

The History of AIC Efforts on Certification

Introduction

The certification materials included here provide a record of the process undertaken by AIC between 2000 and 2009 to develop a certification program for conservators. The 2009 vote by members for certification was unsuccessful.

Contents include AIC News articles dating back to 2000, descriptions of the certification process, and the final vote, as well as results from surveys taken in 2006, 2007, and 2008.

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The Status of Certification in Europe (AIC News, May 2000)

Introduction

The article that follows is meant to inform AIC members of ongoing discussions about a few certification issues that have evoked dissenting views among conservators in the European community. Conservators in the United Kingdom and Europe differ in their definitions of the qualifications used to define a conservator or restorer, in part, because of the specific needs of conservation communities in various countries. The Certification committee feels that the AIC membership can benefit from an awareness of these different approaches to certification. Please come to the issues session on Saturday, June 10, at the 28th AIC Annual Meeting in Philadelphia for an update on AIC's certification activities. Let's continue the dialog!

–Terry Drayman-Weisser and Members of the Certification Committee

The AIC Certification Task Force has been reviewing and comparing the status of professional certification in other countries as part of an effort to review all available information on the certification of conservators. This article addresses the status of certification in European countries and the various views of the conservation profession among the nations.

In 1991, the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organization (ECCO) was created to address the issues and concerns of conservators in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. In Europe, efforts are under way to establish a definition of "conservator-restorer" and establish legal recognition of professional standards. It is hoped that these efforts will help affirm and obtain a high professional status of the field (ECCO 1994). For example, the Raphael Programme was created to focus on the development and promotion of cultural heritage, establish networks and partnerships, support innovation, further training and professional mobility, and initiate cooperation with non-member countries and international organizations. The Program was developed under the European Union (EU) Treaty and the article on European Community action in the support of culture and is expected to run through December 2000.

Conservators in continental Europe are particularly concerned with the legal recognition of the professional conservator and the development of a pan-European definition for competency. The problem is particularly complex in France and Germany, where curators also refer to themselves as "conservators."

In 1984, the International Committee of Museum-Conservation Committee (ICOM-CC) first defined and recognized the term "conservator-restorer." While many considered this definition to be the first significant milestone on the road to professionalism, the social and procedural context of "professionalism" varies among the continental countries. In some, a legal definition is required for recognition of professions and accreditation is needed to practice a profession. Therefore, qualification and accreditation processes in one country may not be legally recognized in another, and conservation professionals may be precluded from working in some countries as non-citizens.

For example, in France, the profession currently has no legal status and anyone can become a "restaurateur," leading to problems obtaining recognition of the "conservation-restorer" profession (ECCO 1995).

In Belgium, the national "Ministry of Middle Class" granted recognition for a conservation association in 1996 to present a "Requete en Reglementation" (ECCO 1996). Austrian museum conservators are classified as civil servants and are placed within the museum hierarchy according to their education and qualifications. Historically, however, museum conservators were classified as artists and craftsmen, and now their academic training can provide a different classification within the museum hierarchy. In Germany, registration on a professional list or use of the title "Restaurator" is only available to those with education at the university level or advanced technical college and an additional two years of practical experience. Nine associations of conservator-restorers form the federation of the "German Restorers Associations" and legislate the title conservator-restorer (ECCO 1994). German craftsmen and their representatives fear that the registration process will prevent them

from calling themselves “restorers” in the future. In addition, “conservator” in Germany refers to the job title of art historian working in museums. In Italy, the need to regulate access to the profession by creating a specific accreditation list is strongly felt because conservation is still not recognized as a profession, and there is little institutional recognition and regulation of the field (ECCO 1997). Specific examples of a unified voice in Italy include the Associazione Restauratori con Diplomi Qualificanti Association (ARRC), which grew from a group of restorers in Umbria who could not completely identify with the existing associations on issues of professional training. ARRC membership is awarded to individuals with diplomas in conservation, which are conferred by regional administrations and reflect the European Community’s norms concerning post-secondary professional training programs. The primary objectives of ARRC are to work for the recognition of the professional status and the regulation of the profession of the “conservator-restorer,” to promote the highest possible professional standards in accordance with the definition of the ECCO Professional Guidelines, to pursue conservation-restoration training that is comparable to university degrees, and to work for the official recognition of diplomas in conservation (ECO 1997). These issues are also prevalent in Germany’s shift from vocational training to professional academic studies.

Although much concern focuses on the legal recognition and definition of the profession, all countries have considered educational issues and the full range of competencies needed for these definitions. For example, in Greece, the IIC Hellenic Group is currently examining the definition and legal recognition of the profession, including the definition, requirements, and standards of education and training; status and accreditation of the conservator based on education, training, and experience; security of the state and private conservator; and health, safety, and insurance issues. With the growth of a private conservation sector, discussion of how to enforce professional standards has increased, leading to conversations regarding the categories of educational training and the extent and type of education that should be required to qualify for competition (ECCO 1997). In Switzerland, activities relating to the professional politics currently center on negotiations regarding the designation of conservation training in view of a new academic status at the professional college level, as well as continued cooperation among conservator-restorers, historic building and monument specialists, and research laboratories (ECCO 1996). In Sweden, full membership to the professional organization is granted to working professionals by application following verification of the following qualifications: A Swedish or recognized foreign diploma at university level with three years of documented practical experience, examples of completed work, and suitable evaluation by the membership committee.

In the past five years, several meetings have brought together conservation representatives from various European countries for discussions on legal status, educational standards, and professional recognition. For example, in October 1997, 45 conservation and restoration experts representing 16 European countries met in Pavia, Italy, at the invitation of the Associazione Secc Suardo (a non-governmental Italian organization that has acted as the leader of projects financed by the EU within the framework of the Raphael Programme). ECCP representatives were also present. These experts gathered to adopt recommendations that would urge cultural institutions of the EU to act together in demonstration of their commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage. The topic under discussion included: historical perspectives, training standards in Europe, definition of the term “competent professional” and “conservator-restorer,” as well as growth of public awareness, both professional and political. A final declaration known as the Pavia Document was drawn up, discussed, and approved.

In 1998, a consortium of representatives from Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom met in Vienna, Austria, to form what is now known as the Fulco Project. The purpose of the Fulco Project was to describe the work of the practicing conservator in a way that was valid across Europe. The resulting document is based on a framework of seven key functions that are roughly parallel to the Museum Training Institute’s (MTI) occupational standards from the United Kingdom, plus six general professional criteria covering areas such as values, understanding and intelligent practice which were drawn from the ASSET model, developed for social work at Anglia Polytechnic. ECCO rejected the Fulco Project because of international disagreements over educational standards for university course work as compared to recognized equivalents. However, this document continues to influence professional developments in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Some U.K. professional associations are currently discussing a scheme for the professional accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR), using a system of occupational standards and workplace assessments for a practice-based system of accreditation. This proposal draws on the principles of the U.K. National Vocational Qualifications. Discussions are ongoing because ECCO members tend to recognize full-time higher education, and PACR involves recognition based on practice or a level of proficiency that is generally set beyond that of new graduates.

In 1999, European conservators met at the ICOM-CC conference in Lyon, France, and expressed their concerns about how little is known of the discipline, that the mechanisms for education and training have not been explained well, and that the differences between work in private and public settings are poorly understood. Some also feel that the name of the discipline is a problem and many are unsure of the role ICOM-CC should have in the professional and in the legal recognition process.

Currently, most of the European conservation organizations have formally adopted the ICOM-CC definition of the profession as well as the ECCO's Professional Guidelines. Since 1996, The ECCO Newsletter has provided the opportunity for the many European conservation associations to present comments on the current status of professionalism in their respective countries. As the European community moves closer toward a common definition of competencies and educational requirements, issues of certification or accreditation will help us define the discipline more carefully.

—Nancy Odegaard, AIC Certification Committee

References

ECCO. 1994–1997. ECCO newsletter, Denmark: European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organizations. Vols. 1–4.

Certification Update (AIC News, May 2001)

Certification has been the focus of the issues sessions at the last two AIC Annual Meetings, and will again be the topic in Dallas. At the 1999 meeting in St. Louis, the Certification Task Force received an overwhelming mandate to continue investigating certification for conservators and develop a program model for review by the members.

For those who were not able to attend the previous meetings, a synopsis may be useful. Certification is defined as a voluntary procedure by which a non-governmental organization attests to the professional qualifications of specific individuals. To become certified, a person must demonstrate that he or she meets minimum standards of professional education and/or experience. Members of the profession determine what those minimum standards will be. "Certification" should not be confused with "licensing," which is mandatory, governmental procedure, or with "accreditation," which refers to institutions rather than individuals. This distinction can be confusing since the term "accreditation" is used instead of "certification" in other countries.

Many other professions in the United States are currently active in certifying their members, and there are several conservation organizations, mainly in other countries, with developing or active programs. These programs have been reviewed in the July 1998 and May 2000 issues of AIC News. AIC is fortunate that the National Certification Commission (NCC), representing more than 150 certifying organizations, can serve as a resource for information on certification. Through surveys of its members and guidance on logistical issues, NCC enables us to make more informed decisions for our own profession.

According to NCC, there are three types of certification: granted, regular, and renewal or re-certification. "Granted" certification is offered to those who satisfy certain requirements without sitting for an examination. It is usually offered for a limited time when a certification program is first introduced. This initial certified group helps a program get started and sometimes assists in writing or testing examination questions. Following the "granting" period, "regular" certification takes its place. "Regular" certification is usually based on meeting minimum requirements and passing a test developed by members of the profession. "Re-certification" is contained certification based on meeting certain criteria, e.g., continuing education at set intervals. Each organization may select any or all types of certification for its program. According to a 1999 survey conducted by NCC, 42% of the respondents introduced their programs with granted certifications, 98% have a regular certification program, and 82% include re-certification as part of their programs.

The AIC Certification Task Force (Terry Drayman-Weisser, Ann Boulton, Toddy Glaser, James Hamm, Nancy Odegaard, Deborah Parr) has been examining issues relating to the types of certification mentioned above as well as other aspects of certification needed to develop a program model. We are currently evaluating the pros and cons of granted certification. A lawyer has been hired to advise us on the legal ramifications, such as liability and whether it is advisable to create a separate certifying organization. We are also considering preparing a "how to" road map to address any legal issues before presenting a model.

Any certification program requires that we set minimum standards by which we must judge ourselves. First, we must define what being a professional conservator means. Chairs of AIC committees and task forces, whose charges related to certification issues attended a retreat in December 1999 (see AIC News March 2000). As a result of this retreat, a Qualifications Task Force was formed to take on the complex job of defining the requisite knowledge and skills that characterize an entry-level professional conservator. This definition will enable us to identify the minimum qualifications for a professional conservator. A second retreat was held in Boston on March 14–15 to review the work of this task force.

Once we establish the definition of a professional conservator, we must be certain that our members can prepare themselves to meet these standards. Existing and developing programs through AIC and programs available through other sources serve as an educational resource, both for filling in educational gaps and for updating certified conservators who seek re-certification.

