

Issues in Conservation Documentation: Digital Formats, Institutional Priorities, and Public Access

New York

Edited Transcript of the Meeting

This meeting was held under the auspices of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on April 27, 2006.

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MORNING SESSION:

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: Welcome everybody. I am delighted to have you all here, and we are all very much indebted to Philippe and his staff for having made these premises available to us. Three years ago, almost to the day, we held a small meeting at the Mellon Foundation on the subject of conservation documentation. At issue on that occasion were mainly matters of methodology. We recognized that expectations for online access to art collections were growing fast and that conservation information would find itself increasingly orphaned if it was not fully integrated with these developing systems. It seemed important to begin the process of developing a consensus about the kinds of documentation methodologies that would be necessary if conservation information was to play an appropriate role within the larger context of collections management. Of the 44 people assembled here now, only seven were present on that occasion. And I think we would all agree that much has happened in the intervening years to make our gathering today more urgent and its focus on values and priorities especially timely. The questions you have all been considering during your internal meetings have, I gather, generated lively debate, and there does seem to be an emerging consensus that far-sighted, carefully considered institutional policies governing the management and use of conservation information are badly needed. There is unlikely to be total unanimity in any institution about what these policies should be, but we hope that today's discussions will take us a good deal further along the path toward a common set of goals and some solutions. We must remember that we are only 40 odd representatives of 13 institutions, clearly a small, if significant, microcosm of the international museum and preservation community. In the wake of this meeting, if it proves productive, we will need to plan for broader communication and discussion with institutions from the European community, probably from other continents, and certainly with other colleagues in the U.S. and the UK, many of whom have already expressed interest in the topics we are addressing. More immediately, we have, as you know, arranged to record today's proceedings and to have them transcribed. We have tentative and very preliminary plans to publish an edited version in the Getty Conservation Institute newsletter and possibly another version on one or more Web sites. We will welcome your thoughts about these intentions, your alternative suggestions and

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ultimately your approval and permission to disseminate the results of our deliberations to our wider community. We will have time to consider these issues after we adjourn at the end of the afternoon and I hope you will share some of your thoughts with us. Now, without further delay, I am delighted to invite Philippe to set the stage for our discussions.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: It is my pleasure to welcome you at the Met today for what I expect will be a most informative and useful discussion. As has so often been the case, it is to Angelica Rudenstine that we are indebted for the impetus of such a discussion and for this organization. It is extremely timely. And if we do our part it is likely to be productive, especially if we turn all of the words that will be pronounced today into first a consensus and then maybe action. So, Angelica, we thank you for your insight, for your largesse. It is not easy, I realize, to galvanize such a large and disparate group. I do not think we would have been able to do it without you – assembling a group which is both geographically and professionally disparate – but it was essential that it be done, essential that we engage in cross-institutional conversations, as our organizations begin to consider the complex matters that are on today's agenda, and they are complex indeed. Such conversations will help us to recognize that we share many of the same challenges and questions with these goals and that we do not necessarily have all the answers. If we did, we would not be here today. Not that we will necessarily be in agreement on every aspect of the issue; a quick perusal of the dossier in front of us demonstrates that. One thing we do agree on, and I cannot say it enough, is our appreciation to the Mellon Foundation and to you, Angelica.

Angelica has asked me to say a few words about the topic of conservation and science documentation. I am happy to oblige, knowing full well that among the people here, I am the one who has the most to learn and probably the least original to say. But still, with your indulgence, I would like to offer a few observations about the sharing of conservation information, a little bit about the past, the present, and – what really interests us – the future.

Traditionally, documentation published by museums has included such aspects of scholarship as attribution, description, technique and now, increasingly, provenance.

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This information appears in our exhibition publications, in the catalogues of our collections and our wall labels, and increasingly on our Web sites, both internally and to the public. That is the basic, old-fashioned so-called art historical information. Now, for the Met and many other museums, the inclusion of information about conservation and the examination of works in our collections have been at best erratic. Limitations on sharing and publishing conservation information are rooted in several factors. Some of them are quite legitimate. The first of these is a long standing assumption that our public lacks – I should say our publics lack curiosity about or adequate understanding of conservation information. I myself feel that the first part of this assumption is not so certain; that is, that many members of the public are indeed curious, because they are interested in the findings of our conservators and scientists. I think we all know that people love process. It is the second assumption, namely that they bring a certain amount of knowledge or understanding to the table that I am more skeptical about, as are many in this room. Therefore, the public's perfectly understandable ignorance of most aspects of this highly specialized field, including many a curator who has not mastered it, will need to be taken into consideration when thinking about what information is to be ultimately disseminated. I think that will be one of the key issues to be discussed here. A second factor for the lag in the process is, of course, the high cost of creating the necessary documentation and then of interpreting it. Print publishing, as we know, is prohibitively expensive for both museums and for the scholarly outside publishers, and, of course, the print runs are very small. The two go together. Finally, there is the premise, perhaps flawed, that the story of the conservation and examination of a work of art is somehow less germane to understanding that work than more traditional kinds of documentation. Objective difficulties are also created by the complex nature, linguistic as well as visual, of conservation documentation. You are dealing with radiographs, with microphotographs, scientific charts that often lose their effectiveness when they are reproduced in printed catalogues, and that further exacerbates the difficulties that are already present in interpreting such documents. None of this is to say that over the years museums have not published or presented the work of conservators and scientists. To use the Met as an example, I point out our award-winning, two-volume publication on that

masterpiece of Italian Renaissance woodwork, the *Gubbio Studiolo*, which includes an entire book, about an inch and a half thick, devoted to the *Studiolo's* conservation. The ten-year project to restore the intarsia of the study of Federico da Montefeltro was a joint effort of the museum's curatorial and conservation department (Olga Raggio for the curatorial side and Antoine Wilmering for the conservation side). His exhaustive documentation of the research and the conservation enriched our understanding not just of the *Studiolo* itself, but also the entire discipline of Renaissance woodwork. And then there was Maryan Ainsworth's 1994 exhibition of the work of Petrus Cristus. That introduced the Metropolitan's audiences to the art of reflectography and x-radiography. The entries in the scholarly catalogue that accompanied the exhibition provided the technical underpinnings for art historical arguments about the artist and his methods. Both the Met's periodicals (our annual journal and the members' bulletin), regularly present conservation information and sometimes complete articles on these topics. Finally, the formal and informal sharing of conservation information among colleagues both within and outside of the institution is a time-honored tradition. I will describe in a moment how that happens. Of course, we are clearly not alone among museums in seeking to publish the work of our conservators and scientists. We admire, for example, the National Gallery in London's excellent and beautifully produced *Technical Bulletin*. We appreciate the inclusion of technical information in their collection catalogues, while we applaud their efforts to popularize conservation activities through exhibitions for general audiences built on science-related themes. I still believe that the long-term value of such presentations for the general public is yet to be proven. I am not sure that it enlightens as much as it confuses, having seen a number of them, and obviously thinking of perhaps doing the same here at the Metropolitan. I have watched more with bemusement than I have with a sense of eureka: "yes, that is what it is about." So I think that is yet to be proven. The Getty Conservation Institute has distinguished itself by its prodigious output in many formats in the areas of scientific and conservation publishing. But creating these publications and exhibitions with their heavily interpretive content and expensive wrappings is costly and resource intensive, as is enabling visits on-site by researchers and students, or answering requests from colleagues about information that

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must be hunted down in conservation department file cabinets. So what brings us to this discussion, the crux of it really, is that we are in the age of electronic information. We must think through how best to place the new technologies at the service of conservation and research. In the process we must examine the successes and the failures we have encountered in using the network information environment to share other kinds of collections information, notably the more standard art historical information. This conference will have been successful if we can point to and agree on the most efficient ways to digitize, index and manage our conservation documentation and the ways to share it not only widely, but wisely. Before we start, I have a few questions and a few caveats based on the practical reality. In this first case I use the Met's own situation, and I know that to some degree, one way or the other, it is replicated throughout the institutions represented at the table. The first issue is: what will each of us need to do at home before we can even begin to contemplate pure record level sharing of our documentation? Here at the Met the prospect of the work that will need to be undertaken to provide our own staff with centralized reliable access to our own conservation documentation is, to say the least, daunting. I envy my colleagues at the National Galleries in London and in Washington, whose conservation departments operate under a single branch. Here at the Met we support four large and separate conservation departments, a separate scientific research department, and seven smaller, but independent, conservation studios within curatorial departments. Each area's practices have developed independently of the others, and we have no common cataloguing tools or standards to enable simple cross-departmental access or retrieval of information. Last year we undertook our first conservation and science intellectual property inventory. That was a first step in simply trying to understand the volume of material produced by our conservation and science departments in order to begin to document the levels of cataloguing and security necessary to support access of the material and to attempt to understand the work flow that generates all of this content. The documentation produced by our staff of over 100 conservators and scientists ranges, as you well know, from quick notes to lengthy reports, from sketches to CT scanning radiographs, from microphotographs to digital files. Only a very small percentage of this material,

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retrospective and current, is digitized. Very little is catalogued in a central location such as our collections management system TMS, which some of you use. Most of the documentation does not circulate outside of the department that created it because we do not have the means for that. At the Met I am afraid it will take years of hard work and significant resources before a centralized repository for this material is created, before a long-term plan for the cataloguing, archiving, digitization of this vast collection of material is in place and before we are ready to even contemplate the broader sharing of this information. On one level at least, this is not such bad news. As colleagues in the field, such as yourselves, develop standards for cataloguing conservation information, we will be joyfully prepared to adapt them to our means, and as common methods for exchanging information emerge, we will gladly embrace them.

The second issue or question that we need to debate is how best to share conservation information with professional colleagues as well as with the general public. Those are two very different things. Certainly what now works well should not be abandoned; to wit, continuing to publish carefully chosen, well explicated, edited content in books and other publications. This remains an excellent path for raising interest in conservation issues and in the technical aspects of the history of works of art.

We may perhaps choose to explore the web as an effective alternate to print for material of this type, recognizing the advantages of reduced production expenses and potentially quicker publication. The Met's current practice of access on request for colleagues and other professionals allows us to share information in a meaningful and appropriate way. Those are two fairly important adjectives. Original records and documents can be consulted and the authors are often at hand for comments and explanations. Certainly there is value in continuing these interactions.

Expanding access to colleagues outside the museum, to record level exchange on a case-by-case basis, is a logical development of this practice. What of record level access then for the general public? Here I believe that, to be of any real use, rather than a mere accumulation of uninterpreted data, the conservation archive must be specifically edited for all its assorted users, taking into account that the level of understanding of the

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curator, the art historian, the conservator, the scientist and, notably, the general public are very different one from the other.

Nonetheless, some elements of our database records may, in fact, be immediately valuable to the public. I am sure much thought will be given today to the determination of what parts of the record are most suitable for unmediated presentation to general visitors. On the whole, I think this information is likely to emerge from examination of materials and technique rather than from treatment, for obvious reasons.

I myself might go so far as to propose that in place of the provision of detailed technical information to the public, the museum's responsibility is to provide, at the minimum, relevant and adequate information about the state of a work of art: which parts are original, which parts restoration, where a painting may have been abraded and so forth. I think this information, when it is available, belongs both in the collection catalogue and on the work's label, if only to allow our visitor to better judge and appreciate the work of art he or she is looking at.

Finally, we must consider the effect on the conservators themselves of policies of greater transparency, of the possibility that simply knowing that their documentation will be more broadly disseminated may change the practices of our curators and conservators.

Will the assumption that their work may be more easily accessed alter the kind of documentation that they create? Will the concern that even casual notes would become part of an open record hinder the very free flow of information that we are trying to encourage? Will greater care in creating publishable material steal time from the core work of treating and caring for works of art? That certainly is a curator's concern. In summary, I hope we will have the chance today to begin to discuss not only the theoretical, but also the practical aspects of the management and sharing of conservation information. It is safe to say we are now in the place with conservation documentation where we found ourselves a few years ago as we started to think about the digital cataloguing of our collections and the potential for sharing the electronic records that we would create. There are still arguments about whether provenance should be included, the names of dealers, prices and so forth. Not everything is even agreed in that arena. Then, as now, we recognized the importance of exploiting electronic methodologies to

reorganize and manage our documentation. And we were perhaps a bit naive then. Once our initial reticence ebbed (and I was at the forefront of the reticent ones), then our enthusiasm for the potential of new technologies occasionally outstripped our understanding of the difficulties and costs of cataloguing and digitizing collections information. I hope that we have all by now learned from those experiences. So let us move forward with cautious optimism to use the opportunity of this gathering to think carefully about what is desirable and to weigh that against what is practical and achievable. There will be resistance to some ideas, to the level of openness that will be sought. But I will say in conclusion that it has been my experience that many reticences are the inherited pattern of unexamined modes of action and thinking over long periods of time, and I would hope that today we will all capitalize on this discussion and interchange among so many distinguished colleagues to approach all topics without reticence, but with a truly open mind. Thank you very much and good work!

TIM WHALEN: Thank you very much, Philippe, for your wise words, and thank you for your hospitality. I am Tim Whalen, director of the Getty Conservation Institute, and I have the privilege of being today's moderator. I would like to introduce two colleagues who are somewhat outside of the museum field and many of you may not know: first, Dan Kushel from Buffalo State College, who is a distinguished professor in the art conservation department, and one of the leading specialists in the digitization of documentation. Second, Dr. Aviva Burnstock from the Courtauld Institute of Art, who has been recently named director of the department of conservation and technology, and also oversees the postgraduate painting conservation course. Both these colleagues are surrounded by people much younger than most of us, and who believe that information does not exist unless it is on the web, so they are here to be our conscience in that regard. We hope to emerge from today's meeting with a far greater understanding of the practices related to the dissemination of conservation information. We first have to understand clearly what is worth doing, what is worth capturing. A dear colleague of mine, Jack Myers, always used to say, "if it ain't worth doing, it ain't worth doing well." So I think what we want to do today is understand what is worth doing. So, welcome to you all, and, Angelica, thank you very much for organizing this important meeting for us.

