

SERCA

Southeast Regional Conservation Association



Newsletter

Spring 2020 Volume 3, Number 1

From the Desk of the Secretary

By Jennifer French

I hope that this newsletter finds our members and your families in good health and are staying safe during this coronavirus pandemic!

Earlier this year, my institution, the North Carolina Museum of History, hosted the SERCA Annual Meeting. Based on the number of people who came up and thanked me for such a great meeting, I believe that it was a successful one. I should mention, however, that the Annual Meeting was not undertaken by myself alone. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes by a large group of people to ensure that the meeting is a success.



The first, and most important, decision made is the topic of the meeting. The board solicits topic ideas from the membership and the board members themselves. The criteria for an annual meeting topic are that it should appeal to a broad range of conservators, if possible, and be able to fit within the 2 ½ days' time frame. A combination of theoretical lectures and practical workshops are preferable so that we can all obtain some 'hands-on' experience that we do not necessarily get when we go to the bigger conferences.

Once the topic and presenter(s) are decided, the location of the meeting is determined. Because SERCA is incorporated in Georgia, the meeting every other year is required to be in Georgia. The non-Georgia years can be hosted anywhere else within the Southeast. The choice of location is dependent on what the presenter needs, such as a lab or a large room for tables, AV equipment, access to chemicals, etc.; the facilities need to be able to hold 40-50 attendees (the number is based on recent meeting attendance) comfortably, potential hotel and restaurant accommodations, and most importantly, if there is a local SERCA member that would be willing and able to host a meeting!

The work involved in planning the annual meeting is split up between the board members and the local host. The local host generally ensures that the venue is secured for the meeting dates, including determining the cost, if any, of the venue. He/she also needs to organize the onsite logistics of the conference – supplying and planning out the lecture/workshop spaces, determining where lunches

and coffee/snacks should be dropped off and placed, providing local directions to the hotel and venue, and making suggestions for Community Outreach projects, to name a few responsibilities.

The board members handle the larger and more general aspects of the meeting. The vice-president sets up and acts as the contact for the hotel accommodations and caterers for lunches, coffee and pastries; he/she plans the business meeting on Saturday night as well. The treasurer, the communications coordinator, and the membership co-coordinator work in concert to ensure that members can and have registered for the meeting. The member-at-large board member is responsible for creating the meeting survey and collating the responses. Other duties, spread out to all of the board members, include reviewing annual meeting scholarships applications, creating and printing out meeting/presentation handouts – many of which will be electronically provided this coming year to reduce paper waste – and setting up the meeting folders, assisting with the registration process at the beginning of the meeting, making sure that the snacks and coffee/water are refreshed, and all of the dozens of little details that come up before, during, and after the meeting.

The annual meeting involves a great deal of work, especially during the 2 months leading up to the meeting itself but it is a lot of fun to work on and the results can be very satisfying! If you think that you would be interested in acting as a host for the SERCA annual meeting in the future, please contact Michelle Savant, SERCA President, at seregionconservationassoc@gmail.com with the subject heading 'Potential annual meeting host.'

2020 SERCA Annual Meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina



New SERCA Board Members

Vice President: Shannon Douglas Kimbro - Shannon Douglas Kimbro is the Conservation and Maintenance Program Manager for the City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs. She stepped into the role in 2018, after six years with a large, privately-owned conservation and restoration firm in Denver, Colorado. There she acquired a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience as a Paintings

Conservator. During her career in Denver, Shannon was inspired by continued education and AIC annual meeting attendance to establish an in-house apprenticeship program. Her passion for all specialties eventually led her to fill the role of Chief Conservator. Shannon received formal education in conservation from Studio Art Centers International (SACI) in Florence, Italy, studying Paintings under esteemed conservator, Dr. Roberta LaPucci. Shannon is devoted to preserving and restoring the visual and tactile works of our past, present, and future.

