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SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS IN CONSERVATION DECISION-MAKING

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18.1 Introduction

In human cultures, books have long served as conveyors of valued information: compiled texts, written or printed, arranged and bound together in physical containers to be intellectually and physically transported through both space and time. However, books do not exist independent of human culture and would not be compiled, bound, read, stored, destroyed, or displayed if it were not for perceived cultural value. They exist as an extension of cultures and societies, testaments to collective histories and experiences in both form and content.

While book conservation in the West has generally remained focused on conserving Anglo-European materials that remain the dominant holding in research library collections, other specialties of conservation and heritage professionals have reckoned with complex issues of colonialism, representation, and ownership. Most Western museum collections holding international or minority cultures' materials have come to recognise that their approaches to curation and collection management, once believed to be universal ideals, were actually culturally specific to colonising nations and were imposed on collections, objects, and stakeholder communities.

Questions regarding the practice of conserving sacred objects had been an issue for conservators, but with the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), practitioners began addressing these complex issues in a structured fashion. At their 1991 annual meeting, the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) held a session on the conservation of sacred objects in which speakers addressed complex issues surrounding African objects, Tibetan sculpture, Jewish objects, Russian icons, and Native American objects (Mibach 1992). This work was quickly followed by Mariam Clavir's *Preserving What Is Valued* (Clavir 2002) which argues for a strategy of community engagement, understanding, and compromise when working with stakeholder communities on objects which are held in museum collections.

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The conceptual threads of these theories have been widely developed in object conservation, as conservators work to apply these vital lessons to other cultural traditions to better serve the objects and communities, including Tibetan sculpture (Hall 2004), Native American objects (Johnson et al. 2005), Islamic objects (Zekrgoo and Barkeshli 2005), Jewish materials (Morris and Brooks 2007), Māori built heritage (Sully 2007), and Hawaiian sculpture (Wharton 2011). Many of the lessons of community engagement have also found a place in the conservation of contemporary art, with conservators undertaking artist interviews to understand the complex intentions of the living creator as a stakeholder in treatments (Cotte, Tse, and Inglis 2016).

Distinct, but related issues of representation, both in the profession and in practice, have also been recognised as issues for conservation. In 2000, Jan Paris made the case that conservators have a role in advocating for the treatment of materials from under-represented groups, such as women and ethnic minorities (Paris 2000). In 2016, Sanchita Balachandran challenged the AIC membership to consider the racial and ethnic disparities in the field and to consider how and why conservation of diverse materials matter (Balachandran 2016). Following up in 2019, Fletcher Durant examined the subject matter of AIC publications, concluding that the subjects of conservation's professional literature are heavily slanted towards Anglo-European materials (Durant 2019).

From the outset, it should be acknowledged that this chapter is written from a Western perspective, with the authors originating from white, middle-class, British and North American backgrounds and educations. Therefore, the perspectives included should be understood within this context, built upon our own individual and collective biases and the lived experiences that our demographic frameworks have produced.

As the field of conservation moves away from the conception of the curator and conservator as sole authorities, conservators need to work to recognise stakeholder communities which can provide input on treatment plans to ensure that equitable care is being given to a diverse range of needs (Henderson 2020). In book collections, these stakeholder communities are often far separated from the materials, and conservators must be prepared to explore new avenues of outreach than may currently exist to garner input.

18.2 Demographics of Conservation

The phrase "demography is destiny" was used to describe shifts in electoral politics based on changing proportions of racial and class groups. In the case of conservation, demographics provide a foundation for the cultural knowledge and expectations that conservators and other cultural heritage practitioners bring to their work (AIC EIWG 2018, 4). Cultural knowledge is deeply rooted in the lived experiences of an individual, who then brings that knowledge to bear in society and their work (McIntosh 1988). For conservators, this cultural knowledge can play out in many different ways. We may be aware of our educational and training limitations, with a book conservator being unwilling to undertake the treatment of an oil painting, but within our own specialisations, we may be willing to stretch our existing practical and cultural knowledge to undertake treatments on bound volumes from different cultural milieus than we are trained in, in order to support institutional needs and expectations. Within some limits, current ethically accepted practice allows flexibility across meanings, but not materials.