KENNETH HAMMA: When we began thinking about this topic with Angelica we recognized that it falls within a larger picture of access to all the knowledge that museums create, and the need to take advantage of digital tools to make that easier, indeed to make it possible, as we see opportunities for reducing the costs of publishing information. I want to look back for a few minutes to remind us of the larger context in which this is happening. In the early to mid-1980s, some museums began exploring the potential for managing collections with the assistance of digital management systems. That is 20 years ago, but it is *only* 20 years ago. At the time, the activity was largely confined to the registrar's office, because it was literally a "collection management" without the broader sense of "information management" that we include in that concept today. The broader collection information documentation meant something specific 20 years ago and it occurred exclusively in print publications. At that time, absent even the rudimentary expectations that are part and parcel of every system today, much time was spent discussing the formation of standards and good practice. This is something that museum staff around the world take advantage of today and for the most part agree on. But as all of this was being invented literally from the ground up, it was truly a time of trial and error. At the Getty, for example, it was a period during which our collection management system (the *Museum Prototype System*) was replaced with something called the *Replacement Temporary System*, not a step that would inspire confidence in the direction things were going. On the other hand, it was also a period when we created shared standards and resources like the *Union List of Artist Names* and the *Art and Architecture Thesaurus*, tools that are widely used in cataloguing and information management today in museums as well as in libraries and archives. In the early 1990s, we began to realize that we might some day also have other media such as images of works of art and cataloguing beyond basic administrative information in those systems. And a few years later, with the growing visibility of the worldwide web, the earliest prospects of sharing information with each other and even directly with our audience began to come into focus. This was a period of quick and ragged change for museums and it felt uncomfortable, but it was that for every other business in the world too. I recall in 1993 suggesting to curatorial staff that some of the data in the collection

management system would be published electronically as part of an online public catalogue and that we might even have little digitized pictures. To prove it, I spent a weekend with a stack of slides, a scanning machine and a programming codebook, making a prototype museum Web site. Despite the evidence of that shaggy model, the suggestion that the museum would communicate directly with a worldwide audience was met with complete incredulity. It was still a business where the computer was a fancy typewriter and real images could only be seen on a light box. But the world outside was changing, and quickly. By the mid-to-late 1990s, many museums began to feel that the traditional organizational chart was not going to continue to be useful and some began to recognize what in retrospect seems a clear and brightly illuminated change: we were no longer only managing collections, but managing significant and growing bodies of information about the works in those collections, and that body of information, we recognized, was evergreen and easily shared if properly begun and maintained. The cost of beginning seemed great. The cost of maintenance declined as the years went by. Since then, museum systems have been expected not only to manage collections, but also to manage work flow, generate movement slips, photography requests, and (more and more) to manage the information for online access to collections for professional purposes as well as for the general public. I think, as Philippe indicated, we are only now beginning to appreciate the depth and magnitude of the change for our institutions. By the turn of the millennium, nearly all museums had begun the long process of acquiring into their databases registrarial and legal information. Some began to include in this data, as a means of delivery on Web sites, exhibition history, provenance and bibliography. The only large body of information directly related to works of art that was carefully created in most major art museums but was fully neglected in this process of becoming digital was in the conservators' files. So what to do next? No matter how we looked at it, the digitization of conservation documentation was a big project, with lots of paper as well as lots of different media representing a range of original capture processes. Unhelpfully, but with genuine concern – and, remember, this was now four years ago and things have changed a lot even in four years – conservators largely echoed the curators of ten years earlier, “that will never be public information.” Well, we understood “never” to

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be about five years. But would it not be useful to have those records of analysis and treatment available in house for curatorial and scientific staff? At this point if someone agreed and said yes, the problems really began. Lacking any institutional policy, we would inevitably be doing things differently for each conservation department. How would we set priorities? At times the investment value seemed to be clear for prospective digital management along with other collection management activities, but if the only audience was the curator down the hall, then the cost-benefit analysis of retrospective capture seemed to indicate no action at all. Then, *mirabile dictu*, conservators themselves starting creating and managing digital resources as analytical documentation came to be more digital. Old binders, the old black binders with the handwritten notes going back to the previous century – (in Getty’s case the last decade) – suddenly had a CD ROM clipped inside. Unwittingly moving in unison, many of us said to ourselves a few years ago, “let us ask some other museums what they are thinking about.” And on May 9th, 2003, Angelica hosted a meeting at the Mellon Foundation. We discovered many topics in that meeting, from systems to processes to current activities to standards to intellectual property rights, where the conversation was very satisfying, and we uncovered previously unremarked shared opinions. But it was also clear (and I think this was the main thing we discovered in that meeting) that if a large investment of time and staff resources were required to achieve professional and public benefit of shared digital repositories, then we really needed to understand the institutional priorities and values that would or would not drive this. We also needed to know if those institutional values would intersect with the values for the field of conservation broadly understood. If those values and that intersection could be articulated, then it might drive a common direction for the independent work in each museum. The happy result might be an information ecology truly useful for museum conservation. At that 2003 meeting on 62nd Street, we suspected there might not be a consensus within the individual institutions from conservator to curator to director, let alone among multiple institutions. While we wondered about all the issues that you have been preparing for this meeting, we realized that the entire enterprise would turn on an articulation of shared institutional values and

priorities, a shared assessment of the risks and opportunities. If we can even hear about that today and nothing else, I think it will have been a great success.

TIM WHALEN: Thank you very much, Ken. We would like to spend the morning discussing issues that arose during the internal discussions you have had in your respective institutions. Since we have all read the documents in your dossiers, we will not revisit them. We would rather focus on the disagreements or agreements, that have emerged. Owing to the large size of our group, we have asked six colleagues to make brief remarks to begin to frame the conversation. They will each speak for 3-5 minutes and we will then have a moderated conversation for about 1 ½ hours. The six will be Ashok Roy from the National Gallery London, Jim Coddington from MoMA, Jacqueline Ridge from Tate, Andrew Lins from Philadelphia, David Saunders from the British Museum and Henry Lie from the Harvard University Art Museums.

ASKOK ROY: I want to open this discussion from two different perspectives. Firstly, to look at all of our collective preliminary responses to the questions that Mark Leonard initially posed, drawing out those areas of commonality and agreement among us and highlighting some of the disparities. Secondly, I will briefly describe the National Gallery's position and thinking on this whole subject. First of all, the obvious: we represent here 12 institutions from the English speaking world (nine American and three British), three of which are educational institutions or attached to educational institutions. I have looked at all our replies to the guiding questionnaire and tried to pick out responses not so much to Mark's more searching questions, but to some basic present attitudes to what we should probably just call conservation documentation. In doing that, I re-posed the questions as follows: Do you have existing digital records in your collections? Do you have a future plan for developing more elaborate digital documentation? Is there ready access to any of these records in your institution by your curators and other institutional scholars? Is wider access granted to professionals outside your institution? What, if any, arrangement for public access exists? And, finally, what are your concerns and anxieties?

Other than the last question, the level of divergence in opinion increases from one question to the next. There are some very clear shared areas in our viewpoints. All

institutions report some level of electronic documentation of records, although the degree of enthusiasm varies. There is quite a strong sense that we have no choice but to go down this path, but no one expressed the view that the paper records of the past or, interestingly, of the present, would disappear entirely in the future. We are left with the consensus view that the institutions represented here will, in all likelihood, continue to maintain parallel systems of record-keeping, with the bulk of historical material held on paper. Most of these records are at least partly digitized but supported by paper documentation. And, as expected, the recording of digital images seems the least controversial issue. All of us also stress our enthusiasm for sharing (without impediment) all conservation-based information – including technical scientific material – with our direct colleagues and within our own institutions, and we are taking steps to facilitate this. Some information, most of it images, is already remotely accessible on institutional computer networks. But there is also a general sense that conservation staff would like the chance to mediate information, and people often do this. Similarly, all institutions are fairly keen to provide information to their professional colleagues in the field and to other outside scholars. But on this point the first hints of a slightly protective attitude toward information emerges, with worries expressed about the possible loss of intellectual property rights, about the use to which unmediated, so-called “raw information” might be put, and concerns about the risk of information falling into trouble-making, journalistic hands. Phrases such as “inquirers known to the museum” appear in several responses and most institutions would like these inquirers to visit the museum in person, by implication gaining access to material if mediated by their staff. There was an incremental decline of enthusiasm for helping students with their research in this way, except in the education-based institutions and the three British museums.

Although this is a simplified overview, there is almost no current appetite amongst us to argue for the extreme, hard-core position of free, unmediated, Internet-based access to conservation records of any kind for the general public and, indeed, some quite strong resistance to the idea. Such an unqualified approach to free access may, however, be a long-term ambition for the three British representatives (ourselves included) and possibly – if I read the documents correctly – for the Getty and the

Washington National Gallery. Notably, these institutions stress public access as one of the key components of their mission. In the case of the three British institutions, we are all government funded and subject to dialogue with the government over our policies and service. The present government places public access very high among its priorities, and the impact of the Freedom of Information Act is decisive. It is also worth noting that several respondents found that the public's interest in conservation-based information was pretty low.

Without going into great detail about the areas of expressed concern, there were some common themes: everyone noted that lack of time and resources to achieve a useful program of electronic documentation were real problems, as were the dangers associated with the misunderstanding and/or misuse of unmediated raw data. Some respondents expressed concern that revelations about past treatments might be damaging to reputations; others saw the limitations of current web-based design and digital record-keeping as potentially damaging to the literacy of our profession and possibly even leading to loss of valuable hard copy.

On the positive side, several respondents pointed to the importance of digitization as itself a preservation tool – a view which we share in London.

On my second point (the National Gallery's position on the overall questions), we are probably on the slightly more hard-core side of open access. This has partly to do with our government funding as already noted. It is also related to the limited scale of the collection and the relatively full existing record of its conservation. We are very interested in using digital technology to document both conservation and the technical study of paintings and are very willing to share this information internally and externally. We would make a clear distinction between the conservation record and the technical information about materials and technique of the painting, and perhaps be more inclined to supply the latter in unedited and unmediated form. We believe there is a low demand from the public for conservation-based information, having already volunteered a bit every year. But we are nonetheless willing (and indeed required) to share. Our present plan is to digitize parts of the historical conservation record in order to preserve it, probably in directly digitized image files of a number of the most fragile conservation

dossiers, so that they need not be handled frequently. Essentially this would be nothing more than a modern form of microfilming. At the same time, we are establishing a technical database with scientific results in the first instance for internal use. But we can see the day when this will be shared much more widely. From discussions at the National Gallery, both formal and informal, my sense is that we would very willingly develop and share gallery information and sources in electronic format. The elephant in the room, as for a number of institutions, is the relative lack of resources to make progress.

JIM CODDINGTON: I was also going to summarize, but since Ashok has done so, I will just note a few points that emerged in our internal review. There does seem to be an evolving consensus, the basic contours of which reside in the fact that sensitive information of various sorts does exist in these files. Some examples we discussed included unconventional or anachronistic treatments; concerns about sharing information on partially owned works; and about the risk of inappropriate use of complex treatment procedures by inexperienced practitioners. The need for mediation, filtering and explanation of data, and the shortage of staff time for such efforts was also a concern. The digitization of records is clearly seen as desirable, but the substantial investment of personnel and equipment involved poses a problem – especially in the case of older records. As noted by Ashok, the need to protect intellectual property was a common theme.

A clear positive outcome of the sharing of these documents with colleagues and scholars is, of course, that we learn great deal from them. It takes time from our more routine activities, but the requests have been manageable to date, largely because we have so far restricted access to fairly high-level, advanced scholars. One question we have begun to ask ourselves is, given the multiplicity of collection management formats and software, how user-friendly will conservation documentation be to scholars of the future? If one has to go through six different databases to get all of the data one wants, are there viable metadata standards that might be brought to bear? Might a general catalogue of existing conservation information be a useful path to pursue, and are there any promising existing models for inter-institutional sharing?

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: In your response document, included in the dossier, Jim [Coddington], there was a reference to the fact that the “formal” policies of the Museum of Modern Art are not in fact the policies in practice. I think it would be helpful to people if you could clarify that, because scholars have had difficulty gaining access to MoMA’s records based on the formal published policies.

JIM CODDINGTON: I would be interested to know if anyone (legitimate scholars) has actually been denied access. Preparing for this meeting, the first internal review meeting we had was with Glenn [Lowry]. I brought up the fact that our formal restrictive policy is not really followed in practice: whenever scholars or other colleagues get in touch with us, we do share the requested information. Glenn replied: “our policy should be absolute transparency as the starting point from which we should proceed. So we can reformulate our specific policy accordingly. We will need to decide who will have access and how much access, however.

JACQUELINE RIDGE: This project offered us our first experience of speaking to a vast range of departments other than conservation about these questions, and I would say this has been particularly helpful. So if we do not achieve anything else, we have forged much stronger links than we had before, and that is a good step forward. I should also say that Tate records are fully accessible to the public, and we are not preventing any access whatsoever at the moment. Beyond some of the issues mentioned by Ashok, I would say that one of the most important questions for us at Tate derives from the fact that we collect contemporary art. Much of the critical documentation at the point of acquisition is acquired through discussion with the artist, and there is a risk if we record it only digitally, we might actually lose that information, which would be difficult, if not impossible, to recapture. This will have a significant impact on the direction digitization needs to take. A second point that emerged clearly in our discussions especially with Tate library, the archive, and the department of digital programs, concerned copyright issues. Contemporary art and “historic” art are significantly less copyright-contentious than modern art – i.e., works of art created by established artists in the 20th century. Because of rights claimed by artists and their estates, far greater resources are needed to

manage publications of modern art. Both archival and digital programs acknowledged that the content and direction of their digital initiatives had been affected by these costs.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: Yes. Just one question about your statement that the Tate records are fully accessible to the public now: does that mean anyone asking to see a file on a particular object, whatever it is, can actually do that, or is that process mediated in some way?

JACQUELINE RIDGE: They can do so through a formal process by contacting us. I think the issue for us is not so much whether they are able to access it. It is actually whether or not the public knows that the information is available at all. The fact that we are getting a very small number of inquiries is not likely due to lack of interest. They do not know the information is there.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I have a general question for my British colleagues. One hears a great deal about how much you do for the public and, of course, the role of government. If government were not so present in the equation, would you all feel quite as comfortable with the degree of transparency you are presenting today?

ASKOK ROY: I think at the National Gallery we probably would because before the Freedom of Information Act, we were supplying information of this type very easily. It is true that there are conservation dossiers that we were reluctant to share with journalists, but we can no longer take that position.

DAVID SAUNDERS: The Freedom of Information section is not compelling us to carry out an activity with which we would not otherwise be comfortable, as a way of justifying government resources. It is something we want to do anyway.

ANTONY GRIFFITHS: If I can just add one comment. I think in the British Museum there was a sea change about 20 years ago, when the director, Dave Wilson, made it perfectly clear that there was no such thing as reserved collections and reserved information. And that certainly is my experience, because I predated that. It did make a very great difference to curatorial attitudes. And I think that the new generation of curators are very, very much more open than they used to be. I am not saying there are not a few recidivists around, but I think there has been real change.

DAVID SAUNDERS: Yes. I was just going to say two things. One is I think that the drive towards openness is not really simply governmental or the Freedom of Information Act. In some way, the Freedom of Information Act in Britain has made us much more careful, and to my regret we can be slightly less free with what we make available because we know it is subject to immediate public scrutiny. The second thing I was going to mention is that we do have journalists who are looking at things constantly and criticizing us, as people will know from *Art Newspaper* and other periodicals. But my general feeling is that as a result of the Freedom of Information Act, they do now have access, which has been beneficial. I think institutions need to be reasonably robust. There is a public interest in conservation practice, and even though some of the questions are uncomfortable and some are difficult and critical of previous practices, actually, as public institutions we have to acknowledge that we work in ways which are careful and scrupulous and open to investigation.

TIM WHALEN: Andrew Lins from Philadelphia.

ANDREW LINS: I am sorry to report that there was no violent disagreement or bloodshed at our institution regarding the sharing of information. At a more fundamental level, before you can share and grant access, you have to manage your records, and that is the critical issue for us. We have the need to create databases in addition to the paper trail, in order to allow us to store centrally and retrieve safely the house records that are digitally collected, as they have been for the last ten years. So inquiries about recent treatments are all going to be handled in digital form, requiring management of the data. We have in the course of the last several years, developed a database, *Conservation Tracker*, which is described in our dossier text. In the late nineties we began to work with TMS to try to develop a conservation-specific component to the existing curatorial-registrarial inventory system. We tried to get TMS interested in developing a conservation module, and worked with a number of colleagues in America, Stockholm and elsewhere to try to accomplish that. The TMS people assured us, after some review, that there was no way a group of conservators would agree on what the right data to share was. So, TMS was not willing to proceed in developing that kind of database even for their system that is now widely used throughout America and a lot of European

museums. Therefore we decided to initiate it ourselves and have developed such a database that is compatible with the present TMS platform. We are presently considering how many of the fields in our database will be transferable directly into the TMS format. That is where we stand at this moment. We are also considering providing a little catalogue recording past treatments or research topics, so that people in the public arena, as well as colleagues, can find out whether a particular work (or a particular artist's works) have ever been treated in our labs. There is currently no way a professional colleague or member of the public can ascertain whether someone is working or has worked in a given area. That lack of available information results in wasteful duplication of effort and costs. If we were to host a database of research topics (as curators and our director have suggested) much could be gained. Along these lines, the infrared and Raman Users Group have developed a nondenominational database that is shared internationally, and is helpful.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: I would like to add one postscript to what Andrew said, (which is all very reflective of our internal conversations.) Posting information on projects underway or on particular areas of research was an idea intended to stimulate the development of a shared system. The analogy was made to the Cool system developed at Stanford.

