



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

IMPACT REPORT 2019-2020

for the year ended 31 March 2020

The leading charity championing excellence in
conservation and promoting the value of
caring for heritage



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INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Conservation is a charity, membership organisation and the professional body representing and supporting the practice and profession of conservation. Icon champions excellence in conservation and promotes the value of caring for heritage.

Members are supported through skills development, networking opportunities, advocacy, education and training. We are the authoritative source of information on conservation practice, policy and the profession.

What we do

From the Magna Carta to your grandmother's jewellery to a rare first edition of your favourite book - we aim to preserve the items that matter most to people, and to advance public understanding of conservation.

Icon represents the interests of conservation to decision makers on issues that affect cultural heritage, from skills to education to funding. We want everyone to see how cultural heritage helps understand our past, present and future, which is why we do our best to celebrate and share the impact of conservation.

We give confidence to the public that cultural heritage is protected to the highest standard. Icon Accreditation acts as the quality assurance that cultural heritage is cared for by fully qualified and capable professionals. The Conservation Register is our free online tool helping the public conveniently find and access a conservator they can trust.

Icon welcomes everyone with a passion for cultural heritage and helps members create a deeper connection to their interests. Our programme of events, and easy access to support and information maintains and drives excellence in the profession.

Our vision

Icon's vision is for cultural heritage to be valued and accessible and for its future to be enhanced and safeguarded by excellence in conservation.

To help us achieve our vision, our Board of Trustees published their Strategy 2017-22. The Strategy sets a strong direction that helps us to focus on the key areas of activity that will deliver impact; it also enables us to respond to challenges and opportunities that arise.

The Strategy sets out three key strands of activity against which we measure our success each year:

- Advocacy: influencing our partners and the public.
- Excellence: building knowledge, high standards and valuing the profession
- Engagement: encouraging public awareness and participation

From the Magna Carta to your grandmother's jewellery - we aim to preserve the items that matter most

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

When I joined Icon as Chief Executive last January, I knew that my first year in post would be exciting and rewarding, and I was thoroughly looking forward to the challenge. I can now say that my expectations and hopes have been considerably surpassed.



A great deal has been achieved during a busy and productive financial year, although it ended on something of a cliff-hanger as we all waited nervously to see just what lockdown would mean for Icon and for our members.

Several months later it is still not clear what the medium and longer term impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic will be, and so we find ourselves planning for a future that looks more uncertain than ever.

However, the publication of the annual Impact Report should be a time to reflect on a different C-word by focusing on celebrating our achievements.

So, here are three C-word highlights from the year that give a flavour of our work to champion the conservation of objects and collections.

1. Conference

The Icon triennial conference (Icon19) in Belfast in June was a phenomenal success, attracting 362 delegates, including an international cohort thanks to funding received from the Getty Foundation. The main event took place over two very full days in the Internal Conference Centre on Belfast's attractive waterfront and offered a packed programme on the theme of New Perspectives: Contemporary Conservation Thinking and Practice.

The programme committee received 254 abstract submissions to fill 90 slots testifying to the high regard in which Icon's triennial conference is held. It also demonstrates the range and scale of important research and development being pioneered by conservators working across our broad range of disciplines.

2. Conservation Register

The second C-word success was the relaunch of the redeveloped Conservation Register, our online directory of Icon Accredited Conservators. This was a genuine milestone for Icon, as plans to restructure and revitalise the Register have been on the cards for a number of years.

We are sincerely grateful for the generous funding provided by the Pilgrim Trust and the Anna Plowden Trust, as well as a private donor. Their support enabled us to create a modern, engaging, and visually-oriented platform to showcase our ACR members. The new resource has already attracted positive feedback from stakeholders and is well on track to regaining its rightful place as the 'go to' resource for anyone seeking a conservator that they can trust.

3. Communications

Our final celebratory C-word for the year is communications. Over the last twelve months we have been gradually rethinking our approach to external communications and have formed our first Communications Team. We have worked hard to craft a communications strategy and to significantly increase the volume of our news stories and social media activity. This has been hugely successful, with steady increases in levels of engagement and positive feedback.

New sections on the Icon website also highlight our key messages and share our impact through a growing series of case studies. We hope these changes will raise the profile and visibility of the conservation profession and help our messages to reach a wider audience. Ensuring our voice is heard is increasingly important the more we move towards that uncertain post-lockdown future.

