AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION (AIC)
FOUNDATION FOR ADVANCEMENT IN CONSERVATION (FAIC)
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HIRING A CONSERVATION PROFESSIONAL

We can help you select a qualified conservation professional who can provide sound, ethical preservation services for your art objects, artifacts, and other items of historic and cultural value.

What to Know

1. **Learn about the field of conservation.** Read through our list of Frequently Asked Questions. You may also want to familiarize yourself with some Conservation Terminology.

2. **Learn what it takes to become a conservator.** Read through our information on how to Become a Conservator.

What to Consider

Hiring someone is not always easy. Consider some of the following issues before making your choice:

1. **Only hire a Professional Associate or Fellow member.** Many people will say that they are our members and follow our Code of Ethics, but only professional members have had their work reviewed by a body of their peers.

2. **Conservation treatments are frequently time consuming and expensive.** Be wary of those who propose to perform a quick and inexpensive restoration job, are reluctant to discuss in detail the materials and methods to be used, or will not permit you to see work in progress. For time-consuming projects or collection surveys, you can advertise for a short-term contract conservator on our blog or in our Newsletter (AIC News).

3. **Many conservators are willing to travel.** It may not be appropriate to restrict your search geographically, especially if the object presents unique problems.

4. **You can try a conservator out.** If you have a large collection requiring treatment, you may wish to have one object treated initially before entering into a major contract.

5. **There are risks involved with certain treatment options.** The added time or expense of finding the right professional will be small compared to the loss or future costs that could result from inadequate conservation treatment.

6. **Conservators do not always agree about treatments.** The quality of conservation work is most accurately evaluated based on the technical and structural aspects of the treatment in addition to the cosmetic appearance; another conservation professional may be able to help

you make this evaluation. Speak to a number of conservators before making a decision you are comfortable with.

What to Ask

When selecting a conservator, seek sufficient information on the individuals under consideration. Ask for the following information:

- **What is your background?**
- **What training have you completed?**
- **How long have you been a practicing professional?**
- **What is the scope of your practice? Is conservation your primary activity?**
- **What is your experience in working with my kind of object?**
- **What is your involvement in conservation organizations?**
- **What is your availability?**
- **What are references and previous clients?**

What to Expect

When you have selected a professional, you should expect the following standard practices in your experience in working with them:

- ***Procedures:*** A conservator will want to examine the object before suggesting a treatment. Prior to beginning a treatment, the conservator should provide for your review and approval a written preliminary examination report with a description of the proposed treatment, expected results, and estimated cost. The conservator should consult you during the treatment if any serious deviation from the agreed-upon proposal is needed.
- ***Cost and Schedule:*** The conservator should be willing to discuss the basis for all charges. Determine if there are separate rates for preliminary examination and evaluation and if these preliminary charges are separate or deductible from a subsequent contract. Ask questions about insurance, payment terms, shipping, and additional charges. Conservators often have a backlog of work; inquire if a waiting period is necessary before new work can be accepted.
- ***Documentation:*** The conservator should provide a treatment report when treatment is completed. Such reports may vary in length and form but should list materials and procedures used. The final report may, if appropriate, include photographic records documenting condition before and after treatment. Recommendations for continued care and maintenance may also be provided. Both written and photographic records should be unambiguous. All records should be retained for reference in case the object requires treatment in the future.

Find a Professional

Use our Find a Professional tool to search for a conservation professional in your area.