

SmartDOC Symposium

November 19-20, 2010 – Philadelphia, USA

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW IS RECORDING, DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Author: François LeBlanc, Conservation Architect, Ottawa, Canada, former Head of Field Projects, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles.

"*What the World Needs Now Is Love*" is a 1965 popular song with lyrics by Hal David and music composed by Burt Bacharach. It was first recorded, and made popular by Jackie DeShannon. It inspired a whole generation of young people at that time. I was part of that generation.

Currently, in the field of cultural heritage conservation, I believe that what the world needs now is recording, documentation and information management. And the participants to this Symposium are the ones who should lead the way to do this. What you have to offer to the world as professional specialists is absolutely essential to the field of cultural heritage conservation.

A great deal of our built heritage is lost every year through disasters of every kind. One only has to think of the devastation and loss of heritage that occurred as a consequence of the December 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, the August 2005 Katrina hurricane, the war in Iraq, the unrestrained urban development all over Asia, and innumerable fires of historic buildings and historic districts all over the world.

I am convinced that much of today's heritage will only be accessible to the next generations through documentation. The recording and documentation work that you are doing today will determine much of what the next generations will understand of our precious heritage that is destined to disappear in the near future. You therefore have a great responsibility to do your work to the highest possible standards and most importantly, to ensure that it is properly archived and widely disseminated. You are absolutely indispensable to the "conservation chain". It is a shame that many decision makers and heritage managers do not realize this and do not confer recording and documentation the place and resources it rightly deserves in the conservation process.

ROBIN LETELLIER, A PERSON OF VISION IN THE FIELD OF RECORDING AND DOCUMENTATION

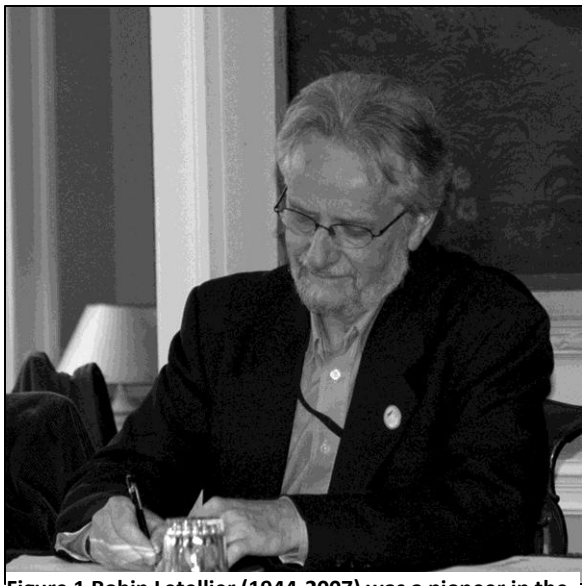


Figure 1 Robin Letellier (1944-2007) was a pioneer in the field of cultural heritage recording and documentation during the second half of the 20th century. He was a very inspiring leader who conceived the RecordIM Initiative.
Photo: Heather Papworth

One of the most inspiring persons I have met in the field of recording and documentation was my compatriot Robin Letellier. He graduated in architecture in 1969 from Laval University in Quebec City. One of his first jobs was to record an early 18th century masonry redoubt built by the French in Quebec City. From that day on, he continued to be passionate about recording and documentation and went on to become one of the leaders in this field not only in Canada, but internationally. His career blossomed during more than thirty years working for various Canadian government agencies responsible for national historic sites such as Parks Canada.

During that time he was also enthusiastically involved in international activities through the ICOMOS-CIPA Heritage Documentation international specialized committee. His colleagues at that time were people such as Hans Foramitti from Austria, Maurice Carbonnell from France, and Jozef Jachimski from

Poland, all world renowned pioneers in this field. In those days, Robin was a young professional and considered to be a bit of a rebel by his international colleagues. Early on, he was of the opinion that the recording specialists (the providers) were not connected enough to the “users” of documentation products and services. He felt that the photogrammetrists and surveyors did not understand the needs and role of conservation architects, archaeologists and heritage managers who, on the other hand, had little knowledge and understanding of what the recording and documentation specialists could offer them. In other words, it was as though the two groups were living on two different planets.

