

# 18

## Conclusion: Common Problems and Potential Solutions

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The "Preservation Education: Sharing Best Practices and Finding Common Ground" conference, on which this volume is based, offered a unique opportunity for educators from around the globe to concentrate on ways to assess and improve programs that focus on the historic environment and heritage. At the conclusion of the formal paper presentations, the participants assembled in a special session to discuss and refine concepts directly or tangentially raised in the presented papers, including some that were controversial. Through this process, the participants defined a common set of problems and potential solutions as well as a vision for the future of historic environment education. This chapter summarizes that discussion.

### **A Summary of Historic Environment Education**

Participants presented on a wide variety of topics and issues, including the importance of the liberal arts, the relationship between undergraduate and graduate programs, job training, the failure and revival of crafts/trades education, pedagogical techniques, curriculum design, international perspectives, performance evaluation, and ethics. At first glance, while these appear to be separate topics with little relation to each other, many of the papers contained significant overlapping themes and content, which can be grouped into the following six categories, which were used by the participants to help organize their discussion:

defining the discipline

employment and relationship to job skills

communication, collaboration, and bridging across boundaries

ethics and quality issues

curriculum design

outcomes and assessment methods

### *Defining the Discipline*

A consistent thread throughout the conference, including the discussion session, was a lack of agreement on defining the "discipline" in which historic environment practitioners and researchers engage their work. Some participants even questioned if it was appropriate to frame the work of practitioners and researchers in a separate historic environment discipline at all, suggesting that a specific endeavor must first originate in a non-conservation, parent discipline with the work then occurring in the historic environment. An example of this scenario is a licensed architect conducting a rehabilitation project on an historic house: the discipline is architecture while the domain of attention is the historic environment. In other words, in this point of view, the historic environment is where the work occurs, but the environment cannot be used itself to define a unique ontological or epistemological approach. This definition becomes problematic, however, with practitioners and researchers who have been educated and trained in aspects primarily identified with the historic environment, but not found in other disciplines, and therefore do not self-identify with any other discipline.

A related issue was a lack of consensus on terminology to describe the domains and activities of educators and practitioners of the historic environment. As clear ontological and epistemological boundaries for historic environment work and research along with consistent terminology are necessary for effective teaching (and are currently lacking), the conference participants thought that these issues should be considered fundamental pedagogical problems that therefore deserve more attention. Moreover, without agreement on the ontological and epistemological nature of work and research in the historic environment, it becomes difficult to define what "it" is, where "it" has been, and where "it" should be heading in the future.

Much like the multiple perspectives on the disciplinary nature of historic environment work, the participants acknowledged that there is confusion about what constitutes practice and research in the historic environment, given disparate national and cultural contexts—a troubling ambiguity that impacts teaching because it is not clear what students should be held accountable to learn. While acknowledging these national and cultural differences, participants believed that there was a potential for a shared, core set of principles, as well as an under-

standing of just what the historic environment is and how professionals ought to engage with it. This is an important, continuing topic of discussion that has broad impact on both practice and teaching, yet there are few, if any forums, for this kind of discussion to date within an educational context.

At a more specific level, descriptive terms for the activities of historic environment professionals and educators as well as terminology to describe aspects of the environment and its heritage objects are not consistent across disciplines, much less between countries. For instance, in the English-speaking world, the term for the field is "historic preservation" in the United States, "heritage conservation" in Canada, and the "heritage sector" in the United Kingdom. Descriptions of the natural- and human-modified environments are also quite varied, from "heritage townscapes" and "historic environment" in the United Kingdom to "cultural landscapes," which is favored in the United States. Non-English-speaking countries are equally varied; for instance, in Sweden, the term for an historic environment practitioner is an *antikvarie*; the English cognate is the pejorative term "antiquarian," which has a different meaning. Countries with Latin-derived languages use variations of the words "patrimony" and "culture" to describe the field.

In the United States, there is increasing discontent in continuing to use the phrase "historic preservation," not only for its grammatically incorrect construction and U.S.-centric usage, but also because in the public arena it conjures notions of preventing change and visions of embalming and preserving things in sealed jars.<sup>1</sup> The natural resource conservation movement has effectively latched onto the word "conservation," to such an extent that, in the United States, it is assumed to only apply to the natural, and not built, environment. This perspective may be changing, however, as more influential people in the field are advocating for a change. Donovan Rypkema, a widely acknowledged expert in the economics of building and place reuse, thinks that the United States should "join most of the rest of the world and be about heritage conservation, rather than historic preservation."<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the University of Southern California changed the name of its master's program from "historic preservation" to "heritage conservation" in order to remain "globally relevant."<sup>3</sup> Discussions about changing the name of the field from "historic preservation" to "heritage conservation" (or some other term) appear with increasing frequency in national conferences in the United States. There is, therefore, some evidence of convergence of terminology, although the conference participants agreed this will likely remain an issue for some time to come. Communication and collaboration among disparate educators

will continue to be problematic until there is a common set of meanings that define historic environment research and practice.