MARK LEONARD: This is a topic that we might get into a little bit more later on, but one thing that did strike me about your summary [Philadelphia Museum of Art] was that you were the only institution that spoke about the conservation department owning conservation information. And I thought that is an important concept. I wondered if you might expound on that a little bit, because I think it is a challenge to think of an individual department owning information, as opposed to the institution owning the information.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: I thought we referred to ourselves as custodians (or did someone else refer to themselves as custodians?) of the information on behalf of the museum. That was intended to be the slant.

JIM CODDINGTON: Just to clarify, the conservation department at MoMA is the official archival repository for conservation information, and the official archived record is a paper record at MoMA.

DAVID SAUNDERS: The British Museum has already made a statement in the document we have all received, where we put forward our policy of conservation documentation as it occurs within the wider documentation policy at the museum. The discussions that we have had since receiving the documents for this meeting have allowed us to see where we stand with respect to our colleagues around this table. We are pleased, and perhaps rather relieved, since there was a broad measure of agreement among people here, that we are not entirely out on a limb in any way. And we are pleased that there is general agreement that materials should be made available, although there are differences of opinion about who should have access to which information, starting from internal access, outside scholarly access, and moving down to broad public access. It also seems clear (and this was brought out first by Ashok) that the number of inquiries from each of those groups steadily diminishes, so that although we might have reservations about public access, there are relatively few public inquiries to trouble us. There are, I think, some caveats to this desire to make documentation accessible, and they seem to be twofold. The first is based on the technical difficulties surrounding making the material available, particularly when there is some level of interpretation and staff time required. Digitization might offer some hope that problems could be overcome, given sufficient resources and commitment and it seems that the representatives here have obviously made significant progress in this direction. The second issue is the concern that access to documentation might result in misuse or misinterpretation. All the contributions submitted make some mention of this possibility. It is also clear that such misuse and misinterpretation is infrequent, partly because requests from members of the public or journalists are not frequent. In our internal discussions at the British Museum (and we represent our director in this), we were all clear that it is entirely appropriate for the museum to make the documentation available to all, regardless of the risk. We are an institution with a publicly-owned collection, most of the research about that collection is publicly funded, and the results should also be public. To this end we are increasing

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commitments at the museum to develop a public face to our information systems. Over the next five years there will be a major investment in the system to make sure that the records that we hold now and share within the museum can be made publicly accessible. There are a few exceptions to this policy, which will be largely legal. For example, it might be impossible to review information about an object because of certain interests in it. Or certain information may be restricted because of legislation concerning the revelation of private personal details. We are not so naïve as to think that there will be no drawbacks to making this information so publicly available; but we believe that this openness is right. It is a case of doing the right thing and bearing the consequences that might result. For example, recent experience with the Elgin marbles has clearly shown that making a clean breast of all that is known about an unfortunate event in the conservation history may create a passing furor that effectively suppresses future speculation and unfounded rumor.

JIM CODDINGTON: Are there examples of exceptions to the kind of information that you would share? You mentioned two.

DAVID SAUNDERS: Those are simple examples.

JIM CODDINGTON: Can you give specifics? Because otherwise it seems as though the thrust is toward transparency.

DAVID SAUNDERS: The home addresses of donors, or telephone numbers. Such personal information is restricted under the Act.

JIM CODDINGTON: But the first example you gave led me to believe that there might be some sensitive political issues with regard to the acquisition of objects and a claim perhaps, against objects. There were two points. Maybe I misunderstood the first one. The second was one about personal information, but the first one?

DAVID SAUNDERS: It would apply if an object were under investigation because it might have been illegally obtained, sold and so forth.

JIM CODDINGTON: Is that not precisely the kind of inquiry we would receive from journalists? If so, to not make the information available would seem to question the intention of transparency.

DAVID SAUNDERS: I think this is a case where it is not our decision to make. We are legally obliged not to make that information available, because it is a police matter. If it is personal information, we have in the UK the Data Protection Act, which has to be read alongside the Freedom of Information Act. So the Freedom of Information Act requires us to make the information available, the Data Protection Act requires us not to reveal certain information.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: In your summary, you mentioned that the conservation records are put on Merlin, and then the paper records are destroyed. Could you speak a bit about what led to that decision?

DAVID SAUNDERS: Yes. The paper actually is destroyed. There are recent copies. We work with them and there have been times when they are literally very, very basic descriptions of objects, for example, a date, “dirty object, dirt removed from spot with magnetic strip,” and then a conservator’s signature. So when that object comes in for new treatment, they would just replace the entry with a new one based on Merlin. The details from the old paper record would then be transcribed into the computer and the old record will be destroyed.

TIM WHALEN: Henry Lie.

HENRY LIE: The Harvard Art Museum’s pre-meeting statement on sharing files did not include any description of our current or planned digitization efforts. They have been extensive, and the various branches of Sam Quigley’s division are busier than ever with database design, a comprehensive imaging program and a variety of related conservation documents. This is not the time to describe these efforts in detail, but suffice it to say that we are very much involved in providing digital access to a large portion of our intellectual property, conservation documentation included. What is worth noting is that one of the earliest database efforts at the museums was initiated by the conservation department and dates back to an ancient era, May of 1989, and that this system and its records are still viable today. With all the questions of longevity that accompany digital data, this does serve as an example of the reliability achievable when a reasonable degree of planning, maintenance and administrative care is taken, even through a period of extreme technological change. Migration to a new, web-based

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system will follow immediately after the migration from its previous collection management system to the more commonly used TMS product, and communication between the two systems will simplify initial data entry work by staff and enforce greater consistency of basic artwork information onto the conservation database. After 17 years of use, our successful transition to a “modern system” will demonstrate that careful administrative oversight can resolve many concerns about digital permanence. Our pre-meeting statement suggests that as part of an educational institution, we might be at the far end of the spectrum in our willingness and desire to share conservation files. We were surprised on reading the other statements that not only are we not alone, but we are fairly typical in this. It remains to be seen, however, whether we and others will be able to stick to these plans in a digital environment. Much of our statements, after all, are lofty concepts based on goals and policies rather than experience and implementation. The reservations expressed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art statement and the careful analysis of the issues in the Met’s recent second statement in which the authors were presumably able to react to the share-it-all attitude of other institutions, and in a rather compelling case against a complete sharing of files, should provide us with a basis for discussing and refining our opinions and our plans. Our own positive experience of sharing files has generally been uncomplicated and rewarding. Recently an author working on historical aspects of conservation treatment has had extensive access to our paintings files, and we believe that the field of conservation will benefit from this research, as will likely public opinion. Our records of numerous outside client treatments of Hans Hoffmann’s works have allowed the authors of Hoffmann’s catalogue raisonné to use our help in obtaining owner information to gain access to these paintings. And students, mostly from the university, have been some of the more frequent users of our files. Artwork owners are another relatively large group who call to inquire about a sticker on the back of their painting that says “Treated at the Fogg Art Museum.” The early practice of using such tags on objects brought in for treatment or examination, though now considered inappropriate, has sometimes been greatly beneficial to owners in cases where our files have interesting information that can legally be shared with them. And the whole question of files on works not owned by the museum may be peripheral to

our discussion, since in most cases there is no question that such files are confidential and shared only at the discretion of the client. However, judgments on sharing may be more flexible in cases where many decades have passed as the artworks have changed hands, perhaps even numerous times. The art museum's new department run by Carol Mancusi-Ungaro at the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art may have sharing issues with parallels in other art museums. A large number of the treatment files donated by private conservators to the department's growing archive are a resource rich in information about modern art. Similarly, extensive records in our treatment laboratories from our days as an active regional center also have considerable research potential. And at what point and to what degree can such material be shared? Indeed, on what unassailable basis can we not share this valuable information? Outside of student research activities, a normal load of file viewing requests per year at the Straus Center is about 20. Most of these are relatively simple and they can be easily accommodated. Digitizing our records has the potential to make this process easier, or, if complex and varied descriptions are applied, a growing number of requests due to digitization could swamp our ability to provide access. As with the differences and obligations of institutions operating in accordance with Great Britain's Freedom of Information Act, there may be a variety of missions, obligations and operational limitations that lead institutions to share differently. Our only real concern is the operational question of whether we will be able to accommodate the volume of inquiries we may precipitate when you throw open the digital doors of this material to the global audience.

JIM CUNO: Henry, in the case of objects that had been owned privately, treated at the Fogg, and then subsequently entered a public collection, would it then be ethical and legal to gain access to all previous information even if the analysis and treatment was undertaken when the object was privately owned?

HENRY LIE: That is a legal question and I am not actually sure what the answer is. I suppose it would depend on the time frame to some degree and what type of information and what various peoples' interest is. There may be somebody here who knows the legal answer to that. But presumably the work that was done was done under

contract, and in that sense there might be a contractual restriction, even after the death of the original conservator.

TIM WHALEN: Other questions regarding Henry's point? If not, in the context of this morning's discussion and the practices within our institutions, we can now open the floor for other comments. It would be good to hear from institutions that have not had a chance to speak yet.

JIM CUNO: I just had one other question about the legality issue. One of the reasons for this conversation today is to bring people from different countries together to talk about these issues, and if there are different legal constraints in various countries, how does that affect how we manage the sharing of information? Will we (or our legal officers) need to know in detail the laws of various countries, as is the case with provenance review, prior to the consenting to the sharing of information?

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: I will not pretend to answer the legal issues, but I will say that the reason we asked the British colleagues to provide us with the current state of legislation in the UK was precisely in order to lay out the kinds of constraints and imperatives that exist. It was not very difficult to do that. And I think as we develop conversations and meetings that include the Prado, the Louvre, the Rijksmuseum, Berlin, and other institutions in Europe and elsewhere, we will learn what their particular legal situations are. I think it is very important to find out exactly what is going on in the UK since the recent Freedom of Information Act, and we were greatly assisted by the British Museum, the National Gallery and the Tate in that task. There was even some disagreement (prior to the compiling of these documents) between people in the British Museum and the National Gallery regarding the precise terms of the Freedom of Information Act. So I think this process has been helpful, but I do not think it is going to be a stumbling block to understanding those issues.

NANCY ASH: I had another question concerning the Freedom of Information Act: in those places where a Freedom of Information Act has been in place for some time, is it true that this has led conservators to withdraw certain information from their files? It was Sue Breakell, I think, who noted that a disclosure imperative would inhibit

free and frank exchange of views. I was wondering whether that risk might serve to provide an exemption from public disclosure of conservation records?

MARK LEONARD: I had a comment along somewhat similar lines which addresses a slightly larger issue that has emerged in all of our internal institutional discussions: that is the fear of misuse of information held in the files. A brief case from our experience: in the early 1980s, the Getty purchased the archives of William Suhr who was, as many of you know, the preeminent private painting restorer in New York for many years. He worked on the Frick collection, and at the Detroit Institute of Arts, and also on virtually every important picture that came into the New York art trade. I would say that almost every American institution has a painting by Billy Suhr in their collection. After Mr. Suhr died, his widow sold the archives to the Getty. The Getty curatorial staff and the Getty legal team found the information contained within the archives so inflammatory that they restricted access to it completely, and even prevented it from being catalogued. The only information available was a list of the artists, and the only way to get access to the archive was for the director of the institution that owned the painting in question to write a letter to the Getty requesting access either for an employee of the institution or someone else designated by the institution. So essentially the archive was killed and became completely inaccessible. However, this situation came to a head a few years ago. I was asked to work on Rembrandt's *Juneau*, which is in the Hammer collection, just down the street from the Getty. There was a note in the Hammer Museum's file that Billy Suhr had worked on the painting. The only way that I could gain access to the Getty's Suhr archives was to get the director of the Hammer to write to the director of the Getty Research Institute, asking permission for me to look at the photographs. The file is wonderful, and very simple: it contains only cleaned-state photographs with Suhr's handwritten notes on the back. But the feeling at the time (and I think that feeling still persists) that these photographs are horrible things to reveal, that they are dirty little secrets that need to be contained and protected. The field has come a long way since the eighties and there is probably no one around this table who would share that view. But there remains a lingering fear that there is something to hide, something that has to be protected, because people will take it and misuse it. I think in

fact that what is emerging is that people do not even know that the information exists, and that we should place a stronger focus on educating the public, even educating our colleagues, because all of the documentation is useful information that diversifies and enriches our understanding of works of art.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I would like to take slight issue with only one of the things that you said, which is the usefulness of cleaned-state photographs. Here I think you have to make the distinction between the general public and the field – that is, curators and conservators. To tell you the truth, many cleaned-state photographs can look terribly frightening to even the moderately initiated, even when, in fact, a picture is in fairly good condition and the manner of treatment is moderate and not excessive. I can imagine the public being terribly confused, thinking that they are looking at totally restored, decrepit works of art. I would be very cautious about making cleaned-state photographs, available to the general public without explanatory mediation.

JOCK REYNOLDS: I would be curious to know how people from different institutions would characterize the nature of the future audience for these conservation records over the next five or ten, or even 20 years. We anticipate that the student and faculty audience will grow, as will the professional audience. But I do not think we anticipate being besieged by all kinds of journalists or other investigators. We feel that providing access to conservation records will be more of a service to the field and to our educational constituency, and that this kind of transparency can only be useful. Yale is a very clear example of an institution that egregiously treated one of its collections. Many years later, in collaboration with many around this table, the institution was willing to confront and reveal that history to share it freely, and to try collectively to address it. Our hope would be that coming to terms with past practice would have a positive effect. We are also particularly interested in making sure that these records not replace the need for conservators and curators to engage first and foremost with the original work of art, to see the conservation documentation as ancillary, but to spend maximum time with the objects themselves. There is some fear that moving rapidly into digital documentation would reduce such engagement and that is obviously undesirable.

CARL STREHLKE: I just want to make two comments. I noticed that a few people thought our statement gave the impression that we were restricting information. I do not think that is true at the Philadelphia Museum. The perception that we do restrict may arise from the fact that we like to hold the information until we can present it in a beautifully edited and interpreted form. A particularly good example would be my own catalogue of the earlier Italian paintings in which we did present a lot of cleaned-state photographs. I should say, though, that I was very, very careful not to put them on the same page as the color plate for the publication, and to gray out, a little bit, the white areas you inevitably find on these photographs. So a lot of this information can be manipulated to good use, I must say.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: It should be said that the Philadelphia catalogue and other publications by Carl are exemplary of what we are discussing here: they reveal an enormous amount of important technical and conservation history about the pictures and thereby giving us a far deeper understanding of what we are looking at.

KENNETH HAMMA: I am wondering whether any of you have experienced an increase in inquiries, if you provide broad access? And whether you feel there has been misuse of material? Might there be a parallel here with what we have all experienced since it became mandatory to provide public access to provenance information about works that were seized by the Nazis before and during the Second World War? There was some concern at our institution that if people realized that we could not confirm the location of a painting between 1938 and 1942, lots of people would call to question us about it. In fact, there were a relatively small number of people who were really interested. But putting the information into the public domain was the most important act.

ASKOK ROY: We have had no inquiries.

JACQUELINE RIDGE: Nor have we.

MARCO LEONA: I have a feeling that our discussion is being distorted by the specter of unwashed masses or nasty reporters looking through our files. But I think there is a consensus that digitization, indexing, and exchange of conservation information all have great potential as tools to increase knowledge about conservation among

professionals. I would like to see us address that because that can be the first step, and all the fears about general access can be discussed later. In that context, I think that we have an obligation to work with the public, to communicate about conservation, creating information, education, and even advocacy, in order to create a better understanding of what conservation is.

TIM WHALEN: Good point.

NARAYAN KHANDEKAR: I want to follow up on what Marco said. One of the things everybody talks about is having access to publications; but I have found that when I publish, the amount of material I can include that is relevant to the object is very limited. There is a huge amount of information that remains in the file, and I would like to have access not only to that, but to all the materials in the files of other museums as well. One of the great benefits of moving into a digital system would be the sharing of such files, so that as professionals, we can begin to learn from materials that would never be accessible otherwise.

