



## PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION: REDUCING RISKS TO COLLECTIONS

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# COURSE INFORMATION DOCUMENT

## BACKGROUND

Today, preventive conservation is a leading theme in all fields of cultural property. Useful scientific and technical knowledge continues to grow but is often incorporated in current practice slowly, incorrectly, or not at all. Despite the best intents, museums may apply unrealistic standards, guidelines, or lists of best practice, with no clear sense of priority, or of realistic expected benefits.

With limited resources, decision-makers are immediately confronted with difficult choices in planning conservation strategies. Should we put all our resources in a sophisticated environmental control system, or should we upgrade the fire control system instead? What exactly will happen to this collection of costumes and fine basketry if they remain exposed to this level of light? And in the long term, how will this damage compare to the various forms of damage possible from the increasing numbers of visitors?

Risk management, which informs and guides decision makers in many fields outside cultural heritage, can help these planning decisions. It directly addresses the question: what will be the condition of my collections at some future moment, 100 years for example, if no actions are taken, or if new actions are taken. Risk management encourages the reappraisal of conservation strategies which require tremendous efforts from our institution, if those strategies do not significantly improve this future state.

Motivated by the potential offered by this new perspective, aware of the need to facilitate its understanding and practice, and anxious to bring leading developers and knowledgeable users together during this formative phase, ICCROM and the Canadian Conservation Institute, in collaboration with other leading institutions, developed this international course on Reducing risks to collections.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the course is to discuss and practice the risk management approach to the management of cultural property. Risk management can be understood as not only the management of rare catastrophes, but also the management of slow continual hazards, and everything in between. At the core of risk management is the concept of "loss of value," which depends on the concept of the value of the collections. Thus risk management becomes an integrated institutional view of both the use and the conservation of cultural property. It provides a reliable tool to establish priorities and design strategies. The course focuses on the principles of risk management in the field of cultural property, and reviews current interpretations and applications. It examines the best available research to enhance estimates of risk. Participants practice the systematic stages of risk management in teams, from risk assessment of a real museum or archive collection, to development of options for risk mitigation.

## **OBJECTIVE**

At the end of the course, participants will see preventive conservation from the viewpoint of risk management.

Given a context, they will be able to use appropriately the terminology, and to identify, estimate and rank specific risks relevant to their context. They will improve their ability to communicate risks effectively, and to develop and assess options to reduce risks. Since risk management is in a formative phase in the heritage conservation field, as well as in other fields, they will also make plans for its application and further development in their own context.

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

The 20 course participants come from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Finland, France, Mexico, Poland, Romania, United Kingdom, USA and Vietnam. They represent a range of heritage and conservation professions dealing mainly with collections in museums, galleries, libraries and archives. They are collection managers, conservators and heads of conservation, conservation scientists, curators, directors and archivists. A third of them are involved in teaching collection management and preventive conservation. Participants' list and profiles are attached.

## **PROJECT TEAM**

The project team is composed of senior staff from CCI, ICCROM, the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, and guest lecturers from other institutions. A course moderator, former participant of the ICCROM-CCI course in 2005 completes the team. It is expected that participants will be actively involved in debating and sharing knowledge and methodologies. Information on the Project team is attached.

## **WORKING LANGUAGE**

Although it is not the mother tongue of the majority of the group, participants are required to be fluent in English. The course team will be available at all times to help in overcoming language barriers during the workshops, case histories, seminars, study visits and other practical sessions.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

Following an induction session, the course is structured into 6 units, based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard for Risk Management, presented below in sequence. However, various units are inter-related, as are the knowledge and skills they encompass.

The course is focused on the discovery, discussion and practice of the concepts underlying the risk management approach. The structure is linear and progressive, with opportunities for participants and teachers, at various stages, and as the course develops, to refine and integrate the various notions. A course schedule is provided as a separate document.

Note: Units are organized into modules and then into sessions of 60 to 90 minutes.

## **UNIT 1 ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT**

### **Module 1 Risk Management in other fields**

To introduce the risk management approach in the wider context.