The thought of an examination for certification can be intimidating and can raise questions about objectivity and fairness. Based on the previously cited NCC survey, 82% of certifying organizations require written

examinations. Of those, 75% use multiple choice questions, 14% use true/false questions, 10% use essay or case study. Although NCC can provide guidelines for writing exams, AIC must call upon its members to write the exam questions and participate in practice exams to test the questions. After all, if a majority of professional conservators cannot answer a question correctly, then the question itself is flawed. To aid in preparing for the examination, bibliographies and sample questions will be published in advance. In developing an examination, the professional members must be actively involved. According to the NCC survey, 15% of certification examinations include a practical component. In developing an examination for professional conservators, one of the critical considerations is to make the test as objective as possible. The introduction of subjective elements can only be an impediment to the success of the program. Although some members might feel that the nature of our profession requires a practical examination, this step introduces subjectivity into grading. In certain other professions there maybe a right and a wrong way to perform a practical function, while in conservation practice, this is not usually the case. Therefore, the Certification Task Force will be investigating alternative ways to evaluate a candidate's practical qualifications.

As stated above, most certification programs require re-certification at certain intervals. The Certification Task Force is strongly in favor of a re-certification component without re-examination. A method must be developed to ensure that previously certified conservators remain qualified. The number of years between required re-certification must be determined and the elements of a meaningful program must be developed. A possible program could entail a point system with various categories of activities. To qualify for re-certification, a conservator might have to accrue a certain number of points from several categories.

A question that is sometime asked is: What will certification do for me? The answer for some in the short term is: perhaps not much. However, if one's training is not considered "mainstream" by others in the profession or by potential employers, such a program could be a great equalizer, downplaying the difference in the training path followed. For independent conservators, certification may have a positive effect on potential clients. It may raise the status of the conservator working as part of a team with other certified or licensed professionals. We also must recognized that users of conservation services are in some cases defining the professional conservator for hiring purposes; thus, de facto certification is taking place, often without our direct input.

Perhaps the most important and lasting benefit of certification is the profession itself. Currently, recognition in our profession comes from graduating from a training program, or becoming a professional member of AIC. As important as these accomplishments may be, they do nothing to provide the incentive to remain current with changes and developments in conservation. They do not require active engagement in and contributions to the profession. Participation in certification, and especially re-certification on a regular basis, will remedy this situation, to the lasting benefit of the profession.

We look forward to hearing your comments during the issues session at the AIC Annual Meeting in Dallas.

—Terry Drayman-Weisser, Chair, Certification Task Force

Certification and Liability (AIC News, July 2002)

Introduction

During the Miami Issues Session, AIC President Jerry Podany announced that a mail vote will take place, likely in November 2002, to determine whether AIC members support the establishment of a certification program. If affirmed, we will move forward with a design. Please keep in mind that development of a program will require input from the members. In preparation for the vote, in the September AIC News, there will be a review of the Miami Issues Session, and the Certification Task Force will address issues raised by the members. If you have questions or comments relating to certification, please send them to me by email.

Over the last two years, questions have been raised concerning whether certification could lead to increased liability for conservators. Sam Harris, who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and is a lawyer, engineer, and architect, addressed this issue at the meeting in Dallas, 2001. Since this subject is important to all members considering the development of a certification program, he has agreed to present his comments here for the benefit of those who could not attend that meeting.

—Terry Drayman-Weisser, Chair, Certification Task Force

Viewpoint

The comments by Terry Drayman-Weisser and Ann Boulton in the May 2002 issue of AIC News were thorough and informative, clear and forthright.

I have been asked to add to ongoing commentary on the issue of liability, which was raised in Dallas in 2001. Meeting participants asked if certification might and/or raise our exposure to claims of professional malpractice. I have done some additional research into the subject and can, with increased confidence, repeat my position of last year by stating that liability exposure is not a function of certification.

What I have learned is that we are currently exposed, to some degree, to claims of professional negligence. There does not appear to be any added exposure because we stipulated the standards of the profession, or because we engage in a certification program. I theorize that as we take on more projects of increasing risk exposure, some of us may seek added protection through insurance. The presence of insurance apparently provides some statistical increase in the likelihood of claims simply because of the presence of a deep pocket; however, the best evidence is that such exposure is not pervasive and is dramatically outweighed by increases in fees. Liability exposure is far more a function of the risks associated with projects and value of projects than it is to certification or insurance.

Consultation with several attorneys suggests that we may be better served in terms of liability reduction by subscribing to well-prepared and standardized contracts than by adding insurance. The consensus is that conservators are more likely to be exposed to claims of breach of contract (for which insurance is not available) than to claims of negligence, for which, ironically, insurance is theoretically available.

If this is the case, then breaches of contract are quite within our power to control and do not constitute insurable risks. At future conferences, it may be beneficial to conduct workshops on contract preparation and establish standards of conservation contracting. In the meanwhile, there does not appear to be any reason to delay, much less reject, certification based on liability exposure.

—Samuel Y. Harris, S. Harris & Co.

Certification: Moving Ahead.

Summary of the Issues Session, Annual Meeting (AIC News, September 2002)

The issues session was very well attended at the annual meeting in Miami. Jerry Podany began with a brief overview of past efforts to establish a certification program within AIC. As members of AIC, we have long wanted to increase the status of our profession, but our natural tendency toward obsession with detail and perfection sometimes impedes efficiency in deciding larger issues. The hesitation to move ahead without answers to every question can't be an obstacle to our ability to better serve the world's cultural heritage. We have to take some chances, and we have to move forward.

At present, there is no conventional method for judging qualifications and aptitude of one who calls himself or herself a conservator, no formal category that recognizes the accomplishments of an individual who has met the minimum requirements to practice this profession. As one audience member remarked, "the federal government still doesn't recognize conservation as a profession...we need the credibility."

Terry Drayman-Weisser, chair of the Certification Task Force, underscored the definition of certification as a non-governmental, voluntary procedure. At a previous issues session meeting, the membership voted for the Task Force to continue to investigate development of a certification program for practicing conservators and produce a model program. Terry summarized the description of one possible model rendered in detail in the May 2002 AIC News (Vol 27, no. 3).

When the topic was opened for discussion, several questions came up from the audience. In response to a question regarding how certification may affect conservation scientists and their role within AIC, Terry stated that initially they will help develop questions for the general exam, and eventually will work with AIC to develop a program for certification of conservation scientists. The intent is to make the certification program inclusive of all facets of our profession, but we will start somewhere, and that will be with practicing conservators.

A question was posted regarding the need for a full-time staff member in the office to manage the program. Where will that salary come from? Some of the expense may be absorbed by grants, while other costs will be born by application fees, recertification fees, and extra fees charged to AIC nonmembers. That question will be carefully considered during the next phase of the system planning.

The issue of the relationship between membership categories and certification was raised and Terry emphasized the separation between the two classifications. Also, certification will be open to non-AIC members, but they may be asked to bear additional related costs.

Terry affirmed the involvement of a lawyer during formation of a program to review an appeals mechanism and all other legal issues associated with program operation. Sam Harris addressed the topic of increased liability caused by certification during his presentation at the Issues Session in 2001, and came to the conclusion that "liability exposure is not a function of certification." For further information, see his article on "Certification and Liability" in AIC News, Jul 2002 (Vol. 27, no. 4).

To some the idea of a Fast Track category seems unfair; why is there a need for this? Terry stated that the concept of Fast Track or Grated Certification involves peer review and includes many of the requirements that have to be met for regular certification, such as recertification, payment of initial fees, etc. Most organizations have a granting or fast track mechanism in place when a certification program is initiated. It provides a body of people to begin the process and to develop an examination. Those who might be granted certification will become the guinea pigs, perhaps taking many exams, testing the test, and helping to develop exam questions. Recertification keeps the process very current; as our profession evolves, practitioners have to stay abreast of new developments. Membership input is critical for development of this phase of the program.

Throughout the discussion, Terry stressed that other ways to implement the program are possible and recommendations are welcome. Although some were eager to call for a vote on the initiative at the meeting, Terry reminded the audience that the importance of this requires that everyone have the chance to declare their

choice. She emphasized the fact that if we feel strongly about certification, we should discuss related questions with our colleagues and urge them to vote.

Vote in November

The issues surrounding the development of a certification program affect the entirety of our membership, and it's important that each member has the opportunity to express his/her preference for the proposed resolution of this long-standing debate. In November, the membership will be asked to vote on whether AIC should move into an active development phase that will result in implementation of a certification process. There is an element of gravity to this vote. If the motion passes, AIC will officially begin to formulate a course of action structured by membership involvement, and significant involvement will be essential to the creation of a viable certification program. If the motion does not pass, the certification issue disappears and we will expend no further effort on the topic. As an organization, we will have new initiatives and challenges that will require different foci of attention and energy.

In mid-November, a ballot will be sent as a separate mailing to all individual members of AIC, with two weeks allowed to return the ballot to the AIC office. If a member cannot return the ballot within that time, arrangements can be made through the office for an absentee ballot. If your address has changed since the 2002 directory listing, please be sure to inform the office of the change.

—Pamela Young, AIC Vice President

Why Certification? (AIC News, November 2002)

The choice to pursue certification has been debated for a very long time and in the last several years, the AIC Board and the Certification Task Force have made a concerted effort to address the membership's questions and concerns; the benefits and responsibilities of certification; and to bring as much information forward as possible so that we can all make an informed decision. No doubt some still feel that questions remain. And no doubt others have grown impatient with the long debate. But the debate has been important and there have been valid concerns: How will this really affect me? How will the granting of certification be determined? What will the 'test' be like? Why can't we just improve the PA category instead?

While the effort to answer these questions and others may very well continue, it is now time to take the next step...or to abandon the effort. The vote you are being asked to cast will determine if the AIC will begin to support this development, be assured it will be open and, more importantly, dependent upon your input and direct involvement. Development will be a transparent process with open debates and a continuing effort to keep everyone informed and engaged. It will also take time to design the program correctly and fine-tune it to run smoothly.

There have been some statements and questions I find puzzling, like, "I have been in practice for more than 20 years and I don't need to be judged," or I already have a degree, why should I prove myself further or jump through more hoops?" I am puzzled because it seems to me that the very principles that guide conservators today—openness, selflessness, and above all, a desire to save cultural property using the best means available and following elevated and principled standards—answer these questions. We should always debate and always question. But we should also be open to being questioned. How else can we be sure to live up to the high expectations we have set for ourselves and with which we enjoy association?

Who among us, after all, is above the material we strive to preserve? Who among us should not strive to better his abilities and always question his approaches? When, exactly, do we stop learning and become autonomous and independent of any need for improvement? One of the strengths of our professional community is that we question, examine, and never stop adding to our knowledge. We, as a group, are highly critical in our review of new methodologies and new materials. We want to be assured that we are using the best and the most appropriate resources in our daily work. Why shouldn't this process of questioning, evaluation, critical examination, and advancement also apply to us as practitioners?

Certification will not "guarantee" anything. Just as licensing, accreditation, degrees, or years of experience cannot make guarantees. It is, however, one part of our effort to raise ourselves to the level of those professions we hold in great esteem and often directly compare ourselves. It is a mechanism by which we can open doors to new opportunities and ongoing development. And it is a tool that can be used to garner more influence in the world of heritage preservation and beyond.

