

Archives Conservation Discussion Group 2010: Working in an Unstable Economy: Experiences and Insight on the Conservation of Paper-based Materials in the Private Sector

ABSTRACT

The Archives Conservation Discussion Group 2010 focused on the work of current book and paper conservators working in the private sector, including individual private conservators as well as conservators working in regional conservation centers. When faced with the challenge of running a business, private conservators and those in regional centers must think creatively, remain flexible, and work within financial restrictions. Four conservators were invited to share their varied experiences and insight. Presentations and a subsequent discussion covered topics such as marketing, cash flow, staffing, outreach, equipment and tools, and special adaptations to treatment techniques.

INTRODUCTION

The 2010 Archives Conservation Discussion Group (ACDG) met in Milwaukee on Thursday, May 13, to share and discuss the work of current book and paper conservators working in the private sector, including individual private conservators as well as conservators working in regional conservation centers. Often our colleagues working on their own, outside the museum or library environment, do not have the time or resources to share all the unique and innovative ways they learn to adapt treatments, deal with staffing issues, and run a business. This insight is beneficial for any conservator working in difficult economic times, whether in an institution or in a private studio. In order to highlight the insight of those working privately, the co-chairs for ACDG invited four conservators with varied experiences in the private sector.

This open discussion took place on May 13, 2010, during AIC's 38th Annual Meeting, Milwaukee, WI. The moderators organized the panelists, led the discussion, and recorded notes. Readers are reminded that the moderators do not necessarily endorse all the comments recorded and that although every effort was made to record proceedings accurately, further evaluation or research is advised before putting treatment observations into practice.

The speakers covered a broad range of challenges and solutions. In addition to their presentations, participants provided handouts with further information and resources and ended with a question and answer session. A summary of each presentation and the resultant discussion is provided below.

MICHAEL LEE

OPERATING A REGIONAL CENTER IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR DURING AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

The first speaker was Michael Lee, Director of Conservation at Etherington Conservation Services (ECS), in North Carolina. Lee shared his insight into the operation of a regional center in the private sector during an economic downturn. To start, Lee emphasized the importance of keeping the employees safe, happy, and productive. The company must be clear about what to expect from staff. A single bad decision can result in poor morale, as well as loss in productivity and business. The company should trust that the staff is on its side and the staff should trust that decisions are made in their best interest. Clear direction helps everyone stay motivated, and those in charge of staff must serve many unexpected functions, including cheerleader, jester, sage, and mentor, keeping things fun and making sure the job is enjoyable. Additionally, Lee stressed that it is very important for those in charge to earn respect by demonstrating that they do work at the highest level. Motivation and productivity is lost as soon as technicians start questioning the ability of those above them.

Next Lee defined what a regional center is, including the services offered. Regional centers, whether non-profit or for-profit, are businesses, varying from other familiar cultural institutions. For-profit businesses such as ECS are not entitled to grants so the conservation and preservation services they provide are the sole source of income. Lee stressed that there is no magic involved in running a center, but much hard work and persistence keeps the business running, especially when extremely difficult decisions are made. The most difficult decisions typically relate to staffing levels. A significant

part of the overhead is labor, and those in charge must look after their staff but they must also let them go for the greater good and well being of the company. Lee emphasized that this is extremely difficult.

Lee provided some basic principles to follow for optimum success, which are applicable beyond a regional center. One should treat everyone equally and fairly and focus on the group. It is also important to match a staff member's skill level to the type of project assigned in order to make best use of time and resources. Ensuring that the appropriate time is allocated for a project is also important, with the goal of never over-estimating. When it comes to clients one must define and meet their needs and personalize the service, defining client value. Clients should be given options and they must make the final fiscal decision. It is also important to reinvest in the staff and company when funds allow. Professionalism and integrity is of the utmost importance, and Lee stated that one must never compromise on quality in order to save money. In conclusion, Lee provided sound advice when he reiterated how important it is to clearly state project priorities, develop a standard work methodology, incorporate the lessons learned from past challenges into daily work and apply them to future projects, and always keep an open mind to new business ideas.

