

**Celia Cramer** is the recipient of the ArtsNational Mid-Career Scholarship for 2023. Celia received \$2000 which she put towards attending the Infrared and Raman User Group (IRUG) conference in Tokyo in September this year.

Conservation has always drawn knowledge from the materiality of objects but this knowledge often stays within the conservation lab. Celia believes that objects can tell us histories, not simply of the objects themselves but of the people and cultures who made them. Archaeologists often draw from the information imbedded within the stone and ceramic from which objects are made. However, techniques to investigate skin-based objects are less developed and typically require the removal and destruction of a small piece of the historic material.

At the Infrared and Raman User Group (IRUG) conference in Tokyo in September 2023 Celia presented the analytical method or protocol for the non-destructive chemical analysis of objects made from skin, eg leather goods, objects and natural history specimens, a protocol which she has developed over the last four years. This protocol uses near infrared spectroscopy, a technique that has only recently been recognised as helpful for heritage materials. Near infrared is special because it does not require any sample to be removed from the object. It can penetrate the surface of an object using light alone. Near infrared is in use in hospitals. It is the critical part of the little gadget that goes over your finger to track your pulse and blood oxygen. Celia's research demonstrates how near infrared spectroscopy can be used to better understand the manufacture of heritage skin-based objects. The technique can also be used to assess the stability of such objects for display. The protocol has further potential in authentication of cultural heritage objects and for determining the provenance of imported leather goods.

Celia's presentation was part of a special session at the conference. This was the first time the IRUG conference has showcased near infrared spectroscopic analysis in conservation research. Celia hopes that by sharing her protocol and the lessons she has learned along the way, that she will assist other conservation scientists to adapt and apply it in their own collections.

Celia's credentials are most impressive. She obtained a Doctor of Philosophy (Science), University of Sydney, Vibrational and X-ray fluorescent spectroscopies for museum objects; Bachelor of Cultural Heritage Conservation, University of Canberra, 2009 – 2012 Double major: Painting Conservation and Paper Conservation; and Bachelor of Arts (Hons), University of Sydney, 1991-1996. She is currently the Principal Conservator of Celia Cramer Conservation (<https://mgnsw.org.au/consultants/celia-cramer-conservation>).