



SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

CONNECTING TO THE WORLD'S COLLECTIONS: MAKING THE CASE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Session 466

October 28-November 1, 2009

SESSION SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sixty cultural heritage leaders from thirty-two countries, including representatives from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, South America, Australia, Europe, and North America gathered in October 2009 in Salzburg, Austria to develop a series of practical recommendations to ensure optimal collections conservation worldwide. Convened at Schloss Leopoldskron, the gathering was conducted in partnership by the Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS) and the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The participants were conservation specialists from libraries and museums, as well as leaders of major conservation centers and cultural heritage programs from around the world. As co-chair Vinod Daniel noted, no previous meeting of conservation professionals has been “as diverse as this, with people from as many parts of the world, as cross-disciplinary as this.” The group addressed central issues in the care and preservation of the world’s cultural heritage including moveable objects (library materials, books, archives, paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photographic collections, art on paper, archaeological and ethnographic objects) and immovable heritage (buildings and archaeological sites).

The participants noted that while collections stewardship is central to the mission of all cultural heritage institutions, resources for proper preservation and treatment are often sorely lacking, emergency plans are not always in place, and public awareness of and support for conservation is not as strong as it should be. However, advances in conservation research and preservation technologies are offering new solutions and strategies for addressing conservation needs.

A paradigm shift away from traditional perceptions of culture as “elitist” was emphasized throughout the seminar. Other themes that emerged during the three days included: building international connections among preservation professionals and with policy makers and the public; avoiding the storage of knowledge in separated silos; the importance of using both top-down initiatives from institutional executives and bottom-up mandates from conservators and public stakeholders; the increased use of technology and Internet resources including social networks, blogs, e-mail, and educational websites; casting the current global economic challenges as opportunities rather than barriers; listening to and learning from indigenous peoples regarding the safeguarding of their cultural heritage, so that they feel that they own their own community museums and that their culture will be respected and kept alive; the growing interest in documenting the protection of intangible traditions associated with cultural collections; and the impact of climate change on preservation and the pressing need for heritage conservation to be represented in existing and forthcoming international agreements and treaties.

At the end of the seminar, the Fellows unanimously endorsed a *Salzburg Declaration on the Conservation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage* that affirmed the importance and value of cultural heritage to cultures and societies globally. The Declaration urges the cultural heritage sector to work together with governments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to integrate conservation initiatives into other social and economic initiatives, raise public awareness and engage the public, strengthen research, networking, educational opportunities, and the exchange of knowledge and resources globally, and promote responsible and sustainable national and regional conservation policies and strategies.

The delegates submitted a list of commitments for future action to be taken when they returned to their own countries and organizations. They agreed to share the recommendations of the Salzburg Seminar on Conservation and Preservation with colleagues in their institutions, professional organizations, and policy makers and to publish information and key points. They noted their intentions to plan educational programs for their communities, implement more days for children and young people at their museums and libraries, and improve collaborative participation in projects. Additional commitments included promoting more realistic and flexible environmental guidelines for museums; evaluating Emergency Preparedness Plans; translating emergency response materials from English into other languages; and expanding risk management networks. A number of partnership initiatives are also emerging from the gathering in Salzburg.

The Declaration and summaries of the Working Group Recommendations are included below:

Salzburg Declaration on the Conservation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage
31 October 2009
Salzburg, Austria

On the occasion of the Salzburg Global Seminar session on *Connecting to the World's Collections: Making the Case for the Conservation and Preservation of our Cultural Heritage*, sixty cultural heritage leaders from the preservation sector representing thirty-two nations around the world shared experiences to address the sustainability of cultural heritage. The Assembly:

Recognizes that our global cultural heritage strengthens identities, well-being, and respect for other cultures and societies,

Affirms that cultural heritage is a powerful tool to engage communities positively and, as such, is a driving force for human development and creativity,

Reaffirms that an appreciation of diverse cultural heritage and its continuity for future generations promote mutual understanding between people, communities, and nations,

Acknowledges that although we have made tremendous gains in the cultural heritage sector in education, facilities, new technologies, and partnerships, our global cultural heritage is threatened by continuing deterioration and loss resulting from a shortage of trained conservation practitioners, natural and man-made emergencies and environmental risks, including climate change, and limited investment, and

Recommends that governments, non-governmental organizations, the cultural heritage sector, communities, and other stakeholders work together to:

- Integrate conservation projects with other sectors to provide a lever for social and economic development,
- Commit to increased community engagement and raise public awareness regarding at-risk cultural heritage,

- Strengthen the investment in research, networking, educational opportunities, and the exchange of knowledge and resources globally, and
- Promote responsible stewardship and advance sustainable national/regional conservation policies and strategies, including risk management.

The deliberations at the Salzburg Global Seminar for the *Conservation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage* have established a new collaborative platform to more effectively preserve the world's cultural heritage and address global challenges now and in the future.

The Assembly thanks the Salzburg Global Seminar and the Institute of Museum and Library Services in Washington, D.C. for initiating, organizing, hosting, and supporting the conference co-chaired by Vinod Daniel (Australian Museum) and Debra Hess Norris (University of Delaware, USA)

Working Group Recommendations:

Five working groups held multiple sessions interspersed among the more formal plenary presentations and discussions; each working group presented recommendations for action summarized below.

1. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The executive management team of cultural organizations must be motivated to lead the entire staff in emergency planning, including guards, building maintenance staff librarians, curators, conservators, and public relations representatives. Networks must be established with local responders such as fire departments and emergency services and with regional, national, and international institutions and websites for assistance, advice, and information. Each organization should carry out regular drills.

2. RAISING AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

Government agencies and other policy makers should be approached and made aware of the need for financial support for heritage protection and preservation. An international alliance should be formed to develop a global advocacy campaign to raise awareness of the need for protection of cultural heritage for children, teachers, and families. Corporations, foundations, and patrons should be informed and inspired to provide significant resources for the preservation of cultural heritage. Each cultural organization should commit to public outreach and advocacy initiatives.

3. NEW PRESERVATION APPROACHES

Research is needed to address the threat to cultural heritage induced by environmental changes; the impact must be defined, and models to reduce environmental impact should be developed, tested, and validated. New solutions should be sought regarding products and treatments for cultural heritage including: longevity of contemporary materials, procedures for storage, evaluation of current treatment materials and technologies, and the development of new materials and approaches. Improved techniques should be developed for museum security, tele-monitoring of archaeological sites and cultural landscapes, and digitalization of library collections. Environmental guidelines for museum collections and loans should be re-examined.

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

New educational models should be developed to train skilled conservation specialists in both developed and developing countries. Conservation specialists must also be trained in leadership, advocacy, and collaboration with communities. Global internships should be supported. Both short-term and long-term courses are needed.

A central website should be developed for sharing models of conservation education. A process for on-going translation of current and new conservation education materials should be established and funded. Social networking technologies can be used to share images, video, and documents freely.

5. ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

A culture of planning needs to be promoted across all the heritage sectors, operating in the context of a set of ethical, technical, and operational principles. Each planning phase should articulate its purpose and tangible outcomes. Monitoring, review processes, and performance indicators are key components of the planning cycle. Participation of all stakeholders in the assessment and planning process will foster a shared responsibility to ensure sustained conservation and management of cultural property.

The full report: **CONNECTING TO THE WORLD'S COLLECTIONS: MAKING THE CASE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE** (Session 466) is available on the Salzburg Global Seminar website www.salzburgglobal.org and on the IMLS website www.imls.gov. Please contact Susanna Seidl-Fox (program director) sfox@salzburgglobal.org or Nancy Rogers (senior project coordinator) nrogers@imls.gov for more information.