



WASHINGTON CONSERVATION GUILD NEWSLETTER

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From the Desk of the President

Greetings, members. I hope everyone enjoyed the Holiday party and is looking forward to the New Year!

The 2011-2012 WCG season has gotten off to a great start. Our first three meetings have taken the membership to new venues, given the members an opportunity to learn about new equipment, see new facilities, and find inexpensive homegrown solutions for conservation. The programming lineup for 2012 promises to be equally informative and engaging.

To kick off the new year we have the always anticipated Three Ring Circus where you can find out what some of your colleagues have been doing. Whether you are interested in finding new uses for mobile technology, meeting the challenge of plastics preservation, or investigating artistic technique, the Three Ring Circus will have a ring for you. As always the Three Ring Circus reception will provide an opportunity for you to catch up with your colleagues both professionally and personally. The reception will also give you the chance to meet with and check out the new products and services conservation vendors have available; there will be new and familiar faces at the tables. While you're enjoying the food and drink at the reception, remember to take a moment and thank those vendors, as it is their support that fills your glass and plate.

While thinking about the success of the Guild's meetings thus far, I think it is important to thank all of the Directors who make the meetings possible. The Directors are responsible for scheduling the speaker, arranging the reception, and

cleaning up after the meetings. They shoulder these often daunting responsibilities while juggling all the other demands of life because they believe in the mission of the Guild. So if you are a member and enjoy the speakers and receptions you attend, please take a moment to thank them for their effort. In addition, if you are a member interested in influencing the programming and direction of the Guild, consider becoming a Director.

Happy New Year and see you at the Three Ring Circus,
Hugh Shockey
President, WCG

WCG on Facebook

WCG members are invited to join our new Facebook group! The Washington Conservation Guild now has a Facebook page. Please join for updates on meetings, information, and announcements regarding WCG.



Do you have photographs for the WCG archives?

The WCG archives, held in the Smithsonian Institution Archives, does not have many photographs, so we are appealing to members to provide photographs of people and events from all periods of WCG's history. The archives can accept color and black-and-white prints or digital images. Every photo must have a caption, and ideally every person in the photo will be identified. If you have photographs to submit, please send an email (not the photos!) to: wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org.

