

Asociación para la Conservación  
del Patrimonio Cultural de las Americas  
*Association for the Conservation  
of the Cultural Patrimony of the Americas*

ABSTRACT

APOYO is an informal group of international volunteers (started in 1989) with the mission of supporting the conservation and preservation of the material cultural patrimony of the Americas. It has created a communications network and produces a newsletter in Spanish on conservation issues, published biannually, and a directory of individuals and institutions. It has a website <<http://imaginario.org.ar/apoyo/home.htm>> where all past issues can be found, and it has links to other conservation/preservation websites. It has depended for financial support on the voluntary contributions of many individuals, on the professional groups of the AIC, and on the generosity of several institutions (SCMRE, ICCROM, Vitae Foundation).

THE APOYO MISSION

APOYO is an informal group of international members with the mission of supporting the conservation and preservation of the material cultural patrimony of the Americas. It was started in 1989 by interested members of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) but has functioned independently. It has depended for financial support on the voluntary contributions of many individuals, on the professional groups of the AIC, and on the generosity of several large institutions.

THE APOYO GOALS

- To create and nurture cohesive bonds among the conservation and preservation professionals worldwide

who are involved in the conservation of the material cultural patrimony of the Americas.

- To promote high standards for the protection of the material cultural patrimony of the Americas.
- To gather and disseminate information on conservation and preservation for the Latin American community in its native languages.

STRATEGIES

In 1989 we determined through surveys and personal communications that the most pressing need in Latin America was for technical publications in Spanish and Portuguese, as well as information about professional meetings and training opportunities. We sent a survey to one hundred twenty professionals in several countries of Latin America. We received an eighty-five percent rate of response (thirty-five percent is considered good and validates a survey). Of the respondents, ninety-five percent indicated the need for professional and technical information in Spanish and Portuguese was the most pressing need.

To meet this need, the immediate objective was to promote and accelerate the exchange of information on conservation and preservation issues. APOYO has promoted this exchange through an outreach program that has had the following strategies:

- First we identified colleagues in Latin America and the Caribbean. Through word of mouth we started to collect names of conservators and other individuals involved in collections care and other material culture conservation activities.
- Then we integrated them into a communications network, a database that has grown exponentially during the past ten years.
- Then we started a newsletter to provide them with an accessible forum to present their work and current needs and to provide them periodically with timely and useful information to enhance their professional per-

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formance and to raise the overall quality of conservation in the American hemisphere.

These strategies have resulted in a network that currently includes over 4,700 conservation and preservation professionals and continues to grow. These professionals are drawn from throughout the Americas as well as Spain and other countries. In addition to this wide geographical representation, they provide ample participation from the diverse specialties involved in conservation, such as paper, library and archival materials, textiles, photographs, paintings, ethnographic objects, sculpture, metals, stone, and natural science. The network also includes other individuals in related fields, among them curators, collections managers, educators, archaeologists, and architects.

#### THE APOYO NEWSLETTER

Our main activity is the production of the *APOYO Newsletter*. Since 1990 APOYO has produced, printed, and distributed a newsletter consisting of one or two issues per year. Currently it is the only publication on conservation issues in Spanish reaching such a wide audience. It is co-edited and produced by Amparo R. de Torres and Ann Seibert, in collaboration with a group of volunteers. The volunteers identify and send to the editors material for newsletter publication such as articles, future events, training opportunities, and other news of interest. Starting in 1999 Escarlet Silva, a paintings conservator from Venezuela living in Washington D. C. temporarily, has contributed eight to ten hours a week. Thanks to her efforts we produced two *APOYO Newsletter* issues in 1999, and the new web site is almost ready.

Translations into Spanish are done by volunteers as necessary. Volunteers also process the incoming mail containing requests for names to be added to the database, and forward them to the International Center for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCRUM) in Rome. Since 1994 the printing and distribution of the newsletter has been made possible through the support of the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education (SCMRE, formerly known as CAL).