The demographics of practising conservators in the United Kingdom and the United States are not reflective of global communities, and rarely reflective of their own national demographics. Similarly, the demographics of the major cultural institutions, libraries, archives, and museums do not reflect the demographics of the communities that they serve, nor do

their collections. Generally speaking, heritage organisations have less racially and ethnically diverse staff than society as a whole, particularly at professional and leadership levels. There is a cultural dichotomy between the objects themselves, and the people tasked to care for them (Westermann et al. 2019). Within these cultural institutions, conservators are duty-bound to reflect stakeholder input into conservation treatment decisions, but the existing structures limit which stakeholders are given power to offer and solicit input, or the extent to which their opinions will be acted upon.

Demographic data in the field of conservation is limited, as organisations have, until recently, shown little interest in documenting their membership. In 1993, the AIC surveyed their membership, finding that 95% of member respondents were white (AIC EIWG 2018). In 2018, AIC undertook another membership survey, finding that 85% of respondents self-identified as white (AIC 2019, 16). A 2018 survey undertaken by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to understand museum demographics found that 80% of "museum leadership and conservators" self-identified as white (Westermann et al. 2019). The 2022 Institute of Conservation (Icon) Membership Diversity Survey found similar numbers for their UK membership, with 93% of respondents identifying as white and only 7.2% as another ethnic designation, including Mixed or Multiple Backgrounds (Nelles 2022).

A 2018 survey of US-based library preservation practitioners found that 82.11% of those surveyed identified as white, with that number increasing to 91.7% among professional conservators (Hain Teper et al. 2018). A similar disjunction of representation among junior and senior practitioners was found in the 2018 AIC survey which identified that while 9% of AIC Professional Associate Members (minimum of 2 years experience) identified as Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC), only 4% of the more senior AIC Fellows (minimum of 10 years professional experience) identified as BIPOC (AIC 2019). This same AIC survey found that 78.7% of members identify as female, 18.35% as male, and 0.91% as nonbinary/prefer to self-describe (AIC 2019).

The field of conservation in the UK and USA is racially and culturally homogenous. Many of us work with collections whose creators are predominantly white. And the work that we as professionals do in and for these collections is predominantly on objects created by and presented to white audiences. When work is undertaken on objects from non-Western cultures, it is most often done by a practitioner not of that originating community. While none of this is a sole determinant in selecting objects to treat or determining the approaches to treatment, these demographics impact our choices and the objects that come to be treated (Durant 2019). Conservation professionals must be able to recognise the boundaries of their cultural knowledge and seek information from representative stakeholders before undertaking interventive treatments.

18.3 Identifying Considerations

The homogenous demographics of cultural heritage fields in the UK and USA demonstrate one reason for conservators to seek involvement from community stakeholders to identify relevant ethical considerations when working with non-dominant heritage objects. This chapter focuses on three possible considerations: social, cultural, and religious.

Social considerations relate to groups of individuals who are associated with each other for demographic reasons, i.e., who people are. This could be geographically, such as by country or city, or statistically, such as class, race, sex, and age.

Cultural considerations relate to the practices, ideas, customs, and beliefs of a group of people, i.e., what people do and think. This is hugely varied in scope, including language, philosophy, family, gender, Individualist or Collectivist ideals, and opinions on heritage.

Religious considerations relate to the beliefs, performance, and communities of world religions and sacred traditions. This can include the sacred traditional practises of global indigenous groups such as Australian Aboriginal, Māori, Native American and Shinto; modern-practised formal religion, such as Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism, or Zoroastrianism; largely modern-dormant formal religion, such as Egyptian, Greek, or Roman polytheism; or non-formal beliefs, relating to an individual spiritualism.

While these considerations can each be individually defined, essential practice in order to establish a grounded baseline, it is important to remember that they exist along a spectrum of ethical thought, rather than as distinct concepts. For example, social and cultural considerations are often grouped together under the phrase "socio-cultural," due to their close correlation, and religion could be considered a subgroup of cultural considerations, although the sanctity imbued within its practice motivated the distinction here. Therefore, it is important to build upon these definitions with active reflection and evaluation, dynamically triangulating the specific needs of each new project across all considerations to establish a unique configuration of depth, breadth, and form.

An additional impetus for flexibility is the reality of variances among community groups. Examples can be seen across all considerations; between religious denominations such as Reform or Orthodox Judaism, culturally such as LGBTQIA+ communities in the United Kingdom and Russia, and socially such as in diasporic communities. No two objects within an historic collection will be the same and, similarly, there should be no expectation that all members of a community will hold the same outlook.