RECENT MEETINGS AND EVENTS

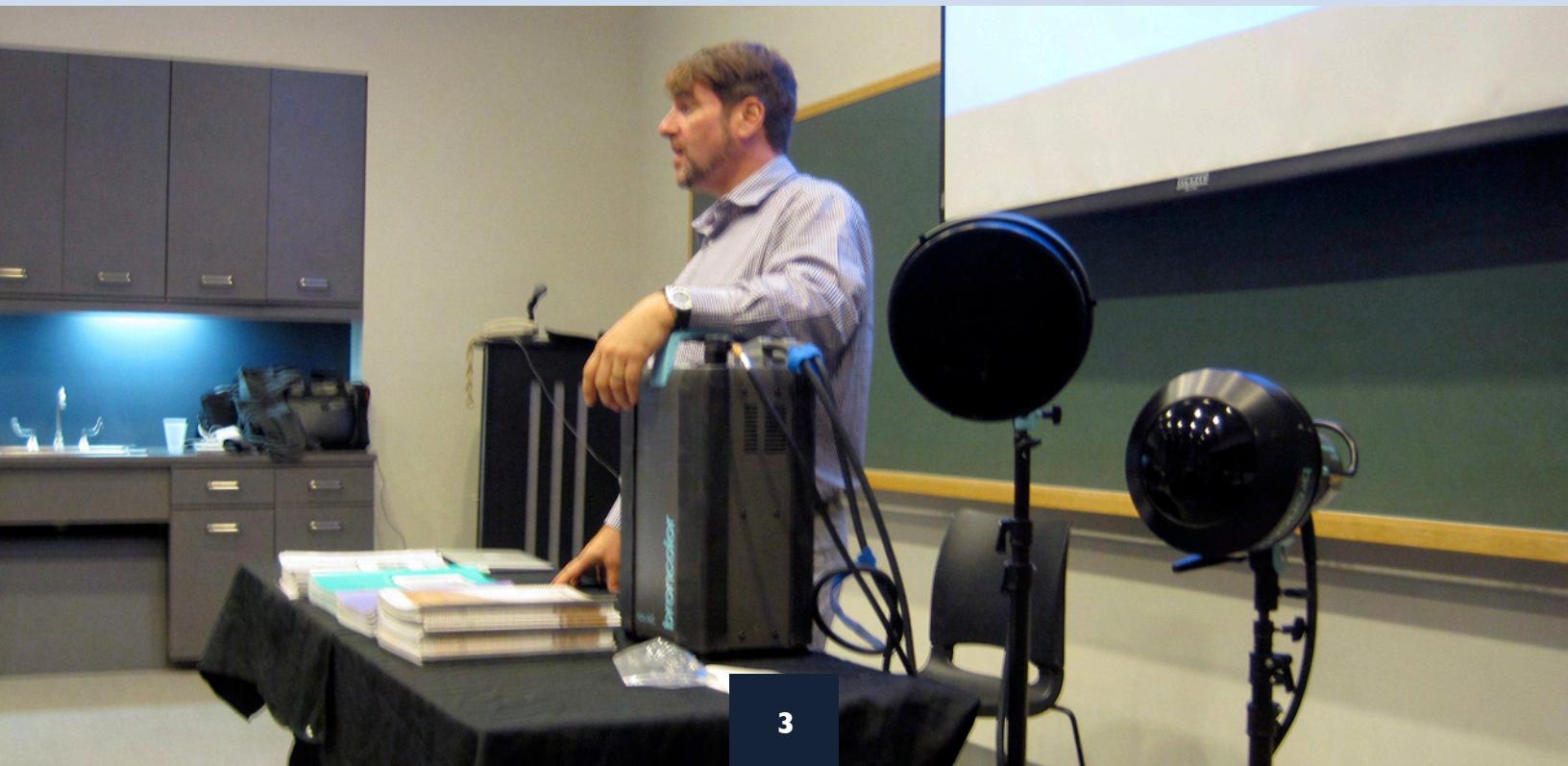
October Meeting

“Why BIG? And What We Do”

Dave McRitchie, East Coast TIC Digital Image Manager

On October 6, 2011, approximately fifty WCG members gathered for the first meeting of the year at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. As the first of two presenters discussing digital imaging in conservation, Dave McRitchie sought to explain what the Bron Imaging Group (BIG) is and how their products can help conservators in the private and public sector. BIG is a thirty-year-old distribution company in the US and Canada for European-made products. Three different brands are sold by the company, and each represents a specific niche of the digital photography market. Broncolor brand is flash light/strobe systems, Sinar is cameras, and Foba offers stands and supports for the above-mentioned equipment. This equipment is handmade in Switzerland above industry standards. This means when the flash is used with a Broncolor system, the lights will not flash until 100% of the light is recycled, with the industry standard requiring only 70%. This differentiation is important as it ensures the same lighting treatment throughout a series of images. This was seen in multiple examples ranging from conservation images to fashion and sports, all captured with BIG equipment. McRitchie brought several Bron products to the meeting for members to see up close. This facilitated a discussion on cost, use, and care of Bron Imaging Group products. The equipment can be interchanged with other non-Bron systems, allowing conservators to buy the Bron system piece by piece rather than needing to invest in lights, cameras, and supports at the same time. Fortunately, service centers for the equipment are easily accessible in California and New Jersey, not just in Europe as has been a concern for some conservators. McRitchie offered to consult with anyone who was interested in the BIG products, as well as reminding that the Bron Imaging Group website (www.bronimaging.com) is an excellent resource for conservators.

Speaker Dave McRitchie



“Conversation for Imaging Competency”

David Mathews, Partner at The Image Collective

David Mathews began his talk by explaining the mission of his company, The Image Collective (www.theimagecollective.org). Their goal is to allow greater access to art through digitization, while also providing support and stability to those seeking to digitize. An important fundamental of Mathews’ talk is knowing what a “bit” is within digital photography. A bit is a collection of pixels within a grid. Simply put, a higher number of bits ensures more information is collected when an image is taken. However, some information, such as color accuracy, surface detail etc., can be lost during this collection process. This is an age-old limitation of all photography, and further investigation of the benefits and limitations of digital photography persist. For example, digital cameras *encode color* in the digitization process. The accuracy of this encoding process is proportionally related to the skills of the photo technician and system design. Digital photography has raised the standard of excellence but also demands greater attention to process control. An object being recorded has a near infinite set of reflected rays of light, and when this information passes through a lens, any misaligned photons to the recording receptor cones result in binary misrepresentation. The recorded digital image will exhibit false information. The quality of a digital image is based upon how much information is gathered, how much skill was employed in capture, and the limits of the system itself. Many conservators desire to take images with the most amount of bits possible to prevent losing information in their image. However, Mathews was careful to note that image quality is much more than the number of bits (resolution) of any given system. Professional digital sensors resolve beyond human vision and can be very useful in discovering very fine detail and nuance. Depending on the object, there is a threshold where a higher bit number becomes unnecessary for general documentation. Ultimately, digital photography provides superior image properties compared to analog photography but also demands numerous decision making options left to the operator.

