

President's letter

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Dear WAAC members,

To many people Seattle is all rain and woods and coffee, but as I write this in April, springtime is in full expression. I'm pleased to see on my phone's weather display that it is looking considerably more cheerful here than it promises to be in Denver, Duluth, and Dublin this week. You see, it may rain here but what that really means is that it is mild.

And as it is in the spring, so it goes at the other end of summer. September is marked by golden afternoons and still long-ish days and the place remains wonderfully fresh, unlike so many towns after a long summer of heat and dodgy air-quality. Of course, it isn't

always idyllic up here in September, but I want to assure doubters that if the decade plus that I have lived here is anything to go by, there is a decent chance that the weather will be glorious, with crisp, maybe misty mornings and sunny afternoons. Seattleites are proud of their Septembers and, besides, the WAAC meeting will have much more to offer than weather (oysters, for example).

As I have been planning this year's meeting, in addition to giving members a chance to visit a great city, hear terrific talks, and have their say at the business meeting, I've been working with my colleagues to assemble an agenda that will offer an entertaining and rewarding experience. One that, we hope, will complement and expand members' interests and knowledge.

At the heart of the Seattle WAAC meeting will be the customary two and a half days of great talks. Serving as the head of conservation at a general museum, I have long found much satisfaction in attending WAAC meeting talks by allied professionals with expertise in fields that I know little about. I'm often struck by the remarkable amount of really useable knowledge that comes from these talks, which can be so beneficial from both practical and theoretical standpoints.

And there is a delight in the rhythm and range of a WAAC session that is unique in our field. It's something like the (apparently ever less common) experience of stumbling across a series of intriguing books in a library. I can't overstate how much I have grown to appreciate the range that is reflected in these talks, from the inspiring science-in-progress accounts by GRI experts last year, to superb projects presented by the Getty/UCLA students and graduates, to riveting accounts of treatments and other work out there in the broader conservation community. I clearly and fondly recollect my first WAAC meeting in Portland in 2002, during which a similar profile was apparent. Jack Thompson's account of building his own paper mill ("Sources of Materials Described: Whiskey and Ibuprofen, widely available") was the yin to the yang of Gail Joice's presentation on the impact of 9/11 on museum insurance, which in turn was a nice transition to Claire Dean's account of protecting rock art sites in South Africa. OK, I'm not going to use all this information to the same degree, but I always bring home use-

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ful thoughts, techniques, and tips, and I am inspired by the ingenuity and talent of colleagues in our field. The continuity of basic themes and shared principles, despite superficial incongruities, reminds us why we love doing what we do.

In our schizoid world of peer-reviewed papers, on the one hand, and anything-goes divulgence of information via tweets and wikis on the other, the WAAC meeting provides an unrivalled forum to present one's best work, often as it is happening, in a professional but utterly congenial atmosphere. While a paper doesn't need to be (but often is) totally slick, presenters and the board volunteers soliciting the talks take the selection process very seriously. The result is a program that is both fresh and rigorous.

All of which is to say that, if you have something you want to share, we urge you to submit a talk for the Seattle meeting this September. For those of you in institutions, presenting is a great way for you to win approval for, and to feel good about, attending the meeting. For those in private studios, we are incredibly grateful for the time you take away from work to attend WAAC- this is a great time for the field to learn about your work in a lot more detail. Intriguing talks have already been proposed, but there is still space on the agenda so hurry, hurry, hurry if you want a place at the podium this year. Also, you might bear in mind that some of the best talks from the annual meeting are often converted into articles for the WAAC newsletter, so a WAAC presentation is a terrific way to ensure a legacy for the projects that you have worked so hard to complete and share.

So that's the pitch. But what is Seattle offering this year? At the time of writing, I am still finalizing several program arrangements, but we will have the classic meeting events plus a few new twists. I have provided an outline of what we are thinking inside this issue, along with some travel tips.

For those of you who haven't been to our beautiful region for a few years, I do urge you to come to the meeting. The city of Seattle has been completely transformed over the past decade, and the museum has been at the heart of that transformation. If you plan a longer trip, the Olympic, Mount Rainier and North Cascades National Parks, Pacific Ocean beaches, and exquisite San Juan Islands are all as gorgeous as ever (although Forks, on the Olympic Peninsula, is now overrun with teenage vampires).

I want to conclude this part of my letter by touching, briefly, on the subject of money. The WAAC board has taken a good look at finances, and it is a simple fact that membership is still a bit light following the economic downturn. We all know that in servicing the cultural arena we are often on the sharp edge of cuts and the breathless extremity of belt-tightening, and so we are trying to do things a bit differently to ameliorate the situation. The first thing to announce, of relevance to the meeting, is the fact that we have decided to donate funds yielded by this year's silent auction to, wait for it,ourselves! So we ask you to go the extra mile to identify classy items to get your colleagues fired up, all for the best possible cause.

Secondly, this year we have ramped up our efforts to obtain sponsorship for the meeting. WAAC is typically just about as uncommercial an organization as could be imagined, but meetings are very expensive, so we have reached out to a small number of sponsors to help support the program. We are incredibly grateful for their partnership and how it will help to bring you a splendid meeting.

Wrapping up, I want to thank you for your membership and your involvement. I hope that you enjoy this edition of the *Newsletter* and that it inspires you to get involved. Please do consider nominating an unsuspecting colleague, or, even better, yourself, for the election, submit an article to the *Newsletter*, develop a workshop, propose a paper for the meeting and, whatever else you do, start making plans to join us in Seattle. You are WAAC.

We can't wait to welcome everyone to the Emerald City this September.

Nick