

## **A visit by Icon HLF/EFP interns to The National Archives, Kew** **Lindsey Gibson, ICON HLF Intern in Book and Paper Conservation at The National Archives**

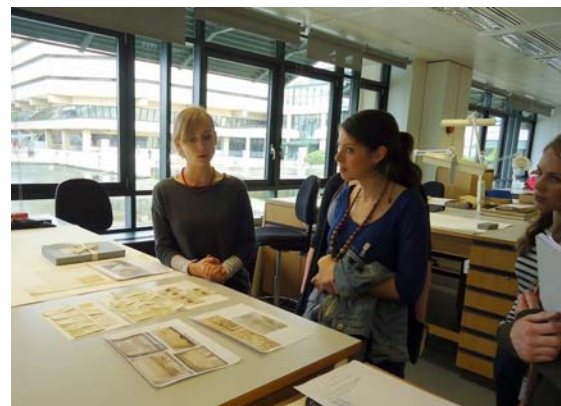
On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September a group of Icon interns came to visit the Collection Care department at The National Archives (TNA).

My supervisor Linda Eells and I both felt that the opportunity of a visit to TNA might be of interest and use for other interns. We planned a day for those working in private practice whose internships may have less of a focus on collections management as well as those in public practice who might like to compare the approaches employed at their host institution with those at TNA.

Therefore, the main focus of the day was on preservation and collection management activities. It began with a tour of the archives taking in the repositories and collection care department, which gave me - and other conservators - a brief opportunity to show some of the objects we are currently working on. The rest of the day provided a series of presentations and discussions covering a range of aspects of collection management:

- Use of risk management and collection mapping in assessing the needs of the collection
- Use of environmental monitoring to inform a building environment simulation project in order to develop strategies for storing the collection sustainably
- Museum management and monitoring display case air exchange rates
- Pest monitoring and prevention strategies and case studies

In addition, Dr Lee Gonzalez and Dr Dinah Eastop introduced their TNA-based research projects. Lee is a Postdoctoral Fellow funded by the AHRC/EPSRC Science and Heritage Programme and is based at TNA and Cardiff University. His project “From Structural Change to Perceived Damage” aims to understand the relationship between the visual characteristics and structural integrity of parchment artefacts and analyse how the relationship changes with Temperature and Relative Humidity. As a Clothworkers’ Research Fellow, Dinah is identifying options to enhance access to 11,000+ Design Registers (1839-1991) containing more than 1 million ornamental designs, without adversely affecting their preservation; the design representations take many forms (e.g. drawings, photographs and textiles) and many are pasted into large, heavy volumes (pictured below).



*Presentations to Icon Interns by Dr Dinah Eastop, Clothworkers fellow (Left), and Lindsey Gibson Icon HLF Intern (Right.) Image Credit: Monika Stokowicz*

Staff from the Collection Care department generously gave of their time to talk with us at length, providing an insight into the many aspects of collections management and an understanding of the various roles fulfilled by conservators in this and other organisations. Naturally, the day also provided a great opportunity for us all to get together and chat about our internships and I was eager to share the broad range of valuable experience I have gained so far at TNA. I hope that the other Interns and Collection Care staff enjoyed the day as much as I did.

*The National Archives is the UK government's official archive, holding over 1,000 years of the records for everyone to discover and use. As a centre of expertise, they give detailed guidance to government departments and the public sector on information management and advise others about the care of historical archives. Furthermore, as the national archive of the United Kingdom, they store and preserve over 11 million public records from Domesday Book to digital files, making them accessible to all.*