOM-CC Documentation Working Group and collaborating with all of you.

Antareen Talukdar - India

I am an Art Conservator working as a Laboratory Chemist at the Directorate of Museums under the Indigenous and Tribal Faith and Culture Department, Government of Assam, India. My responsibilities include conserving collections of the Assam State Museum and various district and sub-divisional museums under the Directorate of Museums, Assam. I hold a post-graduate degree in Art Conservation from the National Museum Institute of History of Arts, Conservation and Museology, New Delhi and a Post Graduate Diploma in Preventive Conservation from the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi. I believe that documentation plays a crucial role in ethical conservation decision making and conserving the significance of tangible cultural heritage. I would like to work further through the platform of the Documentation Working Group of ICOM-CC to develop glossaries of terminologies for community-based conservation practices with the goal of raising awareness and disseminating information.



Christine Mueller-Radloff - Germany

I have spent my career working in the restoration and conservation of ethnographic textiles, as well as objects that combine textiles with other materials from cultures around the world. My academic journey began at the Technical University of Dresden, where, between 1977 and 1982, I completed my graduate studies in engineering with a focus on fiber determination and the techniques used in processing and decorating archaeological textile finds from South America. Later, from 2000 to 2003, I pursued postgraduate studies in restoration and conservation at the Distance University of Hagen, Germany.



Since 1982, I've worked as a textile researcher and conservator at the Ethnographic Museums of Leipzig and Dresden. I've been a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) since 1990 and have served as an Assistant Coordinator for the ICOM-CC Textile Working Group in past years. In 2024, I transitioned to the role of Assistant Coordinator for the ICOM-CC Documentation Working Group.

Throughout my career, I have actively participated in textile workshops in places like Peru and Azerbaijan, as well as ICOM conferences. I've also contributed to the field through various publications and lectures on the use of textiles in museums.

Nathael Cano - Mexico

I hold a PhD in Art History from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), along with a Master's degree in Museology from the Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía (INAH). I also completed a Master's in Art History from UNAM and earned my Bachelor's degree in Restoration from the Escuela de Conservación y Restauración de Occidente (ENCRyM-INAH).



Throughout my career, I have conducted research and training in heritage science through various prestigious programs and labs. This includes the Integrating Platforms for the European Research Infrastructure ON Heritage Science program, the National Laboratory of Sciences for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage at UNAM's Institute of Physics, the Art Diagnostics Lab at the Institute of Aesthetic Research (UNAM), and the Laboratory for Taxonomy and Technology of Wood at Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa.

I have specialised in collection management, technical art history, and the preservation of paintings and contemporary art. I have

developed research, publications, and projects for the restoration of paintings and archaeology collections from the 15th to 21st centuries, as well as advised bachelor's and master's theses. I obtained the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Miguel Covarrubias National Award. I have been an academic at the Seminar in Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art (ENCyM-INAH), an art conservator at Museo Nacional de Arte, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, the head of conservation at the Basilica of Guadalupe Museum, and a conservator-restorer at the National Coordination for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage (Coordinación Nacional de Conservación del Patrimonio Cultural, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia), among others. I am also the head of the seminar on panel painting conservation and collections management.

Aditi Nagar - India

I currently work as a conservation scientist at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in New Delhi. With a robust background as a chemist, art conservator, and researcher, I have cultivated a deep-seated passion for heritage, culture, and traditions since childhood. This intrinsic interest has guided me toward a career that harmoniously blends scientific expertise with cultural preservation. I am currently posted in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India, where I am working for the conservation of the historic Lal Bagh Palace. My work involves documentation, planning, thorough research, and the execution of conservation projects, utilising scientific techniques and analysis to develop informed conservation methodologies.

As the Coordinator of the ICOM-CC Documentation Working Group, I aim to strengthen collaboration among conservation professionals by fostering knowledge exchange and promoting the development of innovative documentation practices. I am committed to facilitating workshops and seminars that empower members with the latest research and methodologies, enhancing the role of documentation in the conservation field.



TRIENNIAL PROGRAMME 2023-2026

Consolidating documentation procedures for cultural heritage

Conservators utilise several techniques for documenting objects and conservation treatments. We aim to compile this information to serve as a reference for group members.

Standardisation of terms used in conservation documentation

Conversations about creating a unified terminology for conservation documentation are happening globally. While it's a long-term plan, we are determined to begin taking steps toward achieving it. Feedback is welcome as well as translations in other languages. We note that ICOM official languages include French and Spanish, however, on a practical level for working purposes, many conservators work internationally and one must acknowledge many terms originate from outside the three official languages that ICOM conducts its business.

