

A Brief Annotated Bibliography for the Conservation of Organs

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Introduction

These books, articles, and websites have been selected for their relevance to the OHS Guidelines for Conservation. What is restorative conservation? How does this approach to restoration promise to revive musical and aesthetic qualities in historic organs while protecting fragile historical evidence? What are the guiding values and the technical methods of conservation?

There is a large and growing conservation literature, and although all of these sources are selected for their relevance to the care and treatment of organs, few are specifically about them. This bibliography is intentionally brief, but most of the sources include extensive bibliographies of their own.

The arrangement is by subject and principal author's name, with similar publications sometimes being paired to share a common annotation. The sources are divided into the following categories.

[GENERAL TEXTS, CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS, AND ANTHOLOGIES](#)

[CONSERVATION VALUES AND THEORY](#)

[TREATMENT AND OTHER TECHNICAL SOURCES](#)

[PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION](#)

[CONSERVATION TRAINING](#)

[ONLINE RESOURCES](#)

General Texts, Conference Proceedings, and Anthologies

Barclay, Robert L. *The Preservation and Use of Historic Musical Instruments: Display Case and Concert Hall*. London: Earthscan, 2004; 303 pages.

This is a general text on technical and philosophical issues affecting the preservation and use of all types of musical instruments. Barclay divides attitudes towards musical instruments into three distinct regimens, each resulting in a particular approach to their treatment. These he calls Currency, Conservation, and Restoration. In emphasizing the distinctions between them, Barclay gives only a brief mention of restorative conservation as a sustainable hybrid for historic instruments in use.

Berrow, Jim. *Towards the Conservation and Restoration of Historic Organs: A Record of the Liverpool Conference, 23–26 August 1999*. London: Church House Publishing, 2000; 182 pages.

Watson, John R., ed. *Organ Restoration Reconsidered: Proceedings of a Colloquium*. Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press in association with The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2005; 176 pages.

These two books are the proceedings of conferences that took place in 1999 in England and the USA, respectively. They cover a spectrum of both conventional and conservation-minded approaches to organ restoration at the end of the twentieth century including a growing interest in historical accuracy and in reducing the impact of restoration on historical evidence. The books are among the first to include contributions by specialists in both organ and conservation disciplines.

Caple, Chris. *Conservation Skills: Judgement, method and decision making*. London & New York: Routledge, 2000; 232 pages.

Chris Caple gives an excellent introduction to conservation: the reasons for preserving the past; the nature and history of conservation; documentation; investigation; the ethical obligations of conservators; and overviews of preservation-minded approaches to cleaning, stabilization, and restoration. Preventive conservation, risk assessment, and the conservator's decision making process are also discussed. Each chapter ends with a case study.

Gwynn, Dominic. *Historic Organ Conservation: A Practical Introduction to Processes and Planning*. London: Church House Publishing, 2001; 98 pages.

Dominic Gwynn is a British organ builder and restorer who describes a targeted approach to restoration with a keen respect for historical accuracy. As the title indicates, the book is both practical and specific to organs. Published by the Anglican Church, the book describes collaboration by restorers, Diocesan Organ Advisers, the Council for the Care of Churches, statutory bodies, granting agencies, and congregations. Practical maintenance and restoration advice is provided along with technical notes about the aging characteristics of several types of materials and other technical matters. Caple's *Conservation Skills* is recommended as a companion book, to complement Gwynn's conservative but conventional restoration approach.

Watson, John R. *Artifacts in Use: The Paradox of Restoration and the Conservation of Organs*. [Forthcoming.]

This is an extensive exploration of all aspects of organ conservation. Beginning with a study of the paradox of restoration and of the values of conservation, the book describes a restorative conservation approach that gives equal emphasis to achieving aesthetic goals on the one hand, and preserving historical evidence on the other. The objectives and actions of conservation are systematically discussed, along with decision-making protocols and practical treatment methods. Intended for both organ specialists and the conservation specialists that might collaborate with them, the book is the first to explore the potential of fully combining these two disciplines in the treatment of historic organs.

