



***Disaster Proofing Heritage Collections – the Blue Shield Australia & DISACT
Symposium 2010***

Paper abstracts and biographies

Developing updated guidelines for environmental conditions in collecting institutions

Julian Bickersteth

Guidelines for environmental conditions in collecting institutions have for the past 40 years or so been defined within fairly narrow parameters. These were developed when energy was relatively inexpensive, global climate considerations were not yet mainstream discussions, and HVAC systems were designed more around controls than efficiency. All this has now changed with the looming energy crisis, rising awareness of green technology that equates to good stewardship of resources, and tighter budgets. The reality is that tight environmental parameters are only needed to ensure the preservation of a limited range of material types and artworks. There is therefore a move to be cleverer about how environmental guidelines are specified for libraries, museums and galleries.

AICCM has established a Taskforce to develop guidelines for Australian conditions based on current international standards, which are changing as a result of these pressures. Julian Bickersteth is the chair of the Taskforce and will be detailing the progress that has been made to date on developing these guidelines.

Julian Bickersteth is the managing director of Sydney-based International Conservation Services, Vice President of the International Institute for Conservation, and Treasurer of the National Trust of Australia (NSW). By training a materials conservator, Julian's key experience revolves around working on projects where there is a conservation component of a broader heritage issue. His expertise is wide ranging extending from a broad knowledge of material conservation issues to collection management, architectural conservation and heritage policy creation. Julian is chairing the AICCM Taskforce on Environmental Guidelines and also in his role as Vice President of IIC helped to organise the forum on climate change and its effect on collections at the National Gallery in London in September 2008.

AICCM Victorian Division's Response to the Victorian Bushfires of 2009: After Disaster Struck.

Alexandra Ellem

This paper presents key aspects of AICCM's response to communities affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires and the unique role conservation can play regarding disaster response and cultural heritage. AICCM, the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material, is the professional organization

for conservators in Australia. Following the efforts by conservators to assist communities affected by bushfires in Canberra in 2003, AICCM Victorian Division developed a response to the Black Saturday fires supported by the Victorian collecting and archiving institutions, conservators, Arts portfolio agencies, the National Archives of Australia and Blue Shield Australia, providing access to information, advice and storage materials. Emphasis is laid upon the critical significance of communication and support between related organizations within the cultural sector, all levels of government, emergency services, local communities and disaster support networks to enable effective disaster responses. Learning from the experience of the Victorian bushfires, AICCM aims to further develop and strengthen links with similarly minded organizations and communities in pursuit of co-ordinated disaster response that will reduce risks to and promote preservation of our cultural heritage throughout the nation.

Alexandra Ellem

Following a teaching career in Australia, France and the US, Alex trained as a Painting Conservator, completing her Masters in Cultural Material Conservation at the Centre for Cultural Material Conservation, University of Melbourne. She was then awarded an internship in painting conservation at CCMC. As well as performing conservation treatments, Alex has conducted research into Australian artists' techniques and the history of conservation. She has also taught Preventive Conservation to conservation students and Conservation Issues to museum curatorship students at the University of Melbourne. Alex is a Hugh DT Williamson Fellow in Paintings Conservation at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Alex has been the President of the Victorian Division of AICCM since 2006. She and the AICCM Victorian Division Committee developed and implemented a response to the Victorian bushfires of 2009 with the support of fellow conservators, the major Victorian arts, heritage, archiving and collecting institutions, the National Australian Archives and Blue Shield Australia. Alex was awarded AICCM Conservator of the Year in September 2009 for her role in the AICCM Bushfire Response.

Centre for the National Museum of Australia Collections: a proposal for sustainable collections storage and management.

Greer Gehrt and Eric Archer

The National Museum of Australia (NMA) recently completed a functional design brief for the design and development of new storage and collection management facilities for the National Historical Collection. As part of this process, the NMA has undertaken extensive studies into the use of passive building technologies.

Passively controlled stores are those which can meet specified indoor environmental targets without the need for active systems for heating, cooling, humidification or dehumidification. A successfully designed passive store has the following distinct advantages in comparison to the standard actively conditioned approach:

- No loss of conditions during power failure
- No loss of conditions during mechanical failure
- Reduced maintenance needs, and
- Significant operations savings over the life of the project

Greer Gehrt and Eric Archer will discuss their work in the design and development of a passively controlled storage for the National Historical Collection.

Eric Archer studied conservation and museum studies in Italy and Australia and has been a paper conservator at the National Gallery of Victoria, chief conservator at the State Library of Victoria and in private practice in Melbourne. In 1999 he was appointed manager of conservation at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. He has served as the national president of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials and is currently a member of the National Collections Preservation Committee.

Eric's main interests include collections and risk management theory and development. In 2009 Eric worked with the NMA's Design and Development team on the proposed Centre for the National Museum of Australia Collections project.

Greer Gehrt, bio follows.

Alert But Not Alarmed: A decade of the Disasters ACT Network.