Digital photography exceeds the limitations of film photography when properly executed. Mathews also reminded the audience that unlike a film photograph, a digital image is a mathematical formula consisting of ones and zeros. The image only becomes accessible as a rendered object following another process such as digital printing or viewing on a monitor. A “digital negative” does not exist as a physical object as does the film photograph. The image and how it is interpreted will forever be tied to how it is created in addition to how it’s rendered.

Mathews continued the talk by saying digital imaging and the digitization of images will remain an important part of the documentation process in conservation. Due to this, he encouraged conservators to pay attention to ten quality issues of digitization and to work to understand various roles and attributes in the image creation process.

1. Image quality does not equal image performance

Do not judge your image effectiveness based on the quality of the contrast, resolution, sharpness, etc. Image processing is subjective from human to human. Humans instinctively respond favorably to strong contrast, so we seek this out in images that we create. Most art objects have subtle tone nuances which can be lost if the tone contrast or color saturation is excessive, even if the digital representation looks more pleasing with higher contrast and saturation.

2. Pixel count does not equal resolution

This adage ties back to the discussion on bits Mathews offered earlier. Just because an image is taken with a



Speaker David Mathews

high number of bits and in turn a high number of pixels, it does not mean that it has the same high optical resolution. Many cameras and scanners produce high numbers of pixels that aren't resolved by the lens or sensor, leading to lower image quality despite high pixel count.

3. Spatial frequency isn't hard to understand.

Mapping image system performance can be quantified. Understanding simple image terminology and performance qualifiers can aid the technical photographer in making good decisions and trade-offs for difficult object documentation. One example presented explained the complexity of textile documentation where fine fabric weave resulted in false image artifacts. Two potential solutions were offered: sample at a greater pixel frequency eliminating artifacts or change camera f-stop to a smaller opening creating lens diffraction. The second approach slightly blurs the image therefore eliminating the image artifact, but it also slightly diminishes the fabric detail. The first example is the superior solution when possible.

4. Visual assessments of spatial artifacts can be very reliable

Careful examination of files at 100% magnification reveals image defects when present. Solutions to image deficiencies should be explored prior to archiving. Interpolation of the color in single shot capture can lead to misrepresentation in certain circumstances

5. Keep your neutrals neutral

Careful attention to setting accurate gray balance using a quality target is 85% of accurate color encoding.

6. Digital cameras do not reproduce colors, they encode color

Standards for colors were set in the late 1990s to early 2000s by the International Color Consortium (ICC). The colors encoded in capture may not be rendered to match the original scene on the monitor or print due to mismatch of rendering profiles for a monitor or digital printer. Proper calibration of display devices is critical to good image proofing.

7. If a little imaging processing is good, more is NOT better

Over-aggressive post-processing can lead to file degradation. Examples of over-processing are de-texturization, over-sharpening, over-aggressive color or tone manipulation resulting in pixel “clipping.” When this is done, data is lost within an image and forever changed. The resulting changes are irreversible leading to poor object documentation.

8. Color profiles are only as good as the targets you feed them

Most targets are not accurate with near neutrals, so keep this in mind when taking images. Accurate colors also depend on good lighting source and operator technique. The target suggested for conservation is made by Image Science Associates of Rochester, NY. <http://imagescienceassociates.com/>

9. Capture, but verify

If there are issues within your image file, careful documentation and system quantification will aid future researchers to understand and interpret image information about an object. Make notations of issues in taking the images, and if certain details cannot be reproduced, add to the metadata. Loss of image quality is sometimes due to lighting issues, lens or sensor inferiority, or operator error. Quality target data associated with the file documenting workflow provide valuable future reference. Examples of target verification at the Library of Congress were cited.

10. Be Aware of repeating features

Repeating features found in certain objects include fine lines, textures, reflective surfaces, fabrics, textiles and etchings. These types of objects may exceed a system’s imaging capacity and, in turn, create rendering anomalies most often associated with entry level digital cameras. Higher quality digitization equipment is typically required to accurately document these types of materials.

