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This is the author's version of a work that was submitted to / accepted for publication.

Citation for final published version:

Henderson, Jane 2022. Meet our Trustees. International Institute For Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.

Publishers page:

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"News in Conservation". Since the December issue is focused on students, I thought it would be the perfect time to have your profile included, as you are such a beloved and respected educator. Would you be willing to write a 400-500 word profile and send a headshot to me by 5th November?

All my best,
Sharra

What experiences from your own student/early career years have shaped/informed your professional path?

The most significant experience of my undergraduate career was my transition from well behaved student to a rebellious one. It took a long time and many scrapes before I learnt that however out of step, difficult or challenging it may feel at that time to stand up for what you believe in - times can and will change, that you can be part of that, and you can be proud. In my younger years I campaigned for things that today are considered normal. Then I was impatient for change, and I still am but now I'm more confident that the process of articulating what you think should be different can sometimes lead to success. I hope some of my academic papers such as the one on disruptive conservation represent my views about how the practice of conservation can reflect some of the great societal challenges.

What words of wisdom do you find yourself repeating the most to your students, and why do you think that is?

This one is hard to narrow down! Don't make your cotton bud too damp and 'fibreoptic' isn't a lamp type. My recurring theme is about revealing evidence to make better decisions. In preventive conservation there are so many numbers in the literature and students do get a bit alarmed about picking the 'correct' figure. But of course, what's 'correct' is only correct in context. To give useful advice you really need to understand your situation and its relationship with the situation in which other people developed their advice. Understanding things from first principles and tracking their evolution enables conservators to offer professional but relevant advice that takes into consideration factors including the familiar issues of materials, decay and resource availability but also the pressing issues of sustainability and inclusion.

One other mantra is that there is no secret book of conservation rules that we hide from the student. That's why we've all got to learn to be reflective, informed decision makers!

Along with where/what you teach, what other projects, institutions, etc. have you been (and are) involved in?

For most of my career I've been an active member of the Welsh Federation of Museums and Art Galleries. One of the secrets for changing the status of conservation is to engage in the status of every other aspect of heritage work. Despite a difficult operating climate 'The Fed' still offers conservation grants to museums and supports training for conservators. My part in making sure conservation stays on the table have been to contribute to the development of the grant process, to go to many meetings and to help with the grant assessments. In my experience it's about sharing goals with others that helps them understand your priorities through a process of you understanding theirs.

Outside of the conservation profession, what are your passions/hobbies/past-times

I asked my partner what he thought my hobbies were outside of conservation and he said there is no outside of conservation for me! I spend a lot of time supporting my sons play football on various rain-soaked fields of Cardiff. I enjoy gardening and planting as many purple flowers as I can although I'm quite often listening to podcasts, especially the C-word podcast, as I weed, dig and plant.