JIM CUNO: Narayan, are there museums which deny access when asked? I would have thought that it would be more a question of how we provide access, not whether we do.

NARAYAN KHANDEKAR: It is not that I have been denied access, though extensive conversation are required to establish whether we can have access or not. But if the information was available on a database, freely granted automatic access among professionals would be instantaneous, without having to exchange letters, etc.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: Are you talking largely about visual materials (such as radiographs, cross-sections, graphs, etc)? Or complex written reports? What range of things are being restricted?

NARAYAN KHANDEKAR: It is all of those things. A digital file cannot replace the paper file entirely. But to be able to see the digital file immediately, then refine our questions before actually contacting the institutions with specific questions could only be a valuable thing.

PATRICIA GARLAND: In my experience, without exception among our colleagues, we will always have access. I have never once been told, "I am not going to

tell you.” But the issue for me is knowing where to look for information. One of the great resources that I have used is the AATA online Getty resource, which deals with published information. If there were a way to link institutions so that we had the capacity at all times to know who is doing research into what, whether it is published or not, that would be of enormous value.

MARK ARONSON: I have a question perhaps as a follow up to what Narayan said. When you go to a Web site and look at data put out by a museum, how will you measure the quality of it – as if in peer review? How can you evaluate it? The quality of the information that you are distributing might not be worthy of publication?

MERV RICHARD: To concur with Patricia, conservators feel comfortable using their judgment about whether to release information. But in discussions about this over the last few months, we have found that everyone has a fairly open mind about releasing information freely. We have probably all had our experiences with the press, where something becomes sensationalized and then distorted. But in fact if things are not treated as mysteries, they become amazingly boring to the general public.

TIM WHALEN: I think the National Gallery in London makes a really nice distinction between technical studies and conservation information. And I wonder, if one had to prioritize the whole realm of materials, whether one or the other of those might hold greater weight or importance for people around the table.

MERV RICHARD: I might say that as we have gone through the process of trying to digitize our files, we have come to particularly value the written notes. Sometimes they just state, “worked three hours on [this particular painting] with XX solvent.” There might be frequent references of that sort, and to those who are seeking information about the condition of that painting. The data has to be interpreted to be useful. That is the difference between conservation information and documentation versus raw data. And we feel the same way about the scientific analyses that we do. You cannot put every little bit of analysis out unrefined.

ANNE D’HARNONCOURT: Is it “unrefined,” or without context? I think that is kind of the problem we are all struggling with. We may have a great deal of information in the files, but if it is meaningful only to the person who created it, but not

for other people, you have a choice between taking the time to elucidate it, interpret it – which is in a sense putting a slant on it, pull it all together, setting it within the context of the treatment as a whole – or else leaving it in the form of “raw” data.

MERV RICHARD: I think that is exactly the point, Anne. If you release one spectrum of an analysis, when it may in fact have required five or six different spectra to make an adequate identification of a particular pigment and medium situation, you may be misleading. If somebody takes a single individual component of that (without being able to put all six together in a more meaningful format) and that is how they access the spectrum from your open files, they will have learned nothing. What are you supplying? You are supplying nonsense.

FRANK ZUCCARI: I agree with you. I think in the case of most requests that come to the Art Institute, one of the conservators has to go through the file, filter through it, and make sense of it. Some of the files on recently purchased objects have undergone careful examination for catalogue projects. In those cases we have very complete documentation that we can share quite easily and quickly. But in most cases we have to go back and re-examine the painting, then looking at the content of the file, provide interpretation and pull the information together so that we can share in it a coherent way.

LARRY KANTER: I wonder if I might just make a polemical comment that touches on a lot of these points. Angelica pointed out to me at breakfast that very few people around this table are curators. And as a curator listening to all these comments, I respond from two different points of view. One is as an end user and one is as someone who is cooperatively or collaboratively responsible for the editing and presentation of information. So I have to sit on both sides of the fence. As an end user of course, it has to be acknowledged that nothing has benefited the study of works of art more dramatically than the expansion of available conservation information. Nothing since the invention of photography has made a greater difference to the study of works of art. And nothing has been more difficult to understand, not excluding the invention of photography, than the dissemination of information about conservation. Therefore as a curator who is responsible for not only overseeing conservation projects, but for managing the way in which the public is presented with the results and the processes, I

have to wonder whether we are doing a service or a disservice to the public by offering them raw, undigested information. Frankly, the experience of working with a collection such as the Jarves at Yale, where the results of our cleaning campaigns are no longer cleaned-state photographs, but cleaned-state objects hanging on the walls of our galleries, I have come to a different conclusion from the one I had over many years at the Met, which is a large institution with a different public focus. My conclusion is that every bit of information is absolutely useful. And the great concern about the web (that as you put information out you lose control of it, because you cannot know who is using it and for what purpose) I find that frankly and polemically to be a meaningless concern. After all, every field of human endeavor is now accessible on the web and no one can control what an end user will do with it. We can edit until the cows come home, but we will still be misunderstood, we will still be misinterpreted and misused by anyone who does not know how to use the information we put out there. There is a lot of useless information on the web, so let users sort it out. We need to be conscientious but not worried.

TIM WHALEN: We have a polemic on the table. Any reflection or comments on that?

JIM CUNO: I would ask Larry what becomes of our educational function?

LARRY KANTER: Education is by definition the process of refining information and directing it to an audience. But the web is not an educational tool. The web is a resource tool. That is a different thing altogether.

MERV RICHARD: Virtually all of the records that are being created from this point on are created in a digital format. Going back to consider the digitization of existing records is really a separate topic. The critical point is that we are creating them digitally now, they are being stored digitally now, and they are becoming increasingly accessible digitally now. That is the way the future is going. We are going to have increasing flexibility to share these materials, and we need to do it in a coordinated way. I am hoping that plans along those lines will emerge from this meeting. By moving in this direction, I am certain we will also make steady progress in the preservation of our records.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: I would like to endorse (from a curator/art historian's point of view) what Larry Kanter has said. There has been a real change in the ways art historians and curators think about what they can learn from conservators and scientists. The learning has grown exponentially as collaborations have taken shape and been developed. One of the reasons we are sitting around this table today is precisely to respond to that situation and capitalize on it. I am not sure I agree with Philippe (in his very interesting opening remarks) that the general public may not be interested in conservation information. I do think there is evidence of considerable public interest in this kind of material. But if we set aside the general public, I believe that the urgent agenda before us is to try to figure out ways of sharing this kind of information easily and openly with our colleagues – art historians, curators, conservators, and scientists working together across electronic media arrive at a deeper understanding of the works of art. Larry's statement (polemic though it may be) was extremely helpful at this point in the meeting and entirely reasonable.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I may not have been terribly clear. I was trying to make two distinct points. I do believe the public is interested, which is why I said the public loves process. In fact there are some institutions where conservation work has been done publicly, and I think that is also something one could debate enormously. If the work of art is too large to move, then one can make the decision to have the public observe the conservators at work in the galleries, though this has its own pitfalls. My concern was not with their interest. My concern was with the level of knowledge they brought to what was presented to them and the need to really interpret it very carefully, because members of the public could become even more confused about how to apprehend a work of art if that is not done.

GLENN LOWRY: I want to say a word on behalf of the public. I think it is dangerous to presume what the public does or does not know. We all think we know the public, or our publics, but I think it is more complicated than that. And that is not, at the end of the day, the issue we are really addressing at this table. I think the public is one aspect of a broad spectrum of potential users of whatever information we choose to provide or commit ourselves to provide. But I do not think that what the public might not

know should preclude our interest in ensuring that they have access to that information in order to determine for themselves what they might or might not know.

ALAN NEWMAN: I want to join the chorus. I think by publishing the unvarnished truth, you are facilitating peer review (which we see now everywhere on the web in the form of wikis), and also closing the gap – the public education gap. So I am also strongly in favor of what Larry had to say.

JIM CUNO: I agree to a certain extent, and especially in the sense that there might be these two levels of access, one of more general interest that is a highly interpreted end product, and one that is based on deeper research which can be accessed by specialists. But it did make me wonder why we are not considering that similar access should be given to the research that curators do (apart from their collaborations with conservators). That is, when we do exhibitions, at the end of the day people get a catalogue, and we have often talked about giving access to the research that lies behind the catalogue. But I wonder if there are legal, ethical or other constraints about giving that kind of access?

GLENN LOWRY: One more general observation about the problem before us, which is probably not a unique problem and which other disciplines have probably had to grapple with as well. A parallel situation exists in the medical industry, about putting treatment information and records into the public domain, with the issues of confidentiality obviously paramount. But surely we as a society have been there before in terms of trying to put hard information into a domain that allows the largest possible number of potential users access to the data. How they interpret it and what they do with it, of course, is a subsequent issue. But surely access to the knowledge, the hard information, is a desirable goal. The real question, it would seem to me, is a kind of cost/benefit. The resources required to deal with what represents decades and probably in some cases centuries of information, in order to get it into a transferable format is probably a huge cost, and if you were to scale it, maybe not even the most important issue before any one institution's conservation staff or research staff. But that is a very different kind of argument. It is a question of what is most urgent within an institution's

priorities, as opposed to a more idealistic question of what does it actually take to develop the standards of shared information.

SUSAN FOISTER: I wanted to follow up on what Jim Cuno raised. At the National Gallery I do not think we would see it as a problem that anyone should ask to see the notes that a curator made for National Gallery catalogues or exhibitions. It is our policy that when people employed by the Gallery move on, their curatorial notes on all their projects pass to the Gallery and these would go into our records. For example, as a result of our recent cataloguing program, we have had to think quite hard about what we do with the often voluminous notes that we accumulated during the research phase. We have made the decision that those notes should all be held as a record, as part of our archives, which people can consult in the future if they read the catalogues and want to know what went on during the examination or some of the thoughts or notes that the compiler of those catalogues produced.

GLENN LOWRY: Is there a reason though, since most of those are probably captured electronically, for not putting them up on the web immediately?

SUSAN FOISTER: Actually most of them are on paper. And I think very few people (when they were starting their cataloguing project) were even using computers. So that is something that we are addressing at the moment, as part of our examination of electronic records and their management.

MICHAEL BRAND: It would be worth considering the position of smaller museums that are not represented as widely. Some of our goals here are universal and very ambitious, which is wonderful. But if you raise expectations for broader public interest in conservation issues, when there are so many art museums that have small or non-existent conservation departments, it does beg the question of what will happen when they have a very interested public who want to know much more.

TIM WHALEN: Ken, do you want to comment?

KENNETH HAMMA: I have a couple of observations, one of which is to Glenn's point, which I think is critical here. There is a change underway in terms of the way museums make their collections available. In addition to being in the business of collecting and of exhibitions, museums are increasingly in the business of knowledge

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management. A group of institutions like those assembled here can begin to lead the way toward taking on that burden, which may be very useful for smaller institutions, with the expectation that everybody is going to be there eventually. But I think that is the crux of the policy issue. This may involve redistribution of resources within institutions. Our curator of paintings has suggested that the form of the next paintings catalogue might involve the pictures being printed in a "coffee table book," while all of the critical apparatus is available only online where it can be constantly updated and maintained no matter when you look at it. The whole notion of what is a publication is at stake here. And to that end, I want to raise the issue of intellectual property rights. We need to think about those rights in this context, because they are at the heart of how open or how closed access will be in the end.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: Just one more question to think about for possible discussion this afternoon. Would anyone feel able to summarize some of the issues in museums, and particularly conservation documentation, that concern those in European Union countries? I have the general instinct that they are far closer in their thinking to our British colleagues than they may be to us Americans, though I am not certain. I would welcome some information on the subject.

TIM WHALEN: I think that is a good point. I think there will be some research agendas arising out of this meeting, and such a question could be a subject for such research.

AFTERNOON SESSION:

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: Before Tim opens the afternoon session, I want to ask you to begin to consider particular next steps that you would like to see taken following this meeting. Just before we adjourn, I will take a few minutes to encourage the development of some pilot projects that could advance the field of international cooperation in digital documentation. I would not expect fully articulated ideas by the end of today, but will be interested to receive emails from any one of you who is ready to conceptualize an interesting and productive pilot project that we might support.

TIM WHALEN: Thank you, Angelica, for this encouraging signal. We have three big themes to consider this afternoon. The first is “conservation information: institutional values and priorities,” focusing on the degree to which conservation information is valued at an institutional level, and therefore the degree to which it merits becoming a priority for institutional resource allocation and IT schemes. The second topic is the task of making conservation documentation both accessible and meaningful. Assuming that we believe in the intrinsic value of this information (which I believe we do), can we agree on what kind of information would be truly meaningful to which audiences, are we willing to make it accessible and to put the resources behind it to do so? The third topic (before the summaries and the consideration of next steps) would be a consideration of the scope, commitment, and requirements involved in this vast agenda – an opportunity to share some of the practical concerns we have. We have avoided the practical concerns till now, but it will be valuable to hear about them from you. Finally, we will hear brief comments from the directors (or their designates) about what each of you found to be the most salient, important issues to emerge from this meeting, what you might be taking home and suggesting to us as next steps.

So let us begin with institutional values and priorities. I can start with a question: Should conservation and other technical documentation be integrated into the broader context of collection information, or are there specific reasons to treat it differently?

NANCY ASH: As I read through the dossier I noted that virtually everyone is working with a database of some sort. In certain cases conservation information is directly integrated into the collections management software; in others (including ours in Philadelphia) we have constructed our own independent conservation databases that

connect to the broader collections database. As we pursue this, which is the better way to go? I know we did not want to force the conservation information into what proved to be an incompatible collections management format, so we created our own system, which we could mold and shape to our own needs. I can see both sides of this dilemma and I am curious to know what others believe is the right path.

CHARLES SAUMEREZ-SMITH: At the end of the morning I think we all agreed that the exchange of information is a good idea. But once one moves to institutional values and priorities within that consensus, the following question arises: “what priority does one put on digitizing, especially retrospective data which is already essentially available to the relatively small number of specialists using it?” If you put the question like that, it seems to me, against all the other things that institutions are trying to do, digitizing this information is not going to have a very high priority. For me the priority is how one uses the agency of the web to improve public understanding of issues relating to the making of works of art in an efficient way. And that means converting specialized information into publicly usable information. That seems to me to be a much bigger challenge.

HENRY LIE: That is a completely different goal, and also different from what the Freedom of Information Act would require. Basically it sounds more like a publication rather than an effort to share all of your information digitally online.

CHARLES SAUMEREZ-SMITH: I personally think the information act is sort of sideways. I mean, it is something we are dealing with in different ways. Obviously now that digital formats are available, from now on, information should be made accessible. The issue for me, which is a real issue in terms of the corporate planning process, is how much money one spends retrospectively converting files which already exist and are already publicly available freely to anybody who asks to see them. At that point I begin to be a bit more skeptical, just because the usage at the moment is relatively small and those people who want to consult the information can do so. Therefore I would put the resources into the mediation, the publication and the interpretation, trying to make this information which, to a nonspecialist (and I include myself) can be slightly arcane. The idea that things are freely available now is not really true. If you take the way

institutions construct access to this information, if you read the things, yes, they are accessible, but you have to know who to telephone, you have to know what information to ask for, and you have to be the sort of person who can feel comfortable and confident in the environment. And those issues actually act as very severe constraints. Somehow the challenge is to find a more active way of encouraging public interest – (truly public interest, not a specialist’s interest) in the materials and in how works of art are made.

TIM WHALEN: Any thoughts about how one might go about that? Jim?

JIM CUNO: Well, there were various nuggets of information sprinkled through the different documents. One of the most intriguing to me was the National Gallery of London’s information strategy group. As long as Charles is speaking about resources, can he give an account of how the “brief” of that group (to make such choices and priorities) has worked?