Bernard Kertesz

DISACT (the DISasters ACT network) is a network of disaster preparedness practitioners operating in south-eastern New South Wales and centred in the Australian Capital Territory. Although largely driven, resourced and enabled by the major Commonwealth cultural collecting institutions, the network participants represent more than 25 Commonwealth, ACT Government and private sector organisations.

The network's primary goals are,

- to keep disaster preparedness on the agenda of their respective institutions
- to further the stated goals of the cooperative agreements which have been struck over the years and signed by the participating organisations,
- to conduct network meetings, seminars and training, and
- to foster awareness within the region, through the use of direct outreach and through the maintenance of a mail list server and website.

Through their interest and enthusiasm, this energetic group of interested professionals have kept the spirit of DISACT and its goals alive and flourishing for over 10 years.

Bernard Kertesz is the Senior Paper Conservator at the Australian War Memorial. As a preservation professional he has had a long standing interest in preventive conservation issues including collections disaster preparedness. As the convener of the DISACT network his goal is to assist that body to keep the profile of disaster preparedness on the agenda of cultural collecting institutions.

Meeting and Reporting "Conservation Standards" for Environmental Conditions; The Government's Key Performance Indicators Versus The Real World

Jennifer Lloyd

It is not unreasonable that the Commonwealth Government expects the custodianship of the nation's heritage collections to be a responsible one. Maximising the life expectancy of these collections is a priority for all cultural collecting institutions.

Institutions' Annual Reports variously refer to "percentage of time storage standards", "within set parameters", "appropriate museum standards" and "conservation standards for environmental conditions". What do these terms really mean? What factors are considered when deciding on adequate environmental parameters for the nations collections?

This paper will examine;

- the way that institutions interpret the Government's expectations,
- what these various approaches mean in reality and
- what commonalities/differences the various "standards" have.

The advantages of normalising these standards will be briefly discussed.

Jennifer Lloyd has been the Manager of Collections Preservation at the National Library of Australia for 5 years. Previously she was a Building Manager for the National Archives of Australia, and prior to that a Conservator at various cultural institutions. Her different roles in cultural institutions have given her a unique perspective of the need to provide stable environmental parameters for our cultural collections and the difficulties in actually achieving this. Risk management is a major strategy when caring for cultural collections.

Blue Shield Australia - Building Disaster Resilience into the Australian and Asia-Pacific Heritage Sectors

Detlev Lueth

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross. The distinctive emblem was specified by the UNESCO's 1954 Hague *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*. It is also the name of the International Committee of Blue Shield (ICBS), set up in 1996 to advise UNESCO on the protection of the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters. With the permission of the ICBS in 2005 Blue Shield Australia was established. BSA's vision is to influence disaster preparedness and emergency management in Australia in order to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage within Australia's areas of responsibility and influence.

This paper will give a brief introduction to the aims and objective of the BSA and will discuss the focus on preparedness strategies. These strategies help an organisation to deal with risks and should be integrated into all cultural heritage organizations' everyday working structures and activities. Furthermore this common need should lead to the establishment of local networks/arrangements for assistance between local cultural heritage organisations and emergency services with the ultimate aim of hardwiring this relationship and building 'disaster resilience' into the community.

Detlev Lueth holds a Bachelor Degree in Applied Science, specializing in the conservation of both Paper & Photographic materials.

In 2002 Detlev joined the National Archives of Australia as Assistant Director of Preservation. Previously he has worked as Senior Paper and Exhibitions Conservator at the National Museum of Australia, Senior Film Preservation Officer at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and Photo Conservator at International Conservation Service in Sydney (ICS).

He has carried out research and lectured on the preservation and conservation of photographic materials at both Canberra and Melbourne Universities.

Detlev has been an active member of the conservation profession for over twenty years and was named the 2004 Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) Conservator of the Year for contributions to photographic conservation.

Detlev sits on the Blue Shield Australia (BSA) Committee as the representative for the International Council on Archives (ICA) and is the current chair of the BSA committee.

Not If But When! Some Observations on Collection Disaster Preparedness Around Australia.

Kim Morris

Disaster planning for collections has been a feature of cultural activity in collecting institutions in Australia since 1985 when the National Library suffered a serious and devastating fire. Major national and state institutions recognised the need to prepare for collection disasters and began developing response and recovery plans.

Since then many disaster incidents have occurred around Australia. Some have been dealt with and resolved well while others have not depending on many factors including the level of preparedness and prevention strategies that were in place at the time of the incident.

As the years have progressed disaster awareness has increased and the value of collections, corporate activity and risk has been recognised. Training and awareness in preparedness, prevention, response and recovery has developed from national to state, to regional and local level, depending on foresight and past experience. Relatively new areas of risk management and business recovery planning have contributed to the need to be prepared and have appropriate planning strategies in place.

As awareness has taken hold, several groups have developed along the lines of DISACT to foster and encourage disaster planning among members around Australia.

This paper looks at the development of disaster planning in collecting institutions of all shapes and sizes over recent years and discusses current trends and shortfalls in planning, based on the experience of a collection disaster consultant, trainer and recovery expert.