Member at Large, Health and Safety Liason: Laura Garner Hine - Laura Garner Hine resides in Columbia, South Carolina where she works as an Assistant Paintings and Frame Conservator with Ginny Newell at ReNewell, Inc. Fine Art Conservation. Her education consists of degrees and certifications from the University of South Carolina in Columbia, the Rijksuniversiteit in Groningen, the Netherlands, and lastly, Accademia Riacci in Florence, Italy. She holds memberships with AIC, ECPN, as well as SERCA, and is thrilled to hold her newest position serving as a SERCA board member. She is also an active board member of the non-profit organization's Bullets and Band-aids (veterans healing through art) and Jasper Magazine (a multidisciplinary arts organization). Laura lives with her husband, their dog, and two cats, and aside from her passion for conservation, she is an avid painter, enjoys gardening, and strumming the ukulele.

Member at Large: Tahe Zalal - Tahe Zalal has worked in the field of paper and vellum conservation since 1999 and is a Professional Associate with AIC. In 2015, Tahe transitioned into an outreach role and now travels throughout the US, serving as an advocate for preservation and conservation by advising museum, library, and archive professionals on caring for their institutions' collections. She enthusiastically shares her expertise with every kind of organization, from volunteer-run historic sites to large collecting institutions. In addition to her exciting new position on the SERCA board, she is also a proud board member of Preservation Greensboro, Inc.

President: Michelle Savant - Michelle is a returning board member, previously serving as Vice President.

Member at Large, Scholarship Coordinator: Julie Newton - Julie ran unopposed and remains our scholarship coordinator.

Thank You, Gwen Spicer!!

Her recent book, [Magnetic Mounting Systems for Museums & Cultural Institutions](#) is available now!

Gwen is a Textile, Upholstery, Paper, and Objects conservator and full-time principal of Spicer Art Conservation LLC. Find her [here](#)



Spring 2020 Leonora Weaver Scholarship Recipients

To become better acquainted with some of the 2020 Leonora Weaver Scholarship Recipients, we asked them a few questions about their conservation backgrounds and their experiences at this year's annual meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina:

- How did you become interested in conservation?

- How did this year's service project stretch your skills? Did you discover a new interest?
- What was the biggest takeaway from your SERCA Annual Meeting experience?

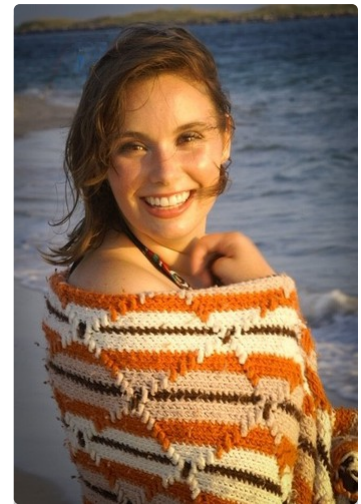
Sara Lanham: Conservation was on my radar during college, but after school, my career flowed naturally into a quest to work with my hands in lots of different ways. The arts and crafts figured in that, as did farming, gardening, artisan baking, and even working with animals. (Note: drawing blood from belligerent cats fosters some very fine hand skills.) In contemplating my next chapter, I realized that over the years I've built my own unique conservation toolkit and should consider putting that to use.

As a first-timer, I knew this year's service project at the SERCA meeting would be new and fun. I got to dip my toe into working with textiles with Paige [Myers], Mariela [Barrantes], and Michelle [Leung]. That's a specialization I hadn't been able to engage with directly yet, and need to investigate further.

One takeaway from our meeting has been a store of momentum that may help to sustain me through the uncertainties of the pandemic and its aftermath. The harsh reality is that the urgency of keeping the lights on and food in the fridge can pull us away from pursuing what we'd most like to be doing on the clock. It's unclear what the coming months will bring, but the meeting will be a touchstone to help me stay connected with the forward trajectory I'd begun. I'm very happy to have that!

Jessica Cosmas: A museum and art enthusiast since childhood, I was drawn to the conservation field as a young adult. I saw conservation as an opportunity to preserve the catalyst of inspiration that cultural sites often provide.