Michael Lee, Director of Conservation, Etherington Conservation Services

SUSAN LUNAS

BOUND AND DETERMINED: CHALLENGES IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

The second speaker was Susan Lunas, Chief Conservator at Many Moons Book Conservation in Oregon. Lunas clearly illustrated what life is like as a private book conservator who must also serve as the sole breadwinner. The largest challenge lies not in treatment but in simply running the business. A private conservator must wear many hats and carefully balance personal and work life. It is difficult to find balance when working out of one's own home. Lunas has discovered the importance of outside hobbies to take care of stress relief. Another challenge common to all private conservators is cash flow. When an item requires many hours of treatment, money may not come in for long periods of time. In order to face these challenges Lunas has developed techniques for working faster and more efficiently and has looked at ways to supplement her income. There has been a noticeable decline in business during the past few years, with the number of clients decreasing between 2008 and 2009. Lunas also addressed a pertinent issue that many conservators face today—a spouse or partner loses his or her job due to the poor economy resulting in the family relying on the conservator's sole income.

Along with herself, Lunas discovered that several colleagues became the sole breadwinner within the past year.

Additionally, marketing to find new clients is a challenge. When Lunas moved to Eugene, Oregon there was already a well-established book conservator. Once this conservator retired Lunas was able to take over the business, which provided new opportunities to develop her clientele. A listing in the yellow pages did not prove to be as useful as Lunas originally hoped, so she decided to invest in a website. Trading work with a web designer allowed for Lunas to develop a website she may not have been able to afford otherwise. Ultimately her workload went from twenty or thirty clients to over seventy with the help of taking over the business of an established conservator and marketing online.

When working with such limited resources, Lunas had to think of how she could outfit her studio with the necessary equipment in the most economical way. She successfully acquired equipment from an estate sale, created a washing table out of a shower floor and bathroom vanity found at a recycling center, made use of her husband's carpentry skills to build a combination press, portable vacuum table, and light table, and scoured through used office stores for other useful and adaptable furniture. When small hand tools are required Lunas uses shaped popsicle sticks for paper splitting and lifting, a street sweeper bristle shaped into a microspatula, and watercolor fan brushes for paste and glue, which are easier to clean. She emphasized that with some adaptations she is still able to use the same equipment found in any lab, even within her limitations.

Lunas explained that the majority of her work includes family and hand bibles, religious texts, halftone prints, cookbooks, marriage certificates, and etchings. She shared a few tips that have helped with speed and efficiency, including using her fingers to achieve a more controlled lifting of pastedowns, using bulldog clips to hold down lifted leather or cloth while re-backing large books, and using cork to remove sticky tape residue. She must always think of ways to adapt treatments to fit the budget and intended use. Lunas explained that some clients are difficult, especially when it comes to demanding fast turn-around time. As a result she charges a rush fee to cover this problem. She also expressed her grief over losing an elderly client by the time a treatment was completed, which is something that is not typically addressed by conservators in private practice.

In order to keep her skills current Lunas attends the AIC meetings and currently serves as an officer for the Conservators in Private Practice (CIPP) group, looks for workshops, and consults her personal conservation library as well as colleagues. The isolation of working privately can be extremely difficult. She reaches out by giving presentations at universities, senior groups, and regional conservation gatherings. She also emphasized how invaluable phone calls to fellow conservators can be in order to discuss challenges,

clients, and treatments. She formed a bookbinding group, which meets once a month to share techniques, vendors, suppliers, and discuss terminology. In order to get out of her studio, she also volunteers at the Oregon Genealogical Society's book repair unit, where she supervises other volunteers in book repair. Despite many challenges, Lunas has used her creativity, determination, and flexibility to run her private business through difficult times.

Susan Lunas, Chief Conservator, Many Moons Book Conservation

WENDY BENNETT

CONSERVATOR: SELL THYSELF!

The third speaker, Wendy Bennett, has been in private practice for fifteen years as owner and paper conservator for Fine Art Paper Conservation in Pittsburgh, PA. Bennett responded to the session topic, namely highlighting the practices of paper conservators in the private sector during uncertain economic times, because she felt it was time to reenergize her business. Bennett's talk focused on how to spread the word about your business and presented ideas on making the business more visible. Bennett shared her own experiences including what has worked, what she is in the process of trying, and ideas she has not yet put into practice.

A couple of years ago Bennett moved and in the process downsized her life and conservation business. During the transition, she took on the directorship of a small non-profit organization with the goal of later continuing her business full-time. Bennett learned much from her directorship position and was able to apply what she learned about marketing in order to start to build her own brand. This brought up an interesting question: exactly what does building your own brand mean as a conservator? Conservators are fond of identifying with doctors and lawyers, yet they would not advertise in the same manner. In fact, selling yourself as a white collar professional was considered taboo until the mid 70's, when a Supreme Court decision lifted bans on advertising by physicians and attorneys. Now ads for these occupations are ubiquitous for doctors and lawyers, but conservators represent a much smaller niche and they generally don't have thousands of dollars to spend on this type of advertising. Additionally, the opinion persists that it is unseemly to advertise in this manner. Therefore Bennett asked: what can we do as conservators to spread the word about our profession and our businesses?