And so, as we all draw close to making this decision, I have a question. If you ask, "What will I get out of certification and why should I care?" let me ask, "What do you get out of our code of ethics and why do we care about it?" Since the underlying purpose of both is to raise our stature and ensure that we have the right tools, the right guides, and an agreed upon set of definitions to help us perform our work at the highest levels possible, the answer to these two questions seems self-evident. —Jerry Podany, AIC President

Below are AIC News articles relating to certification from 2000 to today.

- Harris, S. 2002. Certification and liability. AIC News 27(4):9.
- Podany, J. 2002. Why certification? AIC News 27(6): 6.
- Weisser, T. 2001. Certification update. AIC News 26(3): 1, 7–8.
- Weisser, T. 2002. Certification: Your vote counts. AIC News 27(6): 6.
- Weisser, T. 2006. Certification Update. AIC News 32(2): 3
- Weisser, T., and N. Odegaard. 2000. The status of certification in Europe. AIC News 25(3):1, 16–18.
- Young, P. 2002. Certification: Moving ahead, summary of the issues session, annual meeting. AIC News 27(5):1, 5.

Certification—Your Vote Counts (AIC News, November 2002)

As members of AIC we stand on the threshold, about to make a crucial decision on whether or not to put all the information we have gathered on certification to use and take that next step toward professionalism. Will certification be in your future?

In November you will receive a ballot asking for your vote, “yes” or “no,” on this issue. There are some members who feel we should move ahead with certification without further ado, but since certification will affect us all, every individual member will be asked to participate in this referendum. If the majority of those voting answer in the affirmative, AIC will make the development of a certification program a priority, along with other already identified priorities. If the majority votes no, the issue of certification will disappear from AIC’s agenda.

The stakes are high and it is imperative that every voting individual takes the time to educate him or herself on the issues. A number of articles have appeared in AIC News in the past, and references to these can be found at the end of this article. I have received a number of thoughtful comments and questions from members, and have tried to answer them on an individual basis; however, I have also been approached by worried members and have received frantic email messages raising points based on rumor and incorrect interpretations of information. If certification were to fail because of uninformed voting, it will be a great disappointment to those of us who believe certification will benefit our profession. However, well-informed members may reach the conclusion that certification should not go forward. This is a legitimate difference of opinion that should be respected equally. So, please take the time to read the previously published articles and contact me attweisser@thewalters.org if you have any questions. Remember to put “certification” in the subject line so that it won’t get deleted as spam.

—Terry Drayman-Weisser, Chair, Certification Task Force

Certification Update (AIC News, March 2006)

In November 2002, after the AIC Certification Task Force presented a model for a certification program (AIC News, May 2002), the AIC Board called for a vote to get a sense of member support for a certification initiative. The Board circulated a mail ballot to all members of AIC asking whether the resources of the organization should be put toward developing a professional certification program. Sixty two percent of the ballots cast were in the affirmative. The Board then created a Certification Development Committee (CDC), charged with developing a certification program for conservators, including a mechanism for re-certification or renewal. Building on the work of the Certification Task Force, the Committee was tasked to create a program for membership and Board review through:

- Direct involvement of AIC membership
- Cooperation and input from AIC Specialty Groups, Committees, and Task Forces
- The judicious and appropriate use of expertise outside of AIC
- Research on and evaluation of existing conservator certification programs

The CDC Structure

As chair of the committee I was delighted that many AIC members immediately expressed an interest in participating in what was certain to be the long and complex process of developing a certification program. In order to begin addressing the many diverse tasks necessary to develop a successful program and to get the input of as many members as possible, a unique AIC committee was formed. The initial CDC members were chosen from the other AIC committees that would be most impacted by certification: Membership, By-laws, and Education and Training. In addition, the specialty group chairs were asked to select a representative to serve on the CDC, and CIPP was asked to select an additional representative for the CDC to be certain that we considered issues and concerns relating to a growing number of AIC members engaged in private practice.

Each member of the CDC was asked to form a working group and was assigned certification development tasks relating to areas of interest or expertise.

This structure allows the CDC to tackle a large number of tasks simultaneously—expediting the development process—and also broadens the base for member participation in the development of a certification program. The working groups are made up of AIC members who previously had expressed interest in working on certification or have special expertise in the task subject. The specialty groups were asked to create their own certification task forces by soliciting interested group members, and to select managers for their task forces who also would serve on the CDC specialty group working group.

A process is now in place for all working groups to carry out their tasks and to make recommendations to the CDC and for the CDC, after discussion, to make recommendations to the AIC Board and the AIC membership.

Initial Tasks

Current members and initial tasks of the CDC and working groups are the following:

CDC: Terry Drayman-Weisser (Chair); Rebecca Rushfield (recently replacing Rosemary Fallon) (By-laws); Tom Edmondson (Membership); Kory Berrett (CIPP); Martha Singer (Education and Training); Frederick Wallace (Specialty Groups);

Tasks:

- Determine whether certification should be general as opposed to specialty-specific and whether initially for practicing conservators only
- Recommend categories for certification, e.g. Fast-Track, Regular, and Renewal
- Develop a format for the certification examination
- Evaluate staff needs for running a certification program (working with AIC office staff)
- Evaluate the cost of a certification program and create a budget

By-laws Working Group: Rebecca Rushfield (Chair), Rosemary Fallon, Maria Fredericks, Hilary Kaplan

Tasks:

- Determine whether any by-laws changes are necessary for AIC to carry out certification
- Develop an appeals process for certification and recommend the make up of an appeals body
- Investigate a system for record confidentiality and make a recommendation (with AIC office staff) including a budget

Membership Working Group: Tom Edmondson (Chair), Susan Adler, Tom Heller, Sarah Fisher, Shelley Sass, Jonathan Thornton

Tasks:

- Examine the possible effects of certification on membership in AIC, including membership categories, increases or decreases in membership numbers (including if AIC requires membership to apply for certification)
- Determine whether Fast-Track certification is recommended and what the qualifications should be
- Address how we determine practical skills

CIPP Working Group: Kory Berrett (Chair), Nancy Pollak

Tasks:

- Update review of successes and failures of existing conservation certification programs (Canadian, British, European, etc.)
- Recommend minimum requirements to sit for certification exam (education, training, experience)

Education and Training Working Group: Martha Singer (Chair), Rebecca Rushfield, Karen Pavelka, Erika Lindensmith

Tasks:

- Evaluate opportunities for preparing for exams (bibliographies, courses, seminars, literature, on-line courses, etc.)
- Recommend a format for re-certification program (how many years after certification? Method for demonstrating continuing education and participation?)
- Develop bibliographies for preparation for exam

Specialty Group Working Group: Frederick Wallace (Chair); Dorothy Krotzer (Architecture); Susan Russick (Book and Paper); Kory Berrett (CIPP); Marlan Green (Electronic Media); Julie Wolfe (OSG); Harriet Irgang (Paintings Specialty Group); Laura Downey Staneff (Photographic Materials Group); James Martin (RATS); Deborah Lee Trupin (Textiles Specialty Group); Randy S. Wilkinson (Wooden Artifacts).

Tasks:

- Determine what knowledge all conservators should have regardless of specialty (beginning with a review of the document, “Defining the Conservator: Essential Competencies”, available at the AIC website, under “About AIC/AIC Core Documents”, AIC 2003)
- Develop questions for exam
- Develop case studies for exam, if required

Current Recommendations:

At a meeting of the CDC held in Minneapolis in 2005, the CDC first discussed two issues that have been brought up by AIC members in the past: whether program training will be a requirement for certification and whether an undergraduate college degree will be required. The group also discussed general vs. specialty-specific certification, limiting the initial certification program to practicing conservators, certification categories, a

certification exam format, and proof of practical skills.

Graduate Program Pre-requisite

The CDC recommends that program training not be a requirement for certification because there are many highly skilled and competent conservators who have not been trained through a graduate training program. A certification exam should test for competencies, not for the source of training.

Undergraduate Degree Pre-requisite

An undergraduate degree is generally regarded as a basic level of formal education (see “Defining the Conservator: Essential Competencies,” pg. 2,). The CDC recognizes that some highly qualified, competent conservation professionals may not have undergraduate degrees, and that these conservators should not be excluded from the certification program. One possible solution discussed was to provide a grace period and not require an undergraduate degree for anyone applying during the first five years of the certification program. Alternatively, an undergraduate degree could be required but the rules could be flexible enough so that a conservator without an undergraduate degree could apply for a variance and be allowed to sit for the certification examination. If he/she passes, the lack of a degree should not prevent the conservator from being certified.

Membership representative, Tom Edmondson, observed that it would make sense to have pre-requisites in keeping with those currently used for Professional Associate membership: “An applicant should have an undergraduate university degree or the international equivalent. Applicants without a degree may still apply, but must request a waiver from the ‘Board of Examiners.’” There was consensus that the CDC adopt Tom Edmondson’s recommendation.

General Certification vs. Specialty-specific Certification

The CDC recommends that certification should initially be general rather than specialty-specific. The specialty groups currently are at various stages of readiness to develop specialty-specific certification programs. Some specialty groups may be many years away from even beginning to plan for specialty certification. The consensus was that it would be detrimental to the development of a working program if it were created in a piecemeal fashion. The CDC recommends that AIC begin with general certification and that specialty certification be added if and when each specialty group develops a specialty certification program.

Limiting Initial Certification to Practicing Conservators

The CDC recommends that certification be initially offered to practicing conservators with the possibility of expanding to educators, conservation scientists, administrators, etc., if these groups are interested and wish to create appropriate methods of evaluation and testing. If an educator, scientist, administrator, or other conservation-related professional, is also trained as a practicing conservator, he/she could apply for certification.

Certification Categories

The CDC recommends the following categories for certification: Regular (by exam), Fast-Track (without exam, but with specific requirements), and Renewal (re-certification after a specified time period). The Renewal category was considered especially important for assuring that those certified would stay abreast of advances in the field in order to retain their certification (education and training working group to recommend requirements). Tom Edmondson added comments from the membership working group concerning the Fast-Track category. The membership working group felt that the inclusion of this category will be accepted only if it is not considered a ‘free ride.’

The membership working group’s recommendation was that “only Fellow and PA members with 7 years or more experience be eligible for Fast-Track certification, with the additional requirement of having their first certification renewal in a shorter timeframe than required for all others. There should be a well-broadcast one-year window available prior to launching the Fast-Track program for anyone eligible to be a PA, who has 7 years or more experience, but has not upgraded from Associate to do so.”

The CDC members suggested an additional requirement that those certified through Fast-Track agree to be involved with evaluating the exam questions by taking sample tests anonymously. There was general agreement by the CDC members that all of the above would be reasonable requirements for a Fast-Track category.

Certification Exam Format

CDC members discussed the format for a certification exam. The intent of the model proposed previously by the Certification Task Force was to make the exam as objective as possible. The following format was suggested: a written two-part multiple choice exam, the first section would be made up of questions on general widely-based knowledge across all specialties and the second section would include a specified number of self-selected complex case histories with questions addressing complex concepts and processes, with a passing grade required on each part of the exam. All members of the CDC agreed that this format be recommended. Proctored examinations in conjunction with AIC meetings as well as at selected regional locations were recommended by the Committee.

