



Linked Conservation Data

LCD Education Working Group

Report from Education Workshop - 4th May 2020

Contributions by: Jeremy Clarke, Kirsten Dunne, Rachel Kerr, Sonja Schwoll, Kristen St. John, Athanasios Velios and others.

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Workshop summary

In May 2020, the Linked Conservation Data consortium organised a workshop about education which featured presentations from The Guildhall Museum Rochester, National Galleries Scotland and The National Archives. The recordings from the workshop are available online: <https://www.ligatus.org.uk/lcd/meeting/212> and summarised in the next section. The purpose of this workshop was to bring together expertise from across conservation and education departments of memory organisations and to discuss ways in which conservation Linked Data can become a valuable resource for education activities in memory organisations.

During the workshop it was agreed that the current focus of the Linked Conservation Data project is primarily to engage with conservators and enable them to produce and take advantage of Linked Data. As such we recognised that any effort engaging education departments from memory organisations would have to be scheduled for a later stage of the project and possibly as a stand-alone activity. The workshop established some initial ideas of how this could be done as outlined in “Points of focus”. The section “Future development” organises these points within a possible new project structure.

Presentations

Guildhall Museum

In this presentation Education Officer Jeremy Clarke, gave an introduction to the Rochester Guildhall Museum (RGM) and their definition and approach to education and engagement.

He emphasised the museum’s locality in Rochester, Kent and its history of transit, transport, travel and transition being a guiding theme in the museum’s education activities for schools. The museum’s approach to engagement with students focuses on objects and live activities led by museum staff. Engagement involves setting up participatory research tasks that respond to the learner’s needs and interests.

In discussing how Linked Conservation Data may play an impactful role in education, the presentation from RGM highlighted the museum’s success with engaging students in real tasks with real outcomes. A possible focus for a relevant educational activity would be to explain why conservation records are more useful as Linked Data and then set-up a task allowing learners to produce documentation records as Linked Data under a conservator’s supervision.

National Galleries of Scotland

In this presentation Senior Projects Conservator from the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS), Kirsten Dunne, provided a platform for discussion around ideas related to what conservators may offer educators and education departments. A selection of examples of conservation driven education projects were shown. The need for more formal links between conservation and education departments was highlighted, which also emphasised that methods of data collection need to be improved.

Education content from the NGS Conservation department has to date focused on adult learning such as adult-based research groups, university departments and peer-led research. Therefore several potential activities that could translate from conservation across to education were mentioned. These are: technical analysis and art history, information on materials, techniques and

processes, facilitating access in different ways, providing skills, providing introductory information and context of the role of the conservator to give insight into a different perspective. In order to do this, questions around what educators and schools need in terms of their curriculum and for their visits need to be addressed.

In discussing how Linked Conservation Data may facilitate these processes, a practical example of how discussions about Linked Data can benefit education departments was given: conservation records in memory organisations should be classified/tagged with suitable vocabulary terms which will make them easier to retrieve by educators, i.e. use categories of content understood by educators to organise conservation records. For this to be feasible conservators need to be aware of the types of learning activities delivered by educators so that a common vocabulary is agreed.

The National Archives

In this presentation Sonja Schwoell, Head of Conservation and Treatment Development at The National Archives (TNA) focused on the work of the collection care department in collaboration with education. As the organisation provides a range of educational opportunities for audiences of all ages, their documents link themselves to support key stages 1-5 as well as professional development for teachers, historians and archivists. Example activities were presented to open up discussion around identifying education strategies in memory organisations in relation to conservation. A key focus at TNA is that students are given real tasks, are allowed access to the unique collections and may handle the original items, providing collaborative environments where both education, conservation and the students benefit.

Discussion

During the discussion, it was agreed that deep interaction between conservators and educators in memory organisation is limited and that the requirements of one group do not necessarily inform the activities of another. For example, conservators producing new records are not aware of the kind of questions that educators may wish to answer and therefore potentially interesting data is never produced.

The value of locality was emphasised repeatedly. Learning about one's place through collections which directly link to this place is considered as a particularly engaging strategy. This links to the tradition of story-telling which can be enhanced through data so that it does not re-confirm a well-known hypothesis but it allows new understandings to emerge.

Points of focus

The following points are important concepts to be considered when designing activities linking conservation data with education departments in memory organisations:

- Real tasks, e.g. group of learners undertaking documentation based on materiality (materials and condition). Requires both educators and conservators. Focus on objects and demonstrate how they are relevant to people.
- Focus on people (owners, users, conservators) and places (locality of memory organisations) and join the two using stories/narratives that conservators can produce.
- Shared language and a commonly understood vocabulary between educators and conservators would benefit communication and discoverability of relevant content. This would allow practical solutions like tagging conservation records with information about

human and geographical connections of objects (e.g. the conservator as a human making decisions, conservator treating damage caused by previous human activity).

Future development

This section specifies how a future strand of the Linked Conservation Data project can facilitate the development of conservation documentation for assisting education programmes in memory organisations.

- Identify a memory organisation with an established collection cataloguing workflow which also includes both a large conservation department and a strong programme of educational activities with school audiences.
- Forge links between the three departments (documentation, conservation, education), both at front-facing and senior management levels by demonstrating potential through past examples of collaboration from own or different organisations.
- Embed a researcher with background in conservation and/or education in the memory organisation with sole target to work across the two departments.
- Identify and recruit volunteer learners from external educational bodies (such as primary and secondary schools) and engage with teachers and carers at design stage.
- Undertake an exercise between the researcher, museum staff and teachers to identify the teaching areas within the curriculum where conservation data and knowledge can benefit learning. These need to be developed in the context of demand to ensure relevance and sustainability. These also need to be informed by the points mentioned (see “Points of focus”).
- Inform and enrich existing educational programmes for the selected audiences with knowledge derived from conservation data. This may involve agreement in terminology according to audiences and also improvement of conservation records and their accessibility within the memory organisation’s systems. The core aim of the Linked Conservation Data project is to assist in this process.
- Example education programmes deriving from the above exercise may include:
 - Participants documenting material and condition of objects using a schema and terminology
 - Participants recording the temperature/humidity/light levels in a historic site

The Linked Conservation Data consortium will continue to identify opportunities for funding where the above plan could act as the basis for a new project.