

ECCO PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES (I):

THE PROFESSION

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly (Brussels 1 March 2002)

Preamble

The objects, buildings and environments to which society attributes particular aesthetic, artistic, documentary, environmental, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual values are commonly designated 'Cultural Heritage' and constitute a material and cultural patrimony to be passed on to coming generations.

Since it is entrusted to the care of the Conservator-Restorer by society, s/he has a responsibility not only to the cultural heritage itself, but also to the owner or legal guardian, the originator or creator, the public, and to posterity. The following conditions serve to safeguard all cultural heritage regardless of its owner, age, state of completeness or value.

I. Definition of the Conservator-Restorer

The Conservator-Restorer is a professional who has the training, knowledge, skills, experience and understanding to act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future, and according to the considerations outlined below.

The fundamental role of the Conservator-Restorer is the preservation of cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservator-Restorer contributes to the perception, appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage in respect of its environmental context and its significance and physical properties.

The Conservator-Restorer undertakes responsibility for, and carries out strategic planning; diagnostic examination; the drawing up of conservation plans and treatment proposals; preventive conservation; conservation-restoration treatments and documentation of observations and any interventions.

- Diagnostic examination consists of the identification, the determination of the composition and the assessment of the condition of cultural heritage; the identification, nature and extent of alterations; the evaluation of the causes of deterioration and the determination of the type and extent of treatment needed. It includes the study of relevant existing information.
- Preventive Conservation consists of indirect action to retard deterioration and prevent damage by creating conditions optimal for the preservation of cultural heritage as far as is compatible with its social use. Preventive conservation also encompasses correct handling, transport, use, storage and display. It may also involve issues of the production of facsimiles for the purpose of preserving the original.
- Conservation consists mainly of direct action carried out on cultural heritage with the aim of stabilising condition and retarding further deterioration.
- Restoration consists of direct action carried out on damaged or deteriorated cultural heritage with the aim of facilitating its perception, appreciation and understanding, while respecting as far as possible its aesthetic, historic and physical properties.
- Documentation consists of the accurate pictorial and written record of all procedures carried out, and the rationale behind them. A copy of the report must be submitted to the owner or custodian of the cultural heritage and must remain accessible. Any further requirements for the storage, maintenance, display or access to the cultural property should be specified in this document.

The record remains the intellectual property of the Conservator-Restorer and shall be retained for future reference.

Furthermore, it is within the Conservator-Restorer's competence to:

- develop programmes, projects and surveys in the field of conservation-restoration
- provide advice and technical assistance for the preservation of cultural heritage
- prepare technical reports on cultural heritage (excluding any judgement of its market value)
- conduct research
- develop educational programmes and teach
- disseminate information gained from examination, treatment or research
- promote a deeper understanding of the field of conservation-restoration

II. Education and Training

To maintain the standards of the profession, the Conservator-Restorer's professional education and training shall be at the level of a university Master's degree (or recognised equivalent) in conservation-restoration. The training is further detailed in "[ECCO Professional Guidelines III](#)".

Conservation-Restoration is a complex and rapidly developing field. Therefore, the qualified Conservator-Restorer has a professional responsibility to keep up to date with new findings, and ensure that s/he practices her/his profession in line with current ethical thought. Continuing Professional Development is further detailed in "[ECCO Professional Guidelines II](#)".

III. Distinction from other Related Fields

Conservation-Restoration is distinct from related fields (eg art and crafts) in that its primary aim is the preservation of cultural heritage, as opposed to the creation of new objects or maintaining or repairing objects in a functional sense.

The Conservator-Restorer is distinguished from other professionals by her/his specific education in conservation-restoration.

CODE OF ETHICS

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly, (Brussels 7 March 2003)

I. General Principles for the Application of the Code

Article 1: The Code of Ethics embodies the principles, obligations and behaviour which every Conservator-Restorer belonging to a member organisation of E.C.C.O. should strive for in the practice of the profession.

Article 2: The profession of Conservator-Restorer constitutes an activity of public interest and must be practised in observance of all pertinent national and European laws and agreements, particularly those concerning stolen property.

Article 3: The Conservator-Restorer works directly on cultural heritage and is personally responsible to the owner, to the heritage and to society. The Conservator-Restorer is entitled to practise without hindrance to her/his liberty and independence.