My current position as a collections specialist at the Museum of the Albemarle (MOA) in Elizabeth City, North Carolina allows me to perform basic preservation tasks like surface cleaning of objects and environmental monitoring. I was excited to expand on these skills during the community outreach session at the Mordecai House. I partnered with Matt Johnson to treat mildewed books recently removed from the 18th Century home. Without a HEPA vacuum, we had to remediate the contaminated books with 70% isopropyl alcohol, cotton balls, and paper towels. Luckily, it was a mild, sunny day and we had ample ventilation on the porch of the site's visitor's center. I enjoyed learning from Matt and practicing this technique.



Treating objects without access to electricity, and only basic supplies is the perfect occasion to hone collections triage skills -- a necessity when working at a museum like MOA, which sits on the hurricane-plagued Carolina Coast. Meeting more experienced conservators and discussing the profession with them, as well as with other early-career participants, was the most impactful experience of the conference. Now as an official SERCA member, I hope to further cultivate these relationships in order to develop my collections care knowledge.



Andy Gabrysiak: My interest in conservation comes primarily from my past two years as an art handler at the North Carolina Museum of Art where I work closely with the talented staff in the conservation department, collaborating on transportation and housing methods. Much of the work the NCMA conservators do informs my approach to art handling which includes packing, transporting, installation, and collection storage care. Prior to the SERCA meeting I had used magnets in exhibition settings for mounting textiles and unframed works on paper. It was interesting to see all of the other ways magnets are being used in conservation as well as in an area that is more directly related to my current role - for use in creating housing for objects in storage as an alternative to twill tape, velcro, and adhesives.

Having worked with neodymium magnets before I felt that my solutions were overly reliant on experimentation, but was relieved to learn that even experienced conservators rely as much on experimentation as they do calculations to estimate the strength between an object and magnet. I certainly feel more confident in using magnets after having formal training in the properties and theory behind their use.

Photo Courtesy the North Carolina Museum of Art

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Spring 2020 Professional Development Opportunity Grant Recipients

Clara Gonzalez will be attending the upcoming book and paper conservation workshop series hosted by the Georgia Archives and Big River Bindery.

Kim Norman will be writing a chapter for the next edition of [Suave Mechanicals](#), Volume 7, describing her treatment of the two oldest Torahs in North America, located in Savannah, Georgia. The grant will support travel to Savannah to photograph the Torahs appropriately for print publication.

Joanne Klaar Walker will be attending this year's AIC meeting, now being offered virtually.

* These plans were made prior to COVID-19, as things are rescheduled we hope to provide updates on their opportunities.*

Membership Experiences & Opportunities



5 Questions for Eva Sander-Conwell

How did you choose conservation as a career?

When I graduated from high school, I was clueless as to what I wanted to be when I grew up. Luckily, my father recognized that some of my interests and skills might be a good fit for a career in conservation and suggested that I look into it. After visiting various conservation labs in Germany, some of them highly specialized, I decided that archaeological conservation was where I could see myself fitting in. Since moving to the US, however, most of my work has been historical objects and outdoor sculpture.

How did you learn of SERCA?

I cannot remember, but I was a member from the very beginning. Having moved to Chattanooga, TN a few years previously, with no colleagues nearby, I was thrilled to learn about the founding of a regional conservators group.

What has been some of your most memorable treatments?

Probably the ones that didn't go quite as planned, but I won't go into those. Instead, I would say probably one of the projects where I had to treat a wide range of materials and objects, all of which belonged together. For example, a set of 9 miniature rooms, the Thorne Rooms at the Knoxville Museum of Art, where I was dealing with all materials and objects that you would find in a real house and household, just tiny and quite deteriorated. There were even gardens with bushes made of some real evergreen plant material, that was sadly drooping and fragile.

Recently, I completed several hundred objects from the former K-25 uranium enrichment facility in Oak Ridge, TN. From delicate scientific instruments to a large, fire engine-like vehicle, much of it was cleaning and there were some repairs. The cleaning was challenging, as many objects were extremely dirty, and often painted or made of plastics. There were some hilarious moments, for example, when I, as a non-US citizen, could do some gentle cleaning of a bombsight [a device used by military aircraft to drop bombs accurately] only after numerous amounts of paperwork and clearances, and, even then, only in the presence of two designated observers. Never mind that this type of bombsight was last used in the Vietnam War and is available on eBay for anyone to buy. Construction drawings and a how-to-use video are available on the Internet, in case you were wondering...

