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## From the Desk of the Communications Coordinator



Hello from the desk of the  
Communications Coordinator!

We hope you all have made it safely  
through hurricane season and are staying  
nice and warm as we head towards the  
winter months. I'm happy to bring you all  
some updates and reminders as we finish  
out the year and head towards our annual  
meeting.

Firstly, it's that time of year again to renew  
your SERCA Membership! As usual, dues are \$25 and provide  
registration through December 2025. You can renew by filling out  
the form online here [SERCA 2025 Membership Renewal](https://sercaconservation.org/membership/) or by  
going to our website <https://sercaconservation.org/membership/>.  
While on the website, please consider donating to the Lenora  
Weaver Scholarship Fund. Every year we offer the Leonora  
Weaver Scholarship, intended especially to help young and/or  
emerging members to cover the cost of attending the SERCA  
Annual Meeting. We accept contributions to our scholarships fund  
year-round on the SERCA website using the DONATE button, and  
I wanted to make this opportunity more visible to everyone who  
may be interested in chipping in—you can choose your preferred  
donation method and donate however much you'd like, as every  
bit helps!

Lastly, we are currently busy preparing the schedule for the  
SERCA Annual Meeting Bridging the Gaps: Practical and  
Theoretical Approaches to Loss Compensation. We've received a  
wide variety of submissions for member-led presentations across

(continued on page 3)



## Board Members

## Board Positions Available



May the holiday season fill  
your days with warmth  
and cheer, and the coming year  
bring you more joy, success, and  
surprises than you expect  
(or even deserve).  
With our warmest wishes,  
The SERCA Team.

### PRESIDENT

Shannon Kimbro

### VICE PRESIDENT

Eliza Gillian

### SECRETARY

Sara Latham

### TREASURER

Brittany Dinneen

### COMMUNICATIONS COORD.

Katie Boodle

### NEWSLETTER COORD.

Amparo Escolano

### HEALTH & SAFETY COORD.

Katie Etre

### MEMBER AT LARGE

Tahe Zalal

Dear SERCA Members,

As our organization continues to grow, we're thrilled to invite dedicated members like you to join our Board of Directors. At our 2025 meeting, we will have openings for Vice President, Secretary, and Communications Coordinator, and we would love to hear from those of you who are eager to step into a leadership role and help shape the future of SERCA.

A strong, diverse Board of Directors is essential for our ongoing success. By joining, you'll have the opportunity to make a meaningful impact, collaborate with fellow members, and drive the direction of our community. Each board position brings unique responsibilities: The Vice President supports the President in guiding SERCA's vision and assists with planning and executing the Annual Meeting. The Secretary is responsible for maintaining official records, keeping minutes, and handling correspondence to ensure the smooth operation of the organization. The Communications Coordinator focuses on developing communication strategies, and fostering member engagement to keep our community well-connected and informed.

If you're interested in any of these positions or would like to discuss other future opportunities on the board, please reach out to [president@sercaconservation.org](mailto:president@sercaconservation.org). We'd be delighted to explore how your talents can enrich our leadership team.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to contribute to SERCA's future. Your passion and dedication are what make our organization thrive, and we look forward to the possibility of working together to continue our growth and success.