18.3.1 The Importance of Social, Cultural, and Religious Considerations

All conservation treatments involve complex decision-making, but the varying nature of objects means some may be more complex than others, with parts of an object's tangible or intangible nature sometimes falling outside of a conservator's traditional realm of expertise. Ethical considerations can present particular challenges, as these issues are often subjective, disputed, and can involve substantial amounts of time, collaboration, resources, and research to resolve. However, approaching the treatment of an object having identified appropriate considerations and adapting practices to suit specific treatments is as important as understanding historical provenance or material characteristics. Social, cultural, and religious considerations all add up to form an understanding of an item's value. Ethical considerations do not need to be met with fear; the process does not need to be overwhelming; and the focus need not be singularly on repatriation. Most current practices are not improper, some mentalities just need to change (Ogden 2007, 285).

Conservators may already include some considerations, as current discourse has increasingly included the intangible as well as the tangible values of an object, in the form of value theory (Henderson 2020, 196). However, many of these current intangible values remain materially focused, with scientific or academic aims, such as aesthetics, previous owners, evidence of origins, and maker's marks. Intrinsic emotional and community attachment values that have no formal use to an institution, such as an everyday object gifted by a beloved family member, along with other external values, are less often considered (Coleman and Wight 2021, 158). Focus often remains on questions of "what do others in the field think is the added value?" or "what can also be of value to museums and heritage practice?", not "what do communities and origin groups think is the importance of the item?".

Value theory and the incorporation of intangible considerations have found a place in conservation theory, as an outcome of dealing with the discrete cultural traditions of indigenous

groups (Clavir 2002). However, their integration into broader practices and discourse has been slow and halting, risking tokenism rather than inclusion. There exists a culture of incorporation rather than change, leading to a prevalence of theory over action, allowing the profession to be credited for saying the right thing, despite limited implementation (Balachandran 2016). Conservation's shift towards inclusivity, including legal rights and moral expectations, has built pressure towards change not because it is perceived as right, but because of growing societal expectation. This has led to the incorporation of intangible values as an additional interest point, rather than a focus, for the conservator (Henderson 2020, 197). Conservators are still seen as having absolute authority over "our" objects with community groups as secondary; "their" opinions can be included if the conservators deem it appropriate (Lynch 2011, 14).

However, intangible aspects of heritage are intrinsic aspects, belonging to the object or originating community, not the conservator, and cannot be replaced or reassigned. Recognising that an object possesses intangible value to an owner or a community must be more than an incorporation of a buzzword in a treatment plan or documentation of provenance, but instead a genuine reflection of the reality of that object.

18.3.2 Undertaking Evaluation and Outreach

A conservator's role as arbiter between the needs of the object and the needs of the owner or curator can place them in an isolating position, attempting to autonomously balance competing demands (Paris 2000). However, a conservator should not work independently when developing a treatment plan or aim to find all the answers within their own experiences and training, instead incorporating reflection, research, and outreach into all planning stages for each new project (Ogden 2007, 283).

Considering social, cultural, and religious considerations, through the lens of three categories, can aid in properly evaluating objects and integrating different perspectives:

Self-evaluation presents the considerations of those currently in contact with the object. List one's own social, cultural, and religious considerations, such as where you live, how old you are, and your idea of heritage, to reflect upon how your individual biases may impact treatment decisions. This can be a stable document, transferable between treatments, but it is important to check back on regularly, as perspectives and demographics may change. Independent practitioners may ask clients for a similar input list, and institutions should work to develop their own statements.

Object-evaluation presents the considerations contained within the object itself, both tangible and intangible. Through research, establish what is known about the object, such as its history, context, and materials, and list what this information presents. For example: when and where the book was written and bound, its language and subject matter, associations to a religious group, any initiation requirements or demographic restrictions for access, and the known chain of ownership. This can be as an extension of a traditional condition report, or as a separate piece of documentation.

Stakeholder-evaluation presents the considerations of those who are associated with the object, such as through cultural connection or previous interaction. Building upon the knowledge gained through research, contact relevant stakeholders and record their insights on the object. This could be a local religious community; a group from the object's place of origin; the original maker, such as an artist (Cotte et al. 2016, 108); or even reaching out to an historian for more information on the provenance of the item, or another conservator who specialises in regional binding styles.