What has been your biggest regret professionally?

I don't really have any big regrets, but I should confess that back when I was an archaeological conservator working on excavations, I

Sadly those never materialized, and instead I was putting together endless parades of pots and cleaning small bronze objects, such as coins and tools. The excavations and their locations, however, were very interesting, so I don't regret going.

What tool or supply do you still guard with your life?

I have small, flexible steel spatulas (plaster tools) from Tiranti, bought in England in the 1980s, unsurpassed in shape and flexibility. You can still buy them, but I cannot guarantee that the quality would be exactly the same.

*

Determining Paper Weight Without a Scale

By Stephanie Watkins [Senior conservator of fine art, artifacts, manuscripts, and photographs on paper; Owner, Watkins Conservation Services, LLC, located in the Atlanta metro area]

This article presents a quick and easy way to estimate paper-size-appropriate solution volume to reduce time and treatment costs by preparing only what is needed. For paper conservators, knowing the weight of any paper to be treated can inform solution recipe batch amounts, important when proportional, optimally pH balanced, scalable recipes and complex cleaning solutions (e.g. chelators, enzymes, surfactants, reducing or bleaching agents, among other things) are used.



Weighing paper on a scale is the easiest, direct approach to getting this data. Measurements will include the media on the paper of art and historic artifacts, of course, but this is a tiny added weight in most cases. Yet, how can paper be weighed when it is substantially bigger than the scale? Few paper conservators have, or have access to, a large enough scale of sufficient sensitivity.

In this discussion as in our lives, we think of mass and weight as interchangeable. If the paper has a watermark, information regarding that paper can sometimes be found online. Office and specialty art paper manufacturers and suppliers often list density of paper in either grammage (weight per size) or basis weight (mass per unit area). For example, a typical watercolor paper is "140 lb" (imperial pound) or "300 g/m²" (also gsm, both grams per square meter). As these measurements are calculated using a "full sized sheet" (this dimension varies between classification types of papers) in a ream (traditionally also a variable range, but more commonly standardized to 500 sheets), and if the artifact to be treated is a portion of that full-sized sheet, further calculations are necessary to determine more closely the specific weight of the paper to be treated. With this information in hand, conservation solutions can be proportionally scaled to the correct volumes.

How does a conservator get data when the paper to be treated is too big to weigh on a scale, does not have a watermark traceable to the grammage or basis weight, or is otherwise "unknown"? With a rough idea of thickness and type of paper, and a surface area calculation (i.e. height multiplied by width), the mass of any paper can be guesstimated from a plot of known paper grammage vs. surface area in a graph. Graphs provide easy visual guides toward determining proper solution size.

For example, a sample graph was made using Microsoft Excel® software program and JAM® Paper and Envelope company's online marketing "Paper Weight Chart" data listing common office and stationery paper types with their g/m² weights tabulated with a thickness dimension. The JAM Company's Paper Weight Chart and data can be found at <https://www.jampaper.com/paper-weight-chart.asp>. Used here as an educational example, the accuracy of the data was checked against a collection of 4"x4" sample squares of various papers that also provided additional data points.

On the graph below, the colored diagonal lines represent routinely encountered papers and their dimensions:

- Lightweight (orange dotted line, weight Japanese papers conservators routinely use)
- Medium weight (blue solid line, art printmaking papers) and
- Heavy weight (red dot/dash line, 140 lb/300 g/m² watercolor papers)
- Super heavy weight (green dash line, 300 lb/640 g/m² watercolor papers).

The horizontal axis is the calculated square centimeter (cm²) surface area of the sheet. Knowing the cm² of the sheet, draw a line up to the approximate paper basis weight line (perceived paper type). From the intersection of those two lines, draw a horizontal line over to the left vertical axis for the mass (aka "weight"). Multiply the paper mass by 100ml of solution to determine the approximate quantity needed for each bath for optimal, effective treatment.

