



NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2018

Postgraduate diploma programme:

On 17 January, the maiden presentation of the Institute's ground-breaking postgraduate diploma programme, "*Technical Conservation Studies*", vaulted out of the starting blocks. Ever since that early start to the academic year, faculty staff and students have been joined at the hip - navigating wall-to-wall classes and tightly scheduled days - most days following hard on the heels of night-time study sessions and/or evening tutorials. These demands on the students are evenly matched by the burdens of preparation and rigorous assessment which rest on the tutors and academic support staff - all being conducted under the experienced oversight of programme director, Dr Christian Dreyer.

Considering the sustained pace and content, it is extremely gratifying to see technical conservation studies being afforded such full rein and extent of application, while benefiting from a lucid, knowledgeable focus. It becomes all the more gratifying when considering that this admirable intensity of application will be sustained across the full duration of this comprehensive programme of study. When one pictures such purposeful, academic endeavours within the bucolic setting of rural Twee Riviere, it soon becomes clear that the programme also harnesses a second constituent element, wherein the Institute's rare setting shines as a conspicuous asset: Given that an almost singular dedication is justified, students and faculty find that the efforts committed to the programme resonate with intense clarity and reward, an exercise focused all the more keenly by the geographic seclusion of this peaceful, valley setting.

If one takes account of the electives exercised by each student during the 2nd trimester (the point at which each student selects specialisms to pursue to advanced level), the postgraduate student successively negotiates a total of eleven modules as his/her particular pathway to the twelfth - the research dissertation. Apart from the time-intensive and partly elective conservation specialism **core modules** (totaling 64 credits), the student's learning is also compelled by **primary support modules** (totaling 20 credits) such as *Conservation Chemistry* and *Conservation Theory & Skills*. In addition, a constellation of **secondary support modules** (totaling 11 credits) serves to bring coherence - positioning the student to functionally deploy both the core and primary support modules under real world conditions. Such secondary support modules include *Heritage Legislation*, *Commercial Practices* and *Identity of the Conservator*. The student's research project / dissertation (35 credits) largely defines the programme's 3rd trimester. For purposes of external examination and supervision, the Institute draws on collaborations negotiated with respected, foreign academics at leading institutions abroad.

As the first postgraduate programme of its kind in South Africa, the inception of this diploma course has indisputably furnished South African conservation studies with a potent and influential platform. It is anticipated that this domain of study will become a thriving one - in due course also being contributed to, and served, through the initiatives of yet other providers of higher education.

Given the sustained pace (only two, brief recesses punctuate the academic year), and considerable heights which the maiden intake will be surmounting during 2018, we are proud to doff our hats to the admirably committed students, faculty, programme director and academic support staff alike. We wish them well with the remainder of the academic year, and look forward to following the students' professional attainments - also *beyond* their remarkable year of study!

Campus facilities:

On the campus facilities front, long-anticipated and essential renovations to student housing were completed in January, and shall contribute to creature comforts for the long haul. In addition, an after-hours reading room on

the cafeteria precinct now provides the postgraduate students with even-handed, extended access to supplementary reading material and recommended text volumes, project artefacts and such occasional, shared resources.

More significantly: A 45m² conservation laboratory is currently under construction, and will be taken into commission during the course of the current academic year. Although this additional laboratory space had been primarily commissioned to support dissertation research and certain module practicals, one notices that it has also stirred excitement with faculty more generally. It is already clear that - once completed - the Faculty of Physical Sciences' new laboratory facility is going to be a very popular and enthusiastically employed teaching space!

Internship programme:

During the most recent 12 months, the Institute had awarded a total of seven conservation internships to candidates from respectively France, Mexico, Italy, USA and South Africa. Over the years, the long-standing internship programme has for all purposes become a native element of campus life. In practice, we find that the majority of interns applying for the award of an internship at the Institute had either recently attained their conservation masters, or are currently masters students in this field. As may be expected, the lively and often fertile exchanges facilitated by the internship programme contribute uniquely to the whole, and are valued by all. Having pended momentarily (in the interests of the PG programme's launch), the internship programme shall resume again in late July, when the first of several foreign interns is scheduled to arrive.