One additional tip discussed was the control of non-image-forming light (stray light) often referred to as “flare.” Stray light degrades the image and lowers the potentiality of image performance.

While many of these reminders can be intimidating and could make some want to return to the more limited but simple use of film for documenting conservation treatments, this was not the purpose of Mathews’ talk. Rather, the talk was aimed at calling attention to and addressing common misconceptions of using digital photography in conservation. As Mathews said, “Digital is an excellent conveyor of photographic information, albeit a more sophisticated system requiring operator intelligence and knowledge.” If conservators heed Mathews’ advice by ensuring their own knowledge of the digital imaging system, they will be on track to produce as close as possible accurate renderings of the objects in their care.

Blair Bailey
Pre-Program Conservation Intern at the National Portrait Gallery

November Meeting

“Conservation in the University Museum: An Introduction to the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum”

Sanchita Balachandran, Curator/Conservator, The Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum

Sanchita Balachandran led an edifying presentation of the history, goals, responsibilities, and challenges of the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum. The museum opened in 1882, just six years after the founding of the university. The current museum space opened in December 2010 and was built to showcase some of the 9,000 archaeological objects from the ancient Mediterranean and Egypt, as well as the ancient Americas. The collection grew from donations by Hopkins alumni, gifts from the Baltimore chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America, and purchases by Hopkins faculty, all during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A highlight includes a collection of Egyptian objects – the earliest collection to travel the United States – collected and gifted by Colonel Mendes Israel Cohen. The museum has always been used for teaching at Johns Hopkins, with courses such as “The Private Life of the Romans” (taught in 1917) and “Ancient Egyptian Civilization” (taught in 2011) having been offered.

Speaker Sanchita Balachandran



Between 1978 and 1984, selected artifacts from the museum's collection were conserved by the Walters Art Museum for a catalog published by Ellen Reeder Williams in 1984. More recently, between 2007 and 2010, the university oversaw a renovation of Gilman Hall, the building in which the museum is located. During the reinstallation of the museum in its new space in Gilman, four mount makers and three conservators were hired to assist with completing this work.

Among the Archaeological Museum's goals are the preservation of its collection, the maintenance of museum-quality displays and exhibitions, and the accessibility of the collection for teaching. Currently, the museum displays a little over 1000 objects, which is ten percent of its collection, and a total of twenty-three courses have been taught in the museum since it opened in December 2010. Balachandran illustrated how teaching provides a conservator with both challenges and possibilities. It presents some complications as it can be difficult to create lesson plans, and minimal time at the bench can be disappointing. However, offering courses at the museum is opportune because it excites students about ways in which to study the past and also builds skills such as object handling and examination. These opportunities are particularly exceptional for undergraduates, who may not be exposed to such coursework in many institutions, and for those who do not normally work with museum collections.

Students taking classes at the museum are often inspired by what Balachandran alludes to as the "ah-hah" moment of figuring out what something really is. Such was the case of a fragment of a Middle Eastern Syriac incantation bowl dated to Late Antiquity. The piece was used in an Advanced Aramaic graduate course, in which students were asked to identify the unfamiliar language of the inscription. Students have also been involved in doing research that ranges from looking at interdisciplinary ways in which to understand the authenticity of Tanagra figurines to identifying the metal alloy of an ancient Roman lead curse tablet.

Balachandran also noted that the museum is working to expand the role of the "traditional" conservator. Some of her key points included: assessing risks and potential gains of allowing access to museum collections, relying on our conservation colleagues as well as collaborating beyond our usual networks, formalizing our work through teaching, research, and publications, and finally, being humble about what we do and do not know and enjoying the process of learning. Balachandran and the Archaeological Museum are undoubtedly making an effort to implement these concepts as well as to engage the public. This past October, the museum used Halloween to its advantage by inviting the public to the unveiling of a recently conserved Roman curse tablet. This brought a wide range of students, faculty, and staff from departments as diverse as Art History, Mathematics, Materials Science, and Computer Science. Such events that engage the public are personally and professionally rewarding and, as Balachandran maintains, are part of our ethical and professional responsibilities.

