



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

IMPACT

REPORT

2020-2021

for the year ending 31 March 2021



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INTRODUCTION

WHO WE ARE

The Institute of Conservation is a **charity, membership organisation** and the **professional body representing and supporting the practice and profession of conservation.**

Icon **champions excellence in conservation** and **promotes the value of caring for heritage.** We are the **authoritative source of information on conservation practice, policy, and the profession.**

Our **members** are supported through **skills development, networking opportunities, advocacy, education, and training.**

WHAT WE DO

From the Magna Carta to your grandmother's jewellery to a rare first edition of your favourite book – through our members we aim to preserve the items that matter most to people, and to advance public understanding of conservation.

Icon represents the interests of conservation to decision makers on issues that affect cultural heritage, from skills to education to funding. We want everyone to see how cultural heritage helps understand our past, present and future, which is why we do our best to celebrate and share the impact of conservation.

We give confidence to the public that cultural heritage is protected to the highest standard. Icon Accreditation acts as the quality assurance that cultural heritage is cared for by fully qualified and capable professionals. The Conservation Register is our free online tool helping the public conveniently find and access a conservator they can trust.

Icon welcomes everyone with a passion for cultural heritage and helps members create a deeper connection to their interests. Our programme of events, and easy access to support and information maintains and drives excellence in the profession.

OUR VISION

Icon's vision is for cultural heritage to be valued and accessible, and for its future to be enhanced and safeguarded by excellence in conservation.

To help us achieve our vision, our Board of Trustees published their Strategy 2017-22. The Strategy sets a strong direction that helps us to focus on the key areas of activity that will deliver impact; it also enables us to respond to challenges and opportunities that arise. There are three key strands of activity against which we measure our success each year:

- **Advocacy:** influencing our partners and the public
- **Excellence:** building knowledge, high standards and valuing the profession
- **Engagement:** encouraging public awareness and participation

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Icon's Board of Trustees agreed the following strategic priorities for the financial year 2020-2021:

- **Advocacy** – articulating the value of conservation and sharing the impact of our work.
- **Excellence** – celebrating the 20th anniversary of the accreditation framework and promoting the new Conservation Register.
- **Engagement** – launching a new e-newsletter for non-members and encouraging more people to join Icon as Supporters.

And:

- **Income generation** – developing our membership growth strategy and seeking new sources of funding.
- **Coronavirus** – supporting the conservation profession and collaborating with colleagues to mitigate the negative impacts.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There is no doubt that this year, which has been dominated by the Coronavirus and its impact, will live long in people's memories for both personal and professional reasons. We have all faced multiple challenges and many cultural heritage organisations have been forced to make tough decisions and to curtail their activities simply to survive. It has been a year when we have all learned what it means to be resilient and adaptable.

Icon has not been immune to these challenges but, at the same time, it is fair to say that our challenges have been more modest than some other organisations. We do not own or manage a heritage site or cultural venue, and our income largely derives from stable sources – membership fees, publications, and advertising – which were less badly affected than commercial operations such as museum cafés, shops, and events. We did have to move quickly to home-working, but our IT infrastructure and internal processes made this relatively painless. We also had to switch our events to an online format, which proved to be highly successful. The #ConservationTogetherAtHome webinar series, led by Icon's Book and Paper Group, showed how imaginative and flexible we can be. The programme of online lectures delivered not only CPD opportunities but also fostered a genuine sense of community and mutual support, which I know that Icon members and others valued immensely.

During the lockdown Icon's staff team worked harder than ever to support the membership. We increased our policy work, engaging with DCMS and other sector networks to ensure that collections care was not forgotten while the doors were closed. We also worked alongside funders, unions and other networks to fight for support and opportunities for freelancers and small businesses. Our efforts were commended by Historic England, the Heritage Alliance, and others and, as a result, we have consolidated our growing reputation as a trusted and considered source of policy advice and evidence.

A further concern was ensuring that those working towards accreditation were not disadvantaged by the lockdown restrictions. We therefore experimented with carrying out online accreditation assessments and accreditation committee meetings. Although the experience of a studio visit cannot be fully replicated in the virtual environment, we were encouraged to find that it was possible to maintain the same rigorous assessment processes and high standards when working online. This is a positive outcome for many reasons, not least because we can now demonstrate that geography is no longer a barrier to assessment. Online assessment also makes it easier to offer Icon accreditation to our international members, with the potential to enhance the global standing of the conservation profession.