Bennett suggested that conservators advertise in a subtler manner, which can still be effective. The AIC Code of Ethics considers the marketing of conservation services an essential link between professional service providers and those who are responsible for making decisions regarding the preservation of cultural property. The Code states that honest and

well-conceived marketing tools serve to promote the profession as a whole. Conservators are advised not to advertise unless they are Professional Associates or Fellows, and conservators are cautioned against giving public presentations in the hopes of attaining business. Care should be exercised to avoid undo self-promotion and it is usually safer to present in the name of education.

Again referencing the Code of Ethics, Bennett outlined techniques she has used to generate work and make her business more visible. She explained that if one of the centerpieces of our Code of Ethics is to be proactive in teaching the public about conservation, then one of the best tools as a private conservator is a clear online presence. Having a website is critical as a way to communicate these days. It is important to make your website graphically clear, be vigilant about keeping it updated, include a LinkedIn profile with professional recommendations, and add current activities. It is also advisable to maintain a blog. Bennett mentioned examples of good conservation blogs such as those by Ellen Carlee, Jeff Peachy, and Beth Heller. For those just starting out, Bennett suggested joining the Emerging Conservation Professionals Network, now hosted on the AIC website. New conservators can also blog or upload photos of projects. This group also has a Facebook page and a Twitter feed.

Bennett also emphasized collaboration. She described a group of private conservators in the Philadelphia area who have joined together to create a cohesive and attractive online presence. They did a particularly good job of building many opportunities for educational outreach, including lectures on a broad range of collections care topics and a section on careers in conservation, as well as a page of conservation tips. Bennett explained that a brochure she made with two other conservators inspired the collaborative website. This brochure now needs to be updated, but it served the conservators in Bennett's own small group quite well for about seven or eight years and Bennett still gets work due to its distribution. Bennett and her two colleagues checked out many other brochures and worked with a graphic artist to develop their own. She found that this collaboration was a great way to share costs. The brochure was particularly useful to leave at frame shops. It was first distributed to a targeted mailing list of museums, historical societies, and private individuals chosen by income within a fifty-mile geographic radius. There are many companies that compile these types of lists on the Internet.

In order to cover advertising costs, Bennett suggested bartering for professional graphic services. She also mentioned the importance of taking some time to select the quality of the paper and the design of the letterhead to reflect your care as a paper conservator. Take advantage of the fact that people receive fewer interesting pieces of mail these days. Making something beautiful will catch potential clients' attention. Other mailing suggestions include compiling a database of clients, including staff members at institutions, private

individuals, frame shops, and galleries. If you move be sure to send cards with your new address, and it is a good idea to send annual holiday cards. Additionally, Bennett suggested creating a calendar to give to special clients.

Another useful tool for a private conservator is a portfolio to highlight your range of work. A portfolio is an excellent way to illustrate your capabilities and skills as a conservator and it is useful for new and potential clients who may be unfamiliar with the concept of conservation. A portfolio is helpful when it is not practical to go online to share your website and it is a good visual aid to pass around at smaller speaking engagements. Bennett also emphasizes the use of bartering to save money on a variety of services. She exchanges conservation treatments for artwork, landscape design, and help with legal documents. Bartering also helps spread the word about your services, often leading to cash-paying customers. Bennett barterers informally, but there are also formal networks including the Green Apple Network, YouExchange.com, and Craigslist.

Joining the board of directors at a small non-profit or municipal arts commission is also beneficial to the business. Bennett was invited to join the board of the new ToonSeum in Pittsburgh, which is one of only three cartoon art museums in the country. Bennett represented the ToonSeum board at a Lawyers in the Arts gathering and a ToonSeum Needs Assessment group at Carnegie Mellon University, where she made some connections both for the ToonSeum and for her own business. Bennett also suggests seeking opportunities to find adjunct professorships. Bennett is teaching a preservation course this summer and fall at the University of Pittsburgh where she will have students develop a survey and disaster plan for the ToonSeum. Bennett is also working with the curator of the Cartoon Art Archives at Ohio State University to develop a checklist of conservation guidelines for cartoonists, which will be presented at the National Cartoonists Society Annual Meeting.