### *Employment and Relationship to Job Skills*

Traditionally, undergraduate education has focused on the liberal arts, but there is an increasing expectation today that students should be well prepared for specific career paths, engendering debate about the extent that these programs should be more vocational in nature. This argument also applies to undergraduate historic environment programs: should an emphasis be placed on liberal arts education versus the development of professional skills with the expectation that some skills will be learned on the job or through further, graduate-level education? An associated argument is if undergraduate degree programs should cater to specific job skills, especially when it is not clear to what extent historic environment employers value or do not value an undergraduate liberal arts education and if this background makes a more effective employee. Most positions that are not based in the trades require a graduate degree regardless, which reinforces the perspective that an undergraduate degree in the historic environment should focus more on the liberal arts and less on specific job skills. For graduate and vocational programs, however, students and employers expect there to be much more of a focus on the development of specific professional skills. There are few data from the employer's perspective, however, with the exception of vocations in traditional building crafts,<sup>4</sup> that have been used to develop curricula with the goal of equipping students with specific skill sets. Curriculum development, therefore, tends to be driven by the personal experience of educators who often have practitioner experience in the field prior to their academic engagement.

The qualifications of tomorrow's historic environment professionals, therefore, constitute an ongoing, open-ended question, but the participants believed that, regardless of specific employer requirements, there should always be an emphasis on problem solving in the teaching process and extensive fieldwork and collaboration along with service and experiential learning. This perspective is far from new, as experiential learning and fieldwork has always been central to educating students who will work in the historic environment. In the United States, for instance, Charles Peterson, who is widely acknowledged as a seminal figure in the history of historic preservation education, emphasized the need for students to be in the field, getting their hands dirty.<sup>5</sup> Most historic environment programs emphasize their experiential learning potential, as it tends to attract students interested in "real-world" experiences.

Problems with fragmentation and communication were prominent themes in the presented papers and pervaded much of the end-of-conference discussion. Due to small program sizes, historic environment educators tend to be isolated in their institution with few or no colleagues with whom to collaborate and brainstorm in order to improve pedagogical practices specific to the historic environment. There is simply a lack of opportunities to approach problems in a collaborative fashion with educators from different fields. Participants thought that this academic isolation leads to a perceived lack of relevance of preservation/conservation within the built environment disciplines in general and especially within the sustainability realm.

Outside of a few nationwide organizations that focus on conservation/preservation education, such as NCPE in the United States and Heritage Canada Foundation's National Roundtable on Heritage Education, educators from other countries, for the most part, have no ability to coordinate their efforts on a larger scale and learn about best practices in the field from international colleagues. The "Preservation Education Conference" offered the first opportunity that many of these educators to come together in the same room to discuss these issues, especially in an international context. Because of the rarified nature of this kind of communication, conference participants were quite interested in continuing the discussion using all means reasonably possible, especially those methods that could take advantage of Internet-based tools such as online forums, websites, and social media. Some participants called for an existing or new international nonprofit or nongovernmental organization to mediate and facilitate this exchange.

Potential academic collaborators exist in many other countries, offering an opportunity to learn from each other and share best practices, especially in terms of effective curriculum design. For instance, educators in the United States and Canada could look toward Europe and Latin America in their approach to "integrated conservation" as a potential solution to integrate sustainability, public health, and planning goals into conservation work. By pooling resources in this manner, there is also an opportunity to educate those empowered to make decisions that affect the historic environment, such as politicians and planners. All participants had a strong desire to learn about the variety of pedagogical, curriculum, and assessment techniques employed on an international basis and were interested in forming an international group of educators that would communicate on a regular basis via a web-based platform to share best practices and continue the discussion. Latin American, African, and

Asian representation, in particular, was encouraged as historic environment research and practice has tended to be dominated by North America, Europe, and Australia.