Chief Executive Sara Crofts - wearing a made-by-a-conservator facemask (thanks to Heather Porter ACR)



There were still many moments to celebrate this year – and our strong focus on international engagement stands out.

Board Communications Task and Finish Group

Fostering positive two-way communication between the Board of Trustees and members is important in any charity and benefits from regular review. The *Task and Finish Group* therefore undertook a process of research and discussion with members before presenting ideas for improvement to the Board. A number of these have already been adopted, such as the new post-Board meeting briefing note which is published on the Icon website. The monthly Chief Executive's 'drop-in' sessions have also been reinstated.

Chair: Dr Duygu Camurcuoglu ACR

Icon's Environmental Sustainability Network

Icon's *Environmental Sustainability Network* was launched in the summer of 2020. This new network will support the actions in our Environmental Statement and will also work to encourage the take up of positive environmental practices in the conservation profession, support the global endeavour to halt biodiversity loss and reach net zero by 2030, and disseminate knowledge and understanding of environmental sustainability.

Chair: Lorraine Finch ACR

Diversity and Inclusion Task and Finish Group

The Board set up its first *Diversity and Inclusion Task and Finish Group* in recognition of the fact that our profession lacks diversity and is not representative of the wider society. While there are many hurdles to overcome to make a positive change, not least the socio-economic issues, we hope that the task and finish group will identify projects and actions that might start to make a tangible difference to the profession.

Chair: Pierrette Squires ACR

Sara Crofts, Chief Executive
@sarajcrofts

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE

Despite the disruption caused by the Coronavirus and lockdown we were able to deliver most of our planned activities and projects. So, here's a snapshot of our key achievements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

You can learn more about our impact on the Icon website:

www.icon.org.uk/about-us/icon-impact.html

SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS

222 NEW
MEMBERS

ETHICAL GUIDANCE PUBLISHED

15 POLICY
RESPONSES

submitted, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to policy and advocacy work

ACCREDITATION & TRAINING

25 ACCREDITATION
ASSESSMENTS
RUN REMOTELY

We were able to offer Icon Accreditation to those outside of the UK – including candidates in Australia and the USA

ICON IS NOW THE
END POINT
ASSESSMENT ORGANISATION

for the two newly approved conservation apprenticeship programmes in England

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

Values of conservation

In 2020, we launched a new **research and engagement project** in response to Icon's strategic priority to **articulate the value of conservation** to stakeholders and the public. Icon's **Values of Conservation** project articulates the values of cultural heritage conservation to society and to consider how we can **better communicate** them to audiences.

20th Anniversary of accreditation

Over the last 20 years Icon's accreditation framework has been **reviewed 5 times** and **1100 members** have been accredited. To mark the 20th Anniversary, Icon launched the new **Accredited Member logo**, **redeveloped the Conservation Register**, and produced **Virtual Open Studios** - a series of videos of Accredited conservators opening their virtual doors to the public.

Online engagement

This year, we launched the **Icon Newsletter**, engaged with high profile **Social Media campaigns** like Maintenance Week and #AskAConservator, and ran a **fundraising campaign** on social media on **Giving Tuesday**.

CONSERVATION REGISTER

USERS VISITING FROM **131** COUNTRIES

We launched a new version of the Conservation Register to ensure that members of the public and potential clients can find conservators they can trust, or can confirm the professional status of a conservator they already know.

GOING GREEN

WE LAUNCHED ICON'S ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

AND ICON'S ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT AND ACTION PLAN

We encouraged members to go digital with Icon News and the Journal of Conservation. We also moved to a more energy efficient office.

COVID-19 ADVOCACY + ACTION

Conservation Together at Home

The **Conservation Together at Home** webinar series was launched during the first lockdown in the spring of 2020. The series now includes over **30 videos** that have reached a **global audience**, connecting conservators who were working at home and may not otherwise have been able to interact with fellow professionals. This created a valued sense of community as well as providing worthwhile CPD.

