

Report on the Winston Churchill Fellowship of Lorraine Finch

Section Two

Introduction

The title of my Fellowship is the Conservation and Preservation of Film, Sound and Photography and its aims were:

- i) to increase and improve my skills in the conservation and preservation of film, sound and photography
- ii) to add to my knowledge of the preservation of film, sound and photography
- iii) to research survey techniques for collections of film, sound and photography
- iv) to view small and large scale cold storage facilities, and to investigate the practicalities of these facilities
- v) to use the skills and knowledge acquired to promote and improve the care of film, sound and photography
- vi) to move closer to my long term aim of specialising in the conservation and preservation of film, sound and photography

I have wanted to specialise in the conservation and preservation of photographic materials since I graduated from the M.A. in Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts (now the University of Arts, London) in 1995. On entering the workplace, I quickly realised that to be an archives conservator with a specialist knowledge in the conservation and preservation of photographic materials was not enough. Most archives with holdings of photographic materials also hold film and sound materials. It is often the case that photographic materials in an archive are neglected as they are not considered to be archival material in the way that paper and parchment are. Given that this is the case for photographic material, it is even more so for film and sound materials. Yet these are the very objects which cannot be ignored. They are frequently made from inherently unstable materials. They have the potential to degrade beyond a usable condition before their worth is recognised. Indeed, it is believed that 80% of the world's production of silent film has been lost.

In order to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to deal with film, sound and photography I have attended several courses and conferences. These include:

- Care of Photographic, Moving Image and Sound Collections, 1998
- Identification of Film and Sound Formats, 1999
- The Conservation and Preservation of Photographic Material, 2002
- Conservation and Preservation of Photographs, 2004
- ICOM-CC Photographic Records Working Group, 2004
- Cellulose Acetate Microfilm Forum, 2005
- From Parchment to Pixels, Society of Archivists Annual Conference, 2005
- Preservation and Management of Photographic Collections, 2005

I have also taken an active role in the committee of the Film, Sound and Photography Group of the Society of Archivists since 2000. I am currently Chair. I am a member of the Photographic Materials Conservation Group of the Institute of Conservation.

However, despite my efforts I have found it difficult to access the information required to provide the best care for film, sound and photography collections. It must be noted

that there is no formal training available in the conservation and preservation of film, sound and photography for conservators in the U.K. .

It is for these reasons that I applied to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for a Travelling Fellowship to the U.S.A. . The U.S.A. is ahead of the U.K. in terms of training for conservators in the conservation and preservation of film, sound and photography.

The Fellowship

The Fellowship took place from the 17th of September until the 14th of October 2006. To achieve my aims and to maximise the benefit of the Fellowship I visited:

- New York City - 17-22 September
- George Eastman House, Rochester, New York State - 23 September-8 October
- Washington D.C. - 9-14 October¹

New York City

The first half of the week was spent with the staff and students of the M.A. in Moving Image Archiving and Preservation at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. I attended a lecture by Nancy Goldman on 'How to Find Film and Video'. I went on a visit to the studio of the film maker, Alan Berliner, and I toured the recently established and equipped Moving Image Preservation Laboratory at the Bobst Library. It became apparent very quickly that the Fellowship was not going to be a one way affair but would be a two way exchange of information and ideas. The people I visited were very interested in a conservator's viewpoint being mainly non-conservators themselves. Additionally, there are resources and initiatives in the U.K. which were new to those I met, of which I could make them aware.

It also became apparent very quickly that those I met could not do enough to help. This was the case throughout my Fellowship. I was given articles, books, reports, informational charts such as video format guides and allowed to take reference photographs of equipment, objects, work spaces and storage areas. This was again a two way process because I returned with a list of information to send people such as copies of survey forms, U.K. cellulose nitrate regulations and details of courses.

In these first few days I also realised that I had a great deal in common with the people I met. I returned home with over 30 sets of contact details. I gave out many of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust business cards, providing not only my contact details but also a lasting reminder of the Trust and its work.

During the second half of the week I visited the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, New York Public Library; the International Center for Photography and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I even found time to squeeze in a visit to the Museum of the Moving Image.

The visit to the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound took far longer than anticipated. The curators were eager that I saw everything and meet with as many staff as possible. As a result we made unscheduled stops at the Performing Arts Department and the Paper Conservation Studio.

The time I spent at the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound and with the curators was immensely interesting. They care for over 600,000 recordings and this number is constantly being added to. The sheer scale of the operation in relation to resources means that prioritisation is key. It was fascinating to see such a large scale organisation in operation. I was also able to start forming an opinion on many of the questions I had.