Kim Morris has been a practicing conservator since 1982. He is a specialist paper conservator who also has extensive experience in treatment and preparation of textiles, paintings and objects. He has worked in and managed the preservation laboratories of the Australian War Memorial and the National Library of Australia. During his work with these large and varied collections he developed many strategies to enable greater preservation focus for collections and those who work with them. Among these was the development of the National Library's Collection Disaster Plan.

In 2000 Kim became director of Art & Archival Pty Ltd, a busy private conservation consultancy specialising in paper and painting conservation, collection preservation consultancy, exhibition preparation, training, and collection disaster planning, response and recovery. Over the past 10 years he has broadened the treatment specialization of the business to include all types of collection items.

In 2006, Kim was awarded the AICCM Conservator of the Year award, partly for his contribution to plan development, training and awareness raising in collection emergency planning around Australia. He continues to provide a range of collection emergency training workshops and consultancy services throughout the Australian region.

AICCM and a National Response Network

Kay Söderlund

Spurred on by the year that saw the Victorian bush fires and the Queensland floods, AICCM has started work on a project to develop a National Response Network in order to more effectively help communities and museums that have been devastated by disasters. Kay Söderlund, National President of AICCM, will briefly outline the project and the plan for the coming year.

Kay Söderlund has worked as a professional conservator for over 25 years. She has worked at several of the major collecting institutions in Sydney, and for the past 20 years Kay has worked privately in the heritage sector, primarily as a conservator. She was one of the first conservators in Australia to recognise the role preventive conservation would play in the preservation of collections, and in 1992 trained in Preventive Conservation with the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles, USA.

In 2000 Kay authored 'Be Prepared: Guidelines for Small Museums for Writing a Disaster Preparedness Plan', written for the Heritage Collections Council. She also developed the training package for industry service providers based on 'Be Prepared'. Both the manual and the training package are available on the AMOL (Australian Museums On Line) web site, www.amol.org.au

Kay established Preservation Australia in 2004 - a conservation consulting, training and archival supply business. She has various publications to her name and has presented numerous papers, workshops and seminars on conservation subjects, preventive conservation issues, and museum management.

Planning for Floods in a Drought: Cooperative Regional Responses to Disasters

Roger Trudgeon

The secret to good risk management is planning to deal with events that you would normally deem to be impossible. In the midst of the state's worst drought in years, the Gold Museum, Ballarat was flooded on New Year's Day in 2007. In the context of climate change and the increasing likelihood of extreme weather events it is essential to think ahead as to how we face such catastrophes.

The response to the flood at the Gold Museum generated ideas of developing a stronger cooperative response to any disasters in our region. Such agreements, it was argued, would take any uncertainty out of knowing when to offer, or ask for, help.

Through the leadership and hard work of Public Record Office Victoria, the Ballarat Collections Network was formed, consisting of over 15 institutions and volunteer organisations. Groups range from the regional museum, art gallery and library, to the Mechanic's Institute, heritage groups and historical societies. Over eighteen months, this diverse grouping developed a Memorandum of Understanding designed to provide training opportunities and seamless mutual support in the event that any member faces a disaster requiring outside assistance. The MOU was informed by the DISACT experience and another MOU used by state institutions in Melbourne.

The process of preparing the MOU created opportunities for sharing information and creating awareness of the importance of disaster planning. All MOU signatories developed their own disaster plans, utilising help from others as needed.

To be effective, however, the MOU is only the foundation on which solid commitments to action are needed. The real benefits lie in shared involvement in training, workshops, sharing of data on

emergency services and support, and combined approaches to minimising risk in our diverse operations.

Believing the Ballarat MOU to be the first regionally based agreement, the project serves as a good example to other regional areas in Australia.

Roger Trudgeon

Deputy Director, Museums at Sovereign Hill and Manager/Curator of the Gold Museum, Ballarat

Roger has pursued a museum career for over thirty years, beginning at the former Science Museum of Victoria in Melbourne in 1978. After obtaining a Masters Degree in Museum Studies at Leicester University he worked at the Victorian Ministry for the Arts developing funding and support programs for regional museums. After this, he was the Course coordinator and Senior Lecturer in Museum Studies at Deakin University at the Rusden Campus in Clayton.

Roger has been the Manager/Curator of the Gold Museum in Ballarat since 1994 and seven years ago was given the additional title of Deputy Director, Museums, with added responsibilities in management of the collections in Sovereign Hill itself.

Roger was chairperson of the Victorian Museum Accreditation Program Committee for ten years during the 1990s, and in the ten years since then has been a panel member for museum accreditation inspections. He has been a committee member of the Victorian Branch of Museums Australia in the 1980s and 1990s.

He has served as President of the Ballarat Historical Society since 2002, since 2007 as a member of the City of Ballarat's Heritage Advisory Committee and in 2009 and 2010 as a judge in the Victorian Museum Awards. He is currently also a member of the Assessment Panel for the Public Record Office Victoria Local History Grants Program.