When it comes to professional development there are many opportunities for conservators to attend classes such as the Campbell Center and continuing education through FAIC. Bennett explained that she has made some great contacts this way while at the same time brushing up on her skills. She also suggests making friends with people in the local media and talking to the public relations staff at museums and other institutions because they may be able to feature a conservation project. Also most universities have their own magazines, so contacting an editor may lead to some exposure if they are able to feature a project that will tie into something happening at the university. Your alma mater magazine is also a useful source of exposure. Publishing is a great way to promote your brand and spread the good word about conservation.

Bennett also suggests keeping current with grant deadlines listed in the AIC newsletter and website and share them with local institutions. Offer to write the conservation section of the grant because whether or not you're successful in getting

the grant, you have helped the institution get a fix on the project they're interested in pursuing and you've also identified yourself as the contact for conservation. Bennett is currently working with two institutions on grant projects. Additionally, considering the model of the Antiques Road Show, your community may sponsor an antique preservation fair where you can serve as a conservation expert. These venues are good vehicles to explain conservation to the general public. For example, a book appraiser Bennett met at a recent fair gave her name to someone who found a rare circus poster in the attic of a house, leading to an excellent project. You can also raise your visibility by making a gift to a silent auction for the charitable organization of your choice. Bennett recently donated a Japanese triptych to her local Cystic Fibrosis Foundation fundraiser. Rather than donating an item, you can also donate your services as a conservator or consultant.

Though conservators in private practice don't have as much time to conduct research, it may be possible to offer to make a presentation, related to what is happening curatorially at a local museum. Bennett pointed out that conservators should not pass up opportunities to speak at high schools or community groups because you never know whom you will meet. Recently Bennett obtained a FAIC Professional Development Grant to attend the History and Use of Pastels course in Buffalo. Upon learning that Bennett received the grant, the curator she had asked to write a recommendation invited her to present a talk about pastels to compliment an upcoming Degas exhibit at the Carnegie Museum of Art.

In conclusion, Bennett suggests that conservators should attend museum and gallery openings and lectures. Go to art auctions and attend or volunteer for art fundraisers. In this way you identify yourself as an active participant in the arts community in your region. One of the reasons Bennett decided to make this presentation was because she wanted to challenge herself to follow through with some of these ideas given the tough economy and her transition back to full-time conservation. By implementing some of the ideas she shared, Bennett has been able to generate fresh sources of work and new opportunities for her business. Certainly there are tips that have been left out, and Bennett is eager to learn from others.

Wendy Bennett, Fine Art Paper Conservation

JIM HINZ

OIL AND BORAX: CONSERVATION OF THE PENNSYLVANIA
GENERAL ASSEMBLY COLLECTION

The last speaker was Jim Hinz, currently the Head of the Book Section for the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA). Through a contract with the State Library of Pennsylvania, Hinz shared some of the day-to-day issues confronted by regional centers. Initially,

CCAHA worked with the State Library of Pennsylvania to identify and write a Save America's Treasures grant for the conservation treatment of the library's General Assembly Collection. CCAHA contributes much of its time to assisting with grants and the center is currently working with other institutions on similar projects. The State Library ultimately received the grant, which in turn benefitted CCAHA in receiving the work.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly Collection was the 422-volume library of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Currently residing in the Rare Books Room of the State Library of Pennsylvania, the General Assembly Collection slipped out of history after its move from Philadelphia to Harrisburg in the early years of the nineteenth century. It was only in the 1960s that dedicated researchers from Independence National Historic Park and the State Library of Pennsylvania realized the historical value of this collection, also discovering that all the volumes were still together.

Benjamin Franklin and Isaac Norris II spearheaded the drive to establish the Pennsylvania General Assembly's library and make it one of the finest in the colonies. In 1745–1746, while Clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly, Franklin purchased the core books of the library from William Strahan, a London bookseller. He chose these books to serve as a practical law library for statesmen, covering the breadth of English and international law. Franklin and Norris then chose to round out the collection with additional volumes on philosophy, art, architecture, and the natural sciences. Today, the books selected offer remarkable insight into the worldview of a Colonial statesman. Even more remarkably, this was the resource library available to our Founding Fathers as they debated and wrote the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