Twee Riviere village:

Elsewhere in the village of Twee Riviere there are independent but equally exciting transformations afoot. Somehow, these changes appear to be keeping pace with the emergence of South Africa's youngest (and smallest!) institution of higher learning. Speaking as someone who had first arrived in Twee Riviere in 1993, I admit to wonderment when I take stock of the village's transformation in the decades between. One unexpected example: The average age of Twee Riviere's 400+ population has undergone a dramatic drop in recent years - now having plummeted into the late 20's! (Neatly matching that of our students, by the way!) In 1993, that average was considerably higher, and Twee Riviere (like so many other rural communities) comprised largely of a rapidly ageing citizenry, attended by a correspondingly low birth rate and very little in the village itself to attract, inspire or retain the average 15 - 35 year old. In recent years, sophisticated internet-based enterprises, digital media studios, NGO's etc have sprung from the endeavours of the village's newest generation. For the most part, this younger generation is the offspring of a sustained spate of new arrivals whom had accumulated in Twee Riviere during the '90's and onward. That early wave of hopeful city-folk (which they were) had somehow given rise to Twee Riviere's refreshing culture of homesteading and small business endeavours, in which the practice of home-schooling had also soon found a place. Today, the future of this village is being written by an enterprising community of several dozen, young, Twee Riviere-bred men and women - many of them recently married and busily establishing the *third* such generation! Strikingly - in a connected world where "here" and "there" have largely merged after all - not one person within this self-starting generation seems afflicted with the reflexive urge to be "elsewhere". Instead, this young set has simply set to work, employing competitive technology and marketable skills to commercially engage a near-borderless world - while retaining all the benefits of community and home-ground advantage. These opportunities they have seized with conviction, while building richly authentic lives of their own hopes and design...

I fervently trust that Twee Riviere is not the exception, and that similar rejuvenations are - who knows? - also afoot in other, small-town villages across our country. Perhaps a knowledgeable reader will let me know? Because if that is the case, I suspect that such a *rural* generation would likely be best positioned and poised to initiate this country's next economic resurgence - galvanizing conviction by a thousand innovative sparks!

Conservation text books:

The Institute's text book desk, *Bibliotheca Universitas*, is delighted to have inventory of a truly seminal work in the field of architectural / built environment conservation: The incomparable, 11-volume work, *Practical Building Conservation* is compiled along ten central themes and represents the latest revision of English Heritage's landmark series on this rich subject. Compiled by editors Bill Martin and Chris Wood, and honoring the formidable John Ashurst, this comprehensive, hardcover, full-colour compendium comes beautifully illustrated,

and is widely regarded as the most authoritative work on the subject. Comprising a total of 5 800 pages, the promotional price of R8 999,00 incl of VAT and shipping, ensures that *Practical Building Conservation* is a must-have reference for every architectural practice, as well as a priceless resource for the buildings conservator. (With this special offer equating to only R1,50 per page, I daresay that not even by the odium of photocopying could one rival the bargain! Grin.)

The previous paragraph also offers good excuse to quote (just a little cheekily) from Rudyard Kipling's 1922 verse, "A Truthful Song":

*I tell this tale, which is strictly true,
Just by way of convincing you
How very little, since things were made,
Things have altered in the building trade.*

The updated text book catalogue, which accompanies this newsletter, also offers a number of other conservation titles, covering a range of specialisms and interests. These are all admirable, selected works and are available for prompt dispatch without additional cost or delays. Helpful preview tabs permit generous peeks inside each of the volumes on offer, and will doubtless assist your selection. Do have a look?

Looking even further ahead, an overview of the 2019 postgraduate programme accompanies this mail. Please do note that entry prerequisites apply.

With best wishes to every practitioner and colleague in conservation!



ADRIAAN BOTHA
(Chairman of the Board)