Conservation Values and Theory

Knowing the technical tools and methods of conservation means little without a clear sense of that discipline's basis in values and theory. For a quick overview of the subject, see the article by Michael Petzet, which is available online.

Avrami, Erica, Randall Mason, and Marta de la Torre. *Values and Heritage Conservation*. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2000. Available from www.getty.edu/conservation/resources/valuesrpt.pdf; 100 pages.

Differences of opinion surface whenever restoration is viewed from different perspectives. While one may simply charge one's critics with ignorance, more often the disagreement arises from a clash of valid but dissimilar values. This publication grew from a gathering of preservation experts who identified a range of values and their role in shaping discourse on preservation. An annotated bibliography is included.

Baer, N.S. and F. Snickars, eds. *Rational Decision-making in the Preservation of Cultural Property*. Berlin: Dahlem University Press, 2001; 304 pages.

Every effort to preserve one artifact is necessarily an effort denied to another one. Making choices is an inescapable part of any initiative to preserve cultural property. What is "value" and how can we identify the organs that have enough value to be deserving of our best preservation and conservation efforts? Does economic value have anything to do with it? This book results from an international gathering of experts who shed much light on these questions. Four summary reports are included and are titled, "Values and Society;" "Values and Institutions;" "Values and the Artifact;" and "Paradigms for Rational Decision-making in the Preservation of Cultural Property."

Caple, Chris. *Objects: Reluctant Witnesses to the Past*. London: Routledge, 2006; 266 pages.

Kingery, David. *Learning from Things: Method and Theory of Material Culture Studies*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996; 262 pages.

Lubar, Steven and W. David Kingery, eds. *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993; 300 pages.

The discipline of conservation is based largely on the premise that cultural property, no matter how utilitarian or beautiful it might be, also contains historical evidence that can be read as a virtual journal from and about the past. This includes evidence about period construction methods, technology, trade and economics, aesthetic values, and the people of the past who were designers, makers, and users. An artifact's passage through time turns it into an ongoing narrative about the people who continually imprinted their lives and values upon it and perhaps re-shaped it according to their changing needs. Anyone who is skeptical or curious about the existence and value of such evidence, or how such evidence can be seen and interpreted, will find these books convincing.

Dykstra, Stephen W. "The Artist's Intentions and the Intentional Fallacy in Fine Arts Conservation." *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* (JAIC) 35 (Fall/Winter, 1996): 197–218. Available online at http://aic.stanford.edu/jaic/articles/jaic35-03-003_indx.html

In planning a restoration, how confident can we be of the original maker's intentions? If the restorer can truly know them, then there would be little need for many of the principles of conservation, such as the ideal of reversibility. The conservation literature however, consistently warns against too much confidence that today's practitioners can truly know the complex motivations and intentions of past artisans and the damage such confidence can cause during restoration. Stephen Dykstra's cautionary article explores the problem fully.

Muñoz Viñas, Salvador. *Contemporary Theory of Conservation*. Oxford, Burlington: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005; 239 pages.

Muñoz Viñas is deeply thoughtful and lucid in this brilliant and readable survey of the meaning of conservation and of the historic works it exists to preserve. He deals with the roles of science and aesthetics; beliefs and values; objectivity and subjectivity; ethics and truth; and authority and the hierarchy of stakeholders.

Petzet, Michael. "Principles of Preservation: An Introduction to the International Charters for Conservation and Restoration 40 Years after the Venice Charter," ICOMOS 2nd Edition, Munich 2004, Translated from the German by Margaret Thomas Will and John Ziesemer. Published online and available from <http://www.icomos.de/einfuehrung.php>.

Beginning with the seminal Venice Charter of 1964, Petzet traces an evolution of thought in a succession of international preservation documents. The article identifies and succinctly explains the chief principles of preservation appearing in several broadly accepted charters. All of the essential concepts now in the 2008 OHS Guidelines for Conservation are touched upon in this concise article.

Price, Nicholas Stanley, M. Kirby Talley Jr., and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro. *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1996; 500 pages.