Proof of Practical Skills

The CDC recommends that proof of practical skills be required before taking the written exam. The membership working group addressed how a conservator's practical skills could be assessed. Their initial comments on this are as follows:

“We think that a visiting committee to each studio is probably impractical. We also had to refine what was meant by practical skills. We arrived at ‘important practical skills relevant to the individual's discipline,’ and which included problem solving, powers of observation, reasoning and treatment design. One way of actually being able to ascertain these skills might be to send out a CD with high quality images of an object or work of art, have the applicant perform an examination and write a condition report with a treatment proposal. The report should include a well-developed rationale for the proposed treatment. This plus 3 letters of recommendation that address the applicant's capabilities in all of the above, including an assessment of the applicants applied treatment skills.”

On-going Work

All working groups have been addressing assigned tasks and the chair of each group will report progress in future issues of the AIC News. The CDC in collaboration with AIC Board Director, Jane Klinger, and AIC Executive Director, Eryl Wentworth, are pursuing funding sources to expedite the development of a certification program. I wish to thank Katy Untch for her past efforts in this area.

If you are interested in participating in the certification development process, we welcome your input. There is still much to do. The best way to contribute is to volunteer on a specialty group task force. We also encourage your comments and suggestions which can be sent to me at tweisser@thewalters.org.

—Terry Drayman-Weisser

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why do we need certification? (Or, Why is certification important for our profession?)

The following are just some of the reasons:

- It is important that our profession defines the qualifications and standards of its practitioners. Some outside groups recognize the need to define the professional conservator for their own purposes and are doing so without input from AIC. Identifying essential competencies for our profession is part of the process for developing a certification program.
- Certification raises the standards in our profession. Re-certification, a central part of the proposed certification program, creates an incentive for and recognition of continuing education and professional development.
- Certification can provide conservators with a recognized credential.
- Members of the public are used to seeing licenses and certifications for everyone providing services, from plumbers and hairdressers to doctors, and are surprised to find that conservators have no such credentials. This can make what the conservator does seem less important or of less value.
- Certification will give conservators standing when working on projects with other professionals with recognized credentials. Without credentials the conservator is often viewed as a junior player.
- Certification can help eliminate perceived barriers in our profession between program and non-programmed trained conservators since the certification process is not based on the method of training.

Will certification be a requirement for membership in AIC?

No, AIC will continue to welcome all conservators and related professionals as members.

When & how will a fully-articulated proposal for the model (certification) be vetted by & approved by the AIC membership?

Information on the model and development process will be displayed on the certification page of the AIC website as it becomes available. In addition, a final survey is to be emailed mid-July to engage the membership in the process. The plan is for the proposed model to be voted on by the membership in late 2008.

Who will be eligible to vote and how will the vote be handled?

The AIC Board seeks a vote from all Fellows, Professional Associates, and Associates in order to hear from those who will be most affected by certification. So that the AIC Board can better understand and evaluate the results, voters will be asked to identify their current membership category on the ballot.

The vote will be conducted via Survey Monkey, a third party site. Postcard will be mailed to all AIC members reminding them of the vote and with instructions on how to obtain a paper ballot if they do not have internet access. Any paper ballots received will be added to the Survey Monkey totals.

Will the exam be specific to different specialties?

All candidates earn the same certification regardless of specialty, but they can, by question selection, tailor their exam to their strengths.

What will the re-certification process be like?

The details are still being worked out, but certified individuals will need to renew their certification every 3–5 years. This can be done in two ways:

- Re-take and pass the exam
- Earn the number of continuing education credits needed to recertify

The number of continuing education credits will be based on the amount of time needed to recertify. For example, if the recertification period is 3 years, you will not need to earn as many credits as you would if it were

5 years. The number of credits needed will also be based on what the average, well informed conservator would do to keep current with or without certification. In addition, certified conservators will be able to request an extension due to extenuating circumstances.

Will only AIC programs and workshops count towards recertification?

Activities qualifying for recertification credit are still being evaluated, but will not be limited to conferences, courses and workshops or to those sponsored by AIC. All relevant programs will count toward recertification. This will include some independent types of learning that can be done on the conservator's schedule.

Will Professional Associates and Fellows need to take the exam?

Everyone wishing to become certified will need to take the exam. There will be no "grandfathering" of any AIC members.

Does the exam test for "hand skills"?

Not directly. To do so would require lab/studio visits, making the exam very expensive to administer. However, since some of the exam's essay questions will be case studies, a candidate's approach to treatments will be evaluated.

Will a certification program help AIC and the profession?

Studies have shown that certification programs raise the awareness and status of the profession in the eyes of related fields and, to some extent, the general public. Parts of the exam development process, like the Job Task Analysis, also provide important information about the profession.

Who will run the certification program?

For at least the first five years, AIC will administer the program by setting up a Certification Commission, independent of the AIC Board, that will be responsible for administering the exam.

How can one general exam be fair to all conservators?

The Specialty Groups have been involved in determining what all conservators should know from each discipline. There will also be study guides, bibliographies and other information on the exam provided to all applicants. No one will need to go into the exam blind. Also, since candidates will have some choice in which questions to answer they can tailor the exam to their strengths.

When and how often will the exam be offered?

The test run exam will be proctored. Following the test run, proctored versus un-proctored exams will be evaluated. Either way, it is proposed that three exam dates be offered annually. If un-proctored, completed exams could be sent to AIC in paper-based or electronic formats.

Given that AIC has limited marketing funds, should AIC wait to start marketing the exam to end users until there are many certified conservators?

Generally, it is more effective to start the marketing during the development phase, because by involving the end users in the development process you are getting buy-in for the program.

Why not just use the certification development funds to advertise AIC more and to conduct outreach programs?

Certification adds value to the profession. Also, there is the concern that certification could be imposed by others in the absence of any internal guidelines.

What involvement have the conservation graduate programs had in the exam development?

A representative from a program was a member of the first certification task force. The programs have been providing bibliographies for exam preparation, and a representative of the programs is an advisor to the

current Certification Implementation Task Force.

Has the passing mark for the exam been set?

No, that cannot be set until an exam is developed.

Will a certification program increase AIC's liability?

For more information on certification and liability read this AIC News article featuring Sam Harris.

In order to make the exam more accessible, could the regional conservation membership organizations administer the exam?

That is a possibility.

How accurate are the numbers in the certification budget both on the expense and income sides of the numbers?

The numbers are estimates based on what is normal for organizations of AIC's size that have certification programs. Running a certification program for a small association can be challenging because many of the exam development costs are the same whether the exam is given to 100 or 1,000 people. Income estimates are based in part on results of surveys of the AIC membership.

Where does the work of the implementation team come into this process?

The charge of the Certification Implementation Task Force is as follows:

The members of the Certification Implementation Task Force agree to:

- Complete the steps necessary to further define what would be a creditable and sustainable certification program for AIC
- Develop a timeline for certification implementation that includes the member vote
- Provide forums for continuing member education and information dissemination to involve members in the process and increase member commitment to certification
- Pursue funding for program development
- Manage the process through the initial testing phase

If certification is adopted, how will AIC make those who contract our services aware of why they should choose a certified conservator over an uncertified practitioner?

AIC will conduct a marketing campaign aimed at users of conservation services and related organizations to highlight the benefits of using a certified conservator. In addition, AIC is redesigning its website to have a more engaging and effective public face. The redesigned website will be an important marketing tool for certification.

Will there be a separate certification procedure for "conservation scientists"?

Currently, AIC is only developing one certification program for conservators. After that program has been in place for a while, AIC will be able to evaluate the possibility of branching out into developing other programs. However, those who are serving as conservation administrators, educators, and scientists, but who were trained as conservators, will be welcome to sit for the exam.

Who would write the exams?

Subject matter experts, conservators recommended by the Specialty Groups, will undergo training by educational consultants in exam question writing. In addition educational consultants will review the questions and assist conservator/writers to create grading rubrics for each question.

Who would be grading these certification tests? Conservators? Consultants?

- A blind review process* will be implemented. Grading will be done by trained reviewers in the candidate's specialty. If the grades are too far apart, then the application will be sent to additional reviewers.

- The reviewers will be drawn from the ranks of current PAs and Fellows.
- The reviewers will be trained by education specialists and will use specially designed rubrics for each question, which will outline how to award and subtract points based on the answers given.
- Reviewers will be trained to view all established acceptable forms of conservation approaches as appropriate, regardless of whether it is what “they would do.”
- Reviewers will be trained to evaluate new or different conservation approaches on their own merits.
- Reviewers will be instructed on how to discount minor flaws in writing such as grammar and sentence structure errors, which are frequent in examinations of this type, so that they do not influence the grading.
- The AIC Certification Commission, an independent body, will review all failing exams and will have the right to change the score if it is appropriate.
- AIC will investigate how to offer an oral version of the exam for those with writing disabilities.

* In a blind review process, only the AIC office would know the name of the candidates. Candidates will be instructed on how to depersonalize their applications. An application number will be assigned to each application, which will be the only identifying mark on the application when it is sent to the reviewers. If at any time a reviewer thinks they know the identity of a candidate, they will be required to inform the AIC office. Because all failing applications will be reviewed (also in a blind review process) by the Certification Commission, there is an additional check against bias in the review process.

We have heard a lot about the benefits of certification . . . what are the downsides of this process?

Certification is a powerful tool to boost the image of a profession and can be an important way to distinguish between qualified and untested professionals within a field. However, any profession considering certification needs to be unified and have an agreed upon set of guidelines that all professional practitioners have agreed to follow. In addition the association MUST be sure that either the proposed certification program will break even or the association has the resources to run the program at a financial loss. Certification is not a quick fix, but rather a long-term process of a profession further defining itself.

Conservators who help write exams – are they then expected to sit their own exam?

- Grant funds will be secured to develop the pilot project, part of which is the test run.
- The first 75 Professional Associates and Fellows, each with a minimum of ten years of experience, who volunteer, will be allowed to apply to take the test run exam, which will be proctored.
- This group will be trained to serve as reviewers.
- During the test run, candidates will also serve as reviewers of other candidate’s exams.
- Those who help to write the exam will also need to sit for the exam. However, they will not be able to use questions they had a part in writing

How much will this cost the individual conservator? -- Not just the exams but the continuing education workshops, travel to testing sites, workshops etc.

These costs are not set yet and will vary by individual. For example it will cost less if you decide to study on your own to prepare for the exam vs. taking a workshop. AIC is attempting to keep the cost reasonable.

What will happen if I fail the exam?

First of all, AIC will not publish the list of those taking the exam, only those who pass. Naturally, no list of those who fail will ever be released. Anyone who fails the exam will have the opportunity to retake the exam in the future and will be provided with a list of what they can do to improve. Also, candidates may appeal their grade to the Certification Commission.

Who can sit for the exam?

Conservators with a cumulative total of 7 years full-time experience in a combination of conservation education, training, and work experience (including pre-program and apprenticeships) can sit for the exam. At

least 4 of these years need to have been spent working and/or studying in a specialty area (as defined within a material specialty). Also, related professionals, conservation administrators, educators, and assessors with the conservation experience listed above can sit for the exam.

