



Membership Stories: Why I Belong to APT

The Association for Preservation Technology International (APT) is a multi - disciplinary, membership organization dedicated to promoting the best technology for conserving/preserving historic structures and their settings. [Joining APT](#) provides exceptional opportunities for networking and the exchange of ideas.

APT members, who hail from more than 30 countries, include preservationists, architects, engineers, conservators, consultants, contractors, craftspersons, curators, developers, educators, historians, landscape architects, students, technicians, and other persons directly involved in the application of methods and materials to maintain, conserve, and protect historic structures and sites for future use and appreciation.

The international, interdisciplinary character of APT - with its outstanding publications, conferences, training courses, awards, student scholarships, regional chapters, and technical committees - makes it the premier worldwide network for anyone involved in the field of historic preservation.

Aleen Stanton



Historical Researcher, Nova Scotia Association of Architects, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Elevator pitches are a business-school practice exercise, a fictional scenario, the ultimate serendipity stereotype. But for me, a chance meeting in an elevator was one of the highlights of the APT conference in Ottawa this past October. It was my first APT conference, and I was invited to attend as a Student Scholar. I was excited, but also nervous--for young professionals, conferences can sometimes feel like walking into a room full of strangers or like the high school cafeteria “where do I sit” feeling in

a new form. Hearing the chatter around me about preservation projects, conservation challenges, and more, I wondered where I fit in.

After meeting people, shaking hands, and attending the first day’s sessions, I made my way from The Westin Ottawa to the evening reception across the street. As I walked to the elevator, I was still thinking about how much I wanted to get to know APTers and become a part of the community. I got in the elevator and said hello to the other person already there. It took me a moment, but I realized I recognized the name on his lanyard (APT provides the Students Scholars with a list of College of Fellows members who mentor them before their presentation at the conference, and he was on the list). Since elevators are known for encouraging small talk, I decided to bring it up. That was all it took. Turns out we shared a common interest in wood building materials and had connections in the same city a couple thousand miles away. The small talk turned into shop talk and lasted the whole ride down to the lobby and the walk all the way across the street to the reception. It was just one elevator conversation, but for the rest of the conference, I felt much more at ease--I felt part of APT. It was a small example of the welcoming APT community, and only a tiny testament to its members’ warmth and openness.

- APT *Communiqué*, March-April 2018

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Erin Gibbs



Training Coordinator, Vanishing Treasures Program, National Park Service, Moose, Wyoming

It's a little strange to admit that crashing a dinner party marks my first real experience with APT members, but it's the truth. I had been working on the north end of Chicago refinishing some wood clapboarding on a beautiful Foursquare when I received a text message from Anne Sullivan, head of the historic preservation master of science program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. I had recently graduated from the program, where I had the pleasure of calling Anne my instructor, advisor, and mentor. The text told me that she was out to dinner downtown with some colleagues

who were visiting from out of town and that I should come meet them.

I tried to warn her that I was in no shape to meet anyone even remotely professional: it was the end of the workday, and I was covered in paint and dust and probably smelled like mineral spirits. Anne responded to come regardless of my appearance and to hurry up. I hopped on my bike for the 30-minute ride to downtown and showed up out of breath at the restaurant (which was way nicer than I was led to believe) and proceeded to walk right into the middle of a dinner party consisting of at least six people other than Anne, who looked up at my sweaty face and dirty work clothes a little confusedly. Anne introduced me, and the group graciously welcomed me and invited me to join them. While everyone at the table was in town for a different conference, they also all belonged to APT. Not only did they bring me into the conversation and allow me to ask them what felt like hundreds of questions, but they also invited me to connect with them at the APT conference that fall, where I would be presenting as a student scholar. I realized immediately that APT was an organization I wanted to be a part of beyond my time as a student. I had always admired and appreciated the vast amount of research and information APT provided but was completely sold after experiencing how welcoming, kind, and helpful everyone at that dinner was. It took me a couple years to become a full member, but I can safely say I have not once regretted the infamous dinner-crashing of 2015. I just hope the restaurant didn't have to clean up too much where I was sitting.

- APT *Communiqué*, May-June 2018

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Patrick Capruso



Vertical Access, Ithaca, New York

Last October APT and the National Trust for Canada held its joint conference in Ottawa. This was my first APT annual conference, and fueled by a shameful amount of readily available coffee, I navigated paper sessions, plenary discussions, and cocktail receptions. For every learning opportunity the conference offered, there was an occasion to network and reconnect. It became apparent that the social aspect of the event alone was worth the cost of registration.

In Ottawa I had the opportunity to attend the first meeting of the

Technical Committee for Materials. I arrived early, tired-eyed with a coffee in hand, and took a seat at the conference table. The bearded, bespectacled gentleman next to me was quick to strike up a conversation asking about my background (doubtlessly curious as to why I decided to join a meeting scheduled so early in the morning). I explained that I got my start shaping architectural terra cotta for historic facade restorations, and he immediately shot back with something like, “Ah, a terra-cotta tapper. There are plenty of terra-cotta tappers at this conference.” A terra-cotta tapper? An appropriate title. I liked it.

Before long the small conference room was packed, and the meeting was underway. Prospective members of the committee went around the room sharing their credentials and specific interests related to architectural materials. I was astonished by the professional diversity that APT attracts. Architectural conservators, preservation engineers, restoration architects--I am confident I was not the only terra-cotta tapper in the room.

After the meeting I was approached by a colleague who was curious to know if I had any idea who I had been speaking to earlier. I hadn't a clue. This was my first APT conference. I learned that the man was an absolute authority in the preservation field. An AIA Fellow and recipient of the Landmarks Illinois Lifetime Achievement Award. It became clear that the APT annual conference offers an unparalleled opportunity to network with industry leaders who are enthusiastic about their work and are eager to learn about yours. With that in mind, I am already looking forward to celebrating APT's 50th anniversary at Points of Departure in Buffalo Niagara.

- APT *Communiqué*, July-August 2018

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Christina Burris



Architectural Conservator, Historic Building Architects, Trenton, New Jersey

As a conservator, I value the interaction that APT gives all of us between different disciplines--architects, engineers, and scientists interacting with one another, sharing their expertise and experience for the common goal of the preservation of our built environment. Recently, I had reason to appreciate APT for a relatively new resource that it has given us, the Building Technology Heritage Library (BTHL).

Our firm, Historic Building Architects (HBA), was working on a Tudor Revival manor by John Russell Pope. Built in the 1920s, the three-story, 44-room manor was modeled after sixteenth-century English estates with half-timbering and pargeted exterior. Among other things, HBA was to make repairs to the wood trim and half-timbering. The 90-year-old finish was failing, and woodwork was suffering from severe UV damage and rot. Time was short, but luckily the owner still had the original drawings and specifications.

The specifications were highly detailed. They described the “adzing” and the rough treatment of the wood. They went into great detail on the formulation of the stain to be used, but then the specifications simply stated “to apply two coats of Wonderlac.” No manufacturer or other information was given. What type of finish was Wonderlac? Who made it, and what was the sheen? The drawings and specifications did not answer these questions, and the Wonderlac itself had long since weathered off of the woodwork. I knew that APT had digitized a sizable collection of trade catalogs going back to the eighteenth century. Thanks to my membership in APT, I knew about the BTHL and could quickly and efficiently research Wonderlac and many other proprietary products listed in the specifications. Wonderlac was manufactured by DuPont and was intended to be used with their line of acidic wood stains. As the company’s literature stated, it was “without even a hint of body or gloss.” The BTHL research also indicated that it was not likely to be chemically compatible with the specified stain. The research made possible by the BTHL, paired with our finish analysis, allowed us to recreate and specify the proper finish for the project. This is just one of the great benefits of APT. JSTOR access to past issues of the APT Bulletin is another research resource available through APT membership that allows me to research efficiently and grow professionally. Thank you to APT for these great resources!

- APT *Communiqué*, September-October 2018

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Alice L. Sloan



Chambers Murphy & Burge, A Studio of Perspectus Architecture, Cleveland, Ohio

What does APT mean to me? It means that, while sharing knowledge, we reconnect to peers in the industry and forge new connections. I was fortunate to attend the Montréal conference in 2008, when APT turned 40. Presenting my master's thesis as a Student Scholar was the culmination of my graduate education, and I felt honored.

I soaked up all I could at APT 2008 by taking copious notes. The keynote speaker that year was Holly Dressel, an architectural historian and writer on biological systems. She spoke about “holistic management” and the need to be flexible, egalitarian, aspiring, inspired by the vernacular, and enchanted by beauty so we can learn how to, above all, live. This year I arrived with my notebook in hand. Alex Wilson, founder of the Resilient Design Institute, served as the keynote speaker. His talk continued in the vein of Dressel's address, discussing sustainability (in his words, “passive survivability”) and calling for flexibility and adaptation to climate change. Over the last 10 years, I have dutifully paid my dues and collected Bulletins. I feel reinvigorated by this year's conference, not just because of the sessions I attended, including masonry best practices, glass, and terra-cotta. It is because I dined and caught up with former classmates; it is because I chatted with an architect I used to work for while in Philadelphia; I bumped into former co-workers, including fellow past-Student Scholars. The University of Texas even adopted me for an evening and invited me the next day to check out the intriguing golden-domed bank near the conference hotel. That is what is great about APT--boundaries vanish. Everyone is willing to share what we know and what we want to explore, even though we are competitors in the field or school rivals or call different nations “home.”

So I have signed myself up to become more involved in APT during 2019 and beyond, thanks to the urging of James Banta, former co-worker and champion of the Eastern Great Lakes Chapter (although he has moved to D.C.). I intend to garner interest in my chapter and hopefully co-author an article on my thesis. Although referring to changing conditions of the built environment, I would like to borrow a concept from preventive architectural conservation and challenge you to monitor and frequently reevaluate your involvement in APT. For me, it was refreshing to “check in” at this conference and see what others have been up to.

- APT *Communiqué*, November-December 2018

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Michael Sanbury



LDA Architects, Cleveland, Ohio

There was a mug in the restoration-architecture office where I interned in my graduate years of architecture school. It was a white mug with big red capital letters spelling what I assumed was the word “APT.” I didn’t know where the mug came from or the organization it promoted, but it was aesthetically pleasing to me. One day, in need of a vessel to hold pens, I chose this mug to sit prominently at my new desk. When the more seasoned members of the office noticed the mug, they asked if I knew about APT and enthusiastically went on to educate me about the organization. This was my introduction to APT.

Nine years later, still sitting at the same desk with the same mug, but now slightly more seasoned in the office, I was asked if I would be interested in attending the Documentation Technologies Workshop put on by APT. In the intervening years, I had participated in a few documentation projects using laser scanning. I had started toying with the idea of using drones to assist with building assessments and documentation, and I was just beginning to dive into the world of photogrammetry. After reading the schedule of events for the workshop, I was so excited about the possibility of meeting people thinking about and implementing these technologies in the field. I enthusiastically accepted the offer, and I had my first real experience with APT in Philadelphia in March 2016. The workshop far exceeded any of my expectations. It was amazing to meet and hear presentations from people who were pushing the boundaries of what preservation technology can do. They shared their setbacks and failures and then shared how they had worked through the problems. Their willingness to dispense this information to what I perceived as a group of strangers was mind-blowing. But I soon realized that was the magic of APT. These weren’t strangers--this was a family, a team. This family is where people in our profession turn to when they hit snags, but this was also where they come to celebrate breakthroughs. That was the magic, that was the enthusiasm I had seen from coworkers so many years before.

This year I attended my first APT annual conference in Buffalo. I was excited this time to reconnect with many of the people I had met at the workshop, as well as members I knew from project collaborations and other associations. In addition to the knowledge shared at the conference and the many new faces, I further immersed myself into the magic of the APT world and joined the Eastern Great Lakes Chapter. I’m excited to be a part of a growing chapter and will continue to encourage those interested in preservation to experience APT and all it has to offer.

- APT *Communiqué*, January-February 2019

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Vishal Joshi



Architectural Preservation Studio, DPC, New York City, New York

My APT saga began during a thesis discussion with my advisor in the graduate program for historic preservation at the University of Texas at Austin. The thesis dealt with the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal and its aftermath on Nepalese heritage. My advisor was quick to point out that there was a plenary session planned at the 2015 APT conference in Kansas City, Missouri, that would be dealing with the same issue. That was the first time I had heard of the organization. Being a student already low on funds but now convinced by my professors, I took a leap of faith and made it to Kansas City.

It was the best introduction I could have had to the APT world. At the conference, I met preservation professionals from all walks of life and stumbled across UT alumni, who quickly became close friends. I was taken aback by the ease of networking and the approachability of preservation experts. My student nametag added another layer of special treatment. I met the presenters at the plenary session on Nepal, who showed keen interest in my thesis and exchanged information on their networks in Kathmandu. With these contacts, I managed to open the door to the preservation world in Nepal. I gained much-needed insight and experience on post-earthquake disaster management and reconstruction, greatly enhancing my thesis.

In 2016, at the APT conference in San Antonio, there was a reversal of roles. I had been selected as a Student Scholar and as the Martin Weaver Scholar and was presenting my thesis to the APT audience. One of the presenters from the plenary session is now my mentor and also my boss. The Martin Weaver Scholarship gave me the much-needed wherewithal to make my way back to Kathmandu after graduation in order to continue my research on Nepalese heritage.

Now, after becoming a member of the APT Texas and Northeast Chapters, attending my third APT conference in Buffalo, visiting Nepal for the third time for research, and serving as the current co-chair of the APT Student Scholarship and Outreach Committee, I can't help but reminisce about the extraordinary journey I have had with APT. My goal now is to support and encourage other students to open the gates and step into this remarkable world.

- APT *Communiqué*, March-April 2019

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Christine Britton



JVA Inc., Boulder, Colorado

My first experience with APT was back in 2014. I was a year into my first full-time engineering job and my coworkers invited me to attend the APTi conference in Quebec City as our company's representative. At first I was ecstatic! Here I was being given the opportunity to attend a conference in another country, not only to represent my company, but also to learn about preservation topics! But then a wave of anxiousness washed over me; what was I going to do as a young professional at this big conference in a foreign city with people I had never met before?

But I quickly learned there was no need to be anxious. There were plenty of opportunities worked into the agenda to mingle and everyone was so welcoming. I met new people, reconnected with classmates and lecturers from graduate school, and bumped into other professionals from Colorado with whom I had worked with previously. What captivated me the most was that we were all there for the same reason: to share and learn technical knowledge about our common passion – historic preservation. There is something electric about being surrounded by like-minded professionals from all over the world.

In the following years I was fortunate enough to attend other APTi conferences held in Kansas City, San Antonio, and Buffalo. Each and every time I come away with new friends, with new knowledge, and feeling re-energized in my passion for preservation.

After my initial experience in Quebec, I also started attending events closer to home hosted by the Rocky Mountain Chapter. These local events provide interesting learning and networking opportunities with other professionals in the area that tend to be more focused on preservation issues related to our part of the country. For example, last year we skied and snowshoed up to a remote, historic mining operation where the owners have plans to adaptively reuse some of the structures as a backcountry hut retreat. This prompted discussions on the constructability and funding issues which many remote projects in the mountain west face and how that impacts preservation design.

Recently, both my experiences with APTi and the Rocky Mountain Chapter motivated me to become more involved by joining the APT-RMC board. I'm looking forward to participating in this organization throughout my career, learning from my fellow preservationists and growing in our passion for preservation together.

- APT *Communiqué*, May-June 2019

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Adam Rush



Simpson, Gumpertz & Heger, Inc., Washington, D.C.

My first introduction to APT happened through membership in the local APT-DC chapter shortly after I moved to DC in 2010, prompted by my passion for historic preservation and friendly nudging by coworkers. A robust calendar of events enticed me to spend considerable time learning more about historic preservation, and before long I had joined the board, moved up the ranks, and served as President of the DC chapter in 2013.

In 2011, I received the local Emerging Professional Scholarship Program award to attend the annual conference in Victoria, British Columbia. It was a great experience. The presentations were inspiring, and the people even more so. I established relationships during that trip, both personal and professional, that remain intact to this day. After all, singing Folsom Prison Blues at a karaoke bar in front of your peers creates a lasting impression.

After my second son was born, I began spending more time on dad duty and felt like I had gone into hiding. After several years of relative isolation, I reemerged and attended the annual conference in Buffalo, NY, my first since the New York City conference in 2013. I was overwhelmed by how welcoming everyone was as I stepped back into renewed engagement with APT.

One of the things that is special about APT is how much it feels like a community rather than just another professional organization. Everyone in the group eagerly shares stories of lessons learned from different projects, including examples of things not going well. The openness among members is very gratifying and makes learning from each other that much easier. With professional and personal demands on my time, I have to think carefully about how I spend it. That APT is the only professional organization that I belong to speaks to the ways it enriches my life. The people of APT—the collegiality they offer—make the organization a true community.

- APT *Communiqué*, July-August 2019

APT *Communiqué* Membership Stories

Meris Westberg



Master of Science in Historic Preservation candidate 2021, University of Pennsylvania

My first encounter with APT was on a sweltering July morning, in a well-loved, well-worn park full of mismatched sculptures in the heart of Washington D.C. I had seen a posting from the Washington Conservation Guild about a volunteer sculpture cleaning event being hosted by the APT-DC chapter. I didn't totally understand what the Association for Preservation Technology was, but I signed up anyway. Although we barely made a dent in removing the grime and graffiti from the misplaced memorial to James Buchanan, I met a handful of preservationists that day who would become my mentors

and cheerleaders as I applied to and ultimately enrolled in The University of Pennsylvania's Master of Science in Historic Preservation program for the Fall of 2019.

Despite spending the first chunk of my professional life in archives and fine art conservation, I never seriously considered applying to those graduate programs. After working in the paper lab at the National Archives for about 5 years, I took a position at the National Gallery of Art as a Preventive Conservation Specialist. There, I was able to learn about other medias and expand into areas like environmental monitoring and emergency preparedness. But during my transition to a generalist, my heart began to wander away from the benches and easels, out of the confines of the museum, and toward greater built environment that encapsulates and contextualizes it all.

I continued to attend APT events on everything from longleaf yellow pine to comparative studies in French and American architectural conservation. I met contractors and conservators, architects and artisans. It was at the same time refreshing and intimidating. But pushing myself to participate in APT events gave me a sense of legitimacy and excitement as I awaited August, when I would finally be inaugurated into the field. Looking back to that morning last July, I don't think that I would have gotten here without APT and its members, whom I'm thrilled to now call friends and colleagues. I look forward to contributing to APT and to the field in my career to come!

- APT *Communiqué*, September-October 2019