CHARLES SAUMEREZ-SMITH: I shall not. In fact, I am not a member.

JILL DUNKERTON: I am a member so I will try to speak to that. In his document, Ashok encapsulated the values that we have tried to set out as “forming a knowledge management strategy.” We talked about knowledge management this morning, and that essentially it involves open broad dissemination. But how one actually takes that forward in practical terms brings you back to reality, and leads to a series of projects which have to be prioritized partly according to available funds. So you go from the grandeur of what you believe is important to the practicalities of what you can actually accomplish each year.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I just want to express a high degree of reassurance and comfort with what Charles just said because, to a certain degree, words are important and you did use in this iteration, the word “converting” the material and the documentation into a publicly useful form. That is very different from what I came away with as a kind of a blanket “feed the programmers all of the material and let us get it out there.” I think it is the conversion into intelligible, interpreted material that to me was the key, and I think that is what I heard you say.

JOCK REYNOLDS: There are a great many of us who subscribe to TMS, and I would like to suggest that rather than creating individual alternatives, we think

collectively about what kinds of fields of information we need that currently do not exist, what systems are useful to the conservators, and then go back to Gallery Systems to demand their help in meeting the need. We at Yale were the first museum to use bar coding for example, and we had to push them to create and deliver this tool to us when we were packing and getting ready to renovate and move. They did so, under pressure. I would be curious to know what other people think about that.

NANCY ASH: I am also curious to know, because we in Philadelphia made an initial attempt with TMS to start a conservation group that would draw up requirements, but it did not go anywhere. That is why I am asking how conservators who have to work directly with TMS are managing. We were not comfortable with it, so we constructed our own database that can import and export information from and to TMS.

TIM WHALEN: Let me mention that following this meeting we have considered convening a group of conservation colleagues who would be interested in meeting with technical people from TMS and/or other vendors to talk about these issues as they affect the field as a whole.

GLENN LOWRY: Let me respond to Nancy's query from a curator's and a director's perspective. If you segregate information, you propagate and continue the idea that somehow there is a necessary division along the continuum of information and knowledge, but I think we are all actually – at least at a professional level – aiming to integrate. TMS may have faults in terms of how information can be loaded into it, but that should be a challenge we put to TMS, rather choosing to perpetuate a system that divides the information and reinforces the sense that somehow conservation knowledge is over here and curatorial knowledge is over there. I am speaking purely on a professional level, not at the level of public access.

ANDREW LINS: We actually did give TMS a chance to do that five years ago and they concluded it was financially not in their best interests. But part of their resistance was due to the way in which records are entered by all of our institutions. Everybody has a slightly different way of entering records, and for a vendor like TMS to customize programs for each and every one of its users was beyond what they could contemplate.

SAM QUIGLEY: I will speak to this issue from the pragmatic or practitioner's point of view, as one who within even my own information technology department sometimes has difficulty keeping us on a unified platform – that is to say, all using the same software. It is highly likely (and dangerous) that you will find yourself with an orphaned database if you have different underlying database tools in operation. So I would urge all of us to try to unify along one platform. In the case of TMS, it is built on a particular software, so if one is to try to build an “add-on” to it, one should choose the very same software, so that the compatibility is there from the start. That is precisely what we are trying to do at the Harvard Art Museums where we are in the process of building a database that will associate directly, inextricably with TMS and yet handle the conservation database and data needs that Henry Lie and his colleagues have identified.

NANCY ASH: And that is essentially what we have done too.

SAM QUIGLEY: That is one way that you can be sure of not ultimately having an orphaned database.

KENNETH HAMMA: Just one general issue. There has never been a group of conservators representing various fields and various institutions putting together a serious requirements document for an application developer like TMS. I think the real issue here is: would institutions like the ones represented today see that as a priority for development, understanding that there are a lot of competing interests for a small amount of development time. In the long run would you see such a document as the next big development priority for the systems we are using? If that were the case, I could see this meeting resulting in a research project to identify the elements that should go into that document and be broadly representative. But I also want to point out that we all keep our records differently. TMS was born here in the Metropolitan Museum, as you all know. As it acquired one new museum client after another, up to about the 460 that it has now, Jay Hoffman will tell you, every one of those museums came to him and said, “oh, but we are special, we are different, we keep our records in this way, or that way, so everything has to be customized for us.” I am not sure to what extent this attitude is a habit of conservation documentation or a requirement.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: Just to remind everybody that TMS still is not an easy system to work with for the majority of museum staff who use it for straightforward collections information – without even embarking on conservation. And that was in fact as much a concern for us as the fact that it seemed to be a very Procrustean bed for conservation information. So in Philadelphia we are enormously interested in increased flexibility, not that the system will be perfect for every kind of information, but that it would provide a public face on one side and at least a fairly commodious ability to receive complex information and on the other, providing indexed cataloguing information. I wonder whether the Metropolitan team could expand a little on the issue of indexing or cataloguing conservation information, as described in their dossier summary.

MARCO LEONA: My feeling as well as that of my colleagues has been that this is something of paramount importance: we need to know, and be able to access easily, what we have done in the past. Not everything about it, but that we have done something (indicating how many items have been radiographed, or that we have pigment data on so many items, for example). We do not yet know where we are going nor what we will undertake, and it is a problem we started considering before this issue of conservation documentation, digitization, sharing, came up. The first thing we did was to send one person who works on the issues of web publishing in the editorial office to interview all the conservators asking what information they produce and what kind of information they want to retrieve. That would probably be the first step in any joint project leading to the creation of a database. What we want to be able to know eventually is what type of analysis or other information we have and where to locate it. We are not in the first instance even as interested in having the material available online, as we are in knowing where it is. So the first step is to establish indexing criteria. But if we have a joint project, the information should flow easily to all museums and all the relevant departments involved.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: In terms of the priorities which fall to me, I have to say in expanding on Ken's earlier comment, that having been, I guess, the pioneers in TMS, it took us years and many millions of dollars to get to the more or less

satisfactory position we are in. We still have curatorial departments that are not yet fully into TMS, and we have 18 different curatorial departments. We are being challenged from a number of points of view. If I were given an amount of money tomorrow and had to begin to address some of the legitimate issues about the digitization of conservation information and getting it online, I would not get stuck on the issue of orphans or non-orphans. If I am told that it will be exceedingly difficult to integrate all of our conservation information in TMS, I would not use it. If another standardized system could, for a reasonable amount of money and a reasonable amount of human and other resources, give us the kind of database that would work in parallel and close to TMS, I think that would be better than throwing up our hands and not doing anything, because it seems just too difficult.

SAM QUIGLEY: I was going to follow up on the importance of knowing what has happened in the past, but I would like to extend that into making sure that it persists in the future as well. Beyond providing a database in which conservation information can be contained, or beyond providing access to it, simply recognizing the fragility of the digital objects is a very important element. Once we are creating the digital asset, we must know that it will be there in the future. And that is a piece of work that needs to be addressed specifically and can be addressed specifically up front, even before one starts talking about this or that kind of database, or the means by which we are going to be provided access to it.

ALAN SHESTACK: I would add that the major issue is not whether it is going to be in TMS or not in TMS, but to be sure that you do not have redundancy. You need to make sure that you carefully plan your authorities so that if TMS is the authority for collection information, and if you are building something parallel to it for conservation, you have a "crosswalk" into TMS.

TIM WHALEN: I think it is clear that we all want to collect information and get it out the door. We are talking about management and working systems within institutions, but we have not touched the issue of making that information public. Is there a consensus about integrating conservation information into whatever in-house systems exist within your respective organizations? Is that implicit? Does everyone agree with it?

HENRY LIE: I think it depends on what you mean by that, because we may or may not. Depending on how you do it, it is more or less integrated. We have been talking about the mechanism but were we talking about presenting (i.e. interpreting) our information, or simply posting it? A lot of what this design does will depend on whether that is a single or a double effort. If we imagine our conservation databases integrated with the parts of TMS that are now available to us simply put on the web, they are not going to be “presentations” in the sense we were discussing. They are simply going to be postings of all of our data. So we are talking about two different efforts. Personally (and I have not yet discussed this internally with my own institutions) I would like, as Marco mentioned, to have just a listing of the contents of our old files going back to 1928, indicating what is there – i.e. what types of analyses were done. No data, but only a record of what has been done. That would not be the most expensive thing in the world to do, and it would give useful basic information.

TIM WHALEN: Like an archival finding aid, a database.

HENRY LIE: Yes. And unlike what Marco was describing, I would like eventually to be able to get images of all the things that are in those files, which is a completely different task, though it also, I believe, would not be that expensive. The expensive thing is presenting the material, because it takes a trained conservator or scientist to go into a file, examine that entire research project or treatment project, to understand it, decide what to present and then make a lot of decisions, and write explanatory captions. It is like creating a catalogue of the objects – though you are doing catalogue work on your conservation files, rather than your objects. That is expensive. And if you want to take that route probably the only way to do it is to choose small parts of your collection over decades and prepare it for public presentation. So it sounds as though we are talking about two very different steps towards progress.

MERV RICHARD: I think it would be important for all of us to look at our existing hard copy conservation files and think about what data will be useful to our colleagues or to the public. Inevitably such material will be addressed differently from institution to institution over time, so at this juncture I think we need to consider potential coordinated efforts (avoiding the creating of digital assets that we cannot share with other

institutions now or in the future). The priority should be to figure out which data might be useful to the Metropolitan, the National Gallery London, the Prado, the Louvre, the Getty, or others. What we post on the web may not all be in the same format. But it should be accessible to a variety of institutions. If everybody works independently, spending resources on their narrowly defined agenda, there will be a lot of wasted effort, because if you cannot exchange information, we all lose. So starting today, I suggest we focus on the sharing of digitized material from our existing hard copy files.

JIM CUNO: It seems as if there is general agreement that we do want to share information publicly, and you suggested, Tim, that we talk about some of the technical issues involved. I have a slightly different though related question, which might be relevant. Henry talked about two steps in the process: the first involving posting of information, the second that of presenting (or interpreting). There are different rhythms or timetables for giving information to the public, whether one is a conservator or a curator, and whether that information is completely confidential or partially confidential when one allows access. We have a case for example, in which research was done by someone at the museum in collaboration with a university-based scientist who wanted to write an article in a scientific journal about the technology process and to use the data as illustration. The curator who had been working with the scientist on the other hand wanted to delay publication for a couple of years until a larger publication would be ready for dissemination. How one manages such conflicting priorities is complicated.

FRANK ZUCCARI: Ken mentioned the dilemma/opportunities of publishing online versus paper. One of the important advantages of online publication is that you can update information easily and do not have to complete the study of an entire collection before you begin disseminating information. Some of the catalogue projects that we have done have extended over two, five, ten years and if you wait until the entire project is ready to publish you are impeding the whole process of sharing information and advancing research.

JIM CUNO: To what extent is there a cultural difference between the scientist who wants to publish immediately and the humanist (curator/art historian)?

MARCO LEONA: Scientists, conservators and art historians – when we work together work at the intersection of the three professions – we should realize that we also potentially have three audiences that sometimes intersect and sometimes diverge. To resolve the question that you raise (not necessarily shared by some of my colleagues) would be that if the scientist publishes his results for a scientific audience in a scientific journal, this does not interfere with the art historian’s prerogative to publish later in an art historical publication. In other words, the single application of the scientific technique goes to *Science* or *Nature*, and the discourse that the art historian makes in the context of many other paintings goes into the catalogue. I am sure that no more than five people would read both publications. But this position is controversial, and I have colleagues at the Met who do not agree.

MARK LEONARD: I think the issue of rights to publication is an enormous issue obviously and every institution wrestled with it during the internal discussions preparatory to this meeting. At the Getty the greatest concern was expressed by the curators, who really wanted to retain the right to be the first to publish the research on objects in their collections. Surprisingly, the scientists were not so concerned with the rights to publish, but they were really concerned about the accuracy and completeness of the information that they did publish. That is a different perspective than ownership of information and a desire to be the first to publish. Personally I have always been very grateful to have somebody else prepare and publish whatever we discover jointly so that I could go on to other things. But it is a complex issue with which we will all be wrestling.

LARRY KANTER: Although Marco and I did not discuss this in advance and I am not here representing the Met, I can only second him. It is an absolute reality that three of us in different disciplines work together and we are not always communicating to a single unified audience, but we feel no conflict of interest in disseminating information in different ways in different venues. Nonetheless all curators react nervously to the phenomenon of scientists or conservators making “para-curatorial” pronouncements based on their research rather than just publishing the research. And I think that that issue is never going to go away no matter what a group of experts like us around the table decides. I only throw this out as a caveat, not as a solution to anything. I did want to say

that when asked the question of how to prioritize the efforts we are discussing on an institutional level, I thought Charles [Saumarez Smith] made a very eloquent case for seeing the whole problem as an educational mission and process. For many of the rest of us, it is more a question of how do you make a passive research tool accessible, which is an altogether different problem. An institution like Yale might think that is a major priority, whereas the National Gallery could not possibly afford to make that a high priority unless they became a national library instead of a national gallery. Marco's solution of putting a super user-friendly card catalogue online is a happy compromise solution, but it is also a first step solution in learning what kinds of information are, in fact, in demand and need to be more accessible than they are in a passive way at present. Any of us can walk to a library and sift through the files. We do not need a book scanned online. But we are very happy if it is available online unless of course no one is ever going to read it. But we will not know that until the card catalogue is available.

MARTHA TEDESCHI: I think that the possibility of publishing more scholarly work (curatorial or conservation work) online is gradually going to affect the degree to which we feel that publications need to be finished works. For example, already in the print world (which is my world), many catalogues raisonnés are now being published online. The wonderful option that the web gives us is to ensure that the catalogue never becomes obsolete; we keep building on it, we keep adding to it. You can think of it in terms of building blocks, it can be constantly updated. And a number of projects like this are underway. So maybe we can get away from the idea that everything has to be finished and polished, before it is made available. We will probably never get to a point where we really feel something is perfect, but is that even necessary anymore?

JACK SOULTANIAN: I want to speak to the issue that Marco and Henry Lie raised, namely the indexing of conservation records so that somewhere for example, there would be a list of the complete files that exist for every object that has been conserved at the Metropolitan Museum. Someone could access these and then call the museum to request access to a given record. Not only would that be more cost effective, but in the end it could be more accurate. For example, even if we put all our records in digital form and they were totally accessible to everyone, who is to say that any one record would be

up-to-date when consulted? Someone might read that record online and think that they had done due diligence and then go ahead and publish whatever they wanted to say. If there were only an index online and they were obliged to call the institution and speak to a conservator about the item involved, they would get the most up-to-date and accurate information available on that work of art.

SUSAN FOISTER: It strikes me that we might be somewhat confused about the idea of “completeness,” because what we are dealing with all the time are individual snapshots – pieces of information compiled a picture at a time, and they are dated records. We have been thinking about these issues at the National Gallery in the context of reviewing all our records – both paper and electronic – to develop our information strategy as a whole. In one of the papers compiled by the team it was noted that we are driven forward by the Freedom of Information Act, and our hope is that when all of the records currently being compiled are on the database we will be able to make them available online in chronological sequence. That means that if you look, as with any other type of document, at a conservation record made in 1996, you will know that it recorded something observed or done that year.

DAVID SAUNDERS: I am going back to something Jack [Soulтанian] said. Concerning the records that are being created at particular times, if there is new information it should go into the system. Not only do we want these records to be available to our colleagues outside our own institutions, and perhaps to a wider public, but we want them for our successors, serving as information for the next generation to work from.

JACK SOULTANIAN: I agree with you completely. Sometimes one does not necessarily put pen to paper every time one has a new notion or interpretation about a work of art. There has to be an impetus to record such changes, and that is why I think it would help develop dialogue if one were obliged to call to ask for information about a given indexed file. We would probably both learn more from the conversation. You have to be careful not to lose that element of communication.