Partnerships could also be established between related fields and organizations. For instance, the real estate community could be tapped for educational programming and there is much to gain by engaging in a dialogue with existing organizations that overlap with conservation activity, such as the Society of Architectural Historians. Combining disciplines, where feasible, may also be an effective way to utilize limited resources and reach a larger audience. The potential for research collaboration exists for a broad variety of disciplines from architecture and planning to anthropology and law in a way that could effectively engage students and alumni. Most conference participants believed that the relevance of conserving the historic environment is much more likely to increase by involving related fields and organizations, but a minority were concerned that this kind of activity could lead to the dilution of the efforts of heritage conservation professionals and academics, and therefore should be approached cautiously.

A specific tool that would help foster communication and provide a bridge between different constituencies is a nonacademic, professional periodical that addresses historic preservation/heritage conservation practice, in either a national or an international context. This concern is perhaps most evident in the United States, where the consensus was that the NTHP's *Preservation Magazine* is not adequately addressing the relationship between professional practice and interested stakeholders. Instead, the magazine tends to focus on personal interest stories and historic homeowners and describes little in terms of professional practice. Some models to consider that seem to work well in the United Kingdom are the Institute of Historic Building Conservation's *Context* magazine and Historic Scotland's *Focus* magazine.

Last, while the concept of bridging arose in relationship to engaging across disciplines, organizations, and geography, conceptual divides were also discussed, primarily centering on linking the built and natural environments holistically; the mutually beneficial relationship between the practical and the academic; and approaching K-12, undergraduate, and graduate education in the historic environment as a continuum rather than as discrete, unrelated units. In terms of the latter theme, there was a great deal of discussion on how undergraduate programs in the historic environment should inform the graduate preservation program experience. It was not clear what differentiates the learning objectives and outcomes between undergraduate and graduate education, as the overlap

between these kinds of programs can be substantial, and should therefore be addressed in the future.

### *Ethics and Quality Issues*

Not surprisingly, there was concern that other disciplines, whose exclusive focus is not the historic environment, lack a conservation "attitude" to their endeavors, or fail to explicitly address the topic or do so in a tangential way, such as with the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED<sup>6</sup> standards and sustainability efforts. For instance, the conservation of the historic environment has, since its inception, focused on building and place reuse, the conservation of energy through maximizing the retention of existing building materials, sustaining environmentally friendly cultural building practices, and learning from passive climate control systems, yet other disciplines frequently fail to discuss these concepts in relationship to historic buildings and places, much less acknowledge that heritage conservators have a role to play in sustainability. While better communication and collaboration could go a long way in addressing this issue, more important, the participants thought that it was the role of historic environment educators to "inspire" and "challenge" other disciplines. Moreover, we should strive to practice what we teach, an activity acknowledged as sometimes lacking in our endeavors.

The conference participants stressed that all historic environment educators have an ethical obligation to communicate to their students, clients, and the public that work in the historic environment should embrace innovation, including the use of technology. While innovation can be described in terms of technological solutions, it can also be defined through methodological improvements, including the increased use of the social sciences in conservation practice. It is therefore the responsibility of educators to describe heritage conservation in progressive terms, an example of which is Silvio Zancheti's (see Chapter 6) framing of practice as the conservation of desirable meanings that present and future stakeholders have for an authentic historic environment, rather than the more simplistic and rationalist view of "managing change" to the fabric of place. Such an approach helps clarify that the conservation of the historic environment should focus on people as much as fabric and that authenticity can be understood as a concept independent of fabric through empirical means. By recognizing that meaning is separate from the heritage object, a number of dynamic, sustainable, and creative approaches can be utilized to preserve the authenticity of historic places, placing historic environment educators in the unique and progressive position of understanding

how the human-influenced environment is perceived and should therefore be treated.

Innovation can also extend to assuring the quality of conservation practitioners. In most countries, any individual can call himself or herself a "historic preservationist," "preservation planner," "architectural materials conservator," or any number of job titles that address and interact with the historic environment, regardless of educational background, prior job experience, or ability, as the sector is usually not regulated, licensed, or certified by any governmental or nongovernmental body. As a result, some conference participants concluded that there is an ethical obligation to assure public and private entities as well as the general public that if someone practices as an architectural materials conservator, for instance, that he or she should be certified by some official body as to his or her capability. The certification of historic environment practitioners, however, is a controversial topic and one that was divisive among the conference participants. While there are no life/health/safety issues in most heritage conservation practices<sup>7</sup> (issues that drove the initial requirements to certify and license architects and engineers, for instance), there are relevant precedents, such as the certification programs of the American Institute of Certified Planners and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (U.K.), that may be useful to study in order to provide better background on the advantages and disadvantages to this approach.