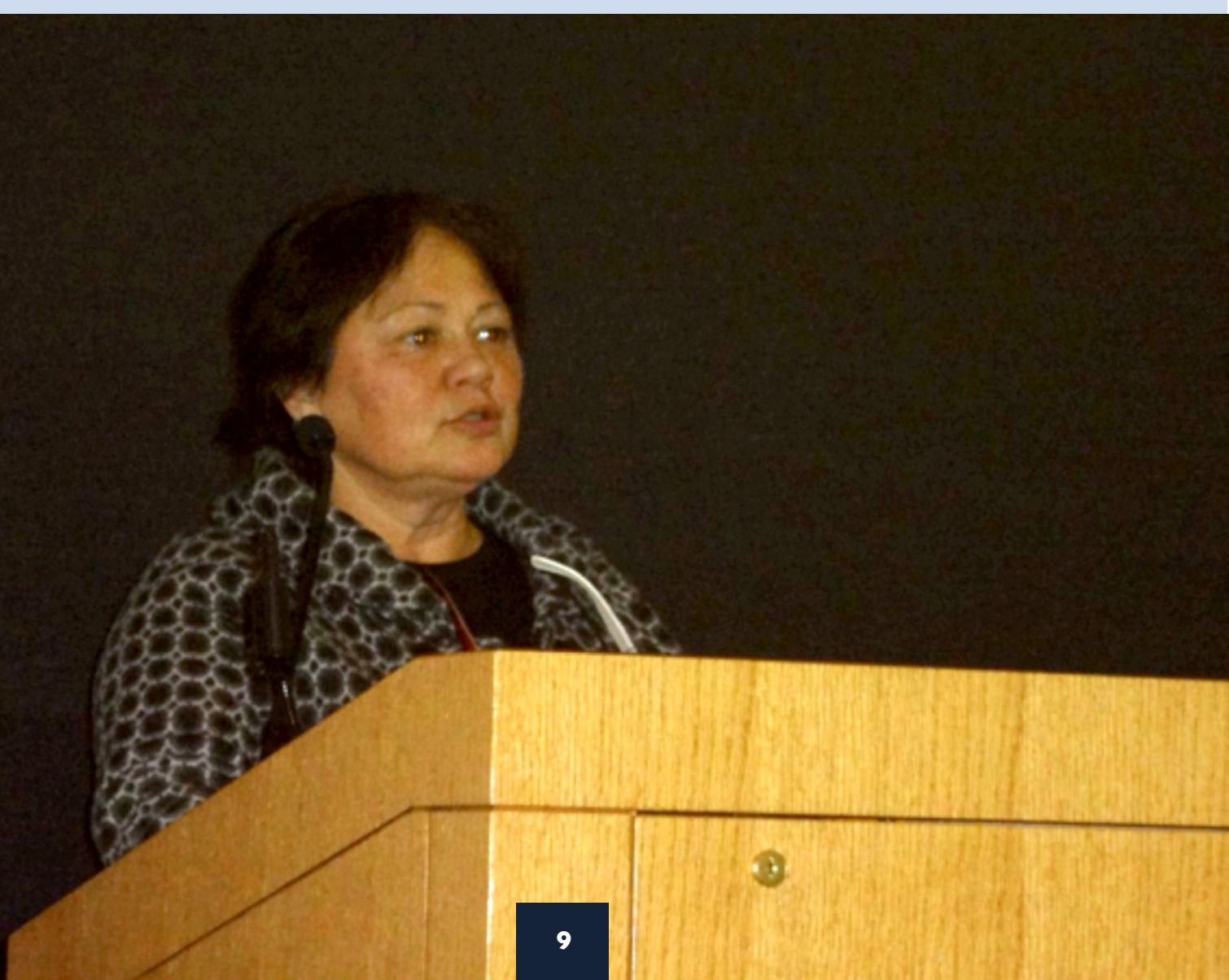
"Heritage Science for Conservation: A New Model in Book and Paper Conservation and Science"
Sonja Jordan-Mowery, Joseph Ruzicka and Marie Ruzicka Feldmann Associate Director for
Conservation and Preservation PI, Heritage Science for Conservation, The Johns Hopkins University
Sheridan Libraries

The second presentation of the evening also involved conservation at the Johns Hopkins University. Sonja Jordan-Mowery is the director of library preservation at the university's Sheridan Libraries, where, unlike museums, the purpose is to preserve objects for use. The department typically encounters problems such as damaged leather, ripped book spines, and the general degradation of books.

