

opportunity to bring up issues of interest. For example, some participants asked about the possibility of turning their posters into short communications for JAIC. This kind of proposal is always welcomed by the Journal, while keeping in mind that the key word is “innovation.” Short communications can be used to present new equipment, method variations, and/or to focus on one specific detail of a larger problem. Another question was about submitting a paper to JAIC that has already appeared in OSG postprints. Here the answer was that the submission to JAIC should contain a significant development of the previously published work. The paper should be sharply focused on the topic, written for a scholarly audience, and add development to the theme if possible. There were also inquiries about the amount of scientific data content required for a treatment paper. In this regards each article is individually evaluated, but generally a treatment paper does not necessarily need to be supported by scientific work. The audience was also interested in turnaround times, which can vary significantly depending upon the quality of the work and written expression. In addition, there were specific questions about the structure, length, and content of various kinds of papers including reviews, original articles, and short communications.

After the pre-session, I had the opportunity to speak with professionals from Latin America and the Caribbean who attended the pre-session “Preservation on a Budget.” I was interested to find out that this group had similar questions to the ones addressed during our Scholarly Writing session. We hope to get more submissions from these countries in the near future. Thanks to Amparo Rueda and Beatriz Haspo for the invitation.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have work that you would like to submit to JAIC, or for any other inquiries.

- **Julio del Hoyo Meléndez, JAIC Editor in Chief, jdelhoyo@museum.krakow.pl**

Health & Safety Committee

Considerations for Conservators in the Prevention of Vision Problems

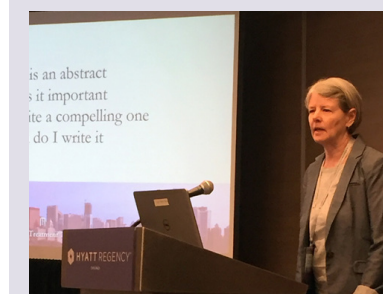
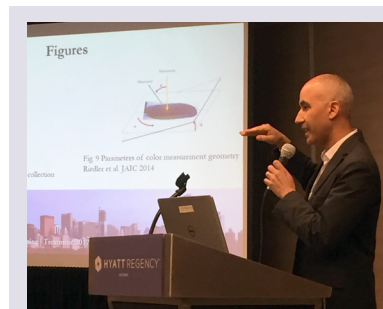
Routine eye examinations and the use of quality eyewear are standard prescriptions for vision care and protection. Increasingly, however, the integrity of the eye’s tear film and eyelid hygiene are also being recognized as critical aspects of eye health.

Lubrication of the eye is a function of tear film quality and quantity. Inadequate lubrication may indicate the presence of Dry Eye Syndrome (DES). Commonly experienced symptoms of eye discomfort such as irritation, itchiness, redness, or grittiness may have a single and/or relatively straightforward cause such as allergies or the presence of a foreign body, or may indicate a multi-factorial condition such as DES. The plethora of over-the-counter eye drop and eyelid wipe products is an indicator of the prevalence of such symptoms, often dismissed as minor or undeserving of serious attention. Like any medical condition, DES is best treated with early professional diagnosis; if left untreated, permanent, serious damage may result.

As a refractive layer, the tear film has optical properties; vision may be affected if this film is compromised. Aside from discomfort, the manifestations of DES include loss of visual acuity, increased light sensitivity, fatigue, and irreversible damage to the ocular surface. By no means exhaustive, the list of contributing factors includes ageing, female gender, dietary inadequacies, certain medical conditions/medications, demodex (mite infestation), altered blinking reflex, and exposure to a dry or windy environment.

While DES may be diagnosed by an eye care professional on the basis of examination and reported symptoms, newer imaging technologies allow for specification of the severity and exact nature of DES, which in turn allows for more targeted treatment and improved evaluation of the treatment process. The tear film has an extremely complex chemistry of over 1,500 proteins in three layers – aqueous, oily, and mucosal – fed by specialized glands and cells. Dysfunction of the oil-producing “meibomian” glands on the inner eyelid surfaces is frequently implicated in the development of DES.