In conclusion, my reflection is that it has been an eventful but invigorating first year at the helm. I have personally taken great delight in getting to know the staff, trustees and members of Icon and I continue to be amazed by the passion and commitment that conservators bring to their work and ours.

The next twelve months will be testing and there will certainly be tough challenges ahead but I believe that we are a stable and healthy organisation and that there remains much to be **cheerful** about. (And that's my final C-word!)

Sara Crofts, Chief Executive



A family of 2,497 members

475 devoted volunteers contributing over £260k of in-kind support



To date, placed 175 interns with leading employers

Accredited 25 new conservators, bringing the total to 775 ACRs



OUR YEAR

16 Special Interest Groups delivering courses, clinics, conferences, lectures, webinars and workshops

Hosted 8 partners from Shaanxi in an introduction visit to the UK conservation scene

AT A GLANCE

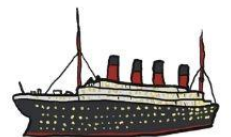
Redeveloped the Conservation Register with the help of 2 funders and 1 generous anonymous donor

Launched the 20th anniversary year of Accreditation with new branding and a Pathway category



Influenced decision makers through 10+ policy papers

Took 362 delegates to our Triennial Conference in Belfast



Engaged with 24,427 followers on Twitter and Facebook

Over 100 news stories keeping members and stakeholders up to date



LMI matters

Labour Market Intelligence helps develop a workforce with the right mix of skills in response to labour market needs, in a way that promotes job quality and lifelong learning. Up-to-date LMI also supports Icon's strategic objectives in important ways. It helps to identify challenges for the profession and to develop policy solutions, to inform training and education and improve our advice and support on issues like salaries, and to foster engagement by highlighting gaps in the workforce with a view to increasing and widening participation.

The need for conservation sector data is shared across the heritage sector. Speaking to our partners, we became increasingly aware of how independent organisations often had insufficient capacity to undertake workforce research regularly on their own. This had created a reliance on external funding, which in turn led to inconsistent methodologies and reporting cycles that did not give a broad overview of sector trends.

“a great example of working together”

Historic England

A collaborative process

We identified an opportunity to work in partnership with ClfA to develop a sector-wide model for producing workforce research. We put together a joint plan for the project and Historic England agreed with our ambition and generously agreed to fund the project in January 2019. Following a competitive tendering process, we appointed Loud Marketing as our partner to help us create the tool. We also recruited an experienced Project Board comprising representatives from Historic England, Cadw, Historic Environment Scotland, Tate and the National Trust.

Following an intense summer of development comprising workshops, ongoing discussion, and two rigorous testing stages, the Toolkit was complete!

Collaboration and consultation was key to the project's success, demonstrating Icon's values of being "collaborative and generous" in working with partners to achieve the best results. The testing stages were essential to collecting useful and actionable feedback from a range of stakeholders. This highlighted the importance of a well-connected Project Team complimented by a representative Project Board that could efficiently identify and connect with the most suitable contacts.

A model for sector wide research

The tool comprises an accessible methodology and survey template that can be used by all professional bodies and organisations wishing to survey the heritage workforce. It provides questions and answer options that can be easily copied onto an online survey platform.

The Toolkit is freely accessible and can be found on Historic England's website. By making the Toolkit open access, we equipped heritage organisations with a tool to independently conduct workforce research on a regular basis. The Toolkit minimises reliance on external funding, provides a model for sub-sector workforce research and allows cross-referencing and comparison of data.



SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

EXCELLENCE

Twelve international conservator voices united

In June 2019, 12 delegates from countries with emerging economies came to together for a programme of professional development - culminating with the Icon19 Conference in Belfast - thanks to funding provided by the Getty Foundation.

The group have continued to use their diverse voices and perspectives to promote and share conservation practice across the globe. The delegates embody Icon's core belief that we should be collaborative and generous, and work with our members and partners to share learning and achieve the best results together.



Current thinking in conservation practice

Getty Foundation delegates came from a variety of specialisms including collections care management, fine art, textile conservation, paper conservation, and archaeology.

Visits to four conservation studios in London enabled delegates to see first-hand how conservation work was being done in the world-renowned facilities of the British Museum and the National Archives, in parallel with relatively smaller, but nonetheless efficient private conservation studios of Janie Lightfoot and Julia Nagle. The visits provided the opportunity to ask questions, share ideas and source information for future reference. For some it forged a professional relationship that has continued.

“The confidence to conduct [training] programmes...and share the information and knowledge I have gained...is what made a huge difference in my life and has helped me in the growth of my career.”