Jordan-Mowery began her presentation with a brief history of the achievements of the department known as Library Book Restoration in the 1970s. (Restorers became known as book conservators in 1983.) In 2006, three years after Jordan-Mowery's arrival at the university, Johns Hopkins reinstated an internship and fellowship program. Two years later, the department received funding through the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for a two-day workshop that convened a conference of internationally acclaimed conservators and applied research scientists. During these two days, participants discussed imperative book- and paper-related concerns in library and archival collections in the United States. At its conclusion, they identified ways in which the Sheridan Libraries could move towards developing research partnerships with various institutions, establishing communication models for scholarly publication, and building a Conservation Science Research Center at Johns Hopkins to provide resources for conservators throughout the country.

The university subsequently received a grant from the Mellon Foundation for a two-and-a-half year pilot project as a follow-up workshop to the conference. This funded two rounds of post-doctoral fellowships that included interactions with skilled and innovative conservators. Known as Heritage Science for Conservation (HSC), the project aims to regulate the increasing need for interdisciplinary research collaborations of paper-based materials in libraries, archives, and cultural heritage organizations and to bring science into the conservation lab. As

Speaker Sonja Jordan-Mowery



the logo illustrates, the program intends to build bridges between the disciplines of materials science, libraries, chemistry, archives, applied physics, conservation, and engineering. Its research agenda includes treatment development, characterization of natural and synthetic materials, testing and aging studies, research communication models, specifications and standards, and environmental issues. The university's efforts have ranged from course integration with local papermaking students at the Maryland Institute College of Art and, on a more global level, to presenting in Korea in 2010 at the Conservation Challenges & Techniques for Book and Paper Collections.

Earlier this year, the Sheridan Libraries received yet another grant, this time for \$1.054 million, from the Mellon Foundation to renew the HSC project. This five-year grant will be used to create a new research agenda, build new laboratory facilities in the Brody Learning Commons, and fund new positions such as a senior book conservator. It will also support a new group of post-doctoral fellows with flexible two- to five-year terms and will sustain ongoing and new collaborations with organizations such as the Whiting School's Department of Materials Science, the Canadian Conservation Institute, and the Johns Hopkins Museum. Additionally, the implementation of a new HSC portal will help in connecting research to the conservation community. Upcoming research topics within the department include paper strengthening (which will be presented at a symposium in early 2012) and copper-corrosion studies.

Brittney Shaked
Pre-Program Intern
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute

Holiday Party





PEOPLE

Robert Muller Organ

Former Chief of the Conservation Analytical Laboratory (CAL) of the Smithsonian Institute

Robert M. Organ, formerly of Bethesda, MD, passed away on October 11, 2011, at the age of 94 at his home in Tarbert, Argyll, Scotland. Mr. Organ was born in the Midlands, England, and worked at the British Museum in London as an Experimental Officer in the Research Laboratory from 1951 to 1965. In 1965, he took a position as the inaugural Curator of Conservation at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. In 1967, he became the Chief of the Conservation Analytical Laboratory (CAL) at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. He retired from the Smithsonian in 1983, and in 1996 he and his wife “Barbara” Beryl Organ returned to the UK and settled in Tarbert, Scotland.

Mr. Organ was noted for his many contributions to the world of conservation of antiquities, specifically the conservation of metals. One of the most noted objects treated by Mr. Organ was the famous Ardagh Chalice – an eighth-century Celtic silver and gold vessel, a treasure of Ireland. He was the Vice President of ICOM-CC (International Council of Museums) from 1981 to 1984. In 2005, he was awarded the ICOM-CC medal for his “outstanding achievements as one of the great pioneers in scientific conservation.” He was an Honorary Fellow of the Washington Conservation Guild and the author of numerous lectures, articles, and publications on the conservation of antiquities. He authored the book “Design for Scientific Conservation of Antiquities,” published in 1968.

Mr. Organ is survived by his wife of 67 years, “Barbara” Beryl Organ of Tarbert, Scotland, and

a brother Arthur Organ of Tarbert, Scotland, and his wife, Jean. He is also survived by a daughter, Hilary Harris of Frederick, MD, and a son, Martin Organ of Toronto, Canada. Also surviving are two grandchildren: Glenn Harris of Bristol, TN, and his wife Tracy; and Melinda Bauerlien of Westminster, MD, and her husband Tim; and six great grandchildren: Ashlie Harris of Libertytown, MD; Samantha, Tabatha, and Thomas Harris of Bristol, TN; and twins Emery and Travis Bauerlien of Westminster, MD. He is also survived by nieces, nephews and many friends.

Funeral services were held on October 24, 2011, in Scotland.

