



Conservation of cultural property — Main general terms and definitions concerning conservation of cultural property

Erhaltung des kulturellen Erbes — Allgemeine Begriffe zur Erhaltung des kulturellen Erbes

Conservation des biens culturels — Termes généraux relatifs à la conservation des biens culturels et définitions correspondantes

Note:

Because of possible comments, the final version of this ÖNORM can differ from the present Draft.

Please send your comments (in writing) by **2010-07-15** to Austrian Standards Institute.

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May 2010

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English Version

Conservation of cultural property - Main general terms and definitions concerning conservation of cultural property

Conservation des biens culturels - Termes généraux relatifs
à la conservation des biens culturels et définitions
correspondantes

Erhaltung des kulturellen Erbes - Allgemeine Begriffe zur
Erhaltung des kulturellen Erbes

This draft European Standard is submitted to CEN members for second enquiry. It has been drawn up by the Technical Committee CEN/TC 346.

If this draft becomes a European Standard, CEN members are bound to comply with the CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations which stipulate the conditions for giving this European Standard the status of a national standard without any alteration.

This draft European Standard was established by CEN in three official versions (English, French, German). A version in any other language made by translation under the responsibility of a CEN member into its own language and notified to the CEN Management Centre has the same status as the official versions.

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Foreword

This document (prEN 15898:2010) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 346 “Conservation of cultural property”, the secretariat of which is held by UNI.

This document is currently submitted to the second CEN Enquiry.

Introduction

General observations

This Standard provides a considered set of general concepts, with their terms and definitions, which are widely used by those working in the field of conservation of tangible cultural heritage. Its purpose is to bring greater understanding and better collaboration amongst those who have responsibility for cultural heritage. The need for such agreement and clarification in the use of conservation words - to avoid confusion, to ensure that what one person means by a word corresponds with what another person means - has become increasingly important in recent years [Vinas, 2005, p 15; G de Guichen, 2007] [36] [35]. The definition of the terms here will also help ensure consistent use of words and concepts within the CEN/TC346 conservation suite of standards. The other standards will define only those terms which are specific to their subject matter.

The tangible cultural heritage comprises 'objects' - a term used in this Standard to include both immovable items (e.g. buildings) and movable items (e.g. archival documents)¹⁾. Those working in these two broad areas have tended to use some conservation words in subtly different ways, and to use words in one field which are not used in the other. This attempt to unify usage may require occasional compromise, with the possibility that not every definition will sit equally well within each sphere of activity. That is a reflection of current usage, not a fault in this document.

This CEN terminology standard, first in this field, is not claimed to be perfect or definitive for all time. Nor is it expected that it will meet with universal agreement. Like all standards, it will change in response to those using it and to changing practice and taste, as well as the flux of language over the years. The list includes the concepts and terms central to conservation practice. The reference for the meaning of common English words used in the definitions follows established usage [Ref Shorter Oxford English Dictionary [45]]. Many sources, listed in the Bibliography, have been valuable in guiding the development of the definitions. Extensive discussion amongst over thirty international experts, as well as their colleagues in their own countries, has helped immeasurably to refine understanding and led to the improvement of these definitions.

The definitions of four terms presented here ('conservation', 'preventive conservation', 'remedial conservation', 'restoration') were developed in parallel with those of ICOM-CC (International Council of Museums Conservation Committee) [7]. The definitions drawn up by each body have considerable commonality but they are not identical. Whereas the ICOM-CC Terminology uses 'conservation' as the umbrella term, such was the strength of feeling about current practice in some European countries and organisations about the term 'conservation-restoration' that we have included the latter as a synonym of 'conservation'. It is anticipated that in due course this ambiguity will play itself out and that 'conservation' will become widely accepted as the over-arching term.

Development of this standard

The standard is the result of four years of consultation initially amongst conservation experts and then with the wider conservation community. The working process is managed by UNI (Italy), with consultation coordinated by the national standards organisations. Users are encouraged to suggest improvements to their national standards bodies, preferably via conservation colleagues who are in touch with the standards project. Comments will be compiled for use in later revisions.

Conventions

The conventions used are those recommended in the documents CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations – Part 3 [20], ISO 704 [59] and ISO 10241:1992 [60]. Only nouns are defined, not verbs or adjectives. Definitions are

1) This distinction is sometimes only approximate: a wall painting may be fixed to a building one day, but may be transferred to an art gallery another day.

succinct, while aiming to encompass all conservation aspects of the concept. Where necessary to make these aspects clear, notes and examples are added, but these do not form part of the definitions. A helpful rule is that each definition is capable of replacing its term when inserted into a relevant sentence.

