ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Putting the Body back into Teaching Conservation Online

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• Abstract (300 words):
For the MA in Conservation of the Historic Environment at Birmingham City University the switch to online teaching and learning in March 2020 meant an immediate shift in our delivery methods and a strategy of ‘coping’ being pursued. Some methods were less successful and we remained very conscious of all we had lost - the interaction with real buildings and sites, the immediacy of fabric, the understanding of character, context and setting that one gets from in-person experience. The development of other core skills too, such as confidence in interrogating lecturers and comfort with conflict, were seen to be retarded. The loss of the physicality of face-to-face teaching also emerged as a hitherto unappreciated factor.

A brief return to face-to-face teaching concentrated on building cohort cohesion and a community of learning. The use of campus buildings was explored as a substitute for the normal site visits because of restrictions in place. This meant that the forced return to online teaching had certain advantages.

At some point one however thinks about moving beyond coping and of putting back into teaching the ‘lost’ elements. This paper looks at some ways we found to put the
students and teachers back in front of buildings and sites during lockdown and made the actual online sessions more interactive. It also considers future ways such as the scope of 3D scans and avatars. The presentation will be given by the Course Director and by students who graduated through this period reporting back on their experience.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Katriona Byrne worked in the heritage industry in Ireland since 1995, becoming a Conservation Research Officer in Dublin City Council in 2001 and subsequently Conservation Officer in Cork City, Roscommon County and Wexford County Councils, with various stints in between as a Conservation Consultant. She came to England in 2013 to take up a position as Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas with Historic England. Her experience in industry led to her position as Course Director of the MA and postgraduate courses in the Conservation of the Historic Environment at Birmingham City University in 2018. She works as a volunteer in her spare time for the Twentieth Century Society.