Hilary Harris

Upcoming WCG Meetings 2012

Monthly meetings for the 2011/2012 season begin in October 2011 and run through May 2012. The meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Most meetings begin at 5 p.m. with a reception, followed by the guest speaker's presentation. Please check individual meeting announcements for exact times and locations.

Thursday, January 5, 2012

3-Ring Circus (three concurrent sessions)

Location: S. Dillon Ripley Center, Smithsonian Institution, 1100 Jefferson Dr. SW, Washington, DC 20560

Thursday, February 2, 2012

Tour the Georgetown branch of the DC public library and hear from library staff about recovery from the fire

Location: Georgetown Branch DC Public Library, 3260 R St. NW, Washington, DC 20007

Thursday, March 1, 2012

Location and topic: To be announced

Wednesday, April 12, 2012

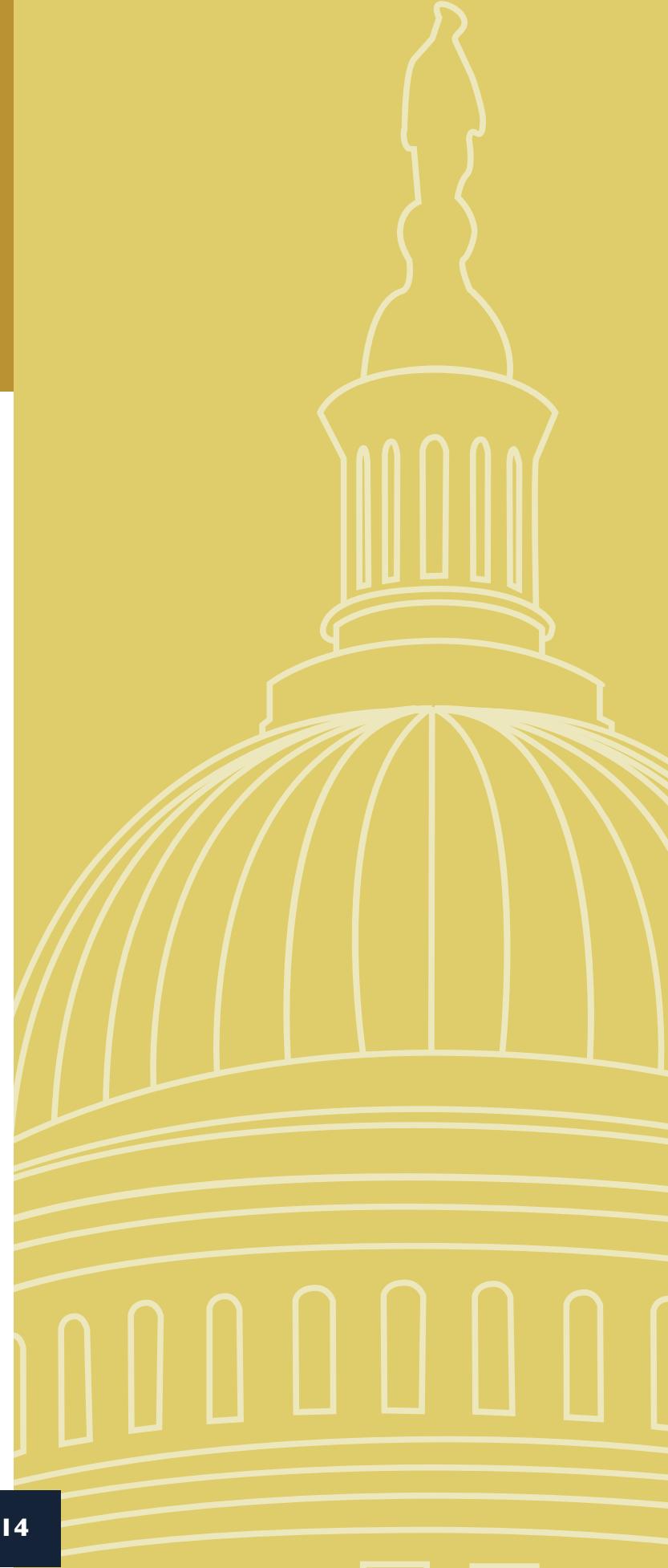
Speaker: To be announced

Location: The Phillips Collection, 1600 21st St. NW, Washington, DC 20009

Thursday, May 3, 2012

Annual Business Meeting and Raffle

Location: (IBEW) International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 900 Seventh St. NW, Washington, DC 20001



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Report from DC: American Friends of Turkey Hosted Lecture on the Sixty-Five Years of Perge Excavations

The American Friends of Turkey hosted a fascinating lecture and exhibit about the excavations in Perge, Turkey, in the elegant circa 1909 Turkish Residence in Washington, DC. The Embassy hosted a reception with delicious Turkish food, followed by the lecture. Incidentally, the ballroom of the Residence is famous for its post-Ottoman embroidered and appliquéd silk wall coverings. From 2003-2008, I cleaned, restored, and then reinstalled these elegant turn of the century red and gold textiles. They create a spectacular backdrop for any function.