¹ See Annex A for the full itinerary

The visit to the International Center for Photography allowed me to view the storage facilities for the photographic materials and to examine the preservation measures such as boxes and housing methods.

The final visit of the week saw me back on familiar territory, a conservation studio, albeit the Photographic Conservation Studio of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was great to be able to discuss the technicalities of treating photographs such as the effect of surface cleaning, the use of aqueous treatments, repair techniques, methods of crease reduction, flattening and mounting methods. I learned new approaches such as mounting photographs without using adhesives or hinges, and had the techniques that I use reinforced, such as screen washing for fragile prints.

George Eastman House

I must admit that the two weeks at George Eastman House were the part of the Fellowship that I looked forward to the most. I have to say that I was not disappointed.

My first week at George Eastman House was spent with the L. Jeffery Selznick Film School staff and students in the mornings and in the Gannett Foundation Photographic Study Center in the afternoons.

With the L Jeffery Selznick Film School students I attended the following lectures:

- Glossary - Preservation, Restoration, Reconstruction and Duplication, Patrick Loughney
- An Introduction to Film Examination and Identification, Ed Stratmann
- The Conservation of Film, Ed Stratmann
- Motion Picture Film Manufacture, Alan Masson

All the lectures were accompanied by copies handouts. I have never seen so many! The lectures were also accompanied by actual objects. It was very useful to be able handle objects which I had only previously seen in pictures, read about or never heard of at all. These objects included film shrinkage guides, obscure film formats and film edge perforators. I was able to photograph the objects for future reference. The final lecture mentioned above was accompanied by two films. I found this lecture and the films fascinating, useful and informative. I have always maintained that as a conservator you cannot treat something well if you do not understand how it was made. I now have a very clear idea of the manufacture of motion film and photographic film

During my time at the Film School, I was able to discuss issues relating to film with staff and students and to gather together information such as reading lists, cataloguing forms, documentation forms and condition reports. They also gave me a copy of *'The Film Preservation Guide. The Basics for Archives. Libraries and Museums'*. I also had access to the George Eastman House bookshop. I was able to purchase some of the key texts in the field of the care of moving image material such as *'Silent Cinema. An Introduction'* and future teaching aids in the form of a Phenakistoscope and a Zoetrope (early methods of creating moving images).

My afternoons in the Gannett Foundation Photographic Study Center were equally productive. I was able to handle original examples of photographic materials such as

daguerreotypes, tintypes and albumen prints, and to examine work by specific photographers such as Hill and Adamson, and Roger Fenton. Initially, my time in the Study Center was unstructured but it eventually evolved into an investigation of the history of photography and historic photographic processes. I started with daguerreotypes, and moved onto tintypes, through photogenic drawings to salt paper prints, then onto cyanotypes, albumen prints and onto glass based photography; which included an interesting and informative investigation into the difference between a wet collodion positive and a true ambrotype. I quickly moved through non-silver processes and onto colour processes; which I have had very little opportunity to study in the past. It must be noted that it is extremely important in photographic conservation to understand the history of photography and to be able to identify the various photographic processes.

There were many interesting discussions and chances for research whilst examining the original photographic materials. For example, a question arose over the difference between a Pellet print and a cyanotype. After a discussion with the assistant archivist, he directed me to the Richard and Ronay Menschel Library where I was able to consult primary and secondary source material and was able to resolve the question. This process was repeated throughout the week.

At the end of my first week I found time to tour the George Eastman House Museum. I spent more time here than I expected such is the quality of the exhibits and the breadth of the information provided.

My second week at George Eastman House was spent with the staff and students of the Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation. I spent the first day and a half with Process Historian (Mark Osterman) in the dark room recreating historic photographic processes. Mark made a collodion inter-positive and calotypes (paper negatives) using the Sutton Process (1855). I learned a great deal in this time. I made a photographic record of the process of recreating the historic photographs.

The remainder of the week I spent using the research library of the Advanced Residency Program, copying articles and using the research collection of original photographic material. For example, I spent one day examining degraded and undegraded cellulose nitrate and cellulose acetate to find out whether there is a simple visual clue which can be used to tell the two materials apart. I again used the George Eastman House bookshop. I purchased several books on the subjects of photography and photographic conservation. I was given *'The Book of Film Care'* by the staff and students of the Advanced Residency program. I spent time researching treatments for photographic materials. I also visited local antique shops in order to purchase original photographic material for my reference collection. I purchased a true ambrotype, cyanotypes, a Kodak snapshot, a daguerreotype, uncased tintypes and a cased tintype. Apart from the cyanotypes, the aforementioned photographic processes are difficult to find in the U.K. . On my last day, I was invited to attend a lecture at the Image Permanence Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology with the Advanced Residency students. After the lecture I was given a tour of the Image Permanence Institute laboratories where I viewed the scientific testing equipment and discussed current research projects.