#### THE APOYO NEWSLETTER ON THE INTERNET

APOYO now has an internet website <<http://imaginario.org.ar/apoyo/home.htm>> where all the past issues of the *APOYO Newsletter* are available, as well as other publications and links to conservation related sites. The newsletter will continue to be available in hard copy as well as in electronic format. This website was created by Ruben Dario Romani, from Mendoza, Argentina, one of the recipients of the Getty Grant Program/ FAIC bursary to attend the AIC meeting in Saint Louis, Missouri, in 1998.

#### THE APOYO DIRECTORY

A directory of individuals and institutions involved in the conservation and preservation of the cultural patrimony of the Americas was published in 1996 and in 1998. Currently it is under revision for publication in 2000. This directory, the first one of its kind for Latin America, was the result of the cooperative project between the ICCROM and APOYO started in 1994. At that time the APOYO and ICCROM databases were merged and the Database Management Office of ICCROM assumed maintenance of the database. This integrated and expanded database is used both to mail the newsletter and to produce the directory. The directory also has been printed and distributed with the support of the SCMRE.

#### THE APOYO/CCI POSTER PROJECT

A translated English/Spanish version of a poster entitled *Framework for the Preservation of Museum Collections* was distributed by SCMRE free of charge to the membership in 1999. The poster was developed by the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) in 1994 and describes the preventive conservation methodology developed by the Preventive Conservation Services Division of the CCI. It is used to guide an institution in the process of doing an assessment of the agents of deterioration that threaten the collections. These agents of deterioration are ranked in descending order from the most devastating and fastest acting to the ones that will give staff more time to act. Additionally, the poster outlines the steps that must be taken to prevent deterioration of the collections. Donations to the Library of Congress of synthetic paper by Yupo Corporation of Virginia and the printing by Reese Press of Baltimore, Maryland, made this project possible.

#### APOYO TRANSLATION ACTIVITIES

APOYO's goal is to serve as a clearinghouse of information to avoid duplication of efforts in translating initiatives; since to produce a quality technical translation requires careful planning and much editing, it becomes a very expensive activity. APOYO has created a bibliographic information database of the material available in Spanish. Conservation material (mostly preventive conservation) has been collected from many different sources in Latin America, the United States, and Europe. APOYO will produce an annotated bibliography of conservation material in Spanish, with information on how to obtain each publication, to be published in the *Newsletter* as well as in the web site.

In addition the APOYO translators have contributed their expertise in several translation projects for other groups such as the American Institute for Conservation,

the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Park Service, the Smithsonian Institution, and Heritage Preservation in the U.S.A., and the Centro Nacional de Conservación y Restauración de Chile in Chile. The material translated and reviewed by APOYO has been used for teaching and other information dissemination initiatives by several organizations, among others the Getty Conservation Institute.

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#### ADDITIONAL APOYO ACTIVITIES

APOYO has worked closely with several organizations to make funding and travel bursaries available for qualified individuals to attend professional meetings. Over fifty professionals from Latin America have attended international conservation meetings in the U.S.A. and Canada. The funding has been provided by the Getty Grant Program and the Getty Conservation Institute of the U.S.A., the Vitae Foundation of Brazil, the Andes Foundation of Chile, and the Antorchas Foundation of Argentina.

APOYO has obtained funding from three important manufacturers and distributors of conservation products to establish awards for Latin American institutions. The Gaylord Award, the Metal Edge Award, and the University Products Award, each of U.S. \$1,500 are given annually to institutions that have excelled in coping with difficult circumstances in caring for their collections. The awards are given in the form of material from their catalogues. The awards include the cost of transportation of the goods to the closest port or airport to the institution receiving the award.

#### APOYO'S FUTURE

In its first ten years APOYO's impressive accomplishments have been largely due to the generous volunteer efforts of the many dedicated individuals who believe strongly in its mission. The enthusiastic reception that it has received has validated its purposes. However in the future it must seek to establish a firmer financial foundation and the cooperation of other associations in order to continue this important work toward furthering its primary goal—to remain fully committed to supporting the conservation and preservation of the material cultural patrimony of the Americas.

For more information about APOYO please contact Amparo R. de Torres or Ann Seibert at the address below.