Structure of the terminology

The arrangement of terms implements a conceptual approach reflecting the way in which heritage professionals currently conserve objects. At its root is consideration of what is to be conserved, its significance and its condition. There follows an overview of various aspects of conservation. These are considered in detail bearing in mind the ways in which the artefact, the conservation process, the materials used and the results of conservation are monitored, evaluated and documented. The term 'documentation' is relevant at all stages of conservation. A "related term" is included to demonstrate the limits of what is considered conservation. Because the scope of a concept is determined by the adjacent concepts, the arrangement chosen can affect how the term is defined. This arrangement therefore provides a map of the terms defined, though they are also indexed alphabetically. Given the unpredictable, often complex and multi-faceted nature of conservation practice, the groupings of terms should not however be considered not watertight. In order to improve consistency and help with cross-referencing, where definitions are written using terms which are defined elsewhere in the standard these are distinguished.

Conservation decisions

The making of decisions in conservation is rarely straightforward. (See e.g. Caple, C , 2000, Fig 3.5, p 41) [31]. There are always many factors to be taken into account, some of them identified in the 'condition survey and condition report', others in the determination of 'significance'. The purpose and process of conservation always recognise the twin attributes of a cultural object, its tangible and intangible components, and aims to retain as much as possible of both.

Neither the structure nor the content of this document can be seen as a substitute for the exercise of professional judgement in making decisions, often in collaboration with others, backed up by appropriate training, skills, qualifications and experience. In fact, international and national organisations are beginning to lay down professional standards and guidelines which help to identify those who are suitably equipped to make conservation decisions and implement them.

Variation in cultures

The practice of conservation varies between countries and cultures around the world. One goal of this document has been to create a structure that can encompass these different attitudes to heritage material and different legislative frameworks, at least within the CEN area.

This standard has been adopted in the three official CEN languages (English, French and German) on the basis of a working document prepared in English. For some concepts there is no direct equivalent term between languages, so expanded phrasing is provided.

In some parts of the world, concepts, the terms and definitions listed here may reflect conservation practice less well. For instance, in some cultures or situations conservation of the significance represented by an item may be perceived as more important than conservation of the material substance of that item; rebuilding or re-creation to match a supposed earlier appearance may be the norm, rather than preservation of the original structure²⁾.

Comment on some of the terms included or omitted

Conservation

In the world today, 'conservation' is a very widely used term: it is commonly applied to wildlife, to landscapes and to energy. This standard is focussed on the conservation of the CEN/TC346 topic: 'tangible cultural

2) E.g. Buddhist temple in Japan, but there are similar practices closer to Europe, e.g. Ship of Theseus.

heritage (see below). The terms presented here have been devised for those working with the built heritage and with movable objects. The lack of easily identified limits to the scope of this topic is exemplified by landscapes. These are almost without exception human (i.e. cultural) artefacts (there are very few wholly wild places remaining), but the concepts presented here may not always be applicable in that field.

As explained above, 'conservation-restoration' is included as a synonym to the preferred term of 'conservation'. This is out of respect for current usage in some countries and in some conservation organisations.

Cultural heritage

The terms 'cultural heritage' and 'cultural property' are widely used and defined. The meaning of cultural heritage is taken here to be "tangible and intangible entities of significance to present and future generations". 'Cultural property' is similar in meaning, but carries connotations of ownership and sometimes of illicit trade and – in some European countries – formal legal significance³⁾.

Tangible: intangible

The focus of the CEN/TC 346 standards is on the tangible cultural heritage: the material things which can be perceived using the senses of sight and of touch as well as hearing (e.g. clocks ticking), smell (e.g. faint odours from a pomander), and taste (e.g. historic wine in a bottle). However, every cultural thing has intangible aspects. Conservation of the tangible, when properly carried out, always respects the intangible significance⁴⁾.

Objects, collections of objects, and items

Conservation may be directed at a single object or a collection of them. For the sake of conciseness, it should be assumed that where the term 'object' is used in a definition, it can be interpreted to mean 'objects' or 'collections of objects'. Where the definition is specific to collections, this is shown. Although the term 'object' generally works in both the movable and immovable heritage, English usage sometimes makes the word 'item' a more appropriate term, an alternative which also helps avoid excessive repetition of the same word.

3) ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, 2006; ICOMOS Charter on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites, 2008; Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005.

4) For example, a shoe to be conserved may be striking in its design, perhaps it was once a treasured gift, there may be no others like it, it shows it was worn by more than one person, it may have (or have had) an odour that some think offensive, it may contain a dye that has changed colour in a way that provokes scientific attention, its lining may be an example of an early synthetic material (i.e. one of each of the list under significance above). Imagine also a manuscript of music - a real tangible artefact - made of ink on paper written in the hand of a famous composer: the manuscript may be unique, it may have been first played by a known musician, its handwriting may carry many meanings, a coded dedication perhaps; furthermore its truly intangible significance does not come into play until – transiently – it is interpreted by musicians, when its effects on emotion and the inner senses of the players and the listeners is equally intangible. It may inspire dance, song, memory, longings.