Celebrating sixty-five continuous years of archeological research, Istanbul University is touring a lecture series and photographic exhibit celebrating the fabled city of Perge, A UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was also a celebration of an important recent repatriation. Dr. Inci Delemen, a long-time archeologist on the project, gave a sweeping and colorful history of the sixty-five years of discoveries and history of this ancient site. Using both aerial views and close-ups of specific structures, Dr. Delemen drew us into the once vast and robust Roman city.

Perge, located close to the Mediterranean coast near the city of Antalya, was the capital of ancient Pamphylia. It grew from the prehistoric era into a thriving Roman city. For centuries, Perge was a thriving, walled metropolis with an extravagant water canal system, roads, agora, mosaic encrusted baths, gymnasium, theatre, and the best preserved stadium in Asia Minor. It is a remarkable case study for Hellenistic, Imperial Roman and Late Roman history. Perge had eight significant benefactors who kept expanding the city and



Ballroom of the Turkish Residence, Washington, DC

developing a sophisticated urban plan. One of these benevolent priestesses was Plancia Magna, hailed as the daughter of the city. Her statue is simply beautiful.

Istanbul University has embarked on a project to resurrect the columns within the city. Each column is “adopted” by a patron, contributing the funds to revive the colonnaded streets. The Theatre, which is in excellent condition, contains life-size colossi statues and mythological reliefs of Dionysus making offerings to Tyche of Perge. Throughout Perge, Istanbul University has unearthed and preserved a vast number of imperial portraits and marble statues. One of the most realistic was a bearded, curly haired youth, Lucius Verus.

Another find from Perge is the Heracles Farnese or “Weary Heracles.” Known to many who study and follow “orphaned” antiquities, the bottom half of Heracles lives in the Antalya Museum. His top half had migrated to the US and was owned by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. In the 1990s the Turkish authorities set out to prove that the upper body in Boston

belonged to the Perge statue. The negotiations for repatriation took over ten years. In September 2011, the Boston half of Heracles returned to meet his other half and be reunited in the Antalya Museum. This recent repatriation is a focal part of the lecture and exhibit tour of the Perge project.

The next chapter will highlight the restoration project of the Ottoman style wall textiles at the Turkish Residence.

Dr. Delemen will tour and lecture in Boston, Connecticut, Philadelphia, and Charlottesville, VA. For more information, contact American Friends of Turkey or email them at info@afot.us

By Julia M. Brennan
www.caringfortextiles.com

Ms. Brennan graduated in 2009 from ARCA's Masters Certificate Program in International Art Crime Studies.



Post of Heracles

MEMBERSHIP

WCG dues are \$30 per year, \$20 for students and interns, payable to the Washington Conservation Guild or WCG.

The membership year runs from July 1 through June 30. Membership forms can be requested by mail from the Membership Secretary at PO Box 23364, Washington, DC 20026 or can be filled out and submitted on our website. Changes of address or telephone numbers, corrections to the directory, and dues payments should be sent to the Membership Secretary at the address listed above or to: wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org



The membership schedule is as follows:

- April: Membership renewal notice mailed
- July 1: Beginning of membership year
- September 15: Deadline for membership renewals

Disclaimer: The Washington Conservation Guild (WCG) does not recommend particular individuals, businesses, products, services, or conservation treatments. WCG's Newsletter and website are simply vehicles for presenting information from various sources. The publication of such information in either medium should not be construed as an endorsement of it by WCG. All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of WCG, its Board of Directors, or membership.

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2011/2012

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WCG Newsletter is printed quarterly (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer). Items for inclusion in the WCG Newsletter should be directed to:

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Email submissions are preferred. Please note that articles should be sent at least two weeks before publication. The editor reserves the right to edit copy to fit available space.

Next issue: Spring 2012

Deadline for submissions: February 15, 2012