ANDREW LINS: I want to comment on the general point that Susan articulated. It is our perception too that the records, such as we have them, are never 100 percent

complete and never fully accurate. That is part of the reality of all existing conservation records. But the cumulative passing on of records, incomplete and imperfect as they are, is certainly something we are all concerned to foster.

TIM WHALEN: We will now move on to the second issue: making documentation accessible and meaningful, accepting the fact that we have already touched on this and our topics inevitably overlap, let us set aside the institutional and technical issues and focus on what would be the most intellectually significant information to make available and to whom.

MARCO LEONA: Rather than immediately addressing that question, allow me to go back for a moment to the issue of publishing on the web. We should not forget that we also have a commitment to help our discipline to grow by disseminating our material strategically to different audiences. I cannot judge what that might mean for curators and conservators. But as far as scientists are concerned, they must, I feel, keep publishing more and for very specialized audiences of traditional scientists. The web may not be the best outlet for such publishing (as opposed to traditional publications) so we must bear that in mind

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: As all of us at the museum (curators, information technology people, conservators, scientists) were talking about these issues in the past months, some existing projects surfaced in which numbers of scholars and scientists are working together and which could provide a variety of models for us. I think it would help all of us if through such models we could make it clear that the scientific analysis of materials, and curatorial insight about works of art, has enormous value. Obviously these models do exist in published catalogues of our various museum collections, but each of our institutions has a different history. Each of the professions within our institutions have different histories, and different histories of collaboration, or lack thereof, which also vary from generation to generation. This is clearly a more collaboratively minded group than one might have been able to assemble 20 years ago, and it is also a group with a huge array of interests. I also think Maryan Ainsworth's infrared photography project at the Met, or the dendrochronology studies of the wonderful Peter Klein, benefit all of us, and the public could understand those instantly and see what the value of them is.

MARK LEONARD: I think those are absolutely critical points. In some ways the whole issue of meaningfulness and accessibility does get back to some of Philippe's opening comments this morning, as to whether or not integration of conservation information into our public world is yet justified. I think we are at a critical learning phase as to what does work, what does not work, what really illuminates and enhances our public's experiences of the works of art that we are caring for. We have emerged from the back room where conservation was a service department and are now weaving ourselves into the life of the institutions in which we work. That includes weaving ourselves into the public face of our institutions – a world that conservation has not quite mastered yet or fully understood. I think there are those who are much further along than the Getty is. This is also the area where we need the most leadership from our individual institutional directors, curators, and education departments; it is a new role that we are learning.

LESLIE CARLYLE: I would like to add to that because I think what Mark is talking about is finding our voice, and that is something we are developing. We have given a lot of thought to what our conservation records hold and how difficult it is for people to access that information. The primary reason, I think, is that as a profession we have tried to make our records as objective as possible, and they often make very dry reading because our primary audience is the colleagues who will come after us. Making such records available to the public is a new way for us to think about the material and what we want to tell people. This is going to change the way we approach the writing of our records and the level of interpretation that we develop.

ALISON GILCHREST: Anne's comment made me think that we can probably learn from other projects going on right now that make vast numbers of documents available to the public. The Archives of American Art, for example, is a vast repository which has finding aids listing their holdings. This does not give you a transcript of a document but it lets you know that it exists and enables you to gain access to it more quickly. That makes me wonder whether it might make sense to create some kind of shared archive of what exists in the way of documentation on a range of subjects, so if I am working on Winslow Homer, I could go to the shared site and find out which

institutions have done research on Winslow Homer and then go directly to the professional files on my artist. We do not necessarily have to reinvent the wheel, or at least we can probably learn from some existing projects.

JIM CODDINGTON: One existing project that is probably a pretty useful model is INCA, which is accumulating information from the international community of conservators on contemporary art. INCA tries to set standards for artists' interviews, so there is a fairly common thread to the information.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: But I would like to hear what you mean by "interpretation."

LESLIE CARLYLE: I did not realize I was waving a red flag there.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: Directors are ex-curators.

LESLIE CARLYLE: I meant "interpretation" in terms of the way we express ourselves about what we are seeing, in terms of the information that we are gathering. Rather than just giving a list of pigments and other media that were identified, for example, we would go the next step and say, "the artist would have chosen that pigment for this reason: cerulean blue looked a certain way under gas light and had a certain color that it would not have under other light." I am thinking about what lies beneath the materials and I do not think I meant to encroach on an area where the curator should lead.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: Okay. I am glad for the explanation. And I am sure everybody understands that a question like this posed by me is based on my having spent 25 years with two very senior paintings conservators who acted most of the time *in loco curator*: John Brealy and Hubert von Sonnenberg.

LARRY KANTER: The interpretation of materials and technique is an enormously valuable tool that has been offered to people outside the conservation world and outside the scientific world, but it is very much to be hoped that it will not supersede the raw data in any circumstance, because just as with any other kind of information, what I as a researcher do not want is anyone else's opinion and conclusions. What I want is the raw material that I can look at and sift through to see if there is not another way to shake it all up and find what somebody else missed. That is where curators and conservators become nervous in each other's company, each trying to second-guess what

the other one did not understand about what I am interested in. And that will not go away, but in effect productively it could lead to the only kind of happy collaboration amongst us, but only when raw data is not suppressed or overinterpreted, so to speak.

LESLIE CARLYLE: Well, actually, the example I gave was really very specific because it was not an opinion issue. It was about factual information from the past about how colors were used and how people perceived colors at the time under different light conditions. So I am not talking about opinions that are unsubstantiated, but about factors that have been researched by probing into the materials and techniques at a much deeper level.

LARRY KANTER: Those problems (as a curator) will be borne, I would say. But I am not interested in that. I want to know exactly how much chromium blue (or whatever it was) was found for a different reason. If that information will not be available because it was not of interest to what you are proposing, it is as well as lost.

ANTONY GRIFFITHS: The question of interpretation of information is rather complicated. At the moment we have a Michelangelo exhibition on and the type of information in our catalogue is very, very different from the type of information that was in Wilde's 1953 catalogue, which is full of highly abstruse references to periodicals and other things which you are not going to look up unless you are a specialist. All of that has been stripped out from what we put in front of the public now. When we put our database on the web, one of the things that frightens me the most is that the typical curatorial comment is going to be entirely incomprehensible for the public. But to rewrite these records in such a way as to be accessible would be overwhelming since we have several hundred thousand records now.

TIM WHALEN: Any other comment or reflections on that? It is getting a little dangerous there.

MARCO LEONA: I think that we have to agree on the meaning of words. We just had an example right here when we were talking about "raw data" and "interpretation." I assume that when Larry says "raw data," he wants me to say it is ultramarine. What I mean by "raw data" is the two rows of numbers that make me think that it is ultramarine. And my "interpretation" is that these numbers mean ultramarine. If

I want to say it is ultramarine because I really like it much better than green, then I am playing with all the dangers. If we disseminate material to an audience that includes the larger public, educators or colleagues with whom we want to share, we will have to identify the audiences carefully and we cannot compartmentalize information without identifying who is going to need what.

JOCK REYNOLDS: If we really want to educate the public in an interesting way, either the general public or young learners in universities and colleges, we do want to have projects that can be on the net. And to some degree based on the conversations we are having, they should be rich collaborations between conservators and curators, and some of these projects could be very wonderfully presented on the web in ways quite different from the traditional modes of presentation in our galleries. For example, high-resolution digital photographs can easily be produced in high magnification showing us things that we cannot see with the naked eye. These are of great interest to the general public. I believe it would be a great mistake to destroy the possibility of going back into the deeper records, and having access to methodologies and techniques of earlier times as well as access to mistakes we made. We really need that kind of retrospective capacity if we are going to talk about the field of conservation, how it is evolving, and what we believe we are doing better. Moreover, the fact that what we do now is, in most cases, completely reversible is itself a new phenomenon.

KENNETH HAMMA: I think that is absolutely right. If you can think of these decisions in a sequence where making the information available does not mean you resolve all of the complexities, but you simply make it accessible, that is perfectly appropriate. Making it meaningful (fully explained) is the second choice that Charles pointed to earlier and that is where a larger investment may be necessary. We would not undertake collaborative and interpretive efforts if the information were not accessible to begin with. So you have to think of these as two separate steps. Providing access is one thing and may cost \$10. Providing meaningful interpretation is another thing, which you can choose or not choose to do, and may cost \$50.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: Yes. I would add to what Ken just said by saying there are also distinctions that can be made by this group in follow-up initiatives between

what you do in the way of retrospective digitizing of earlier records, and what you do going forward. If we are going to think about next steps, it would be perfectly legitimate and plausible to conclude that ultimately we want to go the retrospective route, but since that will be overwhelmingly costly, we are not sure how we are going to accomplish it. So initially we will be focusing on making current and future documentation accessible. We might then make a further distinction between what is to be accessible to our professional colleagues: that is, to my mind, our first priority. And making the material accessible to the public is a secondary priority. It would be plausible and legitimate, I think, to make these kinds of distinctions between what we can do in the immediate future and what we would ultimately like to do but does not seem immediately feasible or affordable.

CHARLES SAUMEREZ-SMITH: I would like to make one clarification of what was said before. I have been listening to the discussion with great interest. If I take, as an example, the Ford Theatre. In theory you could retrospectively convert all the conservation information, which probably is voluminous, but it would be expensive. As a user, a student or a member of the public, however, I would like to be able to get on the web information about the ways in which the Ford Theatre has been treated in order to help me to understand and interpret its history. The issue is the relative cost. And I suspect the retrospective exploration would be hugely expensive, whereas the second option seems to me intellectually more interesting and challenging, and would take us forward into using the web in an interesting way.

ANDREW LINS: I wanted to go back to something that Angelica said about the urgencies of conversions for materials that could be accessible in the future. One of the things that I think everybody here must face is that a certain proportion of our records are ephemeral and some of them are disappearing rather rapidly, for example color photographs, transparencies, and radiography. And if those are not converted soon, there will be no records to share.

TIM WHALEN: One of the things we have not focused on in this particular conversation is making information accessible and meaningful to the public. And I

wonder if we could spend some time focusing on what that might look like in the public realm.

[?]: I have a question for my colleagues at the Met regarding that. We have skirted around the museum education field and you have mentioned it a number of times in dealing with interpretation. But in your recent resubmission for the dossier you alluded to a crosswalk between the time lines of our history, (your major web educational project) and conservation information. I was wondering if you could amplify that, and explain how you have discussed that internally at the museum.

JACK SOULTANIAN: Actually, conservation is a new entrant into the ideas of the time line. We just had a meeting with Philippe last week, which included conservation for the first time. Now that the time line for our history is fairly far along historically, the thought is to add conservation information. While we understand that we could not create a parallel time line of our history, that is, we cannot create a time line of technology or art materials or inks, we could include essays written by members of the conservation staff on specific subjects. For example, I could write on the techniques of gilding Medieval polychrome sculpture, Marco could talk about an analytical method, I know Philippe was interested in casting technology and these kinds of things. And this information could be very object based. A conservator, for example, could write on a specific work of art that is on the time line or could choose to add one, describing the techniques of its manufacture or a technical aspect that she/he finds particularly revealing about that work of art.

MARCO LEONA: This is an example I wanted to bring up in response to Charles' observation on education and then dissemination to the public. The time line is probably one of the most successful educational pieces at the Met. If you look at the sheer numbers of hits, we get 4 million a year, which is pretty much in the same range as visitors walking into the physical building. Even though the curators, who are the authors of most of the entries, would probably not consider their own entries as of a high academic level (because they have to be shrunk down to 1,500 to 2000 words with very good footnotes and bibliographies), it is an immensely helpful resource for high school and college students, which is our next generation of patrons. Likewise, conservation

articles and conservation essays would be put up. There would be edited essays on topics that are discussed among educators, curators and conservators. Both conservation and curatorial writing is on a volunteer basis, so if you wanted to see a way to enhance this too, you could find ways to increase the number of essays that get entered. But this is a strong effort to make information accessible and meaningful to the wide public. The contributions are all edited, however, not raw data.

GLENN LOWRY: I want to explore a little bit the distinction between accessible and meaningful. I do not think anyone around this table would dispute that putting meaningful information, interpreted information, about works of art on the web or in any other form of public access is something that is inherent in our mission, and to the degree that we can do it, we will do it. It seems to me there can be hardly any debate about that. The question that is more interesting and perhaps more sensitive is the one about accessibility of less resolved interpretation. And I wonder whether there is an equivalent on the conservation side to the kind of tombstone information that we all provide as basic information on the label: dates of the artist, the material, support, whatever we might each believe is basic tombstone information. There may well be some equivalent body of information in conservation: "received 22 treatments." I do not want to presume what could be meaningful or interesting to a public. But it seems to me that somewhere between just dumping data onto a site and the fully resolved essay on meaning is a body of information that might be pertinent and useful and that it may not be that difficult to achieve.

ALAN SHESTACK: I think that Glenn's point is very interesting, because I have been thinking about parallels, and I thought about the Visual Resources Association and what is called the "VRA core." These are visual resource professionals who have worked for a number of years to get to the point where there was a commonality on some basic core information that they could share across institutions. It seems to me that we are now at the point where they were a few years ago, and it might be very interesting to move toward that end, as Glenn is suggesting.

JIM CUNO: I agree with Glenn. We have spent a lot of time talking about meaningful interpretation, and whether the information should be raw or cooked for

dissemination. Getting it to the public is one thing, getting it to the research community is another. The next generation would be the capacity to merge the two electronically into a hand-held device. MoMA and other places are taking great strides with this new technology that enables one to download information in the actual presence of the object, so that in addition to the printed label on the wall, the electronic data (in some cooked form) can be presented in the galleries. We seem to want to convey information to the public without charge that we assume they might want, but many of us will charge the public for what they want most, which is a reproduction of the picture to take home, a postcard for example.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: In many ways I think we have all found that for the general, intelligent, museum-going public, just that "tombstone" information, which is the traditional curatorial registrarial information, is actually not what stimulates people to get deeper into the object. I have a hard time imagining precisely what that would be in terms of conservation documentation. But what triggers people's excitement is a few really amazingly well-chosen phrases by a conservator, a curator, or an educator, about how one might look at the picture or the object and what one might find there. Such conservation information, conservation wisdom (both the raw data and the very cooked) provides hugely exciting ways to get into works of art. And I think for the public accessibility, it is this distillation of ways to get into a work of art which is enormously valuable and exciting. It is very hard to do. What we found hardest when we were reinstalling 80 galleries of European art was to distill down to maybe four sentences, something about the work of art that would not be the same something about each work of art: who owned it or what it was made of. It was really something that got you into it. And our education department was brilliant at forcing everybody involved to do that (Carl Strehlke was one of the major players, as were conservation colleagues). That seems to be another kind of challenge, one we are all engaged in one way or the other.

GLENN LOWRY: Can I just quickly respond to that? I did not mean information that one would necessarily post on the label in the gallery. I was really talking about electronic information, where the density of what can be accumulated for an object is greater and where one can navigate it more easily. In the same way, none of us

needed the issue of Nazi looted art to highlight the significance of provenance, since anyone who is trained as a curator or an art historian begins the study of any object by endeavoring to look at provenance. There is no doubt that provenance is something that is interesting to the public, although it is unlikely that anybody knows who any of the individuals cited on a long list of owners is: it is more of a record. So, when I mentioned the treatment of a work of art twenty-two times, I was only using that as an example stating clearly that what you are looking at has been treated over time, that it does not exist the way it does now in some absolute way. And I think there is a legitimacy to acknowledging that.