Conservators should take note of occupational risk factors since certain types of environments and activities common to the conservation profession are similar to known high-risk environments, such as “clean room” environments and operating rooms. For example, a decreased blinking rate and partial blinking may occur with intense concentration before a computer screen or peering through a microscope. Even this “simple” reflex is the subject of ongoing scientific research and is affected not only by the visual task but an astonishing number of other factors.



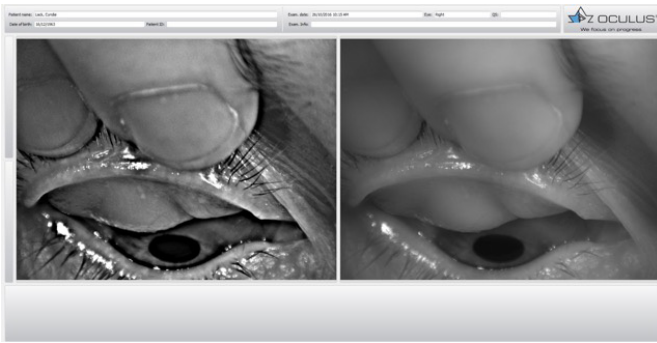


Fig. 1. Meibography scans taken on Oculus Keratograph 4, showing author's complete loss of meibomian glands. Photo courtesy of Cowichan Eyecare.



Fig. 2. Healthier glands; ideally the glands cover the full inside eyelid surface. Photo courtesy of Cowichan Eyecare.

My own experience as a paintings conservator with DES may be instructive to others in the profession as a cautionary tale. Trained in thread-by-thread tear repair, I had undertaken many projects involving intense, breath-holding, eye-staring work under a stereo binocular microscope. After one marathon tear repair lasting several weeks, I perceived a marked deterioration of my vision and greater sensitivity to light, however I blamed my symptoms on presbyopia, which was nearly guaranteed for my age category. DES was not proposed during visits to ophthalmologists. Ongoing symptoms of intermittent and increased severity of irritation (including one incident of being convinced I had metal in one eye) eventually landed me in an optometrist's office, ostensibly for what I assumed would be another eye drop prescription. After a thorough examination and extensive testing and imaging, Trevor Miranda, O.D. diagnosed DES and discovered the near eradication of my meibomian glands — a case he described as the worst he had ever seen (figs. 1 and 2). While meibomian glands cannot be regenerated, an earlier diagnosis and intervention likely would have halted or slowed their loss (Dr. Miranda is a practicing optometrist at Cowichan Eyecare on Vancouver Island, and has a special interest in the diagnosis and treatment of Dry Eye Disease).

Most people now spend significant time before a computer screen, though I suspect that the hyper-intense concentration required of delicate work using a microscope represents a significant additional risk factor. I also wonder about exposure to organic solvent vapors. A study of conservators for DES is unlikely given the relatively small subject pool, but the multi-factorial nature of DES and increased risk for occupations with tasks and environments similar to treatment conservation has been established. DES is a possible occupational hazard; its prevention is worthy of consideration by conservators as a commitment to preserving visual health and safety.

—Cyndie Lack, cyndielack@shaw.ca



Need help?

Have a question about health and safety in your conservation work? Send it to us at health-safety@conservation-us.org.

People

Angela Campbell has been appointed as Paper Conservator at the Historic Architecture, Conservation and Engineering Center (HACE) of the National Park Service. Angela was previously an Assistant Conservator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she spent seven years working in the Sherman Fairchild Center for Works on Paper and Photograph Conservation. During that time, she treated a wide variety of materials, including medieval parchment manuscripts, 16th-century German prints and etchings, 17th-century French drawings, and modern American prints, among others – though her specific area of interest has consistently been printed material. Angela holds an MA degree and Certificate of Advanced Study in Art Conservation from Buffalo State College.

Ann Marie Willer has been appointed Director of Preservation Services at the NEDCC. With over 20 years of experience in the library field, including 14 years as a preservation librarian at the University of North Texas (UNT) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) libraries, her knowledge of paper-based, audiovisual, and digital collections will provide a tremendous resource for NEDCC's expanding national outreach program. She has been recognized as an effective leader and has successfully led cross-departmental committee work for both the MIT Libraries and the UNT Libraries.



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