Washington D.C.

The last week was by no means the least. It was an extremely interesting week during which I learned much and met many knowledgeable and very helpful people.

The week began with a visit to Heritage Preservation. My time here was spent mainly discussing surveys and survey methodology.

The next visit was to the National Archives and Records Administration. I spent some time in the conservation studio. I then toured the photographic stores including the sub-zero cold storage area. I was able to see some solutions to storing oversize photographic material. I moved from here to the Film and Sound department where I toured the reformatting areas. I saw equipment that I had only heard of before and I had an in-depth discussion on the future of video and audio reformatting and the implications of digital technology.

The following day saw a well planned and organised visit to the Library of Congress. It began with an overview of the Library of Congress detailing their remit, holdings, buildings and storage facilities. The Library of Congress state that they hold 75% of the audio visual holdings in the U.S.A. They are currently building the National Audio Visual Conservation Center. It is due to open in 2007. The importance of preservation and cold storage for audio visual materials were discussed. The new building will have storage at 10C, 0C and -5C to enable the whole gamut of audio visual materials, with their differing needs, to be stored.

After this I visited the Prints and Photographs Division. I examined a variety of photographic material and saw a variety of storage methods. Of especial interest were the storage solutions for problematic materials.

Next I met with the Chief of the Conservation Department. This was followed by a presentation and discussion of the preservation of audio material. By this point in the Fellowship, I had heard the same points made in relation to audio materials many times. Far from being a negative this is extremely important. It meant that the knowledge I had acquired is accepted as best practice by most audio professionals. Additionally, the repetition of the information meant that I learned it. I also had a very useful discussion regarding the storage of cellulose nitrate audio material.

I moved from audio material to photographic material. I spoke with the Senior Photograph Conservator for some time about her current project - an extremely interesting crossover between early moving image material and photographic conservation.

After photographic conservation I moved onto the Preservation Research and Testing Division. Here I had a tour of the Division, its equipment and a discussion about the variety of its work. Again the issue of cellulose nitrate and its flammability was raised and some very interesting information was provided.

My final visit was to the Smithsonian Institution. I was there for almost a full day. I visited several people and departments but I would like to highlight my visit to the Smithsonian Institution Archives. Here I met the Preservation Manager. This visit

centred on survey and survey methodologies and answered many of the questions and doubts that I had.

I also used my time in Washington D.C. to increase my collection of reference literature. I visited the American Institute for Conservation and purchased an almost complete set of *'Topics in Photographic Preservation'*.

Finally I would like to add that the Fellowship was not all work and no play. I did find time for sightseeing and to be a tourist. Also, I was warmly welcomed by those I visited. They made me feel very welcome and were very generous with their time and knowledge.

Lessons Learned

- I have increased and improved my skills in the conservation of film, sound and photography.
- I have added to my knowledge of the preservation of film, sound and photography.
- I have thoroughly investigated survey techniques, and the practicalities and application of small and large scale cold storage. I feel able to advise others.
- The knowledge and skills I have acquired will, when used, promote and improve the care of film, sound and photography.
- I am closer to my aim of specialising in the conservation and preservation of film, sound and photography.
- I recognise that I had already acquired a great deal of knowledge relating to the conservation and preservation of film, sound and photography prior to travelling to the U.S.A.
- The visits reinforced the knowledge I had before the Fellowship. I added greatly to this knowledge during the visits. I feel that I know the subject.
- I need to use the knowledge and skills I have acquired.
- I am able to pinpoint areas where I still have more to learn such as conservation techniques for photographic material. However, I now know where to access this information.
- I am aware of my limitations, such as what I can and can't do, what I need specialist equipment to treat and what work needs to be outsourced to others with more experience.
- I answered many of the questions I had. For example, whether it is possible to use a simple visual feature to distinguish between cellulose nitrate and cellulose acetate, the contradictory advice regarding the storage of photographic negatives and film negatives with paper and the storage of cellulose nitrate audio material.
- I have improved my photographic material identification skills.
- I have met many knowledgeable and extremely helpful professionals in the fields of film, sound and photography with whom I will maintain contact.
- As far as I am aware, I am only one of two conservators in the U.K. able to work with film, sound and photography.
- I have greatly improved my confidence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Fellowship achieved a balanced mix between film, sound and photography, with no one area dominating over the other. A great deal of information and source material was acquired which will be of use to me and others who care for film, sound and photography. I achieved my aims. Indeed I achieved more than the aims outlined. I greatly added to my knowledge and skills in the conservation and preservation of film, sound and photography. The Fellowship was extremely interesting and useful and exceeded my expectations.