MICHAEL BRAND: I would like to get back to a more basic question, which is that the public literally do not know what they are missing. If you polled the general public and asked “what would you most like to find out of a Getty Museum file,” it would probably be how much it cost. You would prefer it if they had other questions. But I thought Glenn’s earlier analogy to medical issues was interesting, because I understand that doctors are now getting surprised when people come in and say, “I think I have a certain condition and I would like to discuss three possible treatments with you.” They are not asking those questions because they have had unlimited access to medical files. Rather, they are going to medical Web sites which are giving them some really interesting information about things they never used to know about. Perhaps it would be great if members of the public did walk in more often and asked, “I would like to see the cleaned-state photo of this particular painting.” After all, they are used to seeing that kind of before and after condition in architecture – a building in poor condition and then coming back later on, seeing it fixed up. I think that at a pretty basic level you can incite people to a broader field of knowledge, depending on what information you provide.

PATRICIA GARLAND: My comments go back to what Anne was saying. The most important thing here is to get back to the question of what is conservation information, and to my mind the most important information is the information about the work itself, namely, how is it made. Not to say that we should be keeping conservation treatment hidden, but I have trouble understanding the benefit of knowing that an object has been worked on 20 or 22 times. This discussion of labels is also interesting. Within

our institution some people have wanted to put up a stripped-state photograph next to an object that has recently been treated, but our view has been that the visitor is then going to spend time trying to evaluate how good our retouching is, which is really beside the point if we want them to take in the work of art itself. That is not to say that there are no good reasons to see stripped-state photographs. But while I agree with the spirit of sharing all this information, I do not think we should be bombarding the public with more than they want to know. Whatever we do, we need to give them the option to just look at the object and appreciate it without the information if that is what they choose to do. However we construct our communication, it needs to be in a layered fashion, just as you can walk through a gallery and choose either to use an audio guide or go without. If there are levels of detail offered on the audio guide, you can pick which level will satisfy you. But you can also choose to reject the technology altogether.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I think this has been a very interesting discussion. It touches on something I mentioned very briefly in my opening remarks, namely the issue of labels, which to me is a very important one. I realize that it is not high tech, but after all, as art museums, the aesthetic dimension of a work of art, the contribution of an artist and how we look at the work is absolutely key. I think that if we fail to put an explanatory label on a Gauguin landscape which has no middle ground because the greens have oxidized, that is to cheat the public. They need the information to understand that this is not the way the picture was conceived by the artist. And a simple sentence saying, "middle ground would have given you greater depth had the greens not oxidized," would be important. A classical sculpture that is 80 percent restored, with positions of the arms and head altered and not at all as the ancient artist envisaged, must be clearly labeled as such and this would be far more fundamental than any scientific information. Conservators could work very closely with curators on how to edit such labels, and the results would be critical to how the innocent and even not so innocent visitor is going to apprehend a work of art. I am not disagreeing with anyone. Just expanding on something that I believe to be fundamental. We try to do this as much as possible, but we have a lot of labels to write and they are not all there yet. Different departments have different priorities.

MERV RICHARD: My comment is more of an observation and it is not even directed at what Philippe is saying. In this room we have people representing a relatively small number of institutions in the scheme of things, but yet within these institutions we all have various priorities. If we want to be a little more specific about the primary objective of a conservation documentation agenda, these would be my priorities: First, to ensure the long-term preservation of the record (an archivist's issue, if you like). Second, try to facilitate the future use of these records. I would include those that we create from now on as well as, to some degree, those that already exist. Third would be making the records available to my colleagues. Fourth, availability of the records to the public. Those would be my personal priorities. But if we conclude that our first obligation is to reach the public, then we should focus on the interpretation that a curator or an education specialist might give to make each work easily accessible to the public as soon as possible.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I agree 100 percent with everything you said, and we will soon begin to know whether everybody else does. Your priorities actually will be my priorities. The issue of the label is, frankly, an ancillary issue. It is a very important issue, but it is ancillary to what we are doing here. We could do it without spending millions of dollars on digitizing records. It was the educator in me that led me to speak of it.

MARK LEONARD: Responding to Merv, I would argue for an approach that was a little less linear in terms of prioritization. I would rather go to my director and curators with an overarching set of goals and priorities for the institution, in terms of what we do with our collections, and explain how my work fits into that. So even though it is extremely important to me that the records are preserved forever, that would be hard to sell. But if I can say that I need to preserve these forever because it meets the overarching goal of the institution, then I can get some support and commitment.

JIM CUNO: Is it not the value of the technology that, while it may be linear, it is not sequential? The data gets entered. But you do not have to access it sequentially or enter it sequentially. It can be extracted in different ways, according to need.

KENNETH HAMMA: That is true. And the interesting thing is that you can look at the steps that Merv outlined (or a number of other things that people have brought up) and rather than looking at them as sequential steps in the project, you could look at them as layers of value that are added to the institution based on your use of that information. I would like to add one more thing which no one has brought up. Making this kind of information available, revealing this aspect of what museums do, adds to the public good, reinforcing some of the long-term value that museums are contributing for future generations.

TIM WHALEN: We will now move on to the next section of the agenda.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: I am not sure whether this comment belongs in this section, but we were talking at lunch about a general public perception that museums represent a certain kind of perfection. Part of our mission has to be to make sure people are aware that works of art, like all of us, age. They are fragile and have been subject to a certain amount of abuse over time, sometimes maybe even in our own institutions, and I think one of the reasons this conversation can be difficult at times is if we think *we* are perfectionists, conservators and conservation scientists are the real perfectionists.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: Just a closing comment on accessible and meaningful. I think one of the extraordinary contributions that was made in that realm in the last decade and a half are the exhibitions that the National Gallery in London has done on *Art in the Making*. I do not know how many of you have spent time watching the public as they go through those exhibitions. I did it with three, and it was amazing to see how focused and fascinated people were in learning about how the works of art were made and what has happened to them over time. One saw people talking to one another, arguing, looking, reading the wall text, looking at the pictures, and then going to the sales desk and buying a postcard of a cross-section. That postcard has apparently sold more than any other postcard in the National Gallery's history, Neil MacGregor told me about five years ago. This is amazing, and a real example of accessibility and meaning, in which major works of art became comprehensible on a new level to large numbers of members of the public. Now we need to move on to questions of scope, commitment, and the problems ahead.

TIM WHALEN: First let us consider some of the practical questions, so I open the table to comments.

MARCO LEONA: I have a question for the experts in databases and information management at the table. Mention has been made of the sequential, the linear, or not so linear, not so sequential aspects of the task at hand. It is my understanding that for a database to really work, you have to know from the beginning what you want it to do and how you are going to enter information. So we should be clear about whether that is the case or not.

[?]: I will take a shot at that and I will try to tie it back into something that Ken and Merv had previously mentioned. Definitely one needs to know what one is trying to accomplish, and especially when confronted with a multiplicity of audiences, one needs to be very clear about those questions that they may or may not be asking. The idea of convening a task force in the wake of this meeting in which we tried to identify a small subset of questions for resource discovery, might be a logical, feasible and highly productive first step, totally consistent with trying to scope out the nature of what could become a shared database or a system that would be available to the broad public. So rather than just being paralyzed at the moment of inception, trying to think of all of the possible questions that could be asked, we could focus with a study group, to try to determine a reasonable subset of the major questions and then go ahead from there.

HENRY LIE: I have a recommendation that arises out of the last session. It would be important, I think, for all of us who are beginning to enter data and other information into databases, to create abstracts, because the idea of going back retroactively and then making a synopsis later is a lot more daunting after many years have passed. It would be pretty easy to do it as we go along.

[?]: Could I follow up on that? Henry, what are the elements that one would want to include in such abstracts? We should start implementing them from now on, as we create such documents, so that we do not fall further behind. We will have to coordinate between what documentation we have inherited and what we want to document or abstract in the future.

ALAN NEWMAN: The retrospective data entry does not necessarily have to be complete right away. It can be prioritized project by project, in connection with exhibition work and whatever other institutional priorities you have. The important thing is to define your structure, to have an inventory of all your intellectual assets, to build something that works and that can be expanded.

KENNETH HAMMA: In the early days of developing collection management systems the Getty spent a lot of money and a lot of effort, but then they discarded what they had done because they did not have discussions like this up front. It is entirely plausible that one can come up with what you refer to as a data dictionary, and one can think of that data model or data dictionary existing separate from any other application that would build it or publish from it. That model would then become the real added value, the thing that we share, regardless of which collection management system you are using to put information in or publishing to take it out. But I think simply it became critical to get to the point where you could have people sit around the table and discuss the issues. In the early eighties when we were all looking at early collection management systems, we did not do that. We assumed everybody had to have the same application: there would be one collection management system and everybody would use it, and that is how we would solve the issues. That kind of outside wrapper approach really does not work, as we discovered.

DAN KUSHEL: In conservation education we face the issue of preparing future conservators to enter this world of digital documentation, which is far more complex than the old way. There is a lot of new material and processes involved: processing of images, processing of the data, putting it into databases, dealing with the color management, all of which constitutes a remarkably deep, new mode of information that has to fit into a tightly constrained curriculum. This is very difficult to accomplish while making sure that our students are prepared to be your new staff as attrition occurs. I am developing curricula on the fly, trying to learn the material myself well enough to develop the curriculum and assess what kind of information the students will need in order to survive well and do the best job when they get out into the world. We took account of small museums, where you may not have a photographer, since most of our students do not end

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up in major institutions. They take positions in smaller institutions where they may be the only conservator, responsible for creating images and creating documents, cataloguing them and learning how to do archival management of digital records. All of that presents extraordinarily difficult challenges for us. I think maybe it is going to work out. Maybe in ten years, things will be on a much more even keel than they are now and it will be a lot easier for us to deal with it. But the problem now is that the time we put into it takes away from the time of training students to do the other work of a conservator – which is not dealing with the virtual artifact but with the real artifact, learning how to mend a tear, learning to identify the right adhesive, and learning the science. So it is a very complex problem. I hope that this meeting will help to reduce the level of volatility in the future. Once things settle down, it will make our job a lot easier and allow me to be a lot more effective in training future conservators.

MARK LEONARD: Just on the issue of commitment and requirements, it seems clear that conservators are naturally cautious about all of this digital information. There needs to be a commitment and requirement to convince us that it is in fact archival information. As some people have mentioned today, hard copies are still regarded as the archival standard in their institution. We are all getting on this train, going into the digital realm and still each institution has a different sense of what an archival document is. There are very many different standards. Our IT departments are not necessarily aligned with other IT departments about digital standards. So we should work towards clearer definitions.

TIM WHALEN: I will now ask each of the directors to offer a comment on what they have learned from this meeting.

MICHAEL BRAND: I should start by saying that at the Getty we have not reached full consensus, though I should not speak for everyone here, because, as you know, Tim is Director of the Getty Conservation Institute and Ken works with the Getty Trust. We are still in the midst of constructive internal discussions, but what I can say is that the Getty Museum is by nature a collaborative institution and an educational institution, so those are very important points for us as we move forward. The ideas expressed about archiving and the conservation of actual data are really important. If we

lose some of that material, nothing else will really matter. Other priorities and objectives are professional sharing of information and giving meaningful public access, but I would not necessarily put the professional sharing very far ahead of meaningful public access (or even ahead at all). That would be for a number of reasons, one of which is something we have not discussed here – namely our responsibility to share information with the so-called source countries as well. In some of those countries there would not actually be a distinction between professional colleagues and the interested general public. You also asked us for some ideas about future action: I am sure that there will be intense and productive inter- and cross-institutional discussion; but I am also thinking about our publications program, and would like to explore ways in which some of this information about conservation could be brought into a more regular publication program, that might reach a broader audience. Certainly we would be interested in talking to colleagues at other institutions about indexing some of the information we already have in our museum conservation department at GCI and elsewhere at the Getty. Finally, as we prepare for what undoubtedly will be broad access to information, we should make sure that our Web site will be not only a research tool, but a way to inform our public about things they do not know, to make them more curious as users of information that our museum (and indeed all museums) have. The meeting was very interesting.

JIM CUNO: As we deal with existing material retroactively, providing an index and finding aids seems to make perfect sense. Incrementally one will make progress on that front. Proactively, it seems urgent that we determine the protocols by which to enter and access the digital information. If there is any way to structure the information in such a way that it could be retrieved equally easily by the general public and the professional audience that would be the best solution. The other priority is to build a consensus in-house as to the importance of this whole agenda. Finally, I hope that there will soon be shared sites developed between us on which collaborative exhibitions or research projects will evolve. Rather than thinking of this kind of information as locally owned I see us working toward a model of open ownership.

ANTONY GRIFFITHS: It was a great pleasure to be representing the director of the British Museum. At least the real director has made a clear statement about what the

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museum's position is. There is no problem that we see in putting this information out for public use. Ninety percent of the digital conservation records at the British Museum currently have no more than 10 to 20 words in them. So we are talking about a very small number of files which actually have serious content in them. Now, we and the London National Gallery are very much at opposite extremes with 2-1/2 thousand objects there, 7-1/2 million here. I would like to say a bit more about the Merlin background, because I feel, having read the dossier, that you may all be getting the rather wrong idea, thinking that we have a wonderful product ready to go forward. The truth of the matter is that the Merlin project was a desperate attempt to try to master a completely unmanageable situation. Instead of being on top of things, I feel that we are hanging on by our fingernails. The 250 years of collecting has produced 250 years of inventories which may or may not bear any link to the objects we have in our cupboards. The Merlin project started as an attempt to try to get on top of the old inventories and match them up with the objects that we have. That was 20 years ago. We have now got one-and-a-half million entries on the system and two-and-a-half million objects, which actually sounds wonderful until you actually start looking at them. Some of the records are extremely sparse, some are completely misleading, and some are very good. This has been extended across a half million records. When it comes to actually putting this information in, of course a huge amount has just been transcribed by teams hired for whatever purpose. The amount of data which has been reviewed by curators is very, very small. The number of records that contain anything like serious information is even smaller. What we are trying to do in the Mellon project is simply to get the process to the next stage, putting in a photograph if we have one, and label or catalogue copy if there is any. It is just really transfer of information. When we get it out, I think we are all absolutely terrified what is going to happen next because most of those entries will mean very little to most of the public. But it will tell you that things are there. With 50,000 objects in our galleries, there is huge ignorance about what is in the collection. Not many people know that we have got 17,000 textiles. But at least it will open that up. What it might produce is 5,000 e-mails a day from people saying that they would like more information. I am hoping that might generate more curatorial time devoted to improving this kind of

information, instead of the activities curators now engage in (an infinite number of exhibitions, infinite number of research projects, and not much in the way of looking at collections). So there is, if you like, a longer-term strategy here to try to redirect curatorial work. But I do wish to stress that this is a real leap in the dark. Many of my colleagues are very frightened about what might happen when the database goes live, and I sometimes have very sleepless nights about that.

TOM LENTZ: I think that what is on the mind of all directors in this room is resources. A couple of people touched on this issue. We all know that from a financial point of view this agenda will involve a huge climb. But I also worry about the impact of increased access and dissemination of conservation information on our human resources. The core mission of our conservation laboratories is treatment and research on the collections. Harvard is not like some of the giants in this room, but we do not have a small collection, and I know that we have substantial backlogs in any number of curatorial areas. So that is very much on my mind. Michael Brand also mentioned source countries, and I think it is going to be of critical importance, before we get too far down the road, to have other cultural areas and institutions involved in this conversation: whether it is China or Japan or the Middle East or Africa or Latin America, they should all be at this table. We represent the wealthy institutions with large resources, and with the right inclinations. But it would be most unfortunate if these others were not brought into the conversation at an appropriate moment, whatever that moment is.

In terms of the Harvard University Art Museums, this agenda is clearly going to be a priority. We are relatively small compared to everyone in the room, but given the size of our information technology department, our conservation laboratory, our amazingly large curatorial staff (all of which work in close synergy), and if you add to that the fact that we work in an academic environment where access and dissemination of material is not simply an expectation, but a demand, we have no choice. Our problem is going to be: How do we balance this with our other responsibilities. It is going to be the same for everyone, but our particular problem is that we are about to embark on an urgent renovation/expansion project. If we do not fix our buildings, there will be nothing left for us to do. The last thing I want to say is that the Straus Center at Harvard has on staff two

PhD art historians who are not members of the curatorial staff, even though they carry that title. Their arena of operation is the conservation laboratory, and their focus is on materials and techniques. Their deep knowledge of art history, conservation and science has in a forceful way driven conservation information and documentation into all of our curatorial work and also into our publications. We have my predecessor, Jim Cuno, to thank for these positions and want to draw attention to the impact they are having.

