Sigrid Eyb-Green* and Ute Henniges **Editorial**

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Dear colleagues,

The history of paper conservation has rarely been addressed in research until recent. While conservators are more often than not confronted with previously treated objects, investigations have generally been confined to case studies focusing on the conservation history of single objects. A systematic approach to the development of methods and materials is certainly a rewarding, yet challenging undertaking. For one part, conservators are typically busy facing daily challenges of their institution's or studio's operations with little time left to reflect on the past. Furthermore, written or photographic documentation from the early days of conservation is often fragmentary or nonexistent. Knowledge and experience have been passed on orally, and writing, let alone publishing has not been the main form of communication, even within formal University based training programs. Consequently, rather unconventional sources have to be explored when researching conservation practices, including studio journals, notes, accounts of senior colleagues and, last but not least, the objects themselves. This special issue of the RESTAURATOR will broach the subject from different angles.

The contributions of Eva Maria Loh and Katarzyna Garczewska-Semka on the history of mounts at the Albertina respectively the National Library of Poland are mainly based on observations of the actual mounted prints and drawings. Conducting interviews with senior conservators who have been working in these collections for many years has proven an immensely valuable source in this regard. Interviews with both employees and contracted conservators were also included in Elina Eder's study which investigates bleaching practices as documented in conservation protocols at the Wien Museum.

It is also interesting to trace the roots of today's paper conservation in literature published by prints collectors in previous centuries. Eva Hummert focuses her paper on the history of resizing as outlined in conservation literature from the seventeenth century onwards. From its first mentioning in books for collectors of prints on paper to its current application in modern paper conservation, the meaning and frequency of application of resizing have changed

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considerably. Another facet of changing perception is outlined by Katrin Holzherr. In her contribution on technically perfect and hardly discernible historic paper repairs, she and her co-author shed light on the changed perception of how art on paper was repaired to perfection in the nineteenth century and how current conservation methodology approaches visually impaired art on paper.

Naturally, the history of paper conservation is closely connected to training institutions which leave an imprint on whole generations of conservators. In this context, Irene Brückle reflects on ways of bringing together theory and practice when teaching conservation, calling for an integrative approach in order to be able to meet the complexities of conservation treatments. Margret Holben Ellis and Cathleen Baker look back on changes in curricula of conservation training programs in the U.S and address present-day challenges of education. In her paper, Andrea Pataki-Hundt outlines teaching practices in conservation at the University of Applied Sciences in Cologne and how she plans to implement teaching and learning formats.

This issue of the RESTAURATOR was sparked in part by the "Oral History Project" which commenced this year at the Institute for Conservation at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. It is based on the observation that implicit knowledge had assumed an important position in the history of conservation and was passed on either verbally or through practice, while scientific dissemination of results and new techniques remained an afterthought. Thus, many crucial parts of the history and scientific development remain intangibly locked away in the memories of the experts who shaped the field. With every loss of such an expert, our understanding of the subject suffers, too. The aim of the project is to describe the history of the profession in Austria in the second half of the twentieth century, based on semi-structured biographical expert interviews. To supplement the findings, literature and archival documents are included in the study.

During the past 50 years, fundamental changes in conservation took place: the establishment of international organizations, the specialization and institutionalization of education and the development of many new methods and materials. These changes have also transformed the public perception and self-understanding of conservators. A study of the past will not only result in a better knowledge of specific treatment methods – it will also help us to understand where we come from and what shaped us as a discipline.

We hope that you enjoy this issue as much as we do! Sigrid Eyb-Green & Ute Henniges