Warm regards,

**The SERCA Board**





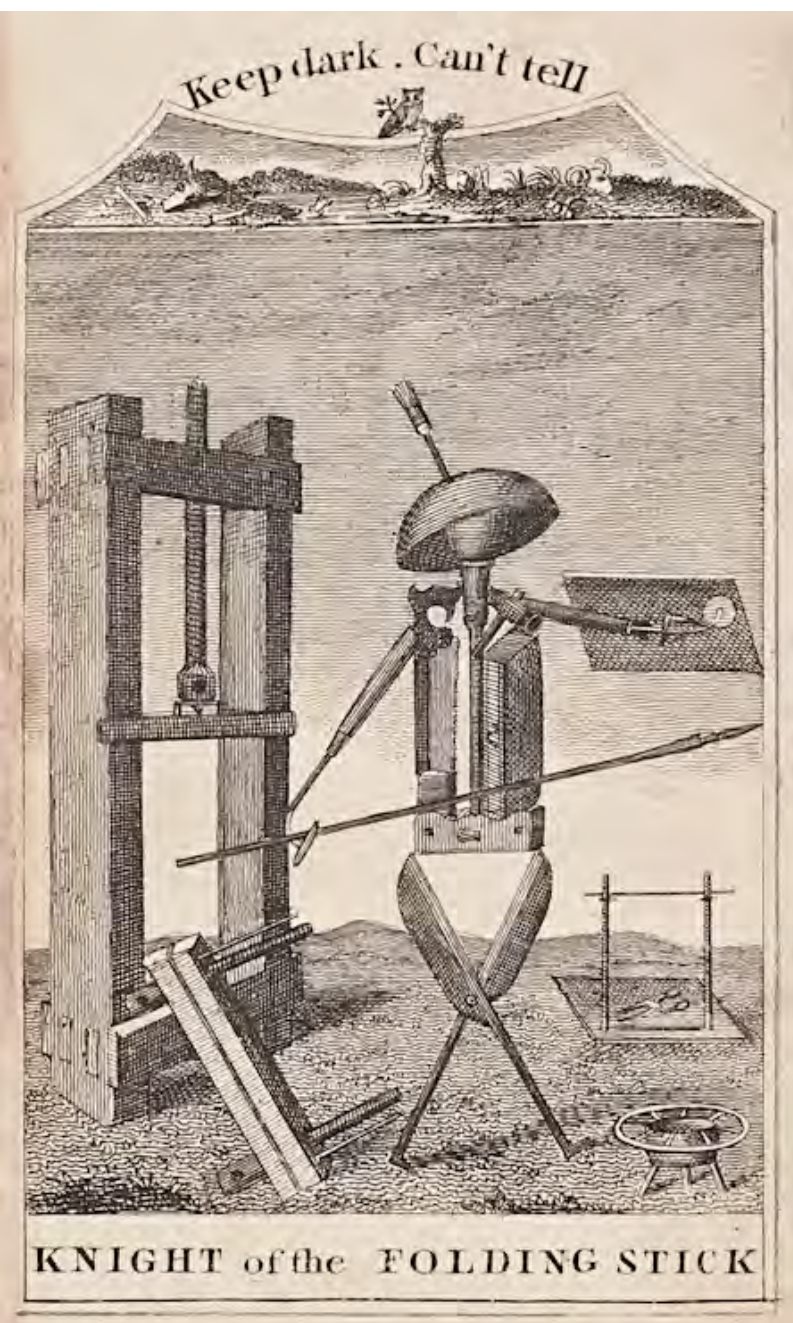
As you may have seen, the meeting will be at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA March 7-9, 2025. We're excited to invite up to 12 students who are a part of the AUC Art Collective program —representing Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College—to engage with conservators and learn more about the field. We invite you to contribute to a special, one-time fund to help SERCA support the registration of these students. You can make a donation by using this link [https://www.paypal.com/donate/?](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=P7ZXRQZ2NY2TC) hosted button id=P7ZXRQZ2NY2TC or

*Kathryn Boodle is a Senior Conservator with the Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, MA.*

<https://sercaconservation.org/serca-newsletters/>



## Crafting the Conservator's Touch: A Week with Jeff Peachey



*This frontispiece from John Bradford's The Poetical Vagaries of the Knight of the Folding Stick consists of a bookbinder made entirely out of bookbinding tools.*

During the week of October 7-11, the Emory Libraries Conservation Lab, SERCA, and the Guild of Book Workers-Southeast Chapter

(GBW-SE) hosted and co-sponsored internationally known book conservator and toolmaker Jeff Peachey for a fantastic workshop. Conservation Tools: Making, Modifying, and Maintaining drew twelve participants from as far as Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Maryland. Jeff Peachey explained to the group that most interventive conservation treatments are mediated through hand tools, many of which have their origin in particular craft traditions. Conservators often modify their tools for specific uses, and they become embodied in the use as extensions of a conservator's hand, sense of touch, and intention. Jeff likes to say that personal hand tools often become prized arrows in a conservator's quiver.

Over the five-day workshop, Jeff emphasized simple, safe methods of working hardened tool steel, stainless steel, Delrin, wood, and bamboo. He introduced progressively more difficult techniques during the week, primarily showing us how to use our own hand tools to make new and different ones. Jeff emphasized choosing materials appropriate to the desired task, including tools for cutting, folding, prying,



Kirsten Wehner's (Emory Libraries) various workshop supplies, like those provided to each participant





*Jeff Peachey, demonstrating a technique for workshop participants*

delaminating, lifting, scraping, and burnishing. All of us worked closely to plan additional events that complemented our activities of the week. These included a behind-the-scenes tour of the Georgia Tech - Robert C. Williams Museum of Papermaking, with appreciation to Director Virginia Howell and Emory Libraries retired conservator and longtime SERCA member Ann Frellsen. We made an afternoon trip to Highland Woodworking for a tool survey and purchases, plus various group lunches and dinners.