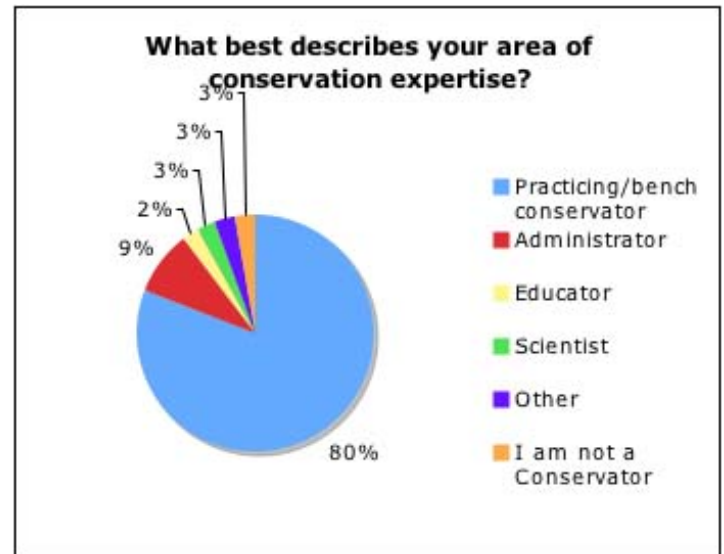
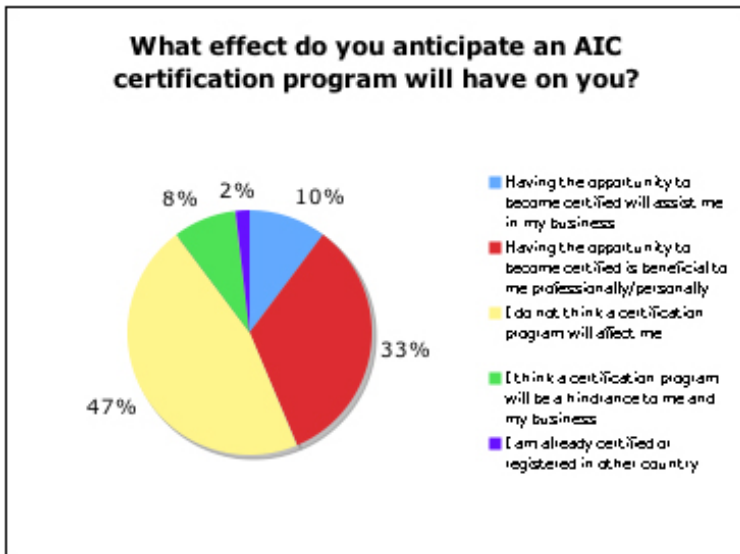
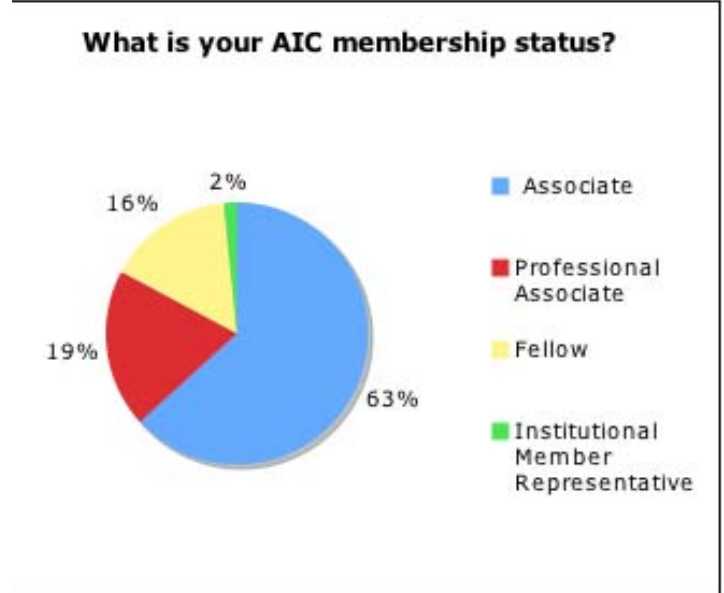
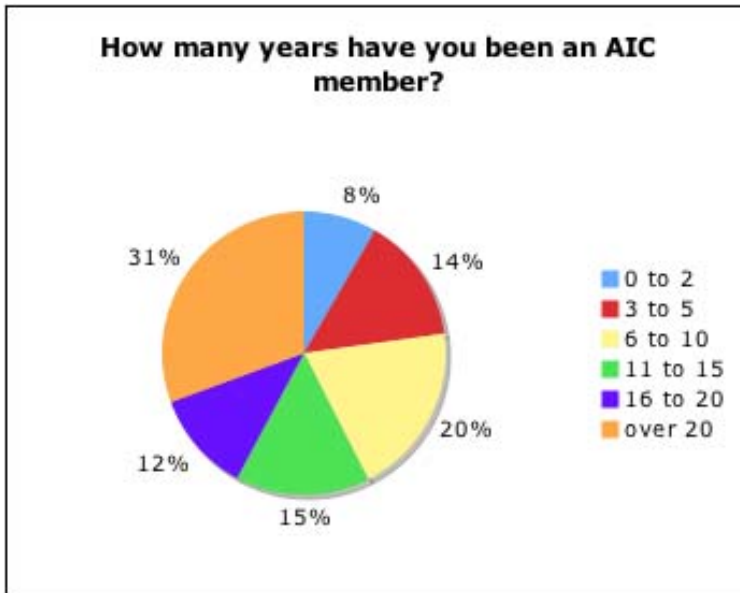
Also, you will need to be a member of AIC to sit for the exam and to recertify. However, since AIC membership is open to everyone there is no conflict with restraint of trade.

What will happen to my PA status when AIC starts a certification program?

Your PA or Fellow status will remain unchanged. If you are a current PA or Fellow and are listed on the AIC Guide to Conservation Services, you will continue to be eligible to be listed even if you choose not to become certified. Members who are not a PA or Fellow who become certified will also be listed.

- A member who becomes certified will be known as a Certified Member.
- A PA who becomes certified will be known as a Certified Professional Member.
- A Fellow who becomes certified will be known as a Certified Fellow.
- AIC will stress in marketing campaigns and on the website that Certified PAs and Certified Fellows have achieved the highest designations.

Certification Needs Assessment Survey 2006 Results



What affect do you anticipate an AIC certification program will have on you?

Having the opportunity to become certified will assist me in my business	10.4%
Having the opportunity to become certified is beneficial to me professionally/personally	33.3%
I do not think a certification program will affect me	46%
I think a certification program will be a hindrance to me and my business	8.5%
I am already certified or registered in other country	1.9%

Which answer best describes your potential actions concerning an AIC certification program?

I plan to pursue certification as soon as it is available	25.4%
I plan to pursue certification within 3 years after it is available and more details are known	42%
I do not plan on becoming certified for at least 5 years	12.1%
I do not plan on becoming certified	11.9%
I do not support certification	8.6%

Which answer best describes your AIC Annual Meeting attendance?

I plan to go every year and rarely, if ever, miss it	14%
I usually attend, at least every other year	28.7%
I have attended at least once in the last five years	33.9%
I have not attended in five years or I have never attended	33.5%

If an AIC certification exam were only offered at the AIC Annual Meeting what would be your reaction?

It would not be an issue for me, I attend regularly anyway or would make a point of attending to become certified	19.3%
It would be a slight issue for me, I am not always able to attend the Annual Meeting	.7%
I would need to wait until the Annual Meeting was offered within driving distance of my hometown	12.8%
I doubt I would be able to become certified if it was only offered at the Annual Meeting	21.2%

If the AIC Certification exam were offered at several sites across the country how far would you travel to take it?

Traveling to take the exam, including an overnight hotel stay, would not be an issue for me	26.7%
I would be willing to travel only if I could come and go in one day	56.2%
I would only be willing to travel no more than 1 hour to take the exam	17.1%

If AIC were to start a certification program what do you think your employer's reaction would be?

My employer would be pushing for me to become certified	10.3%
My employer would be supportive if it was something I wanted to do	25.6%
My employer would expect me to do this on my own time and/or it would make no difference to my employer whether or not I was certified	14.8%
I don't know how my employer feels about certification	11.3%
I own my business	37.9%

What portion of the costs of becoming certified do you think your employer would cover?

My employer would probably pay for me to take the exam and any travel costs as well as letting me take some time away from work to prepare and take the exam	0.4%
My employer would probably cover the exam costs and time away from work, but I would need to pay any travel costs	5.5%
My employer would probably pay for 50% of the costs and would expect me to do most of my preparation in off hours	7.4%
My employer would probably make little or no financial contribution, but would let me do some of the preparation during work hours	23.3%
My employer would not offer any support	14.4%
I own my business	38%

How much would you be willing to pay to take a certification exam (exam registration fee only, not including travel costs)? Most associations price their certification exam anywhere between \$200 to \$1,000.

Within reason, cost is not an issue, the benefits I will receive from being certified will out weigh the costs.	8.9%
Anything over \$500 would cause me to rethink taking the exam.	13.6%
Anything over \$300 would cause me to rethink taking the exam	55.4%
I am unsure if I would take the exam at any cost.	22.9%

How much would you be willing to pay to become certified (exam, preparation, and travel costs)?

Within reason, cost is not an issue, the benefits I will receive from being certified will out weigh the costs	9.9%
Anything over \$800 would cause me to rethink taking the exam	21.3%
Anything over \$400 would cause me to rethink taking the exam	40%
I am still unsure about the benefits of certification	28.8%

Outside of the Annual Meeting, how many AIC sponsored professional development workshops have you attended in the last 3 years?

None	56.8%
One	25.2%
Two to Three	16.3%
Four or more	1.7%

Including the AIC Annual Meeting, AIC workshops, and non AIC events, how much do you spend on professional development in an average year?

Less than \$200	15.8%
\$200 to \$500	25.3%
\$500 to \$750	20.6%
\$750 to \$1500	24.7%
More than \$1500	0.6%

Certification Needs Assessment Survey 2007 Results

The Survey had 664 responses, a 25% return rate. Groundspring, our email service, reported that 673 people clicked on the link to the survey and that 547 people clicked on the link to the certification information the AIC website.

1. How long have you been an AIC member?

A. 0-2 years	12.8%
B. 3-5 years	13.1%
C. 6-10 years	16.1%
D. 11-15 years	14.8%
E. 16-20 years	17.6%
F. Over 20 years	25.6%

2. What is your membership type within AIC?

A. Associate	38.6%
B. Professional Associate	39.6%
C. Fellow	11%
D. Student/Interim Year	10.5%
E. Institutional Representative	3%

3. What is your primary occupation?

A. Practicing Conservator	77.6%
B. Conservation Scientist	2%
C. Conservation Administrator	5.3%
D. Allied Professional	3.9%
E. Conservation Student	6.3%
F. Other	5%

4. Do you work in...?

A. A museum, library, archive, or other institution	42%
B. Private practice	37.5%
C. A regional conservation center	6.5%
D. Some combination of private practice and institution/museum setting	5.7%
E. Student	5%
F. Other	3.3%

5. Did you attend the Issues Session concerning certification on April 19 at the 2007 AIC Annual Meeting?

A. Yes	19.6%
B. No	80.4%

6. After attending the Issue Session and/or reading the information on the website about the proposed AIC certification model are you in favor of AIC developing a certification program for conservators consisting of a multiple choice exam?

A. Yes	45.3%
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- B. No 20.8%
- C. Undecided 34%

7. If maintaining a certification program were to cost AIC an additional \$25,000 a year in unrecovered expenses what should AIC do?

