

Conservation Terminology

The legacy of our collective cultural heritage enriches our lives. Each generation has a responsibility to maintain and to protect this heritage for the benefit of succeeding generations. Those who care for cultural heritage use special terminology, which we have currently defined as follows:

Conservation: The profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care, supported by research and education.

Examination: The investigation of the structure, materials, and condition of cultural property including the identification of the extent and causes of alteration and deterioration.

Documentation: The recording in a permanent format of information derived from conservation activities.

Treatment: The deliberate alteration of the chemical and/or physical aspects of cultural property, aimed primarily at prolonging its existence. Treatment may consist of stabilization and/or restoration.

Stabilization: Treatment procedures intended to maintain the integrity of cultural property and to minimize deterioration.

Restoration: Treatment procedures intended to return cultural property to a known or assumed state, often through the addition of nonoriginal material.

Preventive Care (also referred to as preventive conservation): The mitigation of deterioration and damage to cultural property through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage, exhibition, packing, transport, and use; integrated pest management; emergency preparedness and response; and reformatting/duplication.

Cultural Property: Objects, collections, specimens, structures, or sites identified as having artistic, historic, scientific, religious, or social significance.

Preservation: The protection of cultural property through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage and that prevent loss of informational content. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural property.

Conservator: A professional whose primary occupation is the practice of conservation and who, through specialized education, knowledge, training, and experience, formulates and implements all the activities of conservation in accordance with an ethical code such as the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

Conservation Administrator: A professional with substantial knowledge of conservation who is responsible for the administrative aspects and implementation of conservation activities in accordance with an ethical code such as the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

Conservation Educator: A professional with substantial knowledge and experience in the theory and techniques of conservation whose primary occupation is to teach the principles, methodology, and/or technical aspects of the profession in accordance with an ethical code such as the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

Conservation Scientist: A professional scientist whose primary focus is the application of specialized knowledge and skills to support the activities of conservation in accordance with an ethical code such as the AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice.

Conservation Technician: An individual who is trained and experienced in specific conservation treatment activities and who works in conjunction with or under the supervision of a conservator. A conservation technician may also be trained and experienced in specific preventive care activities.

Collections Care Specialist: An individual who is trained and experienced in specific preventive care activities and who works in conjunction with or under the supervision of a conservator.