### *Curriculum Design*

Curriculum design is an essential activity for educators and should reflect innovative approaches and have a strong relationship to practice and advancing theory. The field already has many diverse and rich programs, which is an asset that can assist in identifying best practices for the creation of new and the improvement of existing educational programs. Historic environment educators are particularly interested in the extent to which practitioners should be influencing curriculum design, including overall pedagogical approaches, the balance between the theoretical and the practical, and whether the curriculum should address a country-specific or an international market. While the conference papers addressed some of these issues, most remain open for significant discussion and research.

Conference participants discussed a variety of challenges related to curriculum design, especially in terms of time and resource limitations. For instance, there is wide agreement on the need to provide students with real-world opportunities through internships and experiential learning, as Anastasia L. Pratt (Chapter 11), Shelley-Anne Peleg (Chapter 9), and Rob-

ert W. Ogle (Chapter 4), discuss, but this requirement also means that traditional coursework needs to be reduced, sacrificing theoretical foundations in order to gain additional vocational/experiential opportunities. Obviously, both practical and theoretical perspectives are essential, but the balance between the two is largely a gray area, especially if the goal is to produce students with a minimal, expected level of proficiency. An example of an attempt to achieve this balance between the theoretical and the practical is with research design. Although sometimes viewed as unnecessary for practicing professionals, an understanding of empirical research is important to help these professionals to understand the sociocultural values associated with the historic environment in order to make more effective planning decisions, as Jeremy Wells (Chapter 16) advocates with his recommendations for student thesis research. There is a need for more scholarship, such as this example, which addresses the desired balance between the theoretical and the applied in heritage conservation pedagogy, given the large number of variables in program emphases and career outcomes.

While the development of a specific program's curriculum is of importance, so is understanding the relationship between the curricula of various types of related programs, which presents even greater challenges in terms of understanding how curricula ought to integrate. As the conference participants represented a wide variety of programs—vocational and professional programs were represented as well as diploma, certificate, associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs—this was a particularly important topic, with little consensus in terms of goals. While there are a wide variety of approaches between practical vocational/trades programs and more theoretical bachelor's and graduate degree programs, there is little agreement on how or in what ways they should integrate into a logical continuum, much less how they ought to differ from one another. The relationship between various types of historic environment degree and certificate programs also engendered much debate, but, again, little consensus. Agreement on how integration ought to be approached is an especially pertinent question for those institutions that offer undergraduate and graduate degrees that address the historic environment.

There was, however, broad agreement that curriculum design should continue to adapt to and incorporate evolving technology to help improve teaching and scholarship, but while recognizing that this change is desirable, participants complained that their institutions' bureaucratic environments often made change difficult, if not impossible, in some cases. Traditional disciplinary silos between departments not only make collaboration with other faculty and students difficult, but they also limit

the potential to show students the interdisciplinary (or some would say transdisciplinary) nature of conservation. Historic environment and heritage programs in higher education also tend to be small, which limits available time and resources while making it difficult to alter the status quo. These challenges will likely remain significant in the future with little reason to expect significant improvements unless the higher education environment undertakes radical changes.

### *Outcomes and Assessment Methods*

Most of the participants' home institutions failed to regularly assess the effectiveness of program curricula and the overall pedagogical approaches to instruction. The most effective way to address this situation is to change the overall institutional culture and realign expectations, although many felt powerless to effect such change, especially where there was a lack of resources and support. While there is significant scholarship on methods used to assess the curricula of higher education programs,<sup>8</sup> there is little guidance in terms of assessing the effectiveness of the curricula of historic environment programs, specifically. Some of the chapters in this volume help to bridge this gap, such as Robert Benedict and Cari Goetcheus's recommendations in terms of integrating preservation material into graduate real estate curricula (Chapter 15), Henry Russell and Philip Leverton's work on distance learning (Chapter 10), and Karla Nunes Penna and Elisabeth Taylor's assessment of training programs in Brazil (Chapter 7), but significantly more scholarship is needed to better understand what makes historic environment programs unique and how this information should impact the design of a program's curriculum. Such assessment methods should focus equally on students' as well as educators' performance.

In terms of specific assessment outcomes, there was a great deal of interest in pedagogical approaches to conservation instruction and which techniques were more effective than others. The contributions of Shelley-Anne Peleg (Chapter 9), Paul Hardin Kapp, Lauren Weiss Bricker, and Luis G. Hoyos (Chapter 12), and Fernando Diniz Moreira and Luiz Manuel do Eirado Amorim (Chapter 13) are examples of useful case studies that may help answer this question. The pedagogical heritage of different cultures may provide intriguing examples of improved methods, as these traditions have learning techniques that have been refined over hundreds of years, as Barry Stiefel and Gilbert Stiefel (Chapter 17) reveal in their challenge to the Socratic method for teaching preservation law. In their case study, collaborative, pair-based learning based on the Jewish *havruta* method may be more effective in helping students to understand divergent values

and perspectives as well as appreciating problems more holistically. There are also many other case studies on pedagogical approaches in conservation referenced by these authors, but what is missing is a meta-analysis to help educators understand the best approaches and techniques and how these could be adapted for particular learning outcomes.