In summer 1776, the General Assembly Collection was maintained in the Library and Committee Room of the State Assembly Building, now commonly known as Independence Hall. Access to the Library and Committee Room was through the back door of the main Assembly Chamber allowing for easy access to the books for reference. Appropriately, the library prominently contained not just law, but the works of John Locke, whose influence permeates the Declaration, inspiring the immortal phrase, "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." Eleven years later, the eyes of America once again focused on the State Assembly Building as the Constitutional Convention met in secret to draft a new set of laws to govern the young nation. Once again, the General Assembly Collection served as a readily available resource library to the assembled statesmen. Edmund Randolph wrote the first draft of the Constitution, which was then rewritten by James Wilson of Pennsylvania, and polished by a committee of Alexander Hamilton of New York, William Samuel Johnson of Connecticut, Rufus King of Massachusetts, James Madison of Virginia, and Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania.

Along with the bound Journals of Congress containing the Proceedings from 1775 to 1788, the Rare Books Room of the State Library contains one of the 18 known surviving copies of the first public printing of the U.S. Constitution, both important components of the General Assembly Collection. But the General Assembly Collection is more than a witness to these foundational moments in American history. Through the 100 volumes of official minutes and laws, it traces the Eighteenth Century history of the Pennsylvania General Assembly as it negotiated with the Penn family, as it appointed Benjamin Franklin to serve on a series of momentous missions to England, and as it reacted to the burdensome laws and tax levies that formed the prelude to revolution. English law and philosophy forged the men who served in the Pennsylvania General Assembly, the Second Continental Congress, and the Constitutional Convention. The volumes of the General Assembly Collection, including the works of John Locke, the Statutes at Large, and the works of Coke, Puffendorf, De Vattel, Grotius, and many of the other great European legal authorities, represent the legal universe that gave shape and legal credibility to the revolutionary documents of that time. As has been said, the fingerprints of the Founding Fathers are all over these books.

The condition problems with the collection were typical for eighteenth century calf bindings, such as split boards and detached spines. Most of the sewing was in good shape, but often the cords were broken, resulting in detached boards from the text block. Loose sections of the text block were discolored, torn, and detached due to failed sewing. There was also surface soil on the leaves and end sheets were discolored, torn and sometimes detached. The leather covers were over-dressed with Neatsfoot oil and lanolin, which became tacky to the touch. The leather on the covers was occasionally desiccated, split at the joint, and had many losses, concentrated along the joints and headcaps.

Solutions to these common problems included:

- Surface cleaning with grated eraser crumbs.
- Reduction of leather dressing in the fume hood with the organic solvent benzine, which was not always successful.
- Board-tacketing to the text block with new linen thread and reinforcing the cords.
- Washing of end sheets and loose sections of the text using calcium-enriched deionized water, followed by mending with mulberry paper and wheat starch paste, and re-sewing.
- Providing new end sheets when necessary.
- Mending leather with acrylic-toned mulberry paper laid down with wheat starch paste and polyvinyl acetate, ensuring that the mends adhered to the over-oiled leather. The mends were finished with an acrylic-polymer/wax emulsion.

Notes written by Robert Bray Wingate were discovered at the State Library from the 1970s. Wingate worked for the State Library as a Chemist and Head of the State Library's Rare Book Room. He performed conservation treatment on the Assembly Collection and his notes on leather and paper treatment were helpful in determining CCAHA's treatment approaches. For example, the notes revealed that borax was used on paper. As a result, CCAHA staff was instructed to perform surface cleaning of paper in a fume hood. The leather appeared to be over oiled and scented. The notes revealed that Wingate wanted the books to smell like Russian leather. Along with Wingate's notes at the State Library, he also published an article titled "Kitchen Chemistry" in the AB Bookman and another article in the Abby Newsletter. Records indicated that Wingate was the last to treat the Assembly Collection and publications by the author indicate the use of Neatsfoot oil and other treatment techniques. It was later discovered that Wingate did not actually hold a chemistry degree, and was eventually fired from his positions at the State Library as a result. Another useful resource during treatment at CCAHA included instructions from a publication of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The National Library of the Netherlands titled "Guidelines for the conservation of leather and parchment bookbindings." Using these guidelines, CCAHA further amended treatment approaches for the General Assembly Collection. These guidelines were a valuable source that Hinz recommends exploring.

