

Introductory Paragraph on

“Employment. Updating and upgrading in lifelong learning in Restoration and Conservation sector”

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After the second world war, there has been a steady increase in the size and variety of the cultural heritage collections held in institutions such as museums, archives, libraries, cultural centres and so on. Moreover, with advances in technology the materials in cultural heritage collections have expanded to include a range of plastics, complex polymers, audio-visual materials and now digital artworks and documents. Very few of these newer materials have been studied in terms of their ageing properties or treatment options thereby presenting additional challenges to the conservation profession.

The resources to manage heritage collections, however, haven't risen to match this expansion. In fact they have shrunk and cultural heritage institutions worldwide are under mounting pressure to account for the resources they consume and the “deliverables” they provide. The idea of using cultural heritage as a tool for development has thus gained currency which is in direct contrast to the previous idea of cultural heritage as an asset to be held in trust for the enjoyment and the benefit of the future generations. The idea of using cultural heritage for the social and economic development of present generation is also at the heart of the topical debate on the conservation-development conflict and commoditization of cultural functioning in an environment of constrained resources and charged with the immense responsibility of balancing preservation needs of cultural heritage with market driven demands for providing greater access and public participation in conservation and management of cultural heritage raises new technical and ethical dilemmas for conservators, conservation scientists and other heritage professionals.

Moreover, conservation decision-making may involve conservators, conservation scientists, art historians, policy makers, members of the local community and so on. Is current training preparing conservation professionals for participating and if needed, for leading these decision-making processes? How professional training and education can address the ongoing challenges to protection of the cultural heritage? What competencies and skills a conservator-restorer must have?