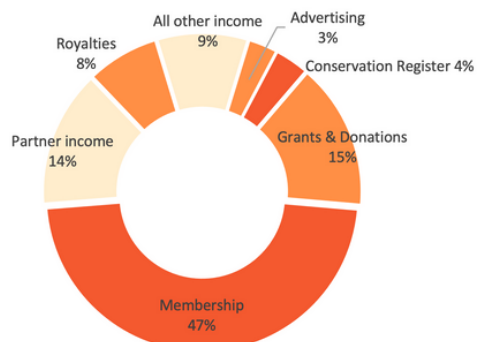
Policy Successes

Our calls for targeted support for conservation were reflected in the Government's **Cultural Recovery Fund for Heritage**. The Fund specifically highlighted conservators and conservation work as being **eligible** for the grants. We also published **Collections Care: An Act of Custodianship and Optimism** - a policy booklet that makes the case that investing in preventive conservation is responsible and cost-effective as well as our **position statement on the value of care of collections professions**.

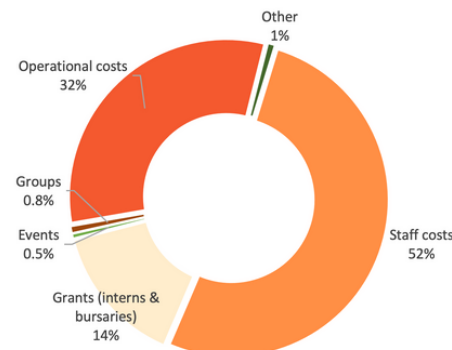
Collections Care Stimulus Fund

The Collections Care Stimulus Fund was created to support the **care of collections** at a time when budgets for the conservation of collections and objects were restricted. **16 grants** of up to **£1,250** have been given out to **small cultural heritage organisations** to support interventive, preventive and digitisation activities.

FINANCES



INCOME



EXPENDITURE

SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT ADVOCACY

Icon's *Values of Conservation* project identified and articulated the values of cultural heritage conservation to society and considered how we can better communicate them to audiences.



Articulating the value of conservation

Gathering fresh material: why conservation matters

We began by collating a range of source material, including reflections about conservation from conservators as well as public perspectives on what conservation means to people. We also commissioned a new series of articles for the Icon website, called the REAL Repair Shop, which explored conservation projects from both the client's and the conservator's perspective.

Publishing the Values of Conservation research report

The findings of the research were shared in a detailed report, which presented a selection of values associated with conservation categorised under social, cultural, economic, and environmental impacts.

Developing a Toolkit: how we talk about conservation

The research report also includes a toolkit, with recommendations on how conservators can effectively communicate and promote the profession's achievements to others. We hope the toolkit will help conservators be more consistent and bolder in the way that they talk about conservation to their peers, employers, families, and friends.

[Find out more about Icon's campaign to demonstrate the value of conservation.](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT EXCELLENCE

The new Icon Ethical Guidance was published in June 2020.



Icon Ethical Guidance

A dedicated task and finish group of **Icon members**, working under the guidance of **Icon's Professional Standards and Development Committee** published the Icon Ethical Guidance in June 2020. This new guidance is the fruit of several years of intense **research and dialogue with members**, and offers a **guide for the actions of all Icon members** regardless of area of practice or specialism.

The guidance is focussed around the **Ethical Principles for Conservation**. These are thirteen broad **statements** that define an **ethical approach** to items of cultural heritage. The Principles are supported by a Commentary, which offers more detail about the fundamental ideas expressed by each Principle, and how to apply them in conservation practice.

The Icon Ethical Guidance demonstrates Icon's clear commitment to **high professional standards**. It is **freely accessible** and easily available, and may be used by others to inform their own policy development around ethics in the cultural heritage sector.

Find out more about the [Icon Ethical Guidance](#).

SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

ENGAGEMENT

During the first lockdown, the Icon Book & Paper Group pioneered the *Conservation Together at Home* webinar series.



Conservation Together at Home

During the first lockdown, the Icon Book & Paper Group pioneered the Conservation Together at Home webinar series, inviting conservation professionals to share **previously presented conference papers** and facilitating **members' professional development** at a time when many training events were being cancelled.

