At museums across the United States and around the world, University of Delaware graduate students are helping to preserve the treasures of our heritage — irreplaceable artifacts for future generations, from ancient Egyptian mummies to Neil Armstrong’s spacesuit.

The students are on advanced internships in the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC). A cooperative effort of UD and Winterthur Museum & Country Estate, the program is one of only five in the United States to offer the master’s degree in art conservation, an interdisciplinary field that combines art and science.

“The Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation has played a critical role in the development of conservation education and preservation practice in the United States,” says Debra Hess Norris, UD’s vice provost for graduate and professional education, chairperson of the Department of Art Conservation, and Henry Francis du Pont Chair in Fine Arts.

“During their careers, our graduates have been responsible for the examination, technical analysis, conservation, and preservation of such irreplaceable objects as the Declaration of Independence, multiple drafts of the Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Star-Spangled Banner, the Treaty of Paris, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and works of art by Old Masters to contemporary artists — from Rembrandt to Van Gogh and Wyeth,” Norris says.

Other notable treasures conserved by the program’s graduates include Babe Ruth’s baseball contract, the original R2D2 from the movie Star Wars, the world’s first photograph, Elvis Presley’s 81 gold records, the 1905 Wright Flyer III, the ruby slippers from The Wizard of Oz, and the architectural interiors of Mount Vernon and the Forbidden City.

As a capstone experience in their third and final year of the program, students complete an 11-month internship at a museum or private conservation laboratory in the United States or abroad.

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“Since its inception in 1974, WUDPAC has developed a curriculum that addresses basic conservation issues and responds to current trends and changing practices in our field,” says Jae Gutierrez, assistant professor of art conservation and interim director of the program. “We aim to ensure that our learning and teaching goals meet national and international preservation needs. Our internship year is an essential component of this education and training.”

The past year’s interns worked at Alexandria Conservation Services in Annandale, Va., the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, Heugh-Edmondson Conservation Services in St. Louis, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Smithsonian Institution Museum Conservation Institute in Suitland, Md., Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Yale University Gallery of Art in New Haven, Ct., and the National Gallery of Canada, in Ottawa, Ontario.

During her internship at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Lauren McMullen had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects. One of her favorites, she says, was documenting, treating, analyzing, and helping to install approximately 20 ancient Egyptian works for a small exhibit titled “Mummified,” which explores the ancient Egyptians’ fascination with mummification and discusses resurrection symbols and their meaning.

McMullen was able to handle and treat all of the objects in the exhibit — some of which are over 2,500 years old, including two animal mummies, a cat and an ibis, on loan from the Johns Hopkins Archaeology Museum, a painted limestone ushabti, stone sculptures, faience amulets, and numerous bronze statuettes.

She analyzed pieces using X-radiography and X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) and obtained X-radiographs of the ibis mummy, so the images could be used in the exhibit.

“Overall, I gained a greater understanding of ancient Egyptian objects and materials through this wonderful hands-on experience,” McMullen says.

National Endowment for the Humanities grant supports fellowships

Last fall, the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation won a $256,800 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which is being used to bolster fellowship and learning opportunities for master’s-level students in 2008–2010.

The funding, which will go toward programming and merit-based fellowships over the next two years, will pay for students’ travel and research costs; honoraria for special guest lecturers in preventive, objects, painted surfaces, and textile conservation; and other training expenses.

“Our program is very competitive,” Norris notes. “We accept only 10 graduate students each year, and they all receive full tuition scholarships, as well as fellowships. What this NEH fellowship will fund, primarily, are additional fellowship opportunities — conference and seminar fees and national and international research and travel expenses. Funds from the grant also will support the costs of bringing experts from across the nation to speak to our students about issues relating to preservation of historic sites or emergency response and recovery — an area for which UD is well-known.”

Norris says the funding also allows for new directions in the field and advances ongoing ventures such as public outreach and collaboration with other institutions.

