

# The Institute National du Patrimoine-INP: the Cultural Heritage Training Institution in France

Cristina Menegazzi

Institute national du patrimoine  
National committee of the Blue Shield  
Paris, France

## Abstract

*L'Institut national du patrimoine-INP* (the National Institute of Cultural Heritage) is an institution of higher education tied to the French Ministry of Culture and Communication.

Its purpose is to recruit, through competitive exams and initial training programmes, French cultural heritage curators, French territorial public service operators and the City of Paris curators. Through competitive exams and training programmes it also selects French cultural heritage conservator-restorers. Training programmes for both curators and conservator-restorers are held at the same institute which is a unique and original specificity.

**Keywords:** Training, Curator, Conservator-Restorer

## Introduction

Each year, the INP admits from 40 to 50 curator students and about 20 students specialized in restoration. The INP also offers a very wide range of lifelong learning programmes. In addition, it serves as a place of cultural dissemination through seminars and conferences which are both a ways and a means to work with other French or international academic institutions linked to cultural heritage.

The INP's mission is to send students abroad through internships and to welcome foreign interns, while exporting its training programmes and its know-how through a network of international cooperation.

The INP is administered by a board of directors and guided by a scientific council. It is composed of two educational departments in charge of conservation and restoration courses. It is managed by a director, assisted by a general secretary, a director of studies for each educational departments and a director of research and scientific relations.

## Department of Curators

Activities of French cultural heritage curators are divided into five specialties: archaeology, archives, historical monuments and inventory, museums, scientific, technical and natural heritage.

Curators hold scientific and administrative responsibilities. Appointed within or at the head of institutes dealing with cultural heritage, they are in charge of studying, classifying, storing, maintaining, enriching, enhancing and helping the public discover cultural heritage. They share their treasures with the widest audience possible. They improve scientific research applied to cultural heritage.

Competitive examinations are open to European citizens with no age limit. External exams are open to candidates who have a bachelor's of art degree or any other equivalent degree. Internal exams are open to agents who are able to demonstrate at least four years of full time public service. Candidates may not apply more than five times. Registration

for the exams takes place in April, written examinations are held at the end of August, oral examinations in November. Classes for curator students begin at the beginning of January of the following year.

The INP also welcomes foreign cultural heritage professionals who are integrated with students from curator disciplines. The full programme, which lasts for 18 months, alternates theoretical teachings, practical seminars and internships in professional settings, in France or abroad. The teaching modules focus on law and economy applied to cultural heritage, public management techniques, human resources management, construction and development of cultural buildings, preserving and restoring (including preventive conservation and disaster risk management), cultural dissemination and mediation, foreign languages.

Scientific research is a very important aspect of the training. To the extent possible, students applying for the position of curator are encouraged to carry on their studies and academic researches while attending lessons at the INP. At the end of the 18 months training period and after being assessed by a penal students receive their diploma as cultural heritage curator.

### Specialisations:

#### Archives

A curator specialising in archives collects, preserves and disseminates records and archival material generated by services and individuals in France. Whether employed by the State or by regional authorities, she/he controls and manages the regular archival material produced by public services, which is then collected, inventoried and circulated for the benefit of the public.

#### Archaeology

A curator specialising in archaeology contributes to the documentation and management of archaeological resources. She/he protects, studies and enhances those heritage resources. The curator is a field specialist and holds responsibility for regular and preventive excavation projects. The curator is also responsible for the dissemination of the excavation results to the public.

#### Historic monuments & Inventory

A curator specialising in historic monuments implements, within a region, the protection, conservation and enhancement of monuments and movable artefacts. She/he may also be in charge of conservation campaigns for movable objects or other specific missions.

A curator specialising in inventory records, studies, protects and raises public awareness on the varied resources of the regions of France, movable or immovable, rural or urban, secular or religious, industrial or scientific. The curator undertakes field surveys which are the basis for a growing number of administrative investigations throughout the territory.

#### Museums

A curator specialising in museums preserves, studies, enriches, enhances and disseminates the collections for which she/he is responsible within institutions of diverse size, status or type.

#### Scientific & natural heritage

A curator with this speciality preserves, studies, enriches, enhances and disseminates the collections especially within Natural History and Science Museums or Centres.

At the end of the training programme, student-curators are assessed by a panel presided by the Director of the school. This panel will take into account the results obtained throughout the training activities and the quality of the work done during the internships.

Students are awarded the Diploma of Cultural Heritage Curator or the Diploma of the Institut National du Patrimoine (for territorial curators).

After qualifying, State and City of Paris curators are recruited by a relevant heritage service or agency.

Territorial (Regional Authority) curators can be recruited by local authorities for a position within regional heritage agencies.