The Conservator-Restorer has the right in all circumstances to refuse any request which s/he believes is contrary to the terms or spirit of this Code.

The Conservator-Restorer has a right to expect that all relevant information regarding a conservation-restoration project (of any size) is given to her/him by the owner or custodian.

Article 4: Failure to observe the principles, obligations and prohibitions of the Code constitutes unprofessional practice and will bring the profession into disrepute. It is the responsibility of each

national professional body to ensure that its members comply with the spirit and letter of the Code, and to take action in the case of proven non-compliance.

II. Obligations towards Cultural Property

Article 5: The Conservator-Restorer shall respect the aesthetic, historic and spiritual significance and the physical integrity of the cultural heritage entrusted to her/his care.

Article 6: The Conservator-Restorer, in collaboration with other professional colleagues involved with cultural heritage, shall take into account the requirements of its social use while preserving the cultural heritage.

Article 7: The Conservator-Restorer must work to the highest standards regardless of any opinion of the market value of the cultural heritage. Although circumstances may limit the extent of a Conservator-Restorer's action, respect for the Code should not be compromised.

Article 8: The Conservator-Restorer should take into account all aspects of preventive conservation before carrying out physical work on the cultural heritage and should limit the treatment to only that which is necessary.

Article 9: The Conservator-Restorer shall strive to use only products, materials and procedures which, according to the current level of knowledge, will not harm the cultural heritage, the environment or people. The action itself and the materials used should not interfere, if at all possible, with any future examination, treatment or analysis. They should also be compatible with the materials of the cultural heritage and be as easily and completely reversible as possible.

Article 10: The conservation-restoration treatment of cultural heritage should be documented in written and pictorial records of the diagnostic examination, any conservation / restoration intervention and other relevant information. The report should also include the names of all those who have carried out the work. A copy of the report must be submitted to the owner or custodian of the cultural heritage and must remain accessible. The record remains the intellectual property of the Conservator-Restorer and shall be retained for future reference.

Article 11: The Conservator-Restorer must undertake only such work as s/he is competent to carry out. The Conservator-Restorer must neither begin nor continue a treatment which is not in the best interest of the cultural heritage.

Article 12: The Conservator-Restorer must strive to enrich her/his knowledge and skills with the constant aim of improving the quality of her/his professional work.

Article 13: Where necessary or appropriate, the Conservator-Restorer shall collaborate with other professionals and shall participate with them in a full exchange of information.

Article 14: In any emergency where cultural heritage is in immediate danger, the Conservator-Restorer - regardless of her/his field of specialisation - shall render all assistance possible.

Article 15: The Conservator-Restorer shall not remove material from cultural heritage unless this is indispensable for its preservation or it substantially interferes with the historic and aesthetic value of the cultural heritage. Materials which are removed should be conserved, if possible, and the procedure fully documented.

Article 16: When the social use of cultural heritage is incompatible with its preservation, the Conservator-Restorer shall discuss with the owner or legal custodian, whether making a reproduction of the object would be an appropriate intermediate solution. The Conservator-Restorer shall recommend proper reproduction procedures in order not to damage the original.

III. Obligations to the Owner or Legal Custodian

Article 17: The Conservator-Restorer should inform the owner fully of any action required and specify the most appropriate means of continued care.

Article 18: The Conservator-Restorer is bound by professional confidentiality. In order to make a reference to an identifiable part of the cultural heritage s/he should obtain the consent of its owner or legal custodian.

Article 19: The Conservator-Restorer should never support the illicit trade in cultural heritage, and must work actively to oppose it. Where legal ownership is in doubt, the Conservator-Restorer must check all the available sources of information before any work is undertaken.

IV. Obligations to Colleagues and the Profession

Article 20: The Conservator-Restorer must maintain a spirit of respect for the integrity and dignity of colleagues, the Conservation-Restoration profession, and related professions and professionals

Article 21: The Conservator-Restorer should, within the limits of her/his knowledge, competence, time and technical means, participate in the training of interns and assistants.

The Conservator-Restorer is responsible for supervising the work entrusted to her/his assistants and interns and has ultimate responsibility for the work undertaken under her/his supervision S/he must maintain a spirit of respect and integrity towards such colleagues.