THE RECORDIM INITIATIVE 2002-2007

It is with this goal of bridging the gap between what he called “users” and “providers” that Robin approached me when I became Head of Field Projects at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles in 2001. Beginning in 1995, working with the CIPA-Heritage Documentation international scientific committee, Robin had organized a series of outreach workshops bringing together users and providers of documentation. In 2001, he suggested that we convene a group of top professionals from both sides to identify clearly the gaps between “users” and “providers” and set a path to bridge these gaps. Robin acknowledged early on that this notion of “users” and “providers” was not a black and white categorization.

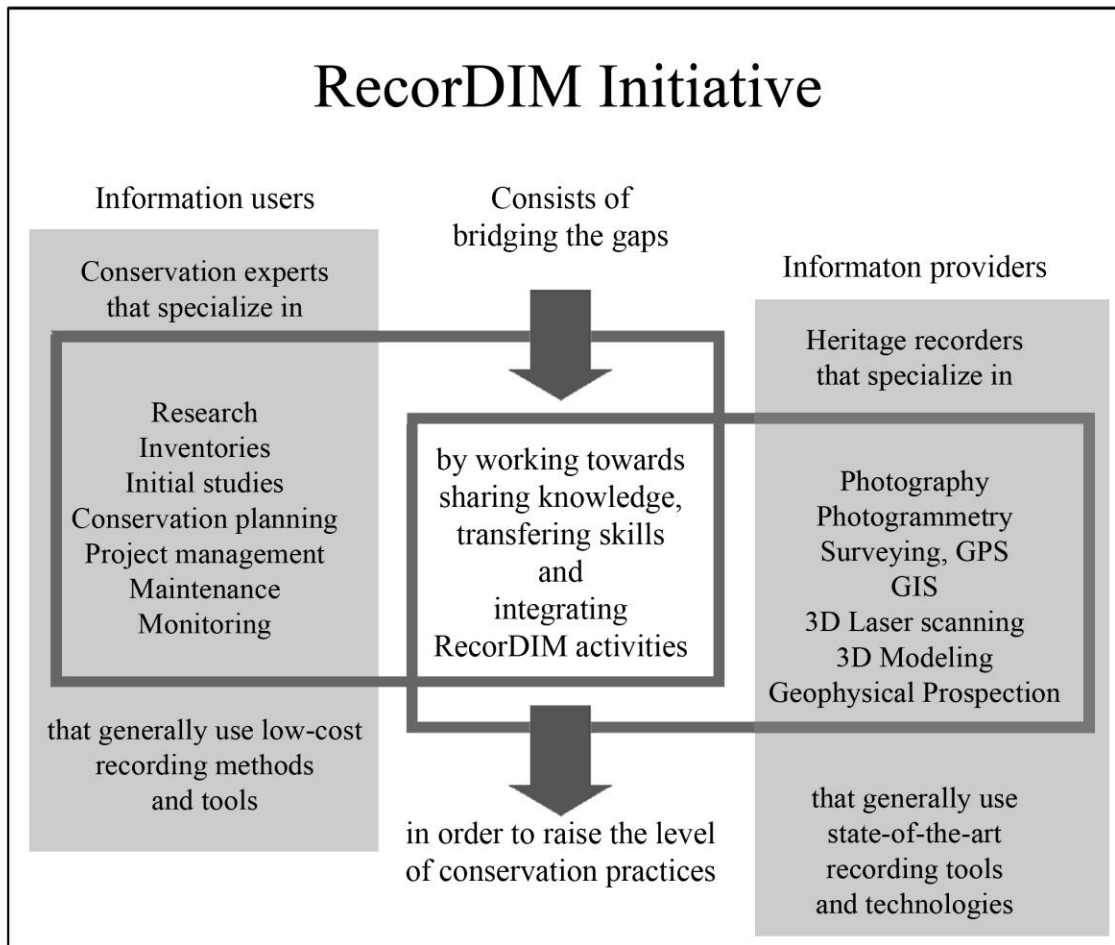


Figure 2 The diagram illustrates the RecorDIM approach to bridge the gaps between documentation users and providers.