In a well-attended, public presentation on our final afternoon, Jeff traced the life of John Bradford and interpreted his bookbinding-centric poetry. Bradford was a lifelong journeyman

bookbinder in early 19th-century New York City, remarkable for his idiosyncratic, self-published book of poetry, *The Poetical Vagaries of the Knight of the Folding Stick of Paste-Castle and The History of the Garrett* (1815). Bradford's poems are fun, and his book is the earliest American description of bookbinding written by

*Bryan Draper (University of Maryland), taking a turn at leather sewing*



an actual bookbinder. Only twelve copies are known to exist, and they are all heavily consulted. Bradford's bookbinding infuses his mythopoetic cosmology in this seriously weird book, with parts even written in hieroglyphics. The Binder's Curse is his most well-known poem. We read the poem as a group at the end of Jeff's presentation.

Participants completed about a dozen tools of their own design during this workshop with the additional opportunity to modify and repair some of the existing tools that they brought. One of Jeff's goals was to free participants from the plethora of misinformation and mystique that surrounds sharpening and teach fundamental freehand techniques. Our group agreed by the end of our productive week that making tools was engaging, fun, and extraordinarily useful, not to mention highly addictive.

For a full description of Jeff Peachey's workshops and handcrafted tools for sale, please visit his websites.

Consider co-sponsoring an event with SERCA. It is a great way to benefit and raise awareness for all organizations involved!

Kim Norman

*Kim Norman is the Director of the Preservation and Digitization Services at Emory Libraries, Atlanta, GA. (kim.norman@emory.edu), Photo credits: Kim Norman*



(L to R) Bryan Draper (University of Maryland), Jeff Peachey, and Tracey Johnson (Georgia Archives), sharpening a tool on an electric grinder

## Sustainable Conservation in Focus: A Journey to IIC Congress 2024

The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) holds a Congress every two years in various locations around the globe. In September 2024, the IIC Congress was held in Lima, Peru, the organization's first-time hosting in South America. When the call for abstracts was released, I was in the middle of a fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), focusing on the care of archaeological silver, particularly working with artifacts from the North of Peru. The setting of the congress, and the theme, "Sustainable Solutions for Conservation," aligned so well with my research, and luckily my abstract was accepted. While the option for online presentation is available for this hybrid event, it was important to me to visit Peru: to see the archaeological collections within Peruvian museums and to connect and learn from local professionals. Luckily through generous support from the SERCA Professional Development Opportunity Grant, IIC's Brommelle Memorial Fund scholarship, and the NMAI, I was able to travel to Lima and attend the conference in person.

The conference venue was Universidad de Ingeniería y Tecnología, or UTEC, a beautifully modern



campus teeming with brilliant young engineers. This was the perfect setting for five full days of information sharing and round-table conversations about the intertwined future of the field of conservation and that of our planet. The session I presented in was titled “Greener Treatments and Materials;” it covered topics from ancient, corroded iron to modern outdoor sculpture. My research looked directly at long term care and preservation of archaeological silver, specifically evaluating coating systems in a practical manner. Instead of using pristine samples of homogeneous materials and perfect mechanical application of coatings, I opted to create more representative samples of an alloy similar to the archaeological silver artifacts, and testing the application of coatings more akin to common practice in the field. The conclusion of the research was that passive systems are safer, more effective, and more sustainable than coating systems. The presentation was well received, and the nature of this type of experimentation was well-met. The international nature of the congress prompted many conversations about availability, or lack thereof, of specific materials due



