

2005 ICCM Conference Session Conclusions

On the final afternoon of the 2005 ICCM Conference, an overview was presented of the main messages that emerged during the thematic sessions. This overview was based on summary points – produced below – which were distilled from each session by conference rapporteurs.

Evaluating Mosaic Practice

- Evaluation of past interventions and practices is essential to improving current and future practices but is largely dependent on accurate and accessible documentation.
- The practice of mosaic conservation has evolved from one of limited options (detachment), materials (cement), values (aesthetic), and stakeholders (professionals), to one involving complex decision making and planning with a range of viable in situ options (both temporary and long term), the use of scientific methods and compatible materials, and the recognition of multiple values and varied stakeholders.
- Conservation interventions are sustainable only when there is a clear vision, an effective management structure and planning process in place, trained personnel, and regular maintenance and monitoring.
- Decisions about how to treat a mosaic must be made on a case-by-case basis (there is no single formula that can be applied to all mosaics on a site). They are the result of thorough assessment and need to be based on defined criteria and guidelines.
- An understanding of causes of deterioration to in situ mosaics requires recognition of unsolved problems, implementation of long-term and in-depth investigations, and wide dissemination of their results.

Caring for Mosaics in Museums

- Decisions need to be shared by curators and conservators in order to achieve successful and sustainable conservation solutions.
- Previous conservation interventions can sometimes be detrimental to the condition of mosaics in museums; negative effects of past treatments (such as embedded iron rods) can often be mitigated or slowed through preventive conservation measures, such as

the control of temperature and relative humidity in both gallery and storage conditions.

- It is important to consider both the objects and the building envelope in making conservation decisions about mosaics displayed in museums; poor storage conditions is a subject of increasing concern.
- Where adequate documentation does not exist, analysis of past treatments and treatment materials may be necessary in order to develop appropriate conservation measures; historic photographs can also be useful in understanding the change in an object's condition over time.
- In some cases, past interventions have become important to the history of the object and merit conservation in their own right.
- Interpretation and presentation to the public are important values in museum conservation; treatments carried out in full view of the public can be useful in increasing understanding of and support for conservation.

Documenting and Assessing Sites at Risk

- Mosaic corpora that include conservation information and risk assessment strategies undertaken at national or regional levels can be significant tools for the conservation and management of the mosaic heritage.
- It is important to establish systematic documentation standards and protocols to facilitate decision making and to improve practice.
- Attention should be given to the development of documentation strategies that permit improved sharing of information, perhaps through more effective use of digital technologies and the Web.
- Archaeologists and conservators must work together effectively on rescue excavations to ensure that decisions made are those that are best for the heritage at risk.

Managing Sites with Mosaics

- There is a clear trend emerging to look at sites holistically and to undertake more systematic assessment and planning before arriving at decisions regarding conservation and management of sites.
- Stakeholder participation is crucial in gaining support for in situ preservation and in the prevention of looting.
- Techniques like geographic information systems (GIS) may be useful in documenting, monitoring, and managing the mosaic heritage.
- There are multiple options for mosaic conservation that include conservation in situ, detachment and replacement in situ, detachment and replacement in a museum, and reburial. These choices should be made through a systematic study of the entire site that considers the condition of each mosaic and its treatment history, the environment, the desirability of presentation to the public, and the cost.
- Better and more comparable information is needed regarding the relative costs of various types of treatment in order to make informed decisions regarding site conservation.
- Further research may be required regarding reburial methods and the nature of the reburial environment.

Sheltering Mosaics

- The assessment of existing shelters, with regard to protection, cost, and maintenance, for example, can lead to a better understanding of the criteria that affect shelter performance and provide valuable information for the design of new shelters.
- Shelter evaluation should be based on a study of the nature and rate of deterioration in relationship to environmental conditions in the sheltered space. Various types of monitoring strategies may be used to better understand conditions and to assess risks in the sheltered environment.
- Decision making regarding the design of a shelter must be informed by a number of factors, including performance criteria, stakeholder concerns, interpretation and presentation issues, and cost.

- The real cost of a shelter includes not just the initial cost but that of “cost in use,” i.e., the cost over the life of a shelter to maintain it in good condition. Too often the need to maintain a shelter is overlooked.
- Shelters cannot be considered in isolation. A shelter affects the entire site, including its condition, appearance, and use. Long-term planning can prevent unintended consequences.

Training of Conservation Practitioners

- Training is needed at all levels, from that of mosaic technician to conservator and site manager.
- The sustainability of a training initiative will be based on a number of factors. These include:
 - the use of tools, materials, and techniques appropriate to the resources and skills in the local environment;
 - a training effort that is not confined to a single experience but involves a continuous effort over time; and
 - the existence of a management context in which those trained will find employment and support once their training is complete.
- Regional, international, and institutional partnerships can be of great value in training initiatives. Partnering can take many forms, including collaboration in national or regional training initiatives as well as the exchange of personnel or periods of supervised work in centers of expertise.
- The coordination of training activity for mosaic conservation and the larger issues of site management is increasingly important. This will allow for the better use of resources, will prevent duplication of effort, and will facilitate the sharing of didactic materials and strategies.