Getty Foundation delegate

Networking

The chance to meet so many conservation professionals in such a short time was greatly valued. The Group also enjoyed the social aspects of the programme that provided them with many opportunities to get to know each other personally and secure lasting relationships via a WhatsApp Group. One year on, they are organising a virtual meeting – to help each other out with matters arising from the Coronavirus pandemic.

From strength to strength

Each delegate became a member of Icon and they have continued to benefit from the membership opportunities available. Getty Foundation delegates have applied their learning in a variety of ways, ranging from:

- designing and identifying requirements and technical specifications for the conservation facility of a new museum
- presenting at international conferences, in some cases breaking new ground
- setting up in-house training for colleagues and museum staff

Advocates for conservation

Icon has been able to develop the potential of new conservation advocates, helping them to facilitate the development of effective and innovative solutions to common challenges for the benefit of our shared global heritage. This will support our continuing ambition to raise the profile of the conservation sector's international work and its contribution to domestic soft-power agendas.



SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

ENGAGEMENT

#Icon19 - delivering excellence

Our triennial conferences play a major part in delivering our strategic objective to support excellence through building knowledge, high standards and valuing the profession.

#Icon19 in Belfast more than delivered. Featuring a conference programme with multiple parallel sessions across specialisms and a variety of tours taking in the local heritage scene, #Icon19 was one of our most popular and memorable events yet. It's legacy lives on in the newly formed Northern Ireland Network's work to support best practice in the region.



Raising the profile: an enduring spotlight on Belfast

A key ambition of Icon19 was to provide a lasting foundation for local conservators to better engage with one another, and to benefit from continued national and international outlets to highlight their activities. We were delighted that a group of local Icon members founded the Icon Northern Ireland Network to sustain the momentum generated by our Belfast-based conference.

The Network is active in the delivery of events programmes, CPD and other networking initiatives in the region; supporting best practice, sharing ideas and working to foster Icon's strategic goals more broadly. The Network has a strong presence across Icon's website, events programme and publication outlets. This attests to the higher international profile consolidated by Belfast conservators as a result of the conference and the spotlight this brought upon the region.

"I think Icon has the potential of being a major player in the conservation world, both nationally and (as a result of this conference) internationally."

#Icon19 delegate

International outreach

The choice of Belfast was designed to position Icon as an outward-looking, nationally and internationally engaged organisation, embracing regional diversity and harnessing opportunities for cross-border collaboration.

Our ambitions grew markedly as the results of the Call for Papers became clear: a substantial constituency of conservators from abroad were interested in attending, with more than 30% of submissions coming from outside the UK. Ultimately, 21% of delegates came from outside the UK with additional international engagement from farther afield across Icon's social media platforms.

Engaging the broader sector

Delegates reported the event's international emphases had a transformative impact on their perception of Icon. However, discussion after the event also positioned Icon at the centre of any drive to achieve an upward trend for the sector. '[There is a] need to communicate the relevance of our profession and to work closely with Icon and other organisations in doing so,' reported one delegate.

Accessibility will be an important consideration as we aspire to ensuring that our events are open to as many of our members as possible. With recent improvements in digital technologies, we feel confident that we can build on this success as we begin to plan our next conference.



SPOTLIGHT ON IMPACT

AND MANY MORE!

find other impact stories online

A practical tool for ethical sampling

The Icon Heritage Science Group's new ethical sampling guidance to aid scientists, conservators and other stakeholders in making sampling decisions for scientific investigations of heritage objects and sites.



A 'pared-down' conference with high engagement

The Icon Book & Paper Group delivers a high quality and affordable conference showing that trade fairs and conference totes are not needed for success.



Glass and Ceramics Conservation conference achieves international success

A collaborative event between Icon Ceramics and Glass Group, the British Museum and ICOM-CC uniting 175 conservators from 25 countries.