Of the three categories, stakeholder-evaluation can often seem the most daunting. It may be helpful to consider the process in the following stages:

ASK – what needs to be done, what needs to be understood, what communities want.
LISTEN – genuinely to what is said without presumptions or dismissal.
ENACT – these direct desires, rather than merely acting with no guiding force.
RESPOND – to future calls for amendment and development, always being open to change.

Outreach is sometimes seen as time consuming and insignificant to the act of conservation, particularly in book conservation, where the financial investment in treating a volume is often greater than the appraised monetary value of the item itself (Ogden 2007, 284). However, it is perhaps the most important evaluation to undertake if we are to move beyond a framework of conserving only what conservators and heritage organisations, both limited by a lack of demographic diversity, deem important and instead work to include all perspectives equally.

Completing these categories of evaluation should result in three distinct areas of consideration, which may work harmoniously or may include some incongruities. Having identified all project-relevant considerations, focus turns to implementing them into conservation practice. All considerations must be amalgamated to create a viable treatment plan that balances these competing perspectives, a process that involves time, discussion, and collaboration.

18.4 Implementing Considerations

Having established the steps towards identifying considerations, the next stage of the process is determining what these theoretical considerations could equate to, in terms of practical implementation, both as a profession and as an individual.

Profession-wide implementation can be thought of in the negative space; "what is absent from our collective approach?", emphasising the need for continual progression to create a relevant and appropriate field. Individual implementation can be thought of in the positive space; "what can be added to my personal approach?", inviting improvement upon already effective treatment methods. Working from this mindset may help reduce personal apprehension and improve the accessibility of change.

18.4.1 As a Profession

The most significant way the profession can implement social, cultural, and religious considerations is to diversify its own demographic make-up (see Demographics of Conservation above). Additional changes can be made to the collective approach and mindset of conservation, including the improvement of ethical standards, documentation, accessibility, and education and training.

Ethical standards are currently fragmented across the profession, formalising and unifying these could transition stakeholder accountability and community involvement into a standard practice. In the UK, USA, and beyond, ethical standards of practice are drawn up individually by professional bodies, such as Icon (2020) and AIC (1994), into Codes of Ethics, to work alongside various significance guides (see Chapter 15). While often similar in vein, these documents present a narrative of selection; suggesting an "opt in" system to your guide or code of choice. Additionally, international standards, while acknowledging the existence

of ethical considerations in documents such as BS EN 16853:2017, have yet to offer explicit guidance on what this may mean in practice, in stark contrast to the detailed individual standards that exist for many technical and scientific processes (British Standards Institute). Expectations of reflection, discussion, and analysis when formulating treatment proposals should instead be standardised, much in the same way as methods such as photographic documentation, solubility testing, or material analysis are seen as obligatory, rather than left to occur on an institution-by-institution, case-by-case basis.

The improvement and expansion of documentation can aid this change. A formalised, consistent section for social, cultural, and religious considerations within condition and treatment reports would guide conservators through the process and assist individual application, while also aiding record keeping and enabling tracking of treatment trends. Additionally, adjustments to terminology across all documentation could be beneficial. The inclusion of glossaries presents one possibility to increase the accessibility of documentation for communities and stakeholders, enabling greater collaboration in the decision-making process and building knowledge and trust. Additionally, language can move beyond formal conservation terms to relate to individual considerations, such as by referring to a book in its native language or its name or title, rather than an acquisition or treatment number (Ratima Nolan 2021). By thinking actively about terminology and consistently including ethical considerations, documentation can become important for communities, as well as conservators, demonstrating equitable "ownership" over an item and building additional avenues for collaboration.

The accessibility of the profession presents another area to address, working to increase access to and knowledge of conservation and reduce gatekeeping. Entrance into the field is difficult and selective, due to a wealth of cultural and socio-economic barriers such as a lengthy education, unpaid or voluntary placements, an often unstable or low income, and discrimination (Francis 2021, 185–88). Additionally, once within the profession, the field can be insular, with information and skills retained within a small group of practitioners to limit damaging "amateur" conservation attempts. However, this also keeps conservation closed off to change or opportunities for collaboration, both necessary qualities for an engaged and relevant profession (Brown 2021). Through increasing access, sharing skills, and opening a discussion and debate with other heritage professionals and community groups, the profession can expand to encompass more perspectives, becoming more representative of global society.

