“We are not just analysts in isolation. Our ‘competitive edge’ is that our team is able to produce information, products, and processes that are of demonstrated use on the conservator’s bench.”

John W. Baty, PhD, Heritage Science for Conservation Scientist, Sheridan Libraries, and Assistant Research Professor, Whiting School of Engineering
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF CONSERVATION

The Department of Conservation and Preservation, established in 1974, is a national and international leader in conservation, education, innovation, and practice. In addition to working on rare books and manuscripts from the Sheridan Libraries’ and University Museums’ rich collections, the department is engaged in an active materials science research agenda, and is also at the forefront of educating a new generation of conservators through a unique partnership with the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Book conservation, a relatively young discipline, has its roots in the centuries-old traditional arts of papermaking, print making, and bookbinding. Over time, these studio arts came together to form the discipline of conservation, with historic studies and materials sciences supplementing our understanding and our ability to preserve cultural artifacts.

Despite the tremendous importance of digital technology, the collections of most libraries and other cultural heritage organizations remain paper-based and will be for the foreseeable future. With more than 33 percent of these collections estimated to be embrittled and endangered, a crisis is already upon us.

Since the founding in 2009 of the Heritage Science for Conservation project (HSC), an initiative initially funded by the Mellon Foundation, the Department of Conservation and Preservation has been working to build an Institute for Book and Paper Conservation and Science to promote research-based solutions to conservation and preservation challenges.

HSC supports post-doctoral research fellows in heritage conservation science as they collaborate across Johns Hopkins—with faculty and students at the Whiting School of Engineering (departments of Biomedical Engineering and Materials Science) and the University Libraries and Museums—and in Baltimore and around the world with partners like the Walters Art Museum, the Maryland Institute College of Art, the Canadian Conservation Institute, and the British Library. Investigators undertake research relevant to materials in libraries and archives, working closely with conservators to ensure that discoveries made in the laboratory can be quickly translated and applied by practicing conservators.

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF PRESERVING THE PAST

We seek support for science research fellows and bench conservators and funding for full-time conservation experts, who will focus on conserving the collections at Johns Hopkins. Additionally, funding is needed for special projects, new technical equipment, and the ongoing requirements of maintaining a cutting-edge laboratory.

Lead Scientist

$125,000 a year for a minimum of 5 years, or an endowment of $2,500,000

Long-term funding or an endowed position for the lead scientist in the Heritage Science Conservation program. This individual will also have an appointment on the research faculty of the Whiting School of Engineering.

Post-doctoral Fellowship

$60,000 a year for a minimum of 2 years, or an endowment of $1,000,000

A two-year, renewable post-doctoral fellowship for scientists engaged in research relevant to conservation. In addition to providing scientific support for conservation, HSC provides opportunities for recent PhDs to work alongside conservators and with the collections in a conservation program.

Book/Paper Conservator Fellowship

$40,000 a year, or an endowment of $500,000–$1,000,000

A one-year renewable fellowship for book and paper conservators, who will work side by side with master conservators and receive a practical education in the care and treatment of special collections and archival materials in an academic library.

Technological Innovation Funds

$50,000 a year

Ongoing support for the acquisition of new technologies.

Unique Format Projects

$25,000–$50,000 a year

Funding for unique and/or complex projects of historical importance.

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