Restoration is necessary to the preservation of aesthetic integrity, yet it also poses a great threat to the truthfulness of material evidence. For centuries, the problem has provoked thoughtful debate that has generated seminal writings, many of which have been collected into this substantial and well-chosen anthology.

Treatment and other Technical Sources

Conservation treatment bears certain similarities to medical treatment: Some types of intervention can be undertaken by anyone able to follow directions, while others may be so situation-specific or technical that they require the judgment and skills of practitioners having specialized scientific training. Several of the sources in this section are of the latter type, and were written as lab manuals for trained conservators. Recommended procedures may be extremely dangerous and require knowledge of safe laboratory methods. It is up to the restorer to judge when collaboration with conservation professionals is required.

Harley Piltingsrud and Jean Tancous. *Aging of Organ Leather*. Richmond, The Organ Historical Society, 1994; 46 pages.

Published by the OHS, this report explores the structure and aging characteristics of leathers used in organ building. The authors employ a scientific approach in testing

modern leathers and draw conclusions about their prospects for long life in organ applications. The report does not venture into conservation treatments for historic leather, but offers background for the selection of new leather.

Chiavari, C., C. Martini, G. Poli, and D. Prandscroller. "Conservation of Organ Pipes: Protective Treatments of Lead Exposed to Acetic Acid Vapours," In *Metal 2004: Proceedings of the International Conference on Metals Conservation*, edited by John Ashton and David Hallam, 281-93. Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2004.

This and other reports from the European Commission-funded COLLAPSE project explore the problem of corrosion in lead alloy organ pipes caused by weak organic acids such as those emitted by oak in wind chests. The study seeks to develop a conservation strategy by testing the corrosion-inhibiting effects of several chemical treatments. See also the COLLAPSE project web page at <http://goart.gu.se/collapse/>.

Dorge, Valerie and F. Carey Howlett, eds. *Painted Wood: History and Conservation*. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1998; 539 pages.

These are the proceedings of an international conference organized by the Wooden Artifacts Group of the American Institute for Conservation held in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1994. Articles by 60 conservators, curators, and conservation scientists cover every aspect of the subject, and are grouped under the headings, "Understanding and Identifying Materials;" "Historical Perspectives;" "Historical Materials and Techniques;" "Investigations and Treatment;" "Ethical Considerations;" and "Scientific Research." This important book is out of print but available for download online at http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/pdf_publications/paintedwood.html

Horie, C.V. *Materials for Conservation: Organic Consolidants, Adhesives and Coatings*. Oxford: Architectural Press, 1987; 281 pages.

Adhesives, consolidants and coatings used in conservation are chosen not only for their effectiveness, but because of their long-term stability and capacity to be removed with minimal impact on adjacent historic surfaces. Horie explains the chemistry involved and describes a range of conservation materials that can broaden a conservator's options in choosing materials with the best prospects for long-term survival. The reader is expected to have a working knowledge of chemistry.

Mills, John Stuart and Raymond White. *The Organic Chemistry of Museum Objects*. 2d ed. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 1994; 206 pages.

The aging and decay of historic surfaces is primarily a chemical and micro-mechanical process. By understanding decay as such, conservators clean or remove inappropriate restoration layers, re-adhere or consolidate weakened materials, or otherwise stabilize vulnerable materials. While the book by Horie (above) is about conservation materials, Mills and White take a similar look at the chemistry of the historic object itself. Treatments based upon chemistry can be accurately targeted to minimize collateral damage to evidence in historic surfaces.

Rivers, Shayne and Nick Umney. *Conservation of Furniture*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth and Heinemann, 2003; 803 pages.

Do not be fooled by the word “furniture” in the title of this book. Pipe organs are made up almost entirely of materials extensively detailed in its voluminous pages, and it is not just about conservation of wood. Over one hundred pages are devoted to the conservation of non-wood materials including ivory, paper, metals, plastics, leather, textiles, and painted surfaces. History, conservation principles, agents of aging and their affects, scientific background, and many practical treatment methods are all covered in detail with ample text, photographs and diagrams.

