

COM exercise – university course versus professional training workshop

A version of the COM exercise was carried out in the first year of the Master's programme in preventive conservation at the University of Belgrade in 2009, as part of the Storage Organization course. It was conceived as an introduction to the session on the Functioning of Storage, and it was called "Storage is important, but why?" The idea behind this short introductory exercise was to bring the students back to the very basics of the role of museum storage and lead them towards two principal parts of its role – conservation and access. The students were given four cards each and asked to write down terms describing the role of museum storage. The teacher, through a discussion with students, then organized the cards on a board. At the end, as planned, two clusters were obtained – conservation and use.

The same exercise was used for the Storage Organization cycle of workshops for Serbian museums in 2011. In the first workshop in the Museum in Nis, the participants were given only two cards because of a technical issue. It turned out to be extremely difficult to lead the discussion and, in the end, the conservation-access storage function had to be pointed out as it did not emerge from the exercise. There were practically no terms connected to use/access. In the next workshop, held in the Museum in Kraljevo, the participants were asked to write at least three terms. The result was better this time; there were more terms that could be clustered under the heading 'use'.

Even though the COM system is presented and used in the Sharing Conservation Decisions course as a communication tool for large groups, in two programmes carried out by CIC, the didactic component of the method prevailed and was used with the objective of stressing the two key elements of storage. Having said that, I would point out that we felt these exercises were also a good opportunity to introduce the method itself.

Role play

One of the teaching tools introduced for the first time, I dare say, in conservation training programmes launched by CIC, was role playing. Being based on a professional Master's course in preventive conservation at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, the preventive conservation programme at Belgrade University was used as an opportunity to introduce 'non-academic' teaching methods into the academic environment. Teaching side-by-side with several conservation experts involved with ICCROM and other training programmes in Europe, encouraged CIC professionals to be inspired by the didactic approach adopted in ICCROM's professional training programmes. Role playing was used within SCD 2008 as an exercise model for the Identifying and Analyzing Stakeholders and Actors and Emergency Decisions modules.