In summary, the total budget for the project was \$300,000–\$400,000, including grant and matching funds from the State Library. In the end, nearly 200 books were treated. With a tight deadline, the conservators had to work quickly while ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines. Since many books were similar in terms of treatment needs, CCAHA developed methods of working more efficiently and Hinz agreed to elaborate on that aspect of the project during the final discussion. In conclusion, Hinz shared the way CCAHA is set up and how it operates with efficiency and speed when it comes to large projects.

Jim Hinz

Head of Book Section

Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts

DISCUSSION

An informative discussion followed the presentations, starting with a question for Hinz regarding how elaborate his methods were to estimate the time it would take to complete the project he discussed. Although he did not do the estimation, CCAHA usually generalizes how long a project will take factoring in many issues. Problems may go unseen in the beginning therefore leading to underestimation. An

employee's skill and speed, reflecting on previous projects, and the type of client will factor into the estimate. Most of CCAHA's work comes from institutional clients, which often have more leeway. Lee added that it is crucial to manage employee time through the recording of billing hours. Once a project is finished, the manager must study the hours to determine whether the estimate was over or under. If an employee is slow at a particular task, you must adjust the estimate to fit their work but also make sure to train them so that each individual is up to speed. Hinz pointed out that there is not always time to study the hours of each employee and it can be very difficult to track hours.

Next, there was a question about whether the panelists have a system for fees. Do they custom-fit the fee according to the project or have set fees? Lee stated that there is a set billing structure at ECS. The billing structure is arranged according to time and materials. Clients always like to know what they are paying for, so you can't expect to take on a project without stating the costs up front. Institutions have very strict budgets and they set their conservation priorities in order to get the most bang for their buck, focusing on valuable items. Lee explained that the cost is not adjusted or catered to the treatment or money available. Options are provided so that the client can choose a treatment that falls within their budget.

An audience member shared her years of experience in private practice and pointed out that the same problems seem to come up time and time again. She has noticed that the more polished and professional conservators appear, the more off-putting they are to the public. The public may not know what conservators are, so fancy brochures and marketing tools may give off the impression of being expensive. She stated that she gets more bookbinding work than actual conservation treatment, suggesting that the conservation end of the business often intimidates or scares people away. In order to gain an approachable image it is best to show the actual work, rather than fancy brochures, photos, or portfolios. Allowing people to see your handwork in person will grab their attention and bring the work to the community. Bennett asked how the audience member shows her actual work to people, and the audience member stated that she brings samples to trade and craft shows, resulting in the majority of her business. She also emphasized the importance of working on items that many view as less desirable such as cookbooks and bibles. Working on these things allows for a conservator to learn how to work quickly and efficiently. Lee stated that the same applies to a large regional center. He recommended not marketing yourself as so high up that you are unattainable. Many clients express hesitation when approaching a conservator with an item to be treated. They are fearful of the cost and don't know what it will require. Conservators should project a good bedside manner and make the clients comfortable. Once a client understands a conservator's work and feels comfortable and

satisfied with the services provided, word spreads around leading to more business.

Another question was raised from the audience regarding the amount of time private conservators spend on the different facets of their business, especially when it comes to administrative versus bench time. Hinz explained that at CCAHA there is a full-time employee dedicated to each task in the business, such as a photographer, biller, and forty conservators, etc. Lee explained that as the head conservator he spends 30% of his time doing bench work. When he first started working at ECS he was doing bench work 75% of the time, indicating that the longer you work the more you are responsible for administrative duties. He also pointed out that it is beneficial to do some work at the bench even when your responsibilities have expanded to administration because if you demonstrate your abilities to your conservators and technicians they are more likely to support and rally around you. This is an important thing to keep in mind as a mentor. Lunas spends 80% of her time at the bench and 20% on administrative duties, but this is because her husband assists in many of the administrative tasks such as photo documentation, checking items in and out, and writing treatment proposals. Without his help her bench to administrative time would be 50/50. Bennett divides her time 50/50, but has been thinking about marketing a lot more lately so this ratio varies. She used to get private work without marketing but now wants to improve the quality of items she works on. The economy does affect the business. People who used to bring items for treatment without a second thought are now more careful when considering getting work done.