Enhancing the role of documentation techniques as a tool for investigation and examination

We aim to present a variety of documentation techniques to group members and conservation professionals through informative lectures, seminars, and workshops.

ENIGMATIC WATER SYSTEM OF HARYANA

SURUCHIKA CHAWLA AND VINIT BHANWALA

Rivers and water sources have been crucial to the growth and sustainability of civilizations throughout history. The State of Haryana in India is a testament to this, showcasing a wealth of water retention structures that have supported its people for centuries. These structures, ranging from ancient wells and *baolis* (stepwells) to colonial-era reservoirs, highlight the region's rich cultural heritage and its innovative approaches to water conservation.

Haryana, derived from the term 'Hariyanka' mentioned in historical inscriptions, signifies a land abundant in greenery and vegetation. This abundance is deeply connected to the region's water management systems, which have been integral to its development and prosperity. The archaeological finds in places like Pinjore, Panchkula, and the broader region of Haryana reveal a fascinating history of water architecture, with remnants dating back to prehistoric times.



Pinjore, in particular, stands out for its Bhima Devi Temple Complex and its Baoli, reflecting the sophisticated water management practices of the past. The Bhima Devi Temple, with its roots in the Gurjara-Pratihara period, and its surrounding structures offer a glimpse into the architectural and religious significance of water bodies in Haryana.

Figure 1: Aerial view of Baoli/Water structure at Pinjore, Panchkula, Haryana, India. Photo: © Author; Suruchika Chawla and Vinit Bhanwala

Throughout the state, from the prehistoric wells of Rakhigarhi to the colonial-era Gladstone Reservoir in Ambala, Haryana's water structures have served various purposes, from religious ceremonies to trade and daily sustenance. These heritage sites not only highlight the historical ingenuity in water conservation but also underscore the ongoing efforts to preserve these marvels.

Documenting these structures is crucial from a conservation perspective. Detailed records help in understanding the original construction techniques, materials used, and the historical context of these sites. This knowledge is essential for accurate restoration and maintenance, ensuring that the structures remain true to their original form. Furthermore, documentation aids in raising public

awareness about the significance of these heritage sites, fostering a sense of pride and responsibility towards their preservation.

Despite many structures lying in neglect, restoration and awareness initiatives are underway to protect and promote Haryana's water heritage. Efforts by individuals like Mr. Vinit Bhanwala, who actively documents and raises awareness about these sites, are crucial in ensuring that these symbols of cultural heritage and identity continue to inspire and benefit future generations.

In conclusion, Haryana's water structures are more than just remnants of the past; they are vital to understanding the region's history and its relationship with nature. As efforts to restore and conserve these sites continue, they remain powerful symbols of Haryana's enduring legacy and its commitment to sustainable water management. Through meticulous documentation, these structures can be preserved for future generations to appreciate and learn from, ensuring that their historical and cultural significance is not lost to time.



Figure 2: Mr. Vinit Bhanwala, Consultant with Department of Archaeology and Museums, Haryana describing significant Heritage aspects of Baoli/ Water structures at Pinjore, Bhima Devi Temple Site and Museum, to a school group who participated in a Heritage awareness event conducted by authors on site in May 2024. 18th May 2024 on the occasion of International Museum Day. Photo: © Author; Suruchika Chawla and Vinit Bhanwala

CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT - FROM HANDWRITTEN NOTES TO DIGITAL DATABASE

CHRISTINE MUELLER-RADLOFF

**Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden/ Dresden State Art Collections (SKD),
Museum fuer Voelkerkunde/ Museum of Ethnology Dresden, Germany (MVD)**

I began my journey in 1982 as a textile scientist and later as a textile conservator in Leipzig, working closely with ethnologists. This long-standing association has provided me with a unique perspective on the evolution of documentation practices in conservation work at the Leipzig Museum of Ethnology. Over the decades, we have transitioned from handwritten records to sophisticated digital systems, reflecting broader technological advancements and a commitment to preserving cultural heritage.

Handwritten Records to Digital Forms

In the late 20th century, conservation documentation at our museum started with handwritten records detailing the condition of objects and the steps taken during their conservation. These notes were initially recorded in workbooks with corresponding dates and later on index cards. The index cards were subsequently replaced by quick-fill paper forms, archived in special hanging pockets in a register cabinet and organised by inventory number for easy local access.