- A. Go ahead with the program. Certification is needed for the profession and AIC should be the driving force behind a certification program for conservators. 42.1%
- B. Look for other less costly options even if it means choosing a certification program based on a model other than a multiple choice exam. 23.7%
- C. Do not start a certification program unless we are reasonably assured it will not lose money. 34%

8. If you answered A or B to question #7, would you support a dues increase (of around \$10 on top of regular inflation-based dues increases) and/or reallocation of funds from scaling back of other programs and services to fund certification?

- A. I would favor a dues increase and/or scaling back of other programs to fund certification 55.7%
- B. I would not favor a dues increase, but would favor reallocation of funds from scaling back of other programs. 16.1%
- C. I prefer that AIC not start a certification program if it needs to be funded by a dues increase or through a reallocation of funds. 28.2%

9. If the fee for taking the certification exam were \$300 for AIC members and the exam were offered at the AIC Annual Meeting, would you take an AIC-sponsored certification exam within 3 years of its launch?

- A. Yes 30.1%
- B. No, the cost of the exam and the travel costs are too high. 29.8%
- C. No, I would not be interested in taking exam regardless of cost. 17.2%
- D. Undecided 22.8%

10. If AIC needed to look at other types of exam models (as opposed to the current proposed model of a paper-based, multiple-choice exam given at the Annual Meeting), to reduce the potential cost of the certification program, what other exam models do you believe could be valid tests of a conservator’s ability? Please check all that apply.

- A. A reviewed based essay question exam with the candidates required to supply treatment reports along with the exam. Reviewers would be from the candidate’s specialty, but would not know who the candidate was (a blind review process). Checks and balances would be put in to factor out issues like quality and style of the writing in the grading process. 47.9%
- B. An online exam of the kind used by universities, with all security and other safeguards that are available at the time of implementation. 52.3%
- C. Only a proctored, paper based, multiple choice exam has enough safeguards to be a fair assessment of a conservator’s skills. 12.3%
- D. Other (fill in) 14.5%

11. If the vote on the model proposed by the Certification Development Committee (a multiple choice, proctored, paper-based exam) were to be held today would you approve this model?

- A. Yes 34.7%
- B. No 28.2%
- C. Undecided at this time 37%

Position Statement: Certification and Membership Categories (March 2007)

Membership Committee, March 2007

Co-existence of PA/Fellow Categories and Certification

Preface

Certification is a measure of one's competence as a conservator, whereas the membership categories of Professional Associate and Fellow are a measure and recognition of one's commitment to the profession of conservation.

Committee Charge

For the past 8 years the Board of Directors has been either asking the Membership Committee (MC) for its opinion on the potential impact of certification on the membership categories, or it has charged the committee to establish a position on the impact of certification and to advise the Board of that position. This has become increasingly important since 2002 when the membership overwhelmingly passed a vote for a committee to establish a certification protocol to be developed and presented for membership approval. To meet that end the Certification Development Committee also charged the MC to evaluate the impact of certification on the categories. For the past three years the MC has strived to articulate its position on this matter.

Introduction

As the committee articulated this position statement on the future impact of certification on the membership categories we realized that this actually underscores the need to address the issues raised in a proposal to change the membership category nomenclature. As stated in that proposal (submitted to the Bylaws Committee in March 2007) at this time AIC technically does not have a membership because individuals who join the organization are either an Associate or Fellow. If anything, the only true members are the Honorary Members, who do not pay dues and have been recognized for extraordinary contributions to the field and AIC, contributions that apparently go far beyond "exemplary". The proposal requests a change of the membership nomenclature from Associate to Member and Professional Associate to Professional Member.

Under the present nomenclature and structure, the Professional Associate and Fellow categories imply a de facto "certification", primarily because of the requirement of proof of compliance with minimum levels of professional procedures and practices. As AIC has grown in numbers and stature, and matured as an organization representing a comparatively young but now well-established profession, it has been recognized that this is an inappropriate use of membership categories.

Certification, on the other hand, is by nature a deliberate process by which the conservator demonstrates the possession of essential competencies and understanding of professional goals, standards of practice, and skills. Although the original goal was to keep certification as a separate issue from the membership categories, it has become clear that by the very nature of the purpose of certification the two are inextricably linked. Once this connection was recognized and accepted, the MC decided that it was necessary to define the link and establish a pathway that would create an environment in which the two can co-exist in a mutually beneficial manner.

The committee concluded that certification and the membership categories are directly linked by examining the ramifications of keeping them separated, and assessing the current PA/Fellow application process. The most obvious scenario stems from the two processes and how they would be administered. At the present time the PA applicant must pay a very modest processing fee of \$15.00, whereas whatever the fee is charged for certification it is understood that it will be substantially more than \$15.00. During the last few years it has become quite clear that those who are taking the time to apply for PA or Fellow are taking this step very seriously. With very few exceptions, the applications have been carefully and meticulously prepared, reinforcing the committee's belief that it is paramount that not only must we also take the evaluations equally seriously, also we must ensure that as certification comes to pass, the Professional and Fellow categories are protected and maintained. Without

acknowledging, if not deliberately establishing a direct link between certification and professional standing in AIC, it is inevitable that the two will siphon off of one another to the extent that one will be relegated to irrelevancy. It is the committee's opinion that the PA and Fellow programs are too important to be left to wither away and that the certification program, when approved, will not need competition from what could be seen as a low cost alternative.

The Membership Committee has long been uncomfortable with the contradictory nature of using the membership categories as an unofficial but acknowledged poor substitute for real certification, and simultaneously acknowledging that in fact this is an inappropriate use of membership categories, and does not really constitute a meaningful measure of competence. In fact, the current PA application process serves only to establish proof of compliance with the AIC Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, and thereby an identifiable commitment to the ideals for which AIC was established and represents. The Fellow application process represents a significantly higher level of commitment to AIC and contributions to the conservation profession.

Certification & Professional Standing: The Link and Pathway

The Membership Committee has been deliberating over the potential impact of certification on the membership categories for eight years, and at the last in-person meeting at the AIC offices on January 26th, 2007, it was unanimously decided that upon the adoption and implementation of certification it will become highly desired that members see certification as a useful prerequisite for applying for Professional status within AIC. This will clean up the highly unsatisfactory process of using membership categories as a faux certification, and will elevate professional status to representing commitment to the profession. Because certification will be focused on demonstrating competence as a conservator, the professional status application process will remain a separate undertaking with the emphasis placed on commitment to the profession. It was also decided that becoming a professional member should earn points that will be applied toward recertification. Because certification will be voluntary, it was decided that a waiver for certification will be available, but the professional application process will be substantially more difficult and will have to include a demonstration of a minimum level of competence in order for it to be in balance with a certified professional. All current Professional Associates will have the option of remaining uncertified or pursuing certification.

To facilitate this desired outcome, the Membership Committee recommends that the current Professional Associate application process to be simplified for certified candidates. The Committee proposes the following recommendations to take effect after the implementation of an AIC certification program.

- The application requirements for certified candidates:
 - Brief Application and Essay
 - Three Sponsor Letters from Current PAs [PMs] or Fellows
- The application requirements for Non-certified candidates
 - Brief Application and Essay
 - Three Sponsor Letters from current PAs [PMs] or Fellows
 - Supporting documentation as may be required by the Committee to demonstrate the knowledge, skill and experience of the applicant.

The committee also decided that after adoption and implementation of a certification program, Fellow would remain a self-nominating category. In order to maintain the attribute of representing a degree of seniority in the profession and exemplary contributions to the field and AIC, it may be appropriate to raise the minimum years of experience from the current 10 years to 15. This change can be done incrementally as it has been in the past.

It is the committee's opinion that it is in the best interest of AIC to make a Bylaws change to the membership nomenclature from Associate to Member and Professional Associate to Professional Member. In addition to clarifying our membership categories, this could help certification come into effect in a seamless manner.

For the Membership Committee this Position Statement is respectfully submitted to the AIC Board of Directors by

—Thomas M. Edmondson, Chair, AIC Membership Committee, March 1, 2007

Proposed AIC Certification Program (July 2008)

Brief History

Following the work of a certification task force formed in 1997, a November 2002 AIC member vote provided a mandate to proceed with developing a proposal for a certification program. Early in 2003, the AIC board of directors created a Certification Development Committee (CDC), chaired by Terry Drayman-Weisser and charged with recommending a plan for a certification program for conservators, including a mechanism for recertification or renewal. The CDC was structured to make use of the expertise of the Membership, Bylaws, and Education & Training Committees and to include working groups from each AIC Specialty Group. For over four years, the committee and its working groups explored all aspects of certification, gathered member input, and developed recommendations for a program for conservators. See *AIC News*, March 2006, for a complete summary of the CDC and its activities at http://aic.stanford.edu/library/documents/06_mar_aicnews.pdf or [.html](http://aic.stanford.edu/library/documents/06_mar_aicnews.html).

The final steps in the planning process were to incorporate a management and financial structure into the program recommendations. In 2005, Ruth Seyler was hired as membership director and brought with her years of experience in certification programs. A staff team including Ruth Seyler, Eryl Wentworth, and Eric Pourchot began working with committee members, and two certification consultants were brought into the process in 2006. The goals were to:

- Review the proposed program in light of more recent changes in AIC, its membership, and the field
- Test its recommendations through electronic surveys reaching up to 87% of membership
- Develop a management structure
- Examine the economic feasibility of pursuing the proposed exam model

In April 2007, the AIC Board of Directors determined that the CDC had completed its charge and work should continue through a Certification Implementation Task Force (CITF), which was charged to:

- Complete the steps necessary to further define what would be a creditable and sustainable certification program for AIC
- Develop a timeline for certification implementation that includes the member vote
- Provide forums for continuing member education and information dissemination to involve members in the process and increase member commitment to certification
- Pursue funding for program development
- Manage the process through the initial testing phase

The CITF incorporates board, member, staff, and consultant expertise, in addition to advisors representing such stakeholders as training programs and end users of conservation services. The task force members have continued to explore issues such as the best type of exam for practicing conservators and concerns regarding costs for both the applicants and AIC itself. An exam model was developed to address both issues.

The proposed program incorporates most of the recommendations made by the Certification Development Committee. However, it proposes an exam comprised of short essays rather than a multiple-choice exam. Multiple-choice exams were found to be expensive to create and maintain because of the number of questions that need to be developed each year and the necessity for contracting with education specialists and psychometricians to constantly review and evaluate exam questions. Furthermore, the spring 2008 survey results demonstrated that, while the majority of members thought either type of exam would be acceptable, they prefer the short essay model. When cost was introduced, the preference for the short essay model increased. See the October 2007 and March 2008 certification survey results at <http://aic.stanford.edu/certification/>.

AIC Certification Program

Please note: The following reflects the proposed Certification Program as of May 2008. Some portions are still being developed and refined and will be continuously reviewed by appropriate experts. In order to provide a credible certification process, the AIC Certification Program should have the ability to adapt and evolve as experience is gained and as the profession and technology changes.