### **Module 2 Concepts of risks**

To discuss and adopt a common terminology for risk. In particular, to establish the meaning, interpretation and connections of key words such as risk, loss, agent, cause, hazard, frequency, likelihood, probability, rare, and continual.

### **Module 3 Integrating Risk Management**

To consider integration of the risk management approach within national preservation policies and within an institution's missions and mandates. To specify the framework and to define scopes for the risk management case-studies.

### **Module 4 Selecting and communicating conservation priorities**

To share current approaches and experiences related to preventive conservation decisions in a variety of contexts.

## **UNIT 2 IDENTIFY RISKS**

### **Module 1 Tools for comprehensive identification of risks**

To examine various systematic approaches for the risk discovery process.

### **Module 2 Finding specific risks**

To identify the specific risks in a real context and to ensure that identification is comprehensive.

## **UNIT 3 ANALYSE RISKS**

### **Module 1 Risk scenario**

To describe the specific risks in a given context and to ensure that the description will allow their subsequent evaluation.

### **Module 2 Informing scenarios**

To examine critically three main sources of information, i.e. material science, historical records of risks, and evidence of damage. Illustrations will focus on risks due to incorrect RH, light, pollutants and fire.

### **Module 3 Value and loss in value**

To discuss the importance of value in cultural heritage, the interpretation of 'loss in value', and how to integrate 'loss in value' into the risk analysis.

## **UNIT 4 EVALUATE RISKS**

### **Module 1 Magnitude of risk**

To discuss and apply a framework within which risks can be compared on common scales. Various scales and computation methods are considered.

### **Module 2 Dealing with uncertainty**

To make uncertainty transparent, to recognize its sources and to determine its role in risk evaluation.

## **UNIT 5 TREAT RISKS**

### **Module 1 Developing options**

To apply a methodical approach to developing options for reducing risks.

### **Module 2 Treating risks in the design of a new storage facility**

To illustrate and discuss the concrete outputs of the risk analysis in a specific context.

## **UNIT 6 COMMUNICATE**

### **Module 1 Sharing risk assessment**

To critically review the various report systems and visual aids that are used to communicate and share risk assessment results.

### **Module 2 Selecting and communicating conservation priorities using the Risk Management approach – reflection and planning**

To review current approaches and experiences related to preventive conservation decisions in the light of the risk management approach.

## **SYNTHESIS CAFÉ**

At the end of the first week, a session is dedicated to a “synthesis café”, a time for review, further thinking, discussion and linkages. It will be an opportunity for participants to bring forward any issues arising from the course so far.

## **INDIVIDUAL STUDY AND THE “HOME PROJECT”**

Every week, time is allocated for reading time and individual study. During these periods, participants will have the opportunity to read suggested articles, to use the CCI library, to arrange individual appointments with the available resource-persons and colleagues, and to plan a “home project”. We encourage each participant to think in advance of an idea or a project that they can carry out within six months of their return. Some follow-up will be available by ICCROM and CCI over those six months.

## **VARIETY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

In order to tap and to develop the participants’ wealth of learning and communicating skills, the course offers a variety of teaching and learning activities. It includes a balance of illustrated lectures, practical work, study visits, case histories, group works, seminars and discussions. Most sessions promote interactive learning.

Participants will practice the various steps in the risk management approach through one specific situation. Approximately one third of the course will focus on the case-studies.

## **PARTICIPANTS’ CONTRIBUTION TO THE COURSE**

The course will bring together a group of professionals from very diverse backgrounds. The past experience and the challenges they face in their work will be an important contribution to the course content, and the exchange of experience, concerns and ideas is a major aim of this project.

A separate document “Participants’ contribution to the course” describes a variety of items that participants are invited to collect or prepare in view of their contribution to the course.

## **COURSE EVALUATION SYSTEM**

As for all ICCROM courses, a formal course evaluation system is in development. It will address course content and approach as well as the learning environment. It will involve the participants and their institutions, the coordinating and teaching team, as well as the partners. It will follow course impact and outcomes well after the end of the event.

In practical terms, the course evaluation will consist of questionnaires to participants and teaching team, during and after the course. Six months after the course, participants will be asked for final feedback, and a report on their “home project”.