

AIC News Blog

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—Sheila Cummins, *Research Associate for Collection Development, Getty Conservation Institute*

Health and Safety

Lead Levels in Bone Confirmed as Mortality Predictor

SOURCE: Bureau of National Affairs, *Occupational Safety & Health Reporter*, 39(38), 9/24/09, pp. 810-811.

Harvard School of Public Health research confirms the widely held belief that lead levels found in bone, rather than blood, are a more accurate indication of mortality from exposure to the metal. The study found that the risk of death from cardiovascular disease was almost six times higher in study participants with the highest levels of bone lead, compared to those with the lowest levels.

Lead levels are commonly determined by taking blood samples. Lead in blood has a half-life of only 30 days, meaning blood levels only provide a “window of a few months of exposure,” said Marc Weisskopf, assistant professor of Environmental and Occupational Epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health. By contrast, bone is the repository of lead in the human body and can show long-term, cumulative exposure over many years, allowing for “a very strong association” between lead levels and cardiovascular mortality, Weisskopf said.

This study, plus studies of

children who received chelation treatments to reduce stored lead without any improvement in mental or physical function, reinforce ACTS’ opinion that attempting to remove lead from the bones by chelation is not usually helpful. By the time lead has been deposited in the bone, “the damage has been done” to the body, Weisskopf said. “It’s not easy to bring bone lead down, and it may not be that bringing the bone lead down is going to reverse the effects that have already occurred,” he said. In addition, chelation treatments mobilize this bone lead and return it to the blood stream, which may provide further damage to the body. Except in cases of extremely high blood lead levels, it is probably best to leave bone lead in place.

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People

Betsy Palmer Eldredge was awarded the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award by the Guild of Book Workers in December of 2009.

Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa, has been appointed as adjunct assistant professor for the Art Conservation Department at the University of Delaware, effective July 1, 2010.

Peter D. Verheyen was awarded the 2009 Laura Young Award for service to the Guild of Book Workers.

Worth Noting

State of Affairs at the School of Information

In Fall 2009, the School of Information (iSchool) at the University of Texas at Austin reconfigured its offerings in preservation and conservation studies. Currently, there is no longer a stand-alone, formally structured certificate program to train bench conservators. Financial concerns in supporting a three-year certificate program were considerable, but the school’s move to a new space housing all labs and personnel in one building, and the process of a formal curricular review by faculty also encouraged us to consider other options. As such,

preservation has been integrated into the overall MSIS curriculum and considered as a major component of the information lifecycle.

The excellent lead article in the January issue of *AIC News* describes the current situation regarding education in electronic media art conservation. As stated in the article, it will take many partners to address the complex needs of electronic media. The iSchool has unique resources that will allow it to contribute significantly to this effort. Our faculty represents a diverse set of knowledge and skills including humanities, history, conservation, preservation, and engineering. Much of the research in the iSchool overlaps with and has implications for conservation of electronic media.

Dr. Megan Winget is studying video games, investigating their impact on society, and examining what it means to preserve something that becomes an on-line community and virtual shared experience rather than just a piece of software. This has obvious overlap with electronic media art, and also has applications for discrete communities such as scientists where massive shared data sets are becoming routine. Dr. Pat Galloway teaches hands-on digital preservation of a broad range of digital object types (from text to music) and sources (from bureaucratic organizations to individuals), with a focus on understanding both the technology of the preserved object and the technology used for preservation.

Preservation must have a purpose and the use of digitally presented objects is a major focus of our work at the iSchool. Dr. Luis Francisco-Revilla studies digital libraries, intelligent user interfaces, information delivery, and human-computer interaction. His classes involve students in the development of hardware as well as software to support their research goals—for example, multi-touch displays and spatial hypermedia software. Students evaluate the effectiveness of their systems by testing them on real users. Such tools have direct applications in museums and participatory art venues. Dr. Gary Geisler is a leading expert in digital library design whose work explores the preservation of and access to video footage in innovative,