By the end of spring 2020, the Conservation Together at Home webinar series had reached **over 9,000 viewers**. A total of 3,400 people had attended the live talks and a further 5,600 people watched the recordings afterwards. Participants came from all over the world, and many viewers did not have conservation backgrounds.

By actively engaging with a non-specialist audience, the webinar series helped to **cultivate appreciation for and understanding of conservation**. With its **global reach**, we also connected conservators who may not otherwise encounter each other.

The library of lectures, now has **over 30 free-access videos**, forming a lasting legacy from the webinar series.

Find the recorded Conservation Together at Home talks [on YouTube](#).

SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

ICOME GENERATION

A grant from the first round of the Government's Culture Recovery Fund enabled Icon to commission a new membership database and website.

Digital transformation

The aim of the digital transformation project was to integrate and manage our data better, support more effective communication with our members, eliminate duplication between digital platforms, and standardise our routine administrative systems to make them more efficient so that staff can be more responsive to members' needs.

An integrated platform

The new cloud-based solution provides an integrated platform encompassing the core membership database, the Icon website, an events platform, a new Student Project Gallery, and communications software. This enables members to see their upcoming membership activity at a glance and also access records of past event registration or membership payments.

Supporting members' CPD activities

The website also includes an integrated CPD feature where Icon members can log their training activity, providing a “one-stop shop” for their career development. Easier record-keeping will also smooth their advancement towards Icon Accreditation and the maintenance of their accredited status.

Find out more about [Icon's new website](#).



SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

CORONAVIRUS

During the pandemic, we increased the level of policy activity that we undertake.

We wrote 15 letters to politicians, we supplied briefings to the Government and we made use of all relevant opportunities arising from the Government's efforts to collect evidence and recommendations.



Lobbying for Coronavirus support

During the year we wrote 15 letters to politicians across all UK nations advocating for support for conservators during the Coronavirus crisis. We also supplied briefings to the Government via The Heritage Alliance (England's largest umbrella body for heritage) which helped shape policy and sector support measures.

We made use of all relevant opportunities arising from the Government's efforts to collect evidence and recommendations. For example, we responded to the DCMS Select Committee on the impact of Coronavirus on the cultural sector and submitted proposals to the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Coronavirus Impact Surveys

We ran two research studies in March and November to open a direct line of communication through which members could share evidence, case studies and feedback to ensure we understood key issues and challenges from their perspectives.

The resulting Coronavirus Research Reports outline the significant consequences of the lockdowns on the profession. We shared our findings with stakeholders and used them to back up the arguments in our letters, statements, and policy responses. We also shared the case studies provided by our members directly with DCMS and The Heritage Alliance, ensuring that the personal experiences of conservators were heard at the highest levels.

Impact

Our partners valued the evidence we collected and shared. Historic England expressed its appreciation for “**Icon’s generosity in being willing to share information,**” describing Icon’s Coronavirus Research Reports “**a great example of working together.**”

The DCMS Select Committee’s report stressed that “it is essential that cultural freelancers and small companies in the creative industries supply chain are also eligible for direct support.”

The Select Committee’s report also called for more application guidance, clarity, and prompt access to Coronavirus support funds. Each of these issues had featured heavily in our response to the call for evidence.

We were therefore pleased to note that the impact of our lobbying was reflected in the Government’s Cultural Recovery Fund for Heritage where conservators and conservation work were specifically highlighted as being eligible for the fund.

Advocacy materials

We produced a variety of Coronavirus advocacy material designed for a broad audience. From our **Statement on the Value of Collections Care** to our pamphlet on the **economic benefits of conservation**, our Coronavirus policy documents supported members in their own individual advocacy efforts - whether it was writing to their local MP or negotiating with their employer during museum restructuring programmes.

Find out more about [Icon’s lobbying work during Coronavirus.](#)

Icon

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

CARE OF COLLECTIONS

'A stitch in time saves nine'

The last few months have been tough for cultural heritage professionals and for the institutions where they work. There are still challenging times ahead - recovery will not be easy and we understand that there will be a need to tighten belts.

However, investing in collections care and conservation is responsible and cost-effective.

WE ARE MAKING A STRONG PLEA FOR THE NEED TO MAINTAIN CONSERVATION SERVICES WITHIN OUR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS.