As part of her graduate internship at Heugh-Edmondson Conservation Services, LLC, in Kansas City, graduate student Lisa Duncan works on the 1930 senior class photoboard from Park College in Parkville, Missouri, that was in a flood and badly water damaged.
University Press publishes landmark books in art history

The University of Delaware Press recently published two landmark books in art history: Lockwood de Forest: Furnishing the Gilded Age with a Passion for India and Zinc Sculpture in America 1850–1950.

The book on de Forest presents the first major study of this artist, collector, and businessman (1850–1932). De Forest was trained as a painter by the American landscape artist Frederic E. Church. His interest in travel, the Middle East, and decorative art led him to become an early business partner of Louis Comfort Tiffany, and from there to become a “professional artistic decorator” (a profession that first emerged in the 1880s) who specialized in East Indian arts and crafts during what is now called the Gilded Age.

Written by Roberta Mayer, who received her Ph.D. in art history with a specialty in American art history and a minor in the decorative arts from UD, the book has been named the year’s best decorative arts monograph by the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America.

Carol Grissom, senior objects conservator at the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute, has written the first comprehensive overview of statuary produced from zinc, which was introduced to the United States as a new sculptural material in the mid-nineteenth century.

Because zinc was less expensive than marble or bronze, even the smallest towns could afford life-size statues to give prominence to the town square, courthouse, and cemetery.

Grissom provides an interdisciplinary overview that engages aspects of art history, popular culture, local history, technology, and art conservation. Included is an illustrated catalog presenting more than 800 statues organized by type: trade figures and Indians, gods and goddesses, fountain figures, animals, famous men, military figures, firemen, cemetery memorials, and religious subjects. The author’s experience as a conservator makes this an essential resource for preservationists seeking to repair statues damaged by years of outdoor exposure.

A member of Associated University Presses (AUP), the University of Delaware Press publishes about 40 books each year. Its major strengths are in literary studies, especially Shakespeare, renaissance, and early modern literature; eighteenth-century studies, art, and culture; French literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; art history and history; and historical and cultural studies of Delaware and the Eastern Shore.

Students experience the power of service

Each year, more than 700 UD undergraduates gain hands-on research experience in the lab, in the field — and in their communities.

Lynnette Overby, faculty director of the Undergraduate Research, Service Learning, and McNair Scholars programs, describes service-learning projects as great opportunities to apply disciplinary knowledge in the community setting.

“It’s not just about volunteerism, though that is very important,” Overby says. “When we do service-learning, we really look at combining our disciplinary knowledge with problem solving that comes with experience.”

Such experiences, Overby says, benefit both the students and the communities they serve. “Students gain civic awareness, and they can witness firsthand the power of service, along with another key element, knowledge,” she notes.

At the Service-Learning Scholars Symposium in August 2008, program coordinator Sue Serra introduced 15 undergrads and their advisers who talked about how they used their academic training to help communities at home and abroad. The projects ranged from “Youth Cultural Integration Through Basketball” by health science majors Matthew Keele and Jennifer Simpkins, who at the time were in Dublin, Ireland, working on the effort, to “Behind the Beat: Bringing Hip-Hop to the Classroom,” by Shanyah Wright, a junior in psychology.

Senior exercise physiology majors Kristen Beddington and Dannielle Miccinello described their project, which compared the energy expenditure of young adults with autism and those without autism. Their adviser was Nancy Getchell, associate professor in the College of Health Sciences.

“We know that there are a lot of people who are overweight, and that this is even more so among people with autism,” Miccinello said. “We also know that there has been a significant increase in the number of people diag-

Hardikkumar Patel, a junior health sciences major, outlines his service-learning project, “Increasing Physical Activity in Pre-Schoolers.”

These students gained hands-on research experience as they worked with Dr. Getchell, Beddington said. “Part of our success in this project was due to our interactions with the students we were working with. We are hoping to get our findings published.”