Article 22: Where work is (in whole or in part) sub-contracted to another Conservator-Restorer, for whatever reason, the owner or custodian must be kept informed. The original Conservator-Restorer is ultimately responsible for the work, unless prior arrangements are made to the contrary.

Article 23: The Conservator-Restorer must contribute to the development of the profession by sharing experience and information.

Article 24 : The Conservator-Restorer shall strive to promote a deeper understanding of the profession and a greater awareness of conservation-restoration among other professions and the public.

Article 25: Records concerning conservation-restoration for which the Conservator-Restorer is responsible are her/his intellectual property (subject to the terms of her/his contract of employment). S/he has the right to be acknowledged as the author of the work.

Article 26: Involvement in the commerce of cultural property is not compatible with the activities of the Conservator-Restorer.

Article 27: When a professional Conservator-Restorer undertakes work that is outside the scope of Conservation-Restoration, s/he must ensure that it does not conflict with this Code.

Article 28: To maintain the dignity and credibility of the profession, the Conservator-Restorer should employ only appropriate and informative forms of publicity in relation to her/his work. Particular care should be exercised in relation to Information Technology (IT) in order to avoid the dissemination of inappropriate, misleading, illegal or unauthorised information.

Acknowledgments

The European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (E.C.C.O.) prepared the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines based on the study of documents of national and international organisations for conservation-restoration and heritage. The "Conservator-Restorer: a definition of the profession" (ICOM-CC, Copenhagen 1984) was the first document adopted by E.C.C.O.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATION IN CONSERVATION-RESTORATION

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly Brussels 1 March 2002. Updated at the General Assembly 7 March 2003

I. The Basic Aims of Education in Conservation-Restoration

Education is to be based on the highest ethical standards of the profession, aimed at respecting the uniqueness of cultural heritage and its aesthetic, artistic, documentary, environmental, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual significance. After a completed education, graduates should be capable of working responsibly in the field of conservation-restoration of cultural heritage, including the more specialised technical, scientific and artistic aspects. They should be able to collaborate with all other professions concerned with the preservation of cultural heritage. Graduates should also be capable of independent research in the field of conservation-restoration and historical technology and techniques. The education is also aimed at developing all other important abilities, as stated in the [ECCO Professional Guidelines I](#) .

II. Level of Education

The minimum level for entry into the profession as a qualified Conservator- Restorer should be at Master's level (or recognised equivalent). This should be achieved by a period of full-time study in conservation-restoration of no less than 5 years at a university (or at a recognised equivalent level) and should include well-structured practical internships. It should be followed by the possibility of study to PhD level.

Both theoretical education and practical training are of high importance, and should be organised in good balance. After successful completion of a final examination the candidate is awarded a degree or diploma. A reference to the specialisms studied should be given.

Depending on national situations, it may also be relevant to assess professional practice to confirm the conservator-restorer's ability to work, ethically and competently in his/her specialism.

III. Practical Training

Practical training must involve the treatment of original objects deemed particularly suitable for didactic purposes. The objects chosen should provide material for a well-documented case study including technical examination, diagnosis and related treatment. From the beginning of their education, such case studies make the students understand every object as a unique case in the most practically oriented way. Furthermore, case studies offer the best possibility to integrate all the theoretical, methodological and ethical aspects of conservation-restoration into the practical training. The study and practice of historical techniques, technology, and the manufacturing processes of related materials are encouraged, as they promote greater understanding of the physical, historical and artistic aspects of cultural heritage.

IV. Theoretical Instruction

A balance between science and the humanities is indispensable for theoretical instruction. The theoretical subjects should be determined by the specialisation in the field of conservation/restoration and should include:

- Ethical principles of conservation-restoration
- Science (eg. chemistry, physics, biology, mineralogy, colour theory)
- Humanities (eg. history, palaeography, history of art, archaeology, ethnology, philosophy)
- History of materials and techniques, technology and manufacturing processes
- Identification and study of deterioration processes
- Display and transport of cultural property
- Theory, methods and techniques of conservation, preventive conservation and restoration
- Processes involved in making reproductions of objects
- Methods of documentation

- Methods of scientific research
- History of Conservation-Restoration
- Legal issues (eg. professional statutes, cultural heritage law, insurance, business and tax law)
- Management (collections, staff and resources)
- Health and Safety (including environmental issues)
- Communication skills (including Information Technology)