A Certification Commission will be created to oversee the program. It will be independent from the AIC Board and have its own budget structure. The details of how the Commission will work remain to be developed. AIC staff will administer the program and manage the process of developing questions, grading exams, and tracking the program. Volunteers trained by education specialists will develop questions and grade exams. Both staff and volunteers will market the program to the end users of conservation services. Funds will also be budgeted annually for administration, outreach, and marketing.

Based on the recommendations from the CITF and survey results, the AIC Board of Directors determined that a short essay format is the type of certification exam that will best meet the needs of our members by:

- Allowing for more originality and diversity of conservation approaches than a multiple-choice exam
- Tailoring more questions to particular specialty areas, but allowing candidates some flexibility in choosing which questions from a group of questions to answer
- Costing less for AIC and its members than a multiple-choice exam
- Containing the flexibility to adjust the requirements based on demand or new issues facing the field of conservation

Exam Structure

The exam will consist of:

- Eight short essay (100 to 250 words) questions on general conservation. Candidates will be able to select their 8 questions from approximately 11-20 choices.
- Two case studies that would require slightly longer answers (500-800 words). Candidates would be able to choose from a number of case studies in each of the specialties represented by AIC Specialty Groups.
- All candidates earn the same certification regardless of specialty, but they can, by question selection, tailor their exam to their strengths.
- Initially, essay questions would be based on topics identified by the AIC Specialty Group Working Groups from the CDC.
- The test run exam (see below) will be proctored. Following the test run, proctored versus un-proctored exams will be evaluated. Either way, it is proposed that three exam dates be offered annually. If un-proctored, completed exams could be sent to AIC in paper-based or electronic formats.

Test Run

- Grant funds will be secured to develop the pilot project, part of which is the test run.
- The first 75 Professional Associates and Fellows, each with a minimum of ten years of experience, will be allowed to apply to take the first exam, which will be proctored.
- This group will be trained to serve as reviewers.
- During the test run, candidates will also serve as reviewers of other candidate's exams.

Exam Requirements

- A cumulative total of 7 years full-time experience in a combination of conservation education, training, and work experience (including preprogram and apprenticeships). At least 4 of these years spent working and/or studying in a specialty area (as defined within a material specialty).
- Whether proctored or un-proctored, Associate members will be required to submit two sets of documentation reports with their application to take the exam as examples of conformance to the Guidelines for Practice.
- If an un-proctored exam were offered, two documentation reports would need to be submitted with the application for PAs and Fellows.
- AIC membership is required to take the exam. However, a membership application and two sets of documentation reports can be submitted for approval along with the certification application. Please note: It is acceptable to require membership for participation in a certification program as long as membership is open to anyone. It is not considered restraint of trade.

- While final budgets are still to be confirmed, AIC is predicting an exam fee of no more than \$350. AIC is committed to keep the exam cost as low as possible for our members.

Exam Grading

- A blind review process* will be implemented. Grading will be done by two trained reviewers in the candidate's specialty. If the grades are too far apart, then the application will be sent to additional reviewers.
- The reviewers will be drawn from the ranks of current PAs and Fellows.
- The reviewers will be trained by education specialists and will use specially designed rubrics for each question, which will outline how to award and subtract points based on the answers given.
- Reviewers will be trained to view all established acceptable forms of conservation approaches as appropriate, regardless of whether it is what "they would do."
- Reviewers will be trained to evaluate new or different conservation approaches on their own merits.
- Reviewers will be instructed on how to discount minor flaws in writing such as grammar and sentence structure errors, which are frequent in examinations of this type, so that they do not influence the grading.
- The AIC Certification Commission, an independent body, will review all failing exams and will have the right to change the score if it is appropriate.
- AIC will investigate how to offer an oral version of the exam for those with writing disabilities.

* In a blind review process, only the AIC office would know the names of candidates. Candidates will be instructed on how to depersonalize their applications. An application number will be assigned to each application, which will be the only identifying mark on the application when it is sent to the reviewers. If at any time a reviewer thinks they know the identity of a candidate, they will be required to inform the AIC office. Because all failing applications will be reviewed (also in a blind review process) by the Certification Commission, there is an additional check against bias in the review process.

Recertification

- Certified individuals will need to recertify every three years. The initial recommendation from the Recertification Working Group was for five years; however, it is extremely difficult to successfully track both conservators and recertification credits over that amount of time.
- The cost to recertify will be about \$75.
- To recertify, a yet-to-be determined number of Recertification Credits would need to be earned. The Recertification Working Group has made suggestions about how this may be done and have suggested a wide range of educational activities that might qualify for Recertification Credits, including taking a work-related workshop, giving a professional presentation, publishing an article in a conservation journal, or attending the AIC annual meeting, among others.
- As an alternative to Recertification Credits, a previously certified member may take the exam at the current fee structure.

Next Steps to Implement the Proposed Program

Over the summer of 2008, task force members will contact each specialty group through their officers, and will work with advisors to answer questions and refine the proposal. Information will be added to the certification page of the AIC website and an additional article will be included in the September newsletter. A short survey to members will gather feedback on the program before plans for a member vote are finalized.

Currently, a September 2008 member vote is being scheduled to provide approval to AIC to implement the proposed program. Following approval, a grant proposal will be written and submitted to several granting agencies to assist in completing such tasks as developing a job task analysis and hiring an education specialist to assist in developing test questions. The proposal will also incorporate the test run and will cover the first two years of certification implementation.

Please watch your email for a link to the upcoming survey. AIC will be adding information to the website and disseminating additional information throughout the summer.

—*Certification Implementation Task Force: Catherine Hawks, Facilitator, Terry Drayman Weisser, Thomas Edmondson, Nancy Pollak, Eric Pourchot, Ruth Seyler, Eryl Wentworth*

Certification Survey Results From the Certification Implementation Task Force (AIC News September 2008)

The most recent survey on certification was sent out to 2,880 members and 621 members responded. 55.8% of responses were from Professional Associates and Fellows. If the member vote for AIC to go forward with starting a certification program based on the proposed model were to be held today, 63.4% would vote “yes,” while 36.6% would vote “no.” If only the tallies of Professional Associates and Fellows are taken into account, the “yes” vote would be 65.9%.

While the raw percentages might look positive for this AIC certification program, the comments reflect a number of concerns that could affect the success of the program. Would enough members participate in the first few years to make it viable? This task force and the AIC board must balance the certification model as a viable business endeavor and a credible measurement of conservation knowledge. In terms of both financial feasibility and content, the program’s success depends on a significant commitment from AIC members.

Please visit the certification page of the AIC website for more detailed information about the survey results and the issues facing AIC at this important crossroads in its evolution.

Certification Needs Assessment Survey 2008 Results

EXAM PREFERENCES

1. How comfortable would you be with taking a proctored in-person multiple choice exam covering general a specialty conservation concepts?

A. Very comfortable	37.7%
B. Somewhat comfortable	38.9%
C. Somewhat uncomfortable	16.3%
D. Very uncomfortable	7.1%

2. How comfortable would you be with taking a proctored paper-based short answer and essay exam covering both general and specialty specific concepts? The exam would be graded by multiple reviewers who would not know the identity of the candidates.

A. Very comfortable	33.7%
B. Somewhat comfortable	38.2%
C. Somewhat uncomfortable	18.4%
D. Very uncomfortable	9.6%

3. How comfortable would you be with taking an online exam either in a multiple choice or essay format?

A. Very comfortable	48.8%
B. Somewhat comfortable	35%
C. Somewhat uncomfortable	10.8%
D. Very uncomfortable	5.3%

4. How important is it to you that any certification program developed by AIC contain information related to your Specialty(s)?

A. Extremely important	58.9%
B. Somewhat important	29.2%
C. Not very important	8.4%
D. Unimportant	3.5%

EXAM VALIDITY

5. Which type of exam(s) do you feel are valid ways to judge if a conservator is qualified to become certified? (Please check ALL that apply)

A. A proctored in-person multiple-choice exam covering knowledge that every conservator should know and including specialty-specific case studies. 57.6%

B. An unproctored multiple choice or short answer time restricted online exam including specialty-specific case studies. 42%

C. A proctored in-person short answer and essay exam including specialty-specific case studies where the candidates would be required to draw on personal experience to answer the questions. The exam would be graded by multiple reviewers who would not know the identity of the candidates. 66.3%

D. An unproctored short-answer and essay exam including specialty-specific case studies done independently, where the candidates would be required to draw on personal experience to answer the questions. The exam could be turned into AIC at 3 deadlines per year. The exam would be graded by multiple reviewers who would not know the identity of the candidates. 59.3%

6. If you could only pick ONE, which type of exam do you feel would be the best way to judge if a conservator is qualified to become certified?

A. A proctored in-person multiple-choice exam covering knowledge that every conservator should know and including specialty-specific case studies. 17%

B. An unproctored multiple choice or short answer time-restricted online exam. 10.6%

C. A proctored in person short-answer and essay exam including specialty-specific case studies where the candidates would be required to draw on personal experience to answer the questions. The exam would be graded by multiple reviewers who would not know the identity of the candidates. 38.5%

D. An unproctored short-answer and essay exam including specialty-specific case studies done independently, where the candidates would be required to draw on personal experience to answer the questions. The exam could be turned into AIC at 3 deadlines per year. The exam would be graded by multiple reviewers who would not know the identity of the candidates. 34%

EXAM MODELS

7. Which type of AIC certification exam would you be more likely to take assuming they were priced the same:

A. A multiple-choice exam given in person 12.2%

B. A review-based exam with short answer and essay questions given in person 9.2%

C. A review-based exam with short answer, essay questions as well as supporting documentation required, which could be submitted for grading several times a year, once you had felt you answered the questions to your satisfaction. 28.8%

D. I would take any of the exams 34.5%

E. I would take none of the exams 15.3%

8. After reading the descriptions of both proposed AIC models on the AIC website site which exam do you feel would best assess who should be a certified conservator?

A. The multiple-choice exam 13.6%

B. The review-based exam 48.6%

C. Neither 14.2%

D. Don't Know 23.6%

9. After reading the depictions of both the proposed AIC models on the website, which exam would you be more likely to take?

A. The multiple-choice exam 22.8%

B. The review-based exam 38.6%

C. Neither 15.2%

D. Don't Know 23.4%

10. After looking at the budgets developed for the two proposed certification exams, which answer best describes your reaction:

- A. A multiple-choice model is my first choice of exam, and I would be willing to pay \$650 to take such an exam, because it would be a suitable exam for AIC. 6.3%
- B. A review-based model is my first choice of exam, and I would be likely to take it at the \$350 cost. 40%
- C. I would prefer that AIC develop a multiple-choice model, but I would be unwilling to pay the \$650 cost. Although it is not my 1st choice, I would be likely to take the review based exam if the cost to take the exam was around \$350. 19.7%
- D. I would not be interested in taking either model at the proposed costs. 20.9%
- E. I am not interested in taking a certification exam of any kind at any cost. 13%

11. If the fee for taking a multiple choice certification exam was \$650 for AIC members and the exam was offered at the annual meeting, would you take the AIC-sponsored multiple choice certification exam within 3 years of its launch?

- A. Yes 21.2%
- B. Yes, but not within the first 3 years. 4.1%
- C. No, the cost of the exam is too high. 43.8%
- D. No, I would not be interested in taking exam regardless of cost. 14.2%
- E. Undecided 16.7%

12. If the fee for taking a review-based certification exam was \$350, would you complete the application process within 3 years of its launch?