Stephanie Guidera presenting "A Study of Protective Coatings for Archaeological Silver" at IIC Congress 2024 in Lima, Peru.  
Photo Credit: Caitlin Mahony



to national regulations and cost, so nuanced thinking about materials was welcome. Throughout the congress, preventive conservation and sustainable practices were continually discussed. All aspects of sustainability, including environmental considerations, individual and social welfare, and cultural autonomy were explored. Presentations also touched on remote cultural heritage, where resources and skilled workers are few. UTEC, with its fully open-air campus, served as a grounding reminder of alternate environments, and the real-time automated captioning and translation expanded accessibility for all attendees. In this way, a broader, more diverse community was established, and ideas for cross institutional and international cooperation were formed. The IIC has increased the success of its hybrid format particularly with implementation of Digital Engagement Volunteers (DEVs). The DEVs monitor the online chat and bring forward questions during the live Q&A portion and write summary blogs of each session. The excellent summary of the “Greener Treatments and Materials” session can be found here: <https://www.iiconservation.org/congress/lima/blog/greener-treatments-and-materials-2>. Additionally, the paper accompanying this presentation was published in *Studies in Conservation*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00393630.2024.2336810>. I am very honored to have been involved in this IIC Congress and am so appreciative to SERCA for the financial support.

Stephanie Guidera

*Stephanie Guidera is an Objects Conservator at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, NC.*

## Newsletter Submissions: Don't Be Shy—Share Your Expertise!

I know, I know... submitting an article might seem like a big step, especially if you're thinking, "What do I have to share?" But here's the secret: everyone in our community has valuable insights, techniques, or even simple tricks of the trade that can inspire others. And we want to hear from you! Still on the fence? Let me sweeten the deal:

**Increase Your Visibility:** Did you know that your article can include links to your personal website or portfolio? This can drive traffic to your page and boost your SEO visibility. Who doesn't want a few more clicks and visitors?

**Enhance Your Professional Profile:** Even though we're a smaller publication, at the end of the day, it's still a professional publication! Including your contributions on platforms like LinkedIn or your CV can give your profile that extra edge, especially when looking for new job opportunities or showcasing your expertise to clients.

So, whether you have a groundbreaking project, a small tip that made a big difference, or a reflection on your recent work, we'd love for you to share it. Don't be shy—your voice is what makes our newsletter diverse and valuable!

Looking forward to seeing your name (and your article) in our next edition!

Best regards,

Amparo Escolano, SERCA Newsletter Coordinator [newsletter@sercaconservation.org](mailto:newsletter@sercaconservation.org)

*SERCA's Newsletter is usually published three times a year in April, August, and December. Please note that articles should be sent at least two weeks prior to publication. Also, even if there is no limit on the number of images, 4 to 6 accompanying images in jpeg format are recommended. The editors reserve the right to copy-edit in order to adapt it to the newsletter format.*



## A Project with Purr-sonality; Treatment of the Key Marco Cat Marco Island, FL

This past fall, RLA's Miami Conservation team carried out treatment of the cast bronze Key Marco Cat sculpture at the Marco Island Historical Society. The sculpture, commissioned by the Historical Society in 2009, is based on a small wooden anthropomorphic Calusa figure. This 500- 1,500-year-old artifact was found on the island in 1896 by anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing and is currently in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History.

The 6-foot-tall bronze sculpture by local artist Carl Wagner was originally cast in silicon bronze and painted and sealed using an Axalta Imron® paint system. After years of direct exposure to

*Original Key Marco Cat figure. Courtesy of the Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution (A240195).*



*Elena Bowen and Emily Rojas work to strip the failing paint layers. (right) Nicola Macdonald and Emily Rojas apply a chemical patina to the sculpture. Images courtesy of the Marco Island Historical Society.*

sunlight, wind, rain, salts, and a direct hit in 2017 by Hurricane Irma, the sculpture's coating began to exhibit pitting and surface loss. In 2020, the sculpture was stripped and repainted in a paint system similar to the original system by a team of local artists. Although the Historical Society was carrying out maintenance of the sculpture 2-3 per year, the paint system began to show signs of failure from exposure to the elements.

In July 2024, RLA Associate Conservator Elena Bowen traveled to Marco Island to assess the current condition of the sculpture and develop a new conservation treatment plan. In discussions with the Historical Society, it was decided to pursue a patina and wax finish for the sculpture instead of a new paint system. Prior to mobilizing for the project, RLA developed a mockup for a deep red-brown chemical patina for approval by the Historical Society.

On site, RLA's process began with stripping the failing layers of clear coat and paint and preparing the surface for patination. Over the course of two weeks the RLA team, consisting of Conservators

Elena Bowen and Nicole Macdonald and Conservation Technician Emily Rojas, carefully built up the deep red-brown chemical patina; finishing off the sculpture with a protective hot wax and sacrificial cold wax. The surface now has a wood-like appearance that plays up the original tool markings and texture of the cast bronze sculpture.