The Institute of Conservation is a charity and the professional body representing and supporting the practice and profession of conservation.

Icon champions excellence in conservation and promotes the value of caring for heritage.

www.icon.org.uk

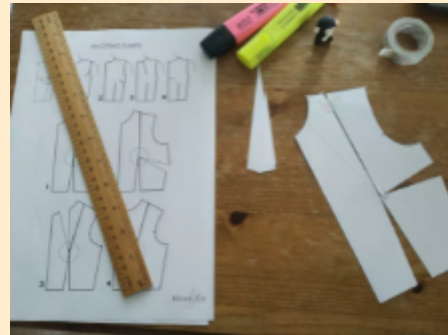
AND MANY MORE! [READ OUR IMPACT STORIES ONLINE](#)



Icon's Board of Trustees comes of age

In celebration of the 15th Anniversary of the first elected Icon Board of Trustees, we dived into the *Icon News* archives to share an extract describing the landmark event.

We also asked our first Trustees to reflect on their experiences of the birth of Icon and to tell us what they've been up to since.



Pattern Cutting to Toile Making on Zoom

Costume conservation and mounting is increasingly becoming a focus for museums and galleries. Despite the challenges of delivering a practical workshop remotely, the Icon Textile Group organised a highly successful online CPD opportunity that was accessible to everyone, including those who aren't always able to travel to a physical venue.



Developing a Coronavirus support hub

In Spring 2020, Icon mobilised its resources to provide members with the support they needed to adapt to the Coronavirus lockdowns.

We created a new dedicated section of the website to host the extensive new suite of Coronavirus support resources, with sections for Continuing Professional Development, Advocacy and Policy, Business Support and Collections Care.



Delivering conservation straight to your inbox

The new e-Newsletter was launched in August 2020 in order to attract a wider audience to Icon. It was designed to appeal to non-specialists, with stories that are both educational and entertaining.

The monthly e-Newsletter also features stories about Icon members as well as links to Icon events and top conservation tips.

AND MANY MORE! [READ OUR IMPACT STORIES ONLINE](#)



Giving Tuesday

On 1 December 2020, Icon participated for the first time in Giving Tuesday, a UK-wide online fundraising campaign which annually raises £20m for good causes. We set out to seek sponsorship for student and international memberships and were delighted to raise £1,783 to support 25 student memberships and 3 international memberships.



Celebrating 20 years of Icon Accreditation

To mark the anniversary of the foundation of the Icon Accreditation framework in 2000, we commissioned a new user-friendly logo for Icon Accredited members to use, relaunched the Conservation Register, developed the Virtual Open Studios series and produced a special events programme.



Making progress on supporting apprenticeships

We successfully completed our registration for Icon to be the End Point Assessment organisation for the newly developed Cultural Heritage Conservation Technician and Conservator apprenticeship standards.



Delivering conservation expertise for small museums

The AIM Collections Care Audit Grant Scheme (funded by the Pilgrim Trust) was developed to enable small museums to commission an Icon Accredited conservator (ACR) to undertake a basic professional collections care audit. As part of Icon's continuing support for this valuable initiative, we launched a new online gallery to showcase the grant-aided projects and their outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Icon is grateful for the contributions of all those who worked tirelessly on the projects mentioned in this report. Together, staff and members have achieved a great deal in a challenging year, and made a considerable positive impact for the conservation profession.

We would particularly like to acknowledge all the **members** who choose to contribute their time to their professional body, including **Group and Network committee members, participants** in Icon's task and finish groups or working groups, **trustees, event speakers**, and critical **friends and advisors**. We estimate that our members contribute more than £0.5m of in-kind support each year, calculated at a professional day-rate.

Icon is also fortunate to have several **external supporters**. We would like to express our special appreciation to:

- **The Radcliffe Trust** for supporting the launch of the Collections Care Stimulus Fund
- Conservators and others who donated funds in memory of the late Nigel Williams and the late Frederick Bearman
- **Donors** who supported our first ever crowdfunding appeal (in support of our digital transformation project) and those who sponsored memberships in response to our Giving Tuesday appeal
- An anonymous donor whose generous support facilitated the delivery of several projects
- **The Pilgrim Trust**
- **The Anna Plowden Trust**

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

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[Contact us](#)

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