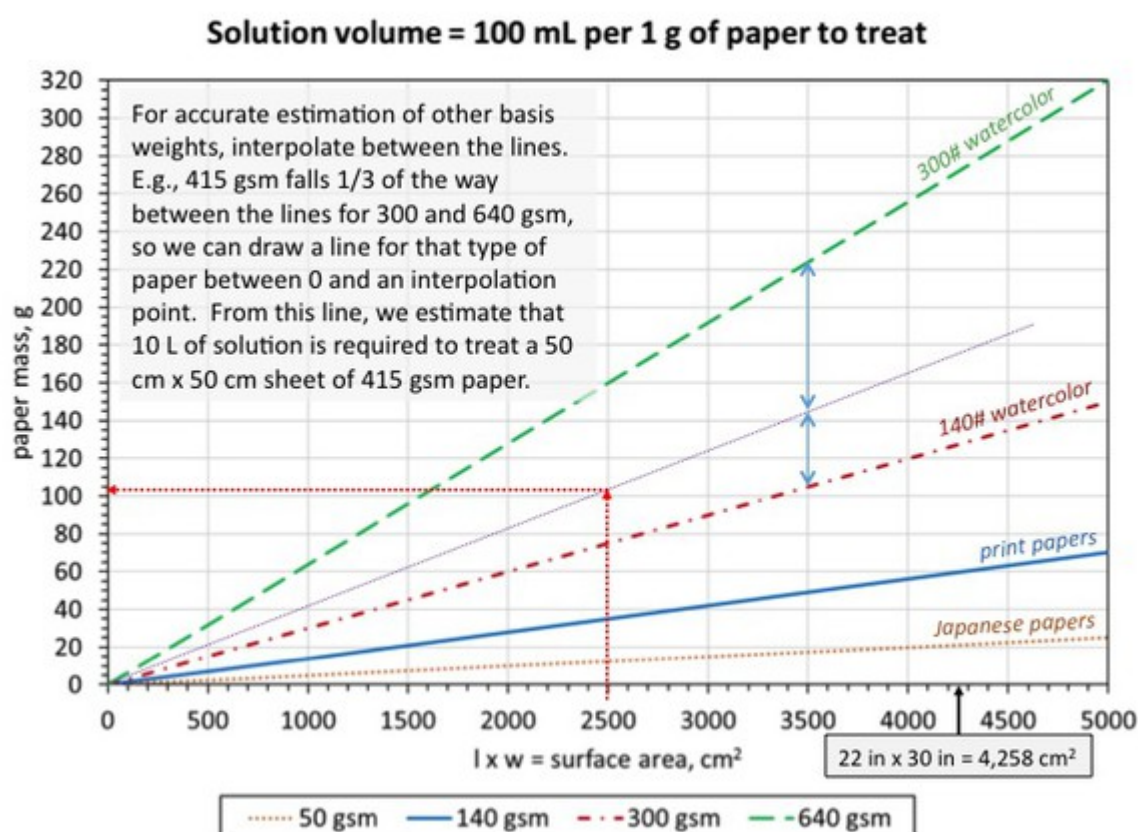


Chart by C. L. Verrill March 2019

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On the second graph below, using the paper types from the previous graph, the basis weight lines to larger surface areas were extrapolated out to estimate even larger papers.

This chart represents a wider range of paper dimension.