Education and training reforms present a natural progression from this, focused on an expansion of form and diversification of curriculum. Entrance into the profession is increasingly academic, with master's programmes becoming an expectation for entry-level positions (Douglas et al. 2021, 234). This discounts the opportunities that apprenticeships and other training programmes, foundational to some of book conservation's greatest practitioners, present, as well as forming a bias towards European collections and ideals, as formal academic training courses are largely concentrated within the UK, Europe, and the US. Therefore, the forms and breadth of learning need to be refreshed to allow space for dissonance and disparities in practice. If diversity is introduced from the inception of knowledge, through multiplicity of form and content, this will translate into diversity within professional practice.

When thinking about social, cultural, and religious considerations, it can be tempting to concentrate solely on direct treatment implications, without considering the overarching structure of the field and its role in informing conservators' skills, mindsets, and actions. These four areas present some of the ways the profession could adapt, becoming more structured

towards the inclusion of ethical considerations in decision-making and better disposed to implement these considerations within individual conservation practice.

18.4.2 As an Individual

The implementation of social, cultural, and religious considerations within individual practice is demarcated by the knowledge gained from the evaluation and outreach process described above and how it can guide practical treatment decisions. Ethical considerations are often seen as largely theoretical, and therefore difficult to implement. However, there are a multitude of ways in which these considerations can directly affect practical work. These outcomes can be categorised into three interfaces:

Objects presents the interface that most clearly links ethical considerations to material implications. These can present themselves within decisions surrounding the object itself, such as its functionality, text or images; treatment methods, such as materials or tools applied; or treatment ideology, such as adapting repair methods to be intrinsic to the historic character of a binding or deciding whether to intervene. Some examples include:

- Working with stakeholders to apply cultural sensitivity labels, or content warnings, on protective enclosures, for items where the contents have been identified as potentially distressing to groups or individuals (Helman and Sawicki 2021).
- Avoiding the use of pigskin, and generally only using kosher materials, in the treatment of Jewish sacred texts (see Chapter 3.9) (Maggen 2005, 104).
- Refraining from using pig-bristle or dog-hair brushes when working on Qur'an manuscripts, as those animals are considered impure within Islamic teaching (Zekrgoo and Barkeshli 2005, 100).
- Following the principle of *kaitiakitanga*, stewardship, to protect the *mauri*, lifeforce, of Māori objects, such as through using natural (instead of synthetic) materials and tools to connect objects to the environment (Ratima Nolan 2021).
- Maintaining historically respectful housing methods, such as a *Rumalla Sahib*, a type of cloth covering used for Sikh texts (Goodman 2022).

Environment relates to implementations concerned with how an object relates to and exists within its external surroundings. This could involve workshop conditions, storage guidance, or display requirements, for both physical and virtual exhibitions. Some examples include:

- Undertaking in situ treatments so objects can remain within their sacred site throughout the conservation process, such as at Pothi Seva, a charitable organisation which conserves sacred Sikh texts from within a London Gurdwara (Pothi Seva n.d.).
- Using traditional workshop furniture, such as the *chabudais* and *tatami* mats used within the British Museum's Hirayama Studio (Sotiras 2017).
- Ensuring Qur'an texts are stored at least above waist height and preferably on the highest shelf (Zekrgoo and Barkeshli 2005, 100).
- Enabling groups to perform sacred ceremonies and blessings of spaces, such as undertaken by First Nations (Pacific) groups before the National Library of Australia's 'Cook and the Pacific' exhibition (Helman and Sawicki 2021).

People concerns any considerations relating to conservators, other museum professionals or members of the public in contact with an object. This interface incorporates aspects such as

supervision requirements, handling or access restrictions, and certain lifestyle constraints and behavioural customs. Some examples include:

- Studying and working with traditional Masters to develop an understanding of historical techniques, such as practised within the British Museum's Hirayama Studio (Weiss et al. 2021).
- Respecting the initiation requirements necessary to handle certain First Nations (Pacific) material, such as by implementing a curtain system, allowing a culturally appropriate representative to describe the condition of an object to a conservator (Helman and Sawicki 2021).
- Not handling Māori objects if you are unwell, or feeling strong negative emotions, so as not to harmfully influence a *taonga*'s, or treasured object's, *mauri* (Ratima Nolan 2021).
- Ensuring you are washed and thoroughly clean before handling a Qur'an, especially focusing on your hands, so that no impure part of yourself is in contact with the text (Zekrgoo and Barkeshli 2005, 100).