Wolbers, Richard. *Cleaning Painted Surfaces: Aqueous Methods*. London: Archetype Publications, 2000; 198 pages.

Wolbers’ text is squarely aimed at trained conservators with chemical laboratory skills. It includes many formulations for cleaning or removing unwanted dirt and restoration layers. Separating worthy layers from unworthy layers means understanding the chemical differences between them. Case studies show how preparations can be designed specifically for the particular surface being treated.

Preventive Conservation

Preventive conservation is the hard work of holding the agents of decay at bay. These include fluctuations or extremes of relative humidity and temperature; ultra violet radiation, especially from sunlight; sulfurous pollutants from burning fossil fuels; and mold, rot, rodents, and other biological pests, among others. These sources describe these agents and provide strategies for controlling them.

The National Trust. *Manual of Housekeeping: The care of collections in historic houses open to the public*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth and Heinemann, 2006; 941 pages.

This hefty tome is far more than rules for dusting and orderliness. With articles by dozens of mostly British preservation authorities, the book describes the agents of deterioration and their respective preventive methods... systematically by category, by artifact material, and by artifact type. Although musical instruments do get a chapter, there is great relevance in the remainder of the book, whether discussing furniture, textiles, metals, mechanical artifacts, gilded wood, leather, polychrome sculpture, plastics, or protecting historic objects during use and program events.

Thomson, Garry. *The Museum Environment*. 2d ed. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann in association with The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1998; 293 pages.

This is a general text on environmental agents of decay and ways of greatly reducing the damage they cause to historic interiors and artifacts. The first half of the book is most practical, while the second half gives greater scientific detail.

See also Rivers and Umney (2003) above.

Conservation Training

Training for organ conservation does not depend upon a school or course in “organ conservation” per se, and no such course exists. The knowledge base, skills, and values of

conservation are separate and complementary to the art and craft of organ building. While training for organ building may come from apprenticeship, additional training for conservation can be found through the following sources.

Museums and Galleries Commission, Conservation Unit. *Science for Conservators*. 3 vols. London: Routledge, 1992.

These three volumes were designed as textbooks for the popular “Science for Conservators” distance learning course. Designed as a university-level introduction to conservation science, the full course with all of its reference materials is highly recommended. Volume 1 of the three books, *Introduction to Materials*, forms a basis for the other two, establishing a scientific perspective on conservation and reviewing the fundamentals of chemistry. Volume 2, *Cleaning*, explains the nature of dirt, solubility, and acidity. Volume 3 covers *Adhesives and Coatings*, including the chemistry of polymers and their longevity, selection, and use as adhesives, coatings and consolidants. The books are available on their own, but the correspondence course for which they were written provides a valuable and structured educational experience.

American Institute for Conservation (AIC). “Becoming a Conservator.” N.p., nd. Available from <http://aic.stanford.edu/education/becoming/>

This collection of resources describes conservation training in North America and where and how it is offered. Graduate schools offer a general conservation education, while workshops, professional meetings, and distance learning options address specific training needs.

Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR). Available from <http://www.pacr.org.uk>.

This document by the British Institute of Conservation (ICON) “...is the professional practice assessment for conservation professionals wishing to gain accredited status” What is a professional conservator in terms of the skill, judgment, and insight needed for that career? This resource gives a clear idea of the training and qualities that make one a professional conservator.

Other Online Resources

The American Institute for Conservation (AIC) website
<http://aic.stanford.edu/>

Conservation Online
<http://cool-palimpsest.stanford.edu/>

Conservation Online (CoOL) includes hundreds of links to conservation help by topic, such as mold and pest management; commercial services; online conservation periodicals; suppliers; and finding conservation specialists.

The Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) website
<http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca>

The CCI website also offers an extensive collection of online resources, including publications, articles, technical reports, links, and listings of conservation services and training opportunities.

CAMEO: Conservation and Art Material Encyclopedia Online

<http://cameo.mfa.org/>

This is an online database of over ten thousand materials found in historic objects or used in conservation. After searching for a particular material, the database returns chemical, physical, and analytical information about it.