Ultimately, the assessment of a program's success should be dependent on the outcome of graduates and their overall career achievement. Most participants, however, indicated that their institution did not do a particularly good job tracking the success of graduates, at least in a formal way, although many program directors and coordinators were aware, to some degree, which students were establishing themselves on successful career paths. The participants stressed that this process should be more formalized and the information on where graduates find employment, how well their skills fit their job, and overall performance should provide a feedback loop into curriculum design. There was much less agreement, however, on how alumni could be tracked, the specific nature of the data gathered, and how the resulting information could influence an overall curriculum.

### **The Future**

While predicting the future is always a risky endeavor, the educators assembled at the conference had a fairly clear vision of the future of historic environment education, with a primary focus on an unambiguous definition of the discipline and its activities. Within the larger sphere of higher education, theory is likely to continue to be deprecated in lieu of practical/hands-on/vocational approaches to curriculum development. Historic environment education is unlikely to be exempt from this trend, but in many ways, conservation/preservation education has always involved a significant amount of field experience and service learning; this foundation will likely expand to encompass greater opportunities. With an increasing international focus on conservation/preservation activities and a future that involves greater collaboration among educators from other countries, more field and service learning opportunities should be available to students. Greater collaboration may also catalyze communication between primary and secondary educators and among educators of certificate and degree programs at institutions of higher learning that is, for the most part, not taking place today. This bridge may then help in visualizing a complete conservation/preservation education continuum from primary to secondary education with an understanding that each level of education will be able to build on the previous level.

Although not entirely unexpected, the future of historic environment education engenders far more questions than answers, including politically sensitive issues such as certifying historic environment professionals and programs and the possibility that conservation/preservation programs will be made irrelevant by integrating them into existing built environment programs. Many of these issues have at their core questions of identity and defining practice and research within the historic environment. If conservation/preservation education leaders cannot agree on the ontological and epistemological domains of the discipline and its core endeavors, collaboration with other researchers and professionals will become increasingly problematic in the future. The first step, however, which the "Preservation Education" conference tried to address is to understand these issues in an effort for conservation/preservation educators across the globe to more purposefully forge a future for historic environment education.

## Notes

1. Roberta Brandes Gratz, *The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs* (New York: Nation Books, 2010), 60.

2. Donovan Rypkema, "Making Historic Preservation Relevant for the Next 50 Years," *Forum Journal*, 24:3 (2010), 18.

3. Kim A. O'Connell, "Field Survey: Where Are the Gaps in Preservation Education?" *Architect Magazine*, 11 (November 2012).

4. Examples of studies that address the necessary skills of heritage trades/craftspeople include National Heritage Training Group, *Traditional Building Craft Skills: Assessing the Need, Meeting the Challenge: Skills Needs Analysis of the Built Heritage Sector in Scotland* (London: National Heritage Training Group, 2007); and English Heritage, *Traditional Building Craft Skills: Skills Needs Analysis of the Built Heritage Sector* (London: English Heritage, 2013).

5. Charles E. Peterson, "The Role of the Architect in Historical Restorations," in *Preservation and Conservation: Principles and Practices: Proceedings of the North American International Regional Conference Williamsburg, Virginia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 10–16, 1972*, ed. Sharon Timmons (Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1976), 1–12.

6. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, which is administered by the U.S. Green Building Council, is "a green building tool that addresses the entire building lifecycle recognizing best-in-class building strategies"; see <http://www.usgbc.org/leed>.

7. It might be argued, however, that materials conservators ought to be certified in working with hazardous substances to protect themselves, their clients, and the public.

8. Examples of guidance for curriculum development include Robert R. Diamond, *Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula: A Practical Guide* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998); Harry Hubball and Helen Burt, "An Integrated Approach to Developing and Implementing Learning-Centred Curricula," *International Journal for Academic Development*, 9:1 (2004), 51–65; Peggy L. Maki, *Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment across the Institution* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2004); and Floyd G. Robinson, John A. Ross, and Floyd White, *Curriculum Development for Effective Instruction* (Toronto: OISE, 1985).

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