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I think possibly the most important thing I take away today, and that is very much the inspiration of Angelica, is the presence of directors here. I think the very fact that we have participated with our colleagues from the conservation and scientific group puts us on the verge, whether we want it or not, of agreeing that our priorities are their priorities, and these could conceivably and probably should become institutional priorities. What is left really is for us to come up with the will and the resources in order to begin the process. Listening to everybody around the table I hear basically tremendous commonality in goals. There may be differentiations in methodology, but essentially I think we all have the same goal. As far as I see it, the way to begin the process is to follow the old adage – it is not an English one – “you build a nest twig by twig.” This is essentially how I think we will need to look at what we have to do. Because ultimately it is British pounds and American dollars that will compel us to set a certain level of priorities. And were we in the ideal world of being handed a certain sum of money, then we would make the decision that has to be made, choosing what is a luxury and what is essential, what is a pipe dream and what is readily achievable. I come away with the sense that this is a discourse that should not end at 4:00 p.m. today, and that it will continue in my institution. We are far behind any of you, not out of lack of willingness, but simply out of the complexity, size, and – rather like the British Museum – the millions of objects we have in many different departments where many different languages are spoken.

GLENN LOWRY: Let me add my words of appreciation to Angelica. By convening this group and, in fact, at least within our institution, stimulating a very healthy debate about critical issues in conservation, you have already established an important dialogue that cannot be stopped, it will continue, and that is perhaps as much as

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one could ever hope to initiate. And to Philippe, not just for the hospitality today, but for the framing of the questions with which the morning began. These have perhaps in part become lost as the conversation proceeded, but I think you shaped correctly the spectrum of problems or issues before us. I just want to touch on a couple of them, some of which have already been identified. In terms of access, I think it really is important (at least within the American context where private funding is going to always play such an important role), to make a distinction between professional access and public access, and to tackle them perhaps simultaneously, but to recognize that they raise specific sets of independent issues. I think if nothing else, the ongoing conversations that are already taking place among many of the conservators around this table and elsewhere might lead to the establishment of a series of protocols that are not about money; they are about practice. We already have electronic means at our disposal because I suspect everyone here has both a Web site and some form of database already in use – in many cases a common database that could lead to some very practical professional sharing of information. That is not about money, or not largely about money. It is about the way in which professionals communicate to each other. On the public side, I do think ultimately it is about money, as well as the allocation of time and energy, because the issues involved there are more complex. I would argue that the level of transparency that we as public institutions in this country should endorse is not simply a matter of practice, but ultimately it is a matter of survival. We have an opportunity before us to actually get out in front of public interest and public demand and demonstrate a willingness to make our collections as wholly visible, or invisible in some cases, as possible. But there is only a finite amount of time and energy in any one institution and resources to support it. So one of the issues we did not talk about today, but which I think does have to be addressed in the broader context, is: in a spectrum of tasks that have to be undertaken at the conservation level, where does the public sharing of information – not the professional sharing of information – fall? In our institution, we are still struggling to do what Jim Coddington often calls triage, dealing with the day-to-day conservation of objects. And as we set priorities in the conservation documentation arena, we should never lose sight

of the fact that all of this data is only meaningful as a result of that day-to-day work, in order to make sure that we keep all of these forces in some kind of appropriate balance.

CHARLES SAUMEREZ-SMITH: As Antony [Griffiths] has aptly pointed out, we have a relatively small collection which is being very intensely studied, and we do have a tradition of doing *Art-in-the-Making* exhibitions, which incorporate research undertaken in collaboration by art historians, conservators, and scientists. I would volunteer (and I would not do so without having consulted with my colleagues) that we would be interested in undertaking a pilot project in which we would take the material we have in a selected group of our dossiers, decide what could usefully be made available to the public, and to the extent possible make it user friendly. I think Jim Cuno's useful distinction between "posting" and "presenting" may be a forced dichotomy, because by posting it, you do present it, you make it more available and you encourage public usage. By undertaking a pilot project you could monitor how much use was actually made of it and how much you encouraged and fostered public interest in this conservation area. As I have already said during the course of the day, I feel very strongly that ultimately our objective should be to try to encourage people really to understand and take an interest in the construction of a work.

RUSTY POWELL: Thank you, Angelica, for arranging this meeting, and Philippe for your hospitality. We would be very interested in participating in a pilot project. I am not sure how such a pilot project would be undertaken (whether by all the museums around this table or a smaller number). But I think it would be useful to integrate one or two smaller institutions into the process because they do have a completely different and in many ways much more complicated situation. We have just signed our contract with TMS and as of next week, we are moving forward with them. So this was an opportunity to move away from our CNS system which we had cherished for many, many years, but which technology no longer services. It is an important moment because we now keep all of our records and images in digital form. What do we do in the way of retrospective digitization of our past records? Like the National Gallery in London, we have, compared to the Met, a relatively small collection, so it may be an easier thing for us to get our arms around, than it would be for the Met. But we will have

to make some tough decisions about costs and priorities. I want to thank you all for the dialogue, which has been both interesting and very instructive.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: One thing we must not forget, as we focus very hard on conservation and conservation science information, is that there is just as much information in our curatorial files. We, like all of you, are immensely dedicated to the ever deeper interaction between curatorial and conservation information projects. But I am just as worried about curatorial files as I am about conservation files. We would love to help think about model projects of various kinds. Perhaps we could be useful to some of the new TMS users in sharing some of our thinking on the conservation side, because, helping to move the community towards greater flexibility would probably help us all. In addition, I am particularly interested – as I think we all are – in the international ramifications of this discussion beyond the U.S. and the UK. I think we have a lot to learn from people in other countries both as regards their needs, the needs of their public and also the needs of their professionals. So it could be immensely productive to hold the next meeting with a different set of countries represented. I, too, would agree that we cannot make the choice between public and professional access to this material. We have to do both to the degree and at the pace that we are able to do it. If we let the public access aspect fall behind while we think about the backlog (the daunting aspects of the huge amount of material to be digested, translated into digital form, and indexed), then we will have lost a huge opportunity. The public obviously has to be brought along with us on this agenda. Glenn's point was very well made on that: if we the people around this table do not do that, who will?

TIM WHALEN: Thank you very much. Our colleagues at Tate have asked to have their director, Nicholas Serota, speak with Angelica when he is in town next week and to present his own thoughts on the topic based on his reading of the dossier. So I will ask Jock to be the final director to speak.

JOCK REYNOLDS: When I came to Yale eight years ago, it happened to be the moment when the collection data were being transferred from 3-by-5 typewritten cards onto a powerful computer database. The TMS system was just being adopted. A year later, we were able to start a digital photography department, and at the same time, with

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the help of the Mellon Foundation and our wonderful colleagues at the Getty, we were able to tackle the first major conservation project that involved the research on our early Italian paintings collection. For quite some time those paintings had simply languished, without any attention. The greatest lesson I think we learned right away was that the most dangerous thing for any museum, large or small, is to have its collection remain isolated and insulated from any discussion about what its needs might be. With the help of many of you, we were able at that moment to get off on the right foot in terms of a better direction for conservation study, particularly focusing on collaboration between conservators and curators. We were also challenged by the president of Yale University who put the question to me: "how much of this collection is truly accessible and usable for the students and faculty? If you come back to me with an ambitious plan, make sure it has a significant component of collection documentation allowing full and true access to the collection, much as libraries have been able to achieve at Harvard and Yale." I am happy to say that a program developed with that in mind has now been enhanced and embraced by the university at a level and a scope beyond any of our wildest dreams as a result of the college curriculum review in which faculty and students asked for more experience in using university library and museum collections. They wanted more internships, they wanted more ability to study works of art firsthand, to publish, and to take those studio courses. So many of our collections are now being digitized and documented. I agree strongly with what Glenn and Tom have said about the difficulty and the need to set priorities in the allocation of resources. One that particularly caught my attention, and also addressed some of the public issues that several people have brought up, was the urgent need to preserve the Yale archives related to the Dora Europus archaeological excavation. Ten thousand untreated negatives were in imminent danger of disintegrating, and once the case was made that digitization of these irreplaceable materials would enable us to preserve them, we had the entire collection digitized, which also now makes it possible to render them accessible. The same can be said of the work that was done with the help of Mark Leonard and others at the Getty on the study and conservation of the Jarves collection.

TIM WHALEN: Thank you all for your contributions. It has been a watershed day for all of us. Before we adjourn, I would like to take a few minutes to hear ideas any of you might have for next steps. In the coming weeks we would like to work together to develop a road map for advancing the conversation. There have been a number of offers to embark on pilot projects, which we will certainly follow up. Angelica suggested the possibility of convening our IT people together on systems issues if that seemed useful.

JIM CUNO: It might be useful to hear from those who have collaborative projects underway between museum scientific laboratories and university-based laboratories. Francesca [Casadio], for example, could share the experience of our very fruitful research partnership with Northwestern's Department of Materials Science and Engineering that might offer an important model for other museums to explore.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: Tim, I would like to get some feedback from the group about our hopes to disseminate the proceedings of this event, which, as you all know has been recorded. The current plan would be to publish an edited version or summary in the *Getty Conservation Newsletter*. Most people in this room probably receive that on a regular basis, but we would make sure that this issue would get broader distribution. We will also probably make the full edited transcript available on the forthcoming extranet of the Mellon Foundation's Museum and Art Conservation Program.

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: One of the things that rises in my mind is the possibility of having a similar discussion, perhaps very much informed by this one, with a different cross-section of people. Everybody around the table here has obviously been thinking about these issues for a long time, and in very deep and complex ways. I wonder what the effect would be on colleagues in other institutions in other countries if in publishing a transcript we appeared to be in some way preempting a more international discourse. That leads me to wonder how we might open things up.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: That would be a very important caution. We have tried to insure that this meeting is conceived purely as a preliminary introduction to the topic which we are looking forward to having much more broadly discussed among the larger international community. Such an effort is clearly essential and I do foresee more

meetings of this kind. Anne, is your concern for any specific cross-section of the international group, or for other museums in this country that were not included?

ANNE D'HARNONCOURT: I think it is much more for the international community – for our Canadian colleagues, our colleagues in Europe particularly and then beyond. I am thinking of how much is going on in Italy in conservation, in France, in Holland, in Germany and Scandinavia. There are lots of places which have been giving these issues attention – both museums and big national scientific institutes of conservation. They need to feel that we know what they are doing and that we have huge respect for it, rather than giving the impression that we are inventing something. How we accomplish that, I am not sure. One of the huge advantages for which we are so grateful is that we were asked to sit down within our own institutions to have probing conversations over several weeks to think hard about the questions that were posed to us by the organizers of this meeting. Even if we had had such conversations previously, I think the focus of this meeting was especially effective in generating dialogue.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: I think this is an important point. I did have a conversation on the phone last night with Cristina Acidini in Florence. She had not heard anything about our meeting but she was fascinated and said, “this is a brilliant idea. It is a terrific initiative. We in Italy will be wanting to know what happened, because we will want to participate in the dialogue in due course.” So I agree that the way in which we publicize the results of this meeting, particularly to our colleagues in France, Italy, Spain, etc, will be very important, but it seems desirable to find the right way to make that possible.

JOCK REYNOLDS: Instead of publishing the whole transcript, you might want to publish the essence of it, some of the key questions and then some of the principles that have emerged. It would be interesting to share this together with an invitation for others to conduct similar meetings. Picking up Dan Kushel's suggestion that we share the outcome of this discussion with those who are training conservators, with the smaller museums, and with additional college or university museums, would be useful. I remember when I ran a tiny little place, there were important things happening at the major museums, but we never heard about them at the grassroots level. So instead of

conveying the impression that our discussion has been authoritative and speaks for the whole field, we would be very wise to encourage others to have similar conversations, and to bring their questions to the Mellon Foundation (which has taken such an important lead together with the Getty in thinking about these issues) and thereby to generate broader representation nationally and internationally.

JIM CODDINGTON: If some of this discussion occurred on the web with the opportunity for feedback, it would give us at least some way to estimate who the audience is for this information. It is also worth remembering that a lot of the conservation for smaller museums takes place in regional labs, so those should also be brought into the discussion.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: Philippe, do you have a sense of how a web presentation of a transcript or summary of the meeting would be received in the European context?

PHILIPPE DE MONTEBELLO: I am not sure. You know, this is chapter 1 of a long book. I do not think we should view with any degree of embarrassment the fact that we have convened here together as a group of 44 people from a number of institutions. We have taken a great first step. And so long as our document indicates that it is a first step, and that we will welcome commentary from elsewhere, as well as future meetings with different institutions, everyone would take into consideration the different needs of different kinds of institutions in different countries with different structures and act accordingly. I do not see that there would be a problem.

MARCO LEONA: From a practical standpoint, I feel that this discussion about selection of institutions is appropriate. Perhaps you would not want at this point to convene the smaller regional centers since their solutions may not work for the larger museums. The smaller museums (Harvard and Yale) in this room are actually more advanced in their discussions about these issues than the larger ones. Coming from a non-English-speaking country, I would say that there is a definite difference between the way the dialogue between conservator, curator and scientist now happens in the Anglo world and, let us say, the Mediterranean and Europe. If we want to try to reach a consensus among these three professions on how we handle information and how we

share it, today's discussion and the agenda followed are good points from which to start. It is right to be concerned that we not appear to the rest of the world as if we are creating policies for them. I do not think that we are or that we will. We should certainly handle the dissemination/publication of our deliberations diplomatically, but without too much concern. We should approach this and next steps with concern for what is most practical.

MARK ARONSON: One of the things that came up in conversations during the planning for this event was precisely the dilemma of having the meeting and then appearing to have arrived at conclusions. We thought that perhaps it would be better to regard the key issues that came up as potential research projects for further investigation. We could involve other appropriate audiences in such research thereby involving a different cross-section of the field. Such an approach would avoid the impression that we started at A, B and C, having identified them as the key issues, rather than as the beginning which would lead to further research and investigation.

ANGELICA RUDENSTINE: I agree fully with what has been said regarding dissemination of the outcomes of this day, which represents a first step in considering the implications of art historical and conservation documentation in digital form. We will endeavor to produce a summary for potential distribution in the *Getty Conservation Newsletter*, followed perhaps by an edited transcript that could be made available on the Mellon extranet. We must involve more institutions from a broader range of countries, and we need to keep the dialogue open-ended.

It may also be valuable to encourage a meeting among information technology professionals from various institutions to explore shared problems, questions, and opportunities with our various systems. As has been suggested, TMS, which is used by many of the institutions represented today, has proved somewhat problematic in the conservation and scientific sphere. It may or may not fully meet the needs of this agenda, but TMS is only going to be as good as we make it. We have got to be demanding clients. And the more demanding we are, the more likely they are to expand their capacity and thus to become more useful to the field. Right from the start there were certain things they said they could not do, but that they have since done. Undoubtedly

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this was in part due to the fact that they knew they would lose business if they did not offer creative solutions to declared needs.

Having convened this meeting, for which all of you have deliberated within your institutions and contributed an enormous amount of time and thought, I believe we have an obligation to move forward to implement some next steps. I am not sure what level of resources I will be able to bring to the table, but I will welcome suggestions from any of you for pilot projects that would offer one or more institutions an opportunity to collaborate in developing models for moving the field forward. We will hope in the next year to plan a second meeting of this kind, probably in Europe, and to launch at least a number of pilot projects.

TIM WHALEN: Let me close by thanking all of you for coming and The Metropolitan Museum for hosting us in what has been an extremely productive and stimulating conversation.