

MARIA DA CONCEIÇÃO LOPES CASANOVA

What do We Need? Education, Ethics, New Values or a Different Perception for the Profession?

Abstract

This paper focuses on the evolution of the work carried out in the first paper and book conservation workshop established in Portugal around 1965, as a starting point for a reflection on the profession and the kind of training with which the next generation should be provided. This workshop was established by Feliz de Barros, who, like many paper conservators around the world in this period, was initially trained as a bookbinder. Following a brief history of paper conservation in Portugal, the life and work of Barros' workshop will be analyzed as to constitute a reference against which the above mentioned reflection will be carried out. Today the training of a paper conservator-restorer encompasses knowledge ranging from the exact and natural sciences to the humanities and social sciences, but it also requires a high level of expertise in the arts and crafts. In effect, understanding the interdisciplinary character of conservation is crucial to define the kind of training which conservators and in particular paper conservators should have. I argue, however, that the only way to proceed is the creation of various profiles within the discipline of paper conservation as a means of effectively promoting the profession and achieving the highest expertise, rather than expecting that a single professional can master all the dimensions involved in his profession.