How to become a conservator

Conservation is a fascinating but highly technical discipline; below is information on how to find out more about volunteering, training and working in conservation.

Interesting in volunteering with us?

Volunteers can get involved in many aspects of our work in Special Collections. All of our volunteers are recruited from the **National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) (http://www.nadfas.org.uk)** Heritage Volunteer Programme. Unfortunately, while joining NADFAS may provide you with many exciting opportunities, we cannot guarantee that you will get to work with us. For more information please **contact NADFAS (http://www.nadfas.org.uk)** .

Interested in finding out more about a career in conservation?

The skills

Conservators need to have a unique combination of skills. A high level of manual dexterity is obviously necessary, as is an understanding of chemistry and a lot of patience and concentration. Conservators also need to be:

- forward thinking: conservators need to assess new treatment options and the physical demands of new technologies on archives
- capable of compromise: in choosing an appropriate treatment, conservators must resolve the often conflicting needs of the artefact and the user
- good communicators and negotiators: conservators act as advocates for the welfare of collections in their care, and must be capable of gently winning their case
- analytical: conservators need to investigate the history and make up of artefacts, what techniques and materials are available for treatment and how these behave in given circumstances
- committed to professional development: conservators need to be prepared to continue their development after qualification, acquiring management skills which enable them to play a full part in the development of the heritage sector
- comfortable with a variety of technology: conservators may be required to care for collections in a variety of formats from early papryii to DVDs.

Training and work place opportunities

Conservators undertake postgraduate training courses in their chosen field of conservation. Full up to date information on the training courses is available on the **Institute of Conservation (ICON) (http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php)** website. ICON is the umbrella organisation for all conservation disciplines in the UK. Internships and job opportunities in all fields of conservation are advertised on the **Institute of Conservation (ICON) (http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php)** website.

Jobs are also advertised through the **Conservation On-line (CoOL) discussion list (http://cool.conservation-us.org/)** , and the **archives-nra email discussion list (http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/archives-nra.html)** , and the national and local press. It is free to subscribe to these discussion lists.

The Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers scheme (PACR) accredits the continuing competence and skills of those who are suitably experienced. It entitles them to use the letters ACR (Accredited Conservator-Restorer) after their name. For further information see **ICON's guidance on the PACR process. (http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=6)**

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