Many thanks to the Marco Island Historical Society team for a successful project!

Elena Bowen

*Elena Bowen is a Conservator at RLA Conservation Art+Architecture - Miami-Fort Lauderdale Area*

*Overall of the sculpture before, during, and after treatment.*



## Managing Stress or How to NOT Throw Your Conservation Project Out a Window



By Kathryn Etre

This time of year tends to be stressful. Add holidays and politics into the typical stresses of work, family...being an adult...and you have a powder keg waiting to explode. Stress is normal but can cause a variety of immediate as well as major long-term issues. All of these issues can affect our lives negatively.

Stress can cause physical, mental, and emotional issues. Physically, stress

can cause tension headaches, back pain, and indigestion. Mentally, stress can lead to poor concentration and indecisiveness. Emotionally, stress can also lead to irritability, edginess, and depression. In addition to the concentration loss and indecisiveness being an issue in conducting a conservation treatment, stress can disrupt the neural pathways involved in motor control. This disruption can trigger a decline in dexterity and precision. However, there are things that we can do to reduce and manage stress.

### Take Breaks

Removing yourself from the situation, even for a short time, will allow you to refocus. Take a walk, work on a different project, read that next chapter, listen to your favorite song. Any action that breaks your concentration on that stressful situation will







Take control

allow that stress to lessen.

### **Exercise**

Exercise releases endorphins into your system. Endorphins are the 'feel good' hormones, which will help to combat stress. Any exercise will release these endorphins, even a short work around your workplace. So go get your endorphin rush!

### **Sleep**

Ideally, adults should get 7 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night. Lack of sleep will worsen the negative issues caused by stress, making a stressful situation even more stressful. Brew yourself some chamomile tea, take some melatonin, any way you can –healthily- get the rest your

body needs.

### **Relax**

Stress can cause your mind and emotions to whirl into chaos. Relaxation, especially guided relaxation, can help you find your center and still the mental chaos. Even if you cannot take a class, there are many good yoga and guided mediation videos on-line. Breathe and Namaste.

### **Take Control**

Taking control, even slightly, in a stressful situation can be empowering. Humans tend to be goal orientated so set yourself small goals and concentrate on productive tasks. These goals and tasks do not need to be centered around the current cause of the stress. The feeling of accomplishment in completing any goal yourself will help to combat the negativity from stress.

### **Gather Your Networks**

Feeling support from your various networks can make a large problem seem smaller. These networks can help to find solutions, lend a sympathetic ear, give you a needed hug, or even make you laugh. These networks can be friends, family, or even colleagues. Remember your SERCA tribe is always here for you.

### **Avoid Unhealthy Habits**

In a stressful situation, you might feel tempted to reach for that third glass of wine and the rest of the chocolate bar. However, unhealthy habits, such as alcohol, smoking caffeine, or comfort food will only provide temporary relief. Over reliance on these unhealthy habits can cause long-term problems, which will lead to additional stress. We do not want to be battling unhealthy habits but the issues caused by these habits as well.

### **Counseling**

Counseling is always an option in any situation. An outside, neutral ear can help you to find solutions, acceptance, and/or your center when other methods are not working. Many large institutions may have an Employee (or Workplace) Assistance Program that provide such counseling. There are also many on-line options, such as BetterHelp and Talkspace, which provide





inexpensive counseling. Counseling can help to provide the tools you need to handle stressful situations.

Stress happens. We cannot always control the stress that comes into our lives but we can control how we handle the stress. Do not get discouraged. It's a process but even a slight reduction of stress can vastly improve your life both personally and professionally.

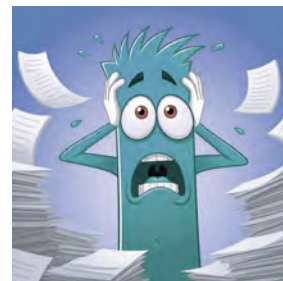
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## Happy Hour!



SERCA hosted a Happy Hour in October for Atlanta-based members, bringing members together for a casual evening of connection and conversation. We hope to organize more regional Happy Hours in the future! If you're interested in planning one for your area and would like assistance, please contact Shannon Douglas Kimbro at [president@sercaconservation.org](mailto:president@sercaconservation.org). Let's keep strengthening our community!