Annex A

Itinerary

Week 1 - New York City

17-24 September

17 Sun - Travel

18 Mon

3.30pm - Meeting with Alicia Kubes, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

4pm - Meeting with Sarah Ziebell Mann, Bobst Library, New York University

19 Tues

4pm - Meeting with Mona Jimenez

6pm - Visit to the studio of film maker Alan Berliner, Dan Streible with M.A. students

20 Weds

10am - Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound, New York Public Library, Don McCormick

21 Thurs

10am - International Center for Photography, Erin Barnett

22 Fri

10am - Metropolitan Museum of Art, Nora Kennedy and Akiko Yamazaki-Kleps

5.30pm - How to find Film and Video, Nancy Goldman

23 Sat - Free day

24 Sun - Travel

Week 2 - George Eastman House

**25 September-1 October - L. Jeffery Selznick Film School & Gannett Foundation
Photographic Study Center**

25 Mon

26 Tues

10am - Glossary: Preservation, Restoration, Reconstruction, and Duplication, Patrick Loughney, Curator

27 Weds

10am - An Introduction to Film Examination and Identification, Ed Stratmann

12pm - The Conservation of Film, Ed Stratmann

28 Thurs

10am - Motion Picture Film Manufacture, Alan Masson

29 Fri

Week 3 - George Eastman House

2-6 October - Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation

2 Mon

Meeting with staff and students of the Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation

3 Tues

4 Weds

5 Thurs

6 Fri

10am - Concepts in Experimentation, Dan Burge

12pm - Tour of the Image Permanence Institute, Doug Nishimura

7 Sat - Travel to Washington D.C.

8 Sun - Free day

Week 4 - Washington D.C.

9-14 October

9 Mon - Federal holiday

10 Tues

10am - Visit to Heritage Preservation, Kristen Laise

11 Weds

9am - Visit to National Archives and Records Administration, Sara Shpargel

12 Thurs

Visit to Library of Congress, Carole Zimmermann

13 Fri

Visit to Smithsonian Institution, Deborra Richardson

14 Sat - Travel back to U.K.

Annex B

Those in the U.S.A. who made the Fellowship such a success:

New York University

Alicia Kubes - Administrative co-ordinator

Mona Jimenez - Associate Arts Professor / Associate Director

Dan Streible

Alan Berliner

All the students on the MA in Moving Image Archiving and Preservation

- Bobst Library

Sarah Ziebel Mann - Moving Image Preservation Specialist

Tanisha Jones - Research Fellow

New York Public Library

Don McCormick - Curator, Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound

Daniel P. Sbardella - Sound Engineer

International Center for Photography

Erin Barnett - Assistant Curator, Collections

Metropolitan Museum for Art

Nora Kennedy - Sherman Fairchild Conservator of Photographs

Akiko Yamazaki-Kleps

George Eastman House

- L. Jeffery Selznick Film School

Carole Yeager - Assistant Curator

Patrick Loughney - Curator

Ed Stratmann

Alan Masson

All the students of the L. Jeffery Selznick Film School

- Gannett Foundation Photographic Study Center

David Wooters - Archivist

Joe Struble - Assistant Archivist, Photograph Collection

- Richard and Ronay Menschel Library

Rachel Stuhlman - Librarian

- Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation

Grant Romer - Director

Stacey VanDenburgh - Co-ordinator for Preserving Photographs in a Digital World and Program Manager

Jiuan-juan Chen - Photograph Conservator

Mark Osterman - Process Historian

Luisa Casella and all the other students of the Advanced Residency in Photograph Conservation

Image Permanence Institute

Doug Nishimura

Dan Burge

Heritage Preservation

Kirsten Laise - Director

National Archives and Records Administration

Sara Sphargel - Senior Photograph Conservator

Ed McCarter

Charles Mayn

Library of Congress

Dianne van der Reyden - Director, Preservation Directorate

Diane Vogt O'Connor - Chief, Conservation Division

Carole Zimmerman

Beatrice Haspo - Preservation Specialist

Mary Goss Mundy

Marlan Green - Preservation Specialist

Dana Hemmenway - Senior Photograph Conservator

Andrew Robb

The staff of the Preservation and Research and Testing Division

Smithsonian Institution

Deborra Richardson - Chair, Archives Section

David E. Haberstick - Head of Photographic Collections

Wendy Shay - Deputy Chair, Archives Center

Sarah D. Stauderman - Preservation Manager

A big thank you to you all for being so sharing with your time and knowledge and for helping to make my Fellowship such a fantastic experience.