Solution volume = 100 mL per 1 g of paper to treat

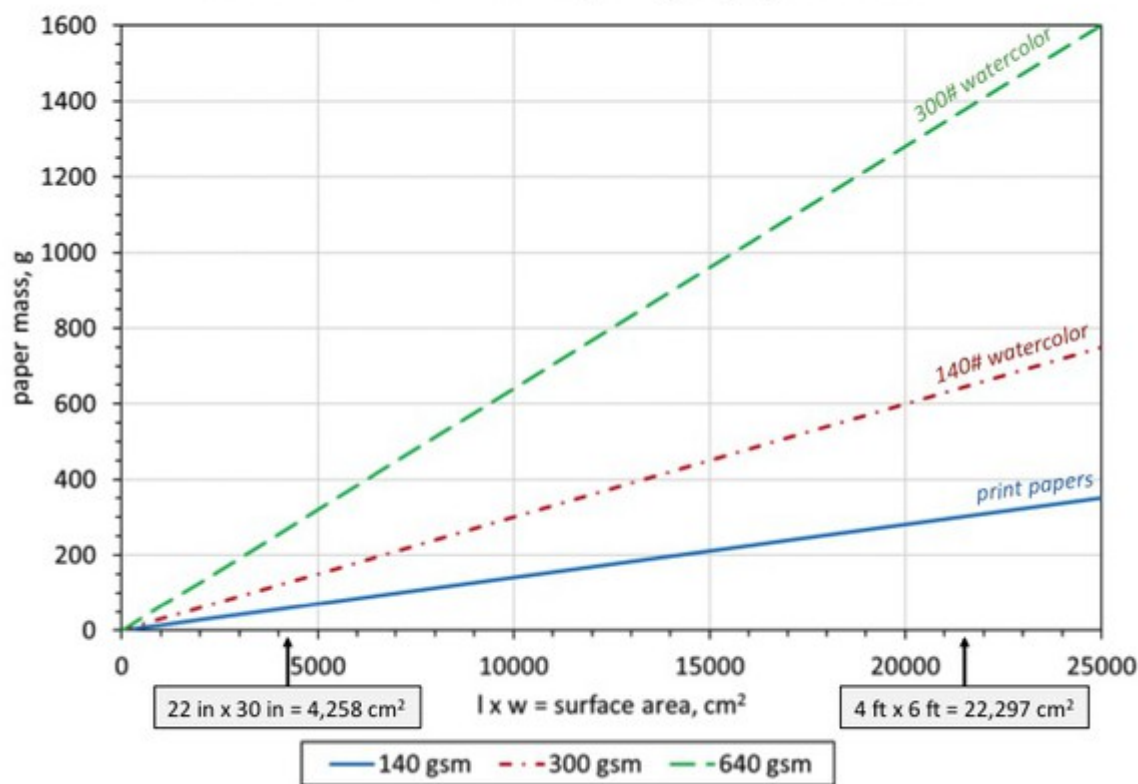


Chart by C. L. Verrill March 2019

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The manufacturing process as well as different paper pulp types and furnish additives (fillers, sizing or coatings) in conjunction with thickness will determine overall density and mass of any paper. However, thickness is not an absolute determinate of mass, so taking micrometer caliper readings is not required to use these graphs.

As approximations, this process has an error of perhaps $\pm 20\%$ as the evaluation of the paper type and thickness relies on the judgment of the conservator. Therefore, the more skilled and experienced the conservator is in evaluating the paper before them, the less the potential error. Still, the inherent error is likely within a reasonable range for making conservation solutions when taking conductivity into account. Otherwise, it's back to complex grammage or basis weight calculations or "winging it" with the possibility of making too little solution, thereby risking incomplete cleaning and wasting time having to make more, or making too much and wasting resources.

The author gratefully thanks Dr. Christopher L. Verrill, chemical engineer in the papermaking industry, with his assistance in reviewing the concept and preparing the Excel graphs.

Membership

Now Accepting Payments ONLINE via PayPal!

Renewing your membership is even easier without having to worry about mailing in those pesky checks!! You will also be able to register and pay for workshops online. Please be sure to submit **BOTH** the registration form *and* the payment. If you haven't already renewed, please do so today. Please spread the word to your colleagues!

Visit our website for more details: <https://sercaconservation.org/membership/>

Find a Conservator

If you would like to be included on the [Find a Conservator](#) page of the SERCA website, please contact: Rachel Penniman, Member-at-large/Website Guru rachel.penniman@duke.edu

Newsletter Submissions

Working on an interesting project? Have an internship or job opening to share? Let us know what's going on in your studio! Items for inclusion in the newsletter should be directed to both Newsletter Editors:

Ephranette Brown

ephranette.brown@emory.edu

Tracey Johnson

tracey.johnson@usg.edu

SERCA's Newsletter is published three times a year in April, August, and December. Please note that articles should be sent at least two weeks prior to publication and should not exceed 750 words. Also, there should be no more than 4 accompanying images in jpeg format. The editors reserve the right to copy-edit in order to fit available space.

Next Issue: August 2020

Deadline for Submissions: July 15, 2020




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