A member of the audience shared some quick ideas that she has put into practice in her own business. In order to demystify conservation, she offers an open house twice a year. Clients are invited and often bring interested friends. Treatments are demonstrated and projects are displayed, showing the care and attention that goes into the work. The clients become familiar with conservation and the friends joining them often become new clients. Another activity that leads to more business includes presenting how to value, care, and preserve work to galleries. A framer, appraiser, and conservator can make a presentation to those responsible for works on paper in galleries. When asked how to get the word out when there is an open house, the audience member emphasized that she keeps the group to twenty people by invitation only. She particularly pays attention to those who express curiosity and interest when dropping an item off, noting their names for future invitations. A third activity that has been successful is to give a lecture to a local community in order to help raise money for the treatment of a special item at a historical society of other small institution with a limited budget for conservation. The conservator can talk about related objects and explain the value of the work and why it is important to treat a particular object. This type of

lecture raises money and the community is delighted. Hinz explained that CCAHA also hosts open houses, where invitations go out to board members, the center's mailing lists, friends, and family. Special tours for other institutions also lead to useful connections.

Another audience member shared her experiences with taking out a business loan to purchase cast iron equipment. She also came across small organizations that have proven to be useful, such as the Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency Team for small business owners in New Mexico. They offer short lunchtime classes and provide a way to meet other local business people. There may not be many conservators, but the insight of other business owners helps, such as putting pricing into a more realistic scope.

One audience member who works at another regional lab stated that the name of the business can influence the amount of work that comes in. The Intermuseum Conservation Association was often viewed as vague and many people were confused whether they did work only for museums or if they also worked for individual clients. The business decided to change their name slightly to prevent confusion. The audience member also asked the panel how much they quote versus how much they estimate when it comes to pricing. Conservators may be compelled to quote a higher price to ensure that their time is sufficiently covered, but perhaps a range is more realistic or fair. Hinz explained that at CCAHA they give advanced estimates and build in a 10% cushion. They also give a range. Lee explained that at ECS they provide one figure to the client, so what they see on paper is what they pay. Adjustments are made only for things out of the ordinary because it is very difficult to make changes. Occasionally the business has to negotiate and split the difference. Bennett gives a range and is happy when she can sometimes go to the low end of the range. It is very awkward to make adjustments. She also finds herself using a sliding scale depending on how much the client seems to be able to afford. Lunas uses a flat fee for simple treatments, but the flat fee is still an estimate. Things may look simple at first but they can end up very complex, so she calls the client and explains why the price must be raised.

An audience member shared that the best way to run a business is to start with the budget before thinking about anything else. For a private business with staff, standardized forms are a way of giving employees a goal of how much work they should do relative to their salary. This record keeping provides a way of determining whether there will be a profit or not. A bonus system also encourages employees to work beyond their goals. Lee agreed and stated that the salary, plus taxes, retirement plans, and other benefits all add up, so the business must generate enough to cover everything for each individual. Obviously time-consuming work such as conservation is not a big moneymaking proposition.

A question arose regarding works on paper and photographs. The audience member asked how the panelists address the highly variable time it may take to in-paint during treatment, compared to the cleaning and repair steps that may be required. Lee explained that if he imagines that something will take an hour it will really take twice as long. There is no set formula, so even doubling the time is often incorrect. When it comes to difficult in-painting for things such as photographs, it can be impossible to make up the time elsewhere.

A conservator from the audience who works abroad explained the way conservation varies in Argentina compared to the US. Working on contract since 1993, she never realized that she technically falls under the “private” designation. Often institutions need a conservator for two days a week, so she works on contract between different institutions dividing her time in two-day intervals. Additionally private collectors do not always want to move their items so she will work off-site. Working offsite makes it easier to keep track of time since the clients see exactly how many hours she has worked. The clients can also see how delicate and difficult treatments can be, and how much time it can take. When they see the work being done they deliver more praise and appreciation, boosting the conservator’s confidence. Giving lectures for artists on how to properly mount and handle their work has also proven to be beneficial because they learn about conservation before it is too late. A bonus is that more people are exposed to conservation and the conservator is able to identify the needs of artists and clients more readily.

The last question from the audience was whether the panelists add state sales tax. Bennett looked into sales tax with the help of an accountant but determined that it was not practical for her business, so she does not charge sales tax. She does pay sales tax when purchasing materials. Lunas was required to collect and pay sales tax when her practice was in New Jersey but because there is no sales tax in Oregon she no longer has to worry. Lee stated that ECS incorporates sales tax into the treatment costs. An audience member pointed out that there is no sales tax on labor, but sales tax must be charged for any materials, such as cut mat board. Lunas ended the session by sharing an interesting multi-purpose pen tool that incorporates a laser pointer and UV and LED lights (purchased from ThinkGeek.com).

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