### **Department of Restorers**

Restorers operate directly on works of art and objects with cultural heritage values, in order to transmit them to future generations. They intervene when the degradation process attacks works of art. Such a demanding profession includes various skills, ranging from artistic sensibility and historical culture to the chemistry of materials, the knowledge of ancient techniques, manual dexterity, comfort in using both the most traditional tools and the most innovative devices, from the graver to the laser. This profession requires first and foremost an immense respect towards works of art, whether they be humble or prestigious, as well as an unfaltering sense of deontology.

While mainly working on public collections, most restorers work on an independent status or as heads of companies.

The competitive examination for admission for students in conservation-restoration is open to French and foreign candidates under 30 on the 31st of December of the year prior to the examination.

Candidates must hold the French Baccalaureat or any other equivalent degree. Direct admission in the second, third or fourth year of studies is possible. It is complementary to the admission through an examination during the first year and is open to candidates aged below 35, holders of a degree equivalent to a bachelor's degree. Applications begin in December and January, eligibility in February, admission in April. Students in restoration begin their courses in September.

The INP also welcomes foreign professionals who integrate students from restoring disciplines.

The training period is five years. It covers seven specialties: earthenware and glassware, graphic arts and books, textile arts, furnishings, painting, photography, sculpture.

This training programme alternates core curriculum teachings, specific courses in each specialty and two lengthy internships in a professional institution. Students also take part in in-situ workshops on preventive conservation, restoration and disaster recovery.

Disciplines vary from history of art, history of restoration, deontology of restoration, preventive conservation, disaster risk management, cultural heritage law, physics, chemistry, biology, applied sciences to materials on cultural heritage, practice of restoration and artistic teachings (drawing, modelling...).

The last year of training is devoted to research and restoration work in the chosen specialty. This assignment leads to a dissertation.

The INP Department of Restorers regularly collaborates with the University of Paris I (MA Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage and Preventive Conservation) and with a number of overseas institutions.

Recognized as a master's degree, the diploma of restorer working for the cultural heritage bestows the accreditation to work on public museum collections in France.

Activities in the restorer department are conducted within the framework of the initial training. Located near the workshops, the laboratory welcomes students for experiments and analyses and, in a broader sense, provides them with regular educational tools in the scientific field.

Partnerships with other laboratories belonging to the Ministry of Culture and with various universities enable it to offer a wide range of analytical approaches.

Studies focus on determining the techniques used to produce objects, their state of preservation and ancient practices. They help restorers to determine the diagnosis formulation.

### **Lifelong Learning Programmes**

By offering its lifelong learning programmes, the INP endeavours to provide an up-to-date answer to the requirements of professionals of cultural heritage, whether they work in state institutions and local authorities or in private sectors. Lifelong learning programmes meeting specific requirements of public or private organizations can be carried out "on demand". The INP welcomes foreign professionals and organizes sessions abroad.

Lifelong Learning Programmes cover the needs of the cultural heritage sector, from strategic questions (e.g. schools, museums, archives, monuments... How to build together an artistic and cultural project) to thematic approaches (e.g. "The Naval and fluvial cultural heritage: How to share the passion of the sea", or "Materials used for preventive conservation or reinforcement of pictorial layers on parchments"). Said sessions renew the practices of cultural heritage and deal with current issues, whether relating to curators or restorers.

### **The Library**

The library, founded in 1978, is an essential educational resource for students and a major research library in France and Europe on the subject of conservation and restoration of cultural heritage.

The library collections reflect the orientation of training programmes in: art history, iconography, history and ethics of conservation, arts and techniques, science: physical and chemical properties of materials, deterioration processes, analytical methods of examination, laboratory equipment, products and tools of conservation, preventive conservation, aesthetic interventions...

The catalogue references number 48,000 items, among which 23,700 early and modern documents, 22,000 articles or proceedings of seminars, 500 periodicals of which 210 deal essentially with conservation, over 800 dissertations, 250 multimedia documents, 1,200 special issues, as well as digital documents.

### **The Documentation Centre**

The Documentation Centre of the *Institut National du Patrimoine* is a unit of the department of curators and is closely associated with regular and lifelong learning programmes.

The Centre has collected works relating to the management of cultural properties, the inventory, acquisition, management, conservation, circulation and enhancement of heritage resources (archaeological, archival, artistic, cinema, ethnological, fluvial and maritime, hospital, industrial, military, museum, natural, photographic, religious, rural, scientific and technical ...).

The Centre has an active publication policy and produces some 180 new educational documents each year, some of which are accessible through the INP digital library. The Centre contains some 17,400 items including 14,800 books and articles, 2,060 subject files, 350 multimedia documents, 302 periodicals, all catalogued online.