These examples outlined are only that, examples, and should not be used as an alternative to evaluation and outreach when developing a treatment plan. Concrete, practical implementations to individual conservation practice, whether it be object, environment, or people specific, should always be determined by close collaboration with relevant community groups. Practical implementation options are immeasurably variable and present a vast area for potential future research, especially concerning complex real-life scenarios. Through developing as a profession and working to incorporate ethical considerations within individual practice, conservation can move towards being more equitable in its implementation.

18.5 Material Risks of Cross-Cultural Treatments

When undertaking treatments of books from non-Western cultures, conservators must balance social considerations with material considerations. Book cultures and binding practices vary immensely, and imposing a differing material mentality during treatment can lead to long-term damage to the structure and workings of books. Approaching treatments with these considerations documented is ultimately beneficial to the stability of the materials.

An example can be seen in the changing treatment approaches undertaken by the New York Public Library (NYPL). In 1909, the newly established Oriental Division of the NYPL purchased a collection of approximately 200 rare Chinese books that had been part of the personal library of the 19th-century British sinologist James Legge, the first translator of many Chinese classic texts, such as the *I Ching* and *Tao Te Ching*, into English.

Upon acquisition of these stab-sewn fascicles, NYPL treated these volumes as they did all of their research collections: they were sent to the bindery. There, the individual stab-sewn fascicles were stacked in groupings of 4–6 inches, their spine edges were glued up with animal glue, the bookblocks were oversewn, and bound into heavy-duty buckram cases. This one size fits all approach to collections care was a traditional approach in most libraries: treat everything in the collection like a Western codex. In essence, the Chinese volumes, bindings in their own right, were transitioned into the codex form, as this was understood as the standard and proper form of the book at this institution at this time.

In 2010, recognising the importance of these materials to a global audience, the NYPL undertook a multi-year project to digitise six of the most important Legge titles. However, the oversewing now became an impediment to accessing and digitising the contents. The oversewing encroached on the printed and manuscript text in the gutters of many volumes,

obscuring the contents. The animal glue also caused staining in the gutters, and the unexpected presence of mountain-fold pages in a Western codex had led to many pages being torn on the fore-edge from patrons attempting to access the blank versos of the pages.

To correct this culturally and materially inappropriate binding choice, NYPL hired a contract conservator for two years to conserve and rebind the six titles in a more culturally and materially appropriate set of stab-bindings to facilitate digitisation and future use. The bindings which had been changed into codices, were transitioned back into their original form. The more appropriate stab-bindings allowed the volumes to lay flat, with clear line of sight into the margins to allow full page capture during digitisation. Modified four-flap folders (see Chapter 20.1) made from 40-point acid-free card stock provide rigid, but lightweight housing to keep the fascicles together while in storage.

18.6 Promoting Values Based Treatment Approaches

To conclude, conservation approaches that consider social, cultural, and religious considerations are complex, but conservation is itself a complex practice. Amalgamating the diverse identity of a book into a coherent conservation treatment should be approached as a challenge, not as a chore.

As in the development of any treatment plan, issues may arise and conservators will need to be flexible. One such issue could be a lack of engagement, such as if co-workers, institution agendas, clients, or even stakeholder communities are uninterested in participating in this approach. Opposition such as this could be dealt with through holding a discussion amongst colleagues to reach a compromise or pausing project plans to allow for the development of community relations before a treatment plan is formed. Logistical issues may present another challenge, such as language and travel barriers or access to information and resources. Through adaptation, such problems can be resolved similarly to how they would if dealing with challenging material or structural issues. For example, rearranging shelves to accommodate new storage procedures, using online video calls if travel is not an option, and identifying local partners to work as translators. Obstacles such as these present an opportunity for flexible thinking, rather than a prohibitive barrier.

Overall, ethical considerations are as expansive and complex as the people they relate to. They will be unique to each object, present different applications in private and institutional practice, lead to disagreements and discussion, and complicate the conservation process. But they are also what makes conservation worthwhile. There is a lot more research that can and should be done surrounding this topic; change begins with you. As Hicks states, "the power of a museum begins with the skill of the conservator" (2020, 230). Moving beyond the physical book can not only create a respectful and equitable decision-making process, but ultimately acknowledge that books belong to all of us, not just conservation professionals.

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