Apprenticeships for the Conservation sector

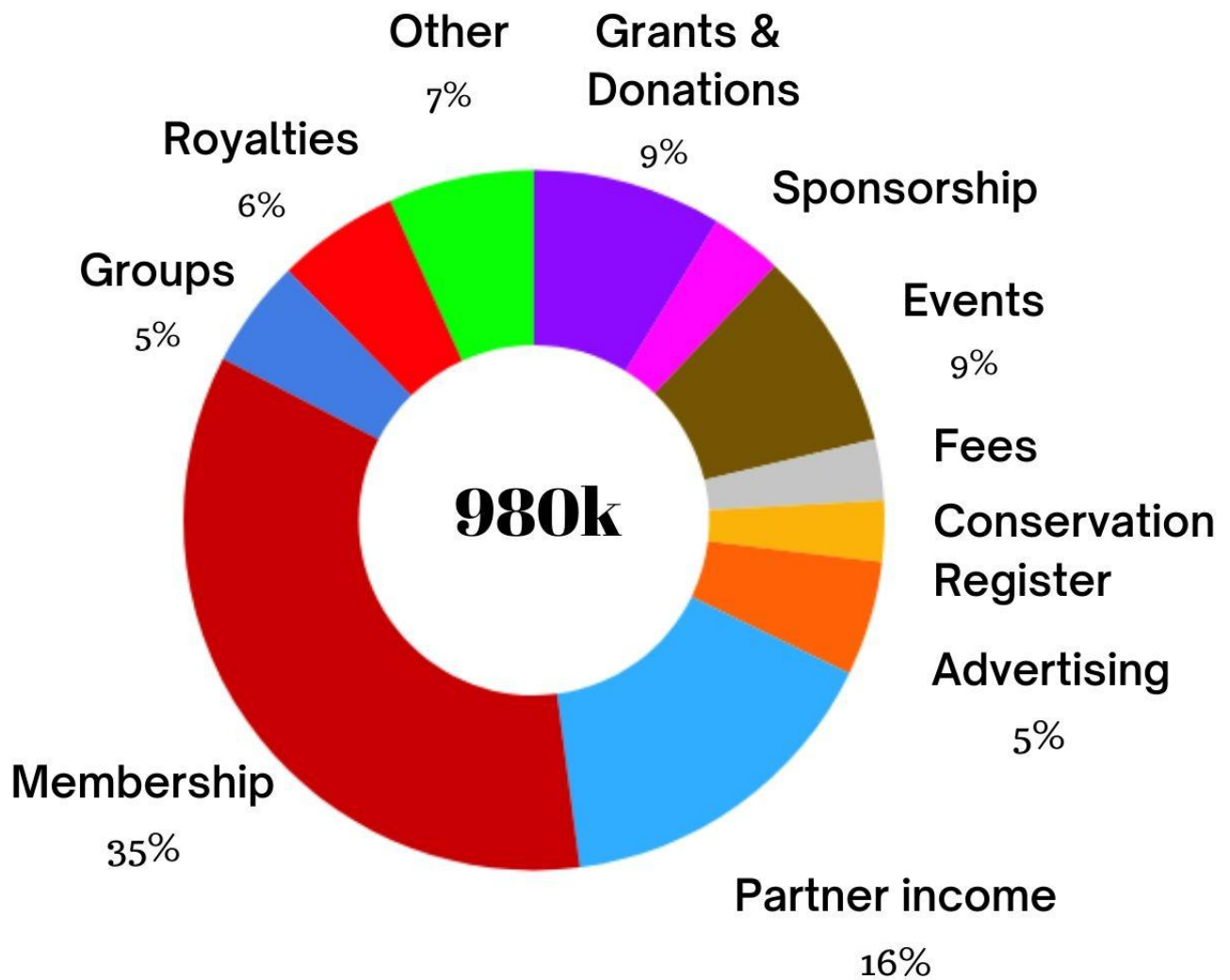
Our journey to develop sector-wide Apprenticeships that had Icon's Professional Standards at their centre.



OUR INCOME

Icon is a charity and we're very grateful to everyone who supports us financially. We use our change for change - spending money wisely to create lasting impact. We're committed to being open about how we're funded and managed so you can feel confident that we're investing our money effectively.

In 2019/2020, we had an income of £980,000 in total. We couldn't have done this without our supporters:

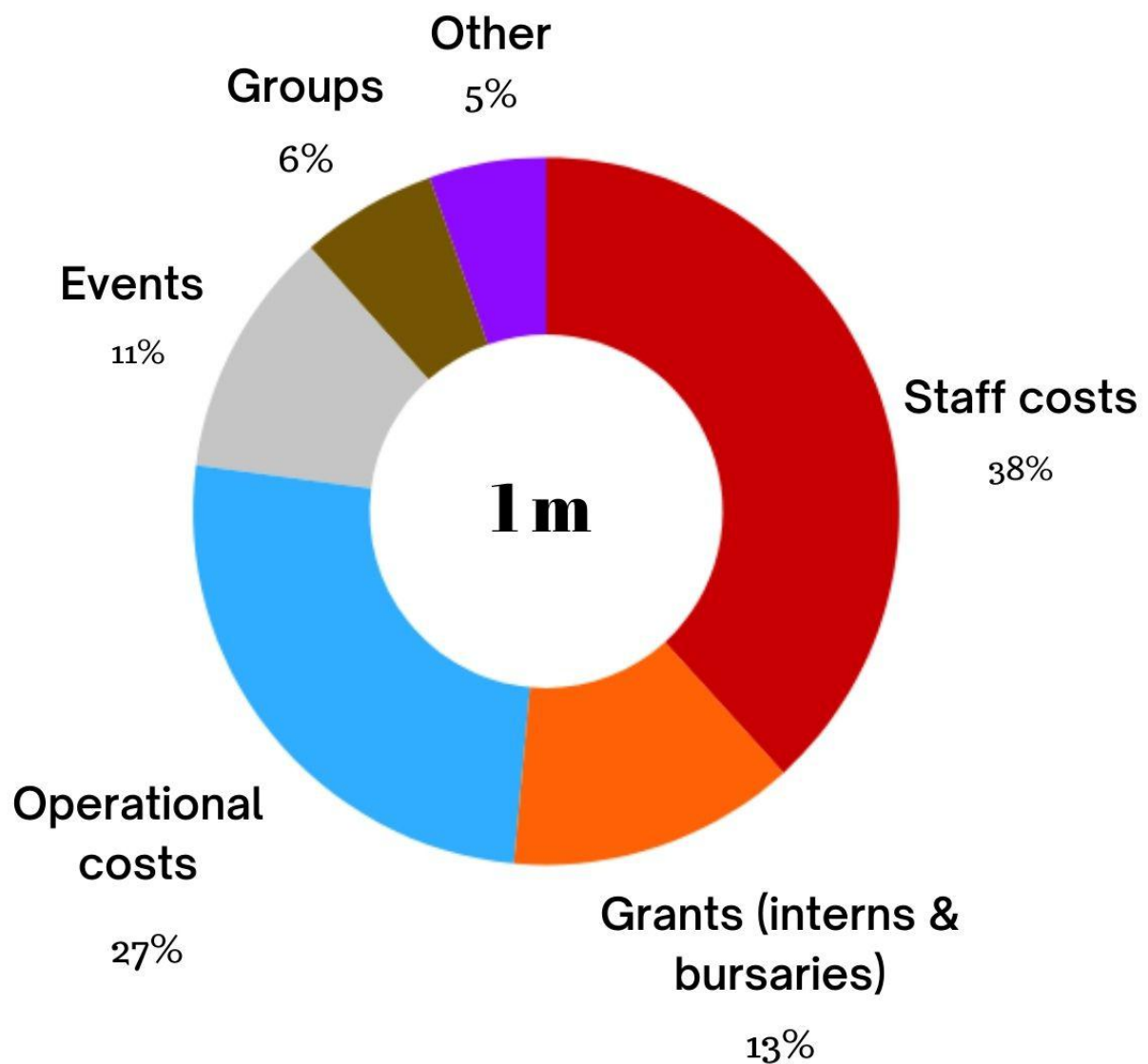


CHANGE FOR CHANGE

OUR EXPENDITURE

Every pound counts. Which is why we think very carefully about how we spend our income and what we commit our money to.

In 2019-2020, we committed £1 million across our activities:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Icon is grateful for the contributions of all those who worked tirelessly on the projects mentioned within and helped us have an impact.

We would like to express our special appreciation to:

- The Pilgrim Trust, The Anna Plowden Trust and an anonymous donor who funded the new Conservation Register.
- The Clothworker's Foundation for completing its funding of Icon's Policy Advisor and for funding bursaries for participants in the #Icon19 Conference.
- The Getty Foundation for funding bursaries for conservators from emerging economies to attend the #Icon19 Conference.
- Historic England for funding the Labour Market Intelligence project.
- Those who donated funds in memory of the late Nigel Williams and the late Frederick Bearman.



**WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT**

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Icon is registered as a Charity in England and Wales (Number 1108380) and in Scotland (Number SC039336) and is a Company Limited by Guarantee, (Number 5201058)

The logo for Icon, The Institute of Conservation, features the word "Icon" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is lowercase, while "con" is uppercase. The letters are closely spaced, and the "o" has a distinctive shape with a small gap at the top.

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION