

CULTURAL HERITAGE CHARTERS AND STANDARDS

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Cultural Heritage Charters

The first to establish a coherent and logically defensible philosophy for building conservation was in the **Society for the Protection of Ancient Building's *Manifesto*** of 1877. The *Manifesto* consists principally of a plea to "put protection in place of restoration", and only the last two paragraphs commend a philosophy of care. However, it is the relatively brief *Manifesto* statement that marks the starting point for the many later policy statements in which the underlying theme of the ***SPAB Manifesto*** is adopted and developed rather than being significantly amended.

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The **Athens Conference** of 1931, organised by the **International Museums Office**, established basic principles for an international code of practice for conservation. The **Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments**, which met in Venice in May 1964, approved the text of *an International Charter for the Conservation of Monuments and Sites* (the *Venice Charter*), which superseded the *Athens Charter*. The *Venice Charter*, which was adopted by the newly formed **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)** in 1956 and published by them in 1966, is an important modern milestone for the conservation movement. **ICOMOS** is an international non-governmental organisation that promotes the study of the theory, methodology and technology of conservation applied to monuments, historic areas and sites.

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The ***Venice Charter*** stresses the importance of setting, respect for original fabric, precise documentation of any intervention, the significance of contributions from all periods to the building's character, and the maintenance of historic buildings for a socially useful purpose. The ***Charter*** outlines the basic doctrine of what is now accepted to be an appropriate approach to dealing in philosophical terms with historic buildings. The full text of the ***Venice Charter*** and other documents detailed in this report can be viewed on the **ICOMOS** and **UNESCO** web sites.

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The ***Venice Charter*** was followed by a plethora of other standards, charters, formal recommendations and conventions relating to building conservation. These provide invaluable guidance for practitioners working in the field of building conservation and are an essential framework for good practice in the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

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The most significant of these that have the approval of **ICOMOS** are:

- The ***Florence Charter on Historic Gardens*** (1982). Provides a definition of the term historic garden and the architectural compositions that constitute the historic landscape. It emphasises the need to identify and list historic gardens, and provides philosophical guidance on maintenance, conservation, restoration and reconstruction. It refers back to the ***Venice Charter*** for many of its principles.

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- The ***Washington Charter on the Conservation of Historic Towns and Areas*** (1987). A particularly useful document that considers broad principles for the planning and protection of historic urban areas.

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- ***Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage*** (1990). Considers the subject of archaeology under the following headings: definitions, integrated protection policies, legislation, survey, maintenance and conservation, presentation, re-construction, and international co-operation.

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- ***Resolution of the Symposium on the Introduction of Contemporary Architecture into Ancient Groups of Buildings*** (1972). Stresses the need for appropriate use of mass, scale, rhythm and appearance, and the avoidance of imitation.

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- ***Resolution on the Conservation of Smaller Towns*** (1975). Considers the potential threats to such places, which are detailed as: lack of economic activity, outward movement of population, disruption of structures due to insertion of new elements, and measures to adapt to modern activities. Methods of counteracting these threats are then considered.

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- ***Declaration of Amsterdam*** (Congress on the European Architectural Heritage, 1975). Notes that the significance of the architectural heritage and the justification for conserving it are now more clearly perceived, and considers processes that would place the conservation of the architectural heritage on firm and lasting foundations. The importance of integrating conservation of the architectural heritage into the urban and regional planning process is identified as one of the most important factors.

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- ***The Charter on Cultural Tourism*** (1976).
Considers the positive and negative effects of cultural tourism on historic monuments and sites.

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- ***Tlaxcala Declaration on the Revitalisation of Small Settlements*** (1982). Considers initiatives for safeguarding communities living in small settlements and the traditional environment of such places.

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- ***The Burra Charter - The Australian ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance*** (1981). This ***Charter*** develops the principles detailed in the ***Venice Charter*** to suit local Australian requirements. It includes a comprehensive list of definitions of items such as place, fabric, conservation, maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and compatible use. It also introduces the concept of cultural significance, the 'aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present and future generations', and requires this to be defined for each place, and conservation plans to be established and justified prior to any intervention. It continues with a description of conservation principles and processes that are intended as a definition of good practice. The Burra Charter is well established in Australia and is frequently used by the Australian Government in its formal capacity.

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- ***The Appleton Charter for the Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment*** (ICOMOS Canada, 1983). Considers levels of intervention in the historic environment, notes that respect for original fabric is a fundamental basis for the activities of protection and enhancement, and considers good practice in terms of documentation, avoidance of conjecture, distinguishability of new work, use of traditional materials and techniques, maintenance of patina, reversibility and respect for the integrity of the structure.

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- ***Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value*** (ICOMOS New Zealand, 1992). Provides comprehensive definitions of the processes involved in conservation, and sets out principles to guide the conservation of places of cultural heritage value in New Zealand. It aims to provide a frame of reference as guidelines for appropriate professional practice. Although written for use in New Zealand, the basic principles are generally applicable and follow the spirit of the Venice Charter.

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- ***Preservation Charter for the Historic Towns and Areas of the United States of America*** (US ICOMOS, 1992). Sets down a comprehensive statement concerning the importance of historic town, neighbourhoods and places, and states what should be done to tackle preservation issues in a coherent and thorough manner.

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- ***Guidelines for Education and Training in the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites*** (1993). The aim of this document is to promote the establishment of standards and guidelines for education and training in the conservation of historic buildings, historic areas and towns, archaeological sites, and cultural landscapes. It emphasises the need to develop a holistic approach to heritage issues and sets out the relevant skills that are required.

UNESCO Recommendations and Other Standards

The **United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO)** was founded in 1947 and has promoted various Conventions and other instruments for the conservation of the cultural heritage. A selection of these are:

- ***Recommendation Concerning International Competitions in Architecture and Town Planning*** (1956). Provides guidance for the drawing up of programmes for international competitions, in the interests both of organisers and of competitors.

UNESCO Recommendations and Other Standards

- ***Recommendations on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations*** (1956). Deals with general principles and regulations governing excavations and the trade in antiquities.

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- ***Recommendations Concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites*** (1962). Considers preventative measures aimed at protecting natural, rural and urban landscapes and sites, whether natural or man-made, which have cultural or aesthetic interest.

UNESCO Recommendations and Other Standards

- ***Recommendations Concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works*** (1968). Considers preventative and corrective measures which should be aimed at protecting or saving cultural properties from works likely to damage or destroy them, such as urban expansion and renewal projects, injudicious repair and modifications, highway works, agricultural operations, the construction of infrastructure and industrial development.

UNESCO Recommendations and Other Standards

- ***Recommendations Concerning the Protection at National Level of the Cultural and Natural Heritage*** (1972). Defines the terms cultural and natural heritage, and provides a lengthy consideration of general principles, the organisation of services, and protective measures under the headings financial, administrative, scientific and technical.

UNESCO Recommendations and Other Standards

- ***Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*** (1972).
Introduced the concept of World Heritage Sites.

UNESCO Recommendations and Other Standards

- ***Recommendations Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas*** (1976). Another lengthy and detailed document which provides a comprehensive set of standards and principles for the conservation of the historic environment

UNESCO Recommendations and Other Standards

The charters and standards should be viewed as providing guiding principles towards defining an appropriate response to particular conservation issues, not as instant and all-inclusive prescriptions. The following factors form the basis of most of the documents: comprehensive analysis of the place, minimum intervention in the historic fabric, precise documentation, respect for contributions from all periods, maintenance of authenticity and the requirement to take a holistic view of the historic environment.