- A. Yes 51.1%
- B. Yes, but not within the first 3 years. 6%
- C. No, the cost of the exam is too high. 12.4%
- D. No, I would not be interested in taking exam regardless of cost. 11.5%
- E. Undecided 19%

ABOUT YOU

13. How long have you been an AIC member?

- A. 0-2 years 13.5%
- B. 3-5 years 13.3%
- C. 6-10 years 17.4%
- D. 11-15 years 14.5%
- E. 16-20 years 13.2%
- F. over 20 years 28%

14. What is your membership type within AIC?

- A. Associate 33.7%
- B. Professional Associate 42.3%
- C. Fellow 12.7%
- D. Student/Interim Year 10.9%
- E. Institutional Representative 0.04%

15. What is your primary occupation?

A. Practicing Conservator	78.3%
B. Conservation Scientist	1.6%
C. Conservation Administrator	7.8%
D. Allied Professional	3.3%
E. Conservation Student	7.8%
F. Other	5.6%

16. Where do you work?

A. A museum, library, archive, or other collections institution	78.3%
B. Private practice	37.9%
C. A regional conservation center	7%
D. Some combination of private practice and institution/museum setting	6.6%
E. I am a student	5.8%
F. Other	4.5%

Certification Voting (AIC News January 2009)

Letter from the AIC Board of Directors

The AIC Board of Directors unanimously endorses the proposed AIC Certification Program and encourages all AIC Fellows and Professional Associate members to vote YES for certification implementation. It is critical for AIC to hear from all eligible voting members. Expect to see the ballot on certification in January!

A YES vote from 50% or more of eligible members (PAs and Fellows) means that AIC will implement a certification program. The first step will be to obtain funding to support the first two years of program development and the pilot examination. If the vote is under 50%, certification will be shelved for the foreseeable future.

Although according to the AIC Bylaws Associate members cannot take part in this vote, the Board wants to hear from all members who will be eligible to become certified. To provide important information to the Board, a poll for Associates only will be taken at the same time as the formal vote.

The proposed program is the result of a 10+-year investment into research, planning, and legal vetting led by scores of your colleagues and the AIC professional staff. The program reflects extensive feedback, criticism, and discussion conducted over many years and in multiple forums. As indicated by the recent straw poll, the AIC Board stands in agreement with a clear majority of the membership by expressing confidence that implementing the current proposal will raise the professional practice of conservation within the United States and, over time, elevate the standing of conservators working within institutions and privately.

Regardless of the outcome, the Board would like to thank all those members who have participated in developing a certification program for AIC through their work on various committees, working groups, and task forces. It has taken over 10 years and thousands of hours of volunteer labor. Thank you for your valuable time and consideration.

Please take time to consider the importance of certification to AIC, to users of conservation services, and to you—Please VOTE in January!

Signed,

Martin Burke, AIC President

Conservator in private practice; Terrapin Neck Conservation, LLC

Meg Loew Craft, AIC Vice President

The Walters Art Museum

Lisa Bruno, AIC Secretary

Brooklyn Museum

Brian Howard, AIC Treasurer

Conservator in private practice; B.R. Howard & Associates, Inc.

Catharine Hawks, Director, Committees and Task Forces

Conservator in private practice and Adjunct Faculty, George Washington University

Paul Messier, AIC Director, Communications

Conservator in private practice; Paul Messier, LLC

Karen Pavelka, Director, Professional Education

Conservation Faculty, Kilgarlin Center, The School of Information, The University of Texas at Austin

Ralph Wiegandt, Director, Specialty Groups

George Eastman House

Everything You Need to Know About the Upcoming Vote on the Proposed AIC Certification Program

Who is eligible to vote?

Per the AIC Bylaws, only Professional Associate and Fellow members of AIC will be eligible to vote. For more information on voting rights, please refer to pages AIC-13 – AIC-15 of the 2008 AIC Directory. The AIC Board of Directors is interested in the views of all members regarding certification. At the same time of the certification vote, a nonbinding poll will be sent to Associate members. If you applied for PA status by the application deadline of January 1 and are accepted, you will have the right to vote.

When will the vote take place?

The vote is scheduled to start on January 28, 2009 and end on February 27, 2009.

How will the vote take place?

The vote will take place on Survey Monkey, a secure third party survey and voting website. An email will be sent to all PAs and Fellows with the link to the vote. Two reminders will be emailed out during the voting period.

What if I don't have Internet access or a computer? Will I still be able to vote?

Yes, those PA and Fellow members without access to the Internet may request a paper ballot. A postcard announcing the vote will also be mailed out to all PA and Fellow members.

Will my ballot be secret? Will anyone know how I voted?

No AIC member will be able to see how another member voted. However, to ensure a secure election, voters will need to list their name on the online ballot. This will be viewable ONLY to AIC office staff working on certification and is for the purpose of checking that only those eligible to vote are voting and that no one is voting twice. Once the election has closed, the data will be deleted from the SurveyMonkey site and no hard copy detailing the names of those who voted will be kept. At no point will the names of who voted or who did not vote will be released.

What do I do if I am traveling or my computer goes haywire and I can't login to the voting site?

The voting period is one month long, so, hopefully, everyone will find the time to login. However, if at any point you are having trouble accessing the voting page, you may call the AIC office to request a paper ballot. Also, survey monkey will only accept one vote per computer. Any PAs and/or Fellows that share a computer can contact the office for a paper ballot.

Certification: Facts and Myths

As we prepare for the vote on the proposed AIC certification program, it has become clear that there is still some confusion and uncertainty surrounding the proposed AIC certification program. Detailed information on the proposed model is available on the AIC website. However, following are some of the questions we have received. Hopefully the answers provided will shed new light on some old myths surrounding AIC certification.

Why can only Professional Associates and Fellows vote? Does that mean you don't care what Associate members think or want us to take the exam?

AIC values the opinions of all of its members equally. Every Associate who meets the requirements should actively consider taking the certification exam if and when it is available. The reason only PA and Fellows can vote for certification is because the vote is a special vote requested by the Board of Directors. For more information on voting rights in AIC you can turn to the AIC Bylaws on pages AIC13-AIC15 of your 2008 Directory.

Will certification be a requirement for membership in AIC?

No, AIC will continue to welcome all conservators and related professionals as members.

Will Professional Associates and Fellows need to take the exam?

Everyone wishing to become certified will need to take the exam. There will be no “grandfathering” of any AIC members.

Who can sit for the exam?

Conservators with a cumulative total of 6 years full-time experience in a combination of conservation education, training, and work experience (including pre-program and apprenticeships) can sit for the exam. At least 3 of these years need to have been spent working and/or studying in a specialty area (as defined within a material specialty). Related professionals, conservation administrators, educators, and assessors with the conservation experience listed above can also sit for the exam.

You will need to be a member of AIC to sit for the exam and to recertify. However, since AIC membership is open to everyone there is no conflict with restraint of trade.

Who would write the exams?

Subject matter experts, conservators recommended by the Specialty Groups, will undergo training by educational consultants in exam question writing. In addition educational consultants will review the questions and assist conservator/writers to create grading rubrics for each question.

Who would be grading these certification tests? Conservators? Consultants?

- A blind review process will be implemented. Grading will be done by trained reviewers in the candidate’s specialty. If the grades are too far apart, then the application will be sent to additional reviewers.
- The reviewers will be drawn from the ranks of current PAs and Fellows.
- The reviewers will be trained by education specialists and will use specially designed rubrics for each question, which will outline how to award and subtract points based on the answers given.
- Reviewers will be trained to view all established acceptable forms of conservation approaches as appropriate, regardless of whether it is what “they would do.”
- Reviewers will be trained to evaluate new or different conservation approaches on their own merits.
- Reviewers will be instructed on how to discount minor flaws in writing such as grammar and sentence structure errors, which are frequent in examinations of this type, so that they do not influence the grading.
- The AIC Certification Commission, an independent body, will review all failing exams and will have the right to change the score if it is appropriate.
- AIC will investigate how to offer an oral version of the exam for those with writing disabilities.

For answers to additional frequently asked questions please visit the AIC website at www.aic-faic.org and click on certification. Additional information on the proposed model is also available on the website.

Certification Vote Results (March 2009)

The AIC Board of Directors announces the results of the member vote on AIC implementing a certification program for conservators.

The vote failed by:

58.6% opposed

41.4% in favor

73% of eligible voters cast a vote.

In keeping with the AIC Board decision concerning the vote, AIC will now end all work on developing a certification program for the foreseeable future.

We thank the many volunteers, especially the Certification Implementation Task Force, for the countless hours given to AIC and the desire to advance the field of conservation. Although AIC members voted not to go forward with the proposed certification program, you have greatly enriched our profession with the research and discussion that went into analysis of numerous certification models and issues over the years. We have added to the body of knowledge of conservation and moved closer to a shared understanding of what it means to be a conservator.

Please be respectful of those who may have voted differently than you. Everyone who voted believed that they were acting in the best interests of the profession.

Going forward, AIC's leadership will continue to strengthen the organization, including by increasing our marketing efforts in support of conservation and conservators. There have been many suggestions put forward by members that are worthy of study and consideration. It will take time to address these ideas. We will seek your views, open dialogs, and keep everyone informed along the way.

Thank you to all of you who voted and took an active role in the debate.

Sincerely,

AIC Board of Directors

Beyond the Certification Vote (AIC News May 2009)

Over the past several years, while pursuing a certification program, we have learned a great deal about our organization, our members, and the changing environment in which we work. The vote of 73% of eligible members opposing the proposed certification model by 58.6% sent a strong, but not a united, message. The reasons many members voted against the proposed program varied widely. Many expressed concerns such as the very meaning of what it is to be a conservator, the viability of our core documents, the strength of our literature, and the effectiveness of peer review. Other members felt just as strongly that certification is a critical step in advancing the field. AIC is still a young and feisty organization and so many of the frustrations and “calls to action” heard are the growing pains of an organization of intelligent, passionate professionals.

What is absolutely essential now is to learn from this process and mine from it all that was accomplished in gathering information and materials over the years. The leadership of AIC must clearly articulate plans to provide additional support for members and promote the field of conservation. We also need our members to engage in this process by providing constructive input along the way.

During the years that AIC explored the possibilities of a certification program, the staff and board have also been engaged in many other efforts. Great strides have been made to improve internal operations, member communications, and outreach. For the first time, advocacy for the field has been instituted at AIC, and this work will grow and be refined in the coming years. We are now on the verge of undertaking several new or expanded outreach efforts. Areas on which we are focusing include, among others, marketing, publications, education, and use of technology.

Throughout 2009, particularly as part of the Transforming FAIC initiative, we will be creating a strategic plan for FAIC and developing priorities that will be built into work plans and budgets.

We will soon begin a more intense process to engage our members in dialogs on specific topics. Surveys are a cost-effective way to gauge the opinions of our members; however, they are only as good as the number of members who respond. Over the next year, a series of surveys to gather facts and opinions will be sent to members. We also plan to reach out to individual members to participate in small group conference call conversations on selected topics. We rely on your participation to help guide us into the future and to provide the information needed to represent you effectively.

—The AIC Board of Directors and the AIC/FAIC Executive Director