As technology progressed, our documentation methods evolved to include drawings and photographs of the objects' conditions, initially in analogue and later in digital form. By the early 1990s, we began recording conservation information in a digital Access database, allowing for the automatic generation of reports. This shift marked a significant leap in efficiency and accuracy. We also started taking detailed digital photographs for condition documentation, which were printed and manually inserted into reports. These reports were preserved in both printed form in hanging pockets and in digital folders sorted by inventory numbers.

The Introduction of “Daphne” Database

Post-2000, the routine use of digital photography became integral to documenting conservation work, leading to a rapid increase in the number of photos and necessitating a more systematic archiving approach. This need was addressed by the introduction of the “Daphne” database, a comprehensive digital asset management system developed specifically for the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD), encompassing 15 museums, including the three ethnographic museums in Leipzig, Dresden, and Herrnhut.

“Daphne” was designed to record, store, and systematically manage existing museum information and documents, linking them with findings from other disciplines and preparing them for cross-museum or international cooperation. The database includes various modules for different areas of museum work, with a dedicated conservation module that contains a general section accessible to all and a chronological listing of interventions, incorporating all existing documents.

Integration and Sustainability

The data in “Daphne” forms the foundation for the SKD online collection, which is being developed to be available in multiple languages. Importantly, the conservation module in “Daphne” includes a list of pollutants, detailing harmful substances found in objects, such as insecticides recorded in old inventory books. This information is vital for ensuring the occupational health and safety of museum employees and is shared with other departments to inform them of potential hazards.

Impact on Conservation Research

Good data management has proven crucial for conservation research. For instance, comparing photos of two Chinese general uniforms from our museums in Leipzig and Dresden revealed errors in their presentation that had persisted for over a century, demonstrating that not all historical photographs are reliable. This finding was presented at the ICOM-CC conference in Melbourne in 2014 and documented in the museum database.

Long-term staff have amassed considerable experience in collecting, systematizing, digitizing, and storing object-related knowledge, ensuring that this information is preserved for future generations. Systematic processing of historical documents allows us to verify past decisions and maintain accuracy in our records. This ongoing process of digitization and systematic documentation supports not only current conservation efforts but also future research, enabling project staff and external researchers to access essential data anytime, anywhere.

In summary, conservation data in any form is also a valuable treasure trove of knowledge for museum work. Therefore, this data collect, sort, store and bring into the digital age in order to make it accessible to a wide audience with the help of databases.

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www.robotron-daphne.de/en

<https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum>

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NEWS AND UPDATES

“Documenting is conserving”

The next webinar between ICOM International Committee for Documentation (CIDOC) + ICOM Mexico & Mexican Board of Conservation, ICOM Mx, “To document is to conserve” aims to present best practices about the documentation of collections in museums. During three virtual sessions in Spanish and English, 9 September, 21 October and 11 November, aspects of vocabulary, data management and current information systems for documenting objects and the processes of research and conservation will be addressed.

This series focuses on Ibero-American conservators in order to offer a platform for dialogue, exchange and proposals for documentation for and from the conservation of collections.

New Issue Release: MAP #14 on “Doing Documentation”

We’re excited to announce the release of the 14th edition of the e-journal MAP – Media/Archive/Performance. This special issue focuses on the theme of “Doing Documentation.” Documentation is an increasingly vital field spanning disciplines like performance, theatre, film, music, digital and new media arts, archiving, museology, conservation, curation, and human-computer interaction. Artists, researchers, and cultural organisations are documenting not just the reception and user experiences of artworks, but also their creation processes (even retrospectively) and iterative development over time. This provides crucial context, convergences, and insight into an artwork’s evolution and potential deterioration. Divided into four chapters, this special issue is edited by Annet Dekker and Gabriella Giannachi and explores the complexities of documenting digital art through contributions from Miriam Akkermann, Sasha Arden, Annet Dekker, Katrina Sluis, Gaia Tedone, Olivia Eriksson, Carlijn Juste, James Newman, Bilyana Palankasova, Sarah Cook, Maria Tane, Aga Wielocha, and Wang-Yun Yen.

Access the full issue at <https://perfomap.de/map14/editorial-14> to learn about the recent discourse on documentation’s role in preserving contemporary cultural heritage.

Review of article: Documenting the conservation: space, time and management of professional practices (Cano, 2024)

This article offers a historiography of the paintings documentation practices from Mexican conservation departments in the 20th century and the current opportunities for updating and training.