“Users” do provide documentation services and products while “providers” do use documentation in their research and professional practices. But still, it was a simple concept that most people working in the field of heritage conservation could easily understand and relate to.

I agreed to organize the first roundtable. The initiative would be called RecorDIM (acronym for Recording, Documentation and Information Management). On March 4-5, 2002, an international group of documentation users and providers gathered at the Getty Centre in Los Angeles to discuss their experiences with heritage recording, documentation and information management. A total of 23 experts from 12 countries, representing most regions of the world, participated in a two-day roundtable discussion to define user needs and suggest strategies to close the gaps between users and providers. In addition, the group developed a list of recommended next steps for RecorDIM over the next five years.



Figure 3 Participants to the first RecordIM round table held at the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles, March 4-5, 2002. Photo: Debbie Valenta.

The group identified the following gaps and needs

1. To improve perception and communication in heritage recording, documentation, and information management
 - By information dissemination
 - By creating bibliographies, thesauruses, definitions
 - By creating focused newsletters
 - By establishing integrated professional networks
 - By encouraging joint symposia, seminars and tradeshow
 - By involving the private sector and outside organizations
2. To integrate recording, documentation and information management activities into the conservation process
 - By developing and implementing recording and documentation processes
 - By including recording, documentation and information management practices in conservation management guidelines
3. To increase resources for documentation
 - By promoting its benefits
 - By writing related policies
4. To define, develop and promote documentation tools
 - By writing:
 - Standards
 - Guidelines
 - Handbooks
 - Best practices

- By encouraging the development of software
 - By encouraging the development of hardware
 - Other tools required
 - Tools to enable cost-benefit analysis
 - Case studies
 - Economic models
 - Tools for estimating, procuring and tendering
5. To make available training and learning programs in recording and documentation
- By offering courses, seminars, workshops, etc.
 - By establishing certification and accreditation
 - By educating providers

For each of these five areas, the group developed a list of strategies to close the gaps between information users and providers and improve conservation recording practice.

The group called on RecorDIM Initiative Partners to use the gaps and needs list as a framework for future activities. Further, it called on each of the partners to adopt the strategies and coordinate efforts to implement them.

The Initiative was launched. It was decided that it would have a sunset date and would last only five years. This would help participants to focus on achievements. During that time, anyone in the conservation community who wanted to be part of the Initiative would be required to:

1. Select one of the gaps identified during the first roundtable
2. Create a Task Group made up of providers and users who wanted to find ways of bridging this particular gap
3. Propose a work plan to reach this goal by the year 2007
4. Agree to meet on a regular basis with other Task Group leaders to report on progress, share experience and seek advice

The RecorDIM Initiative's focus was on "doing something" to advance the field as opposed to simply talking about the needs and challenges. Sixteen Task Groups were created during the Initiative's active period from 2002 to 2007, and most of their leaders met every year to report on progress and discuss challenges.

The Task Groups

1. **Training: Metric Survey Skills in Conservation** - Chair: Sarah Lunnon, English Heritage, UK
2. **RecorDIM Information Warehouse** - Chair: Andrew Powter, HCD for Parks Canada, Canada
3. **Survey on Heritage Recording as a Property Management and Project Delivery Practice** - Chair: Natalie Bull, HCD for Parks Canada, Canada
4. **Guiding Principles and Guidelines for the Recording, Documentation and Information Management of the Built Cultural Heritage** - Chair: François LeBlanc, Getty Conservation Institute, USA; **Illustrated Examples for the Recording, Documentation and Information**

- Management of the Built Cultural Heritage** - Chair: Rand Eppich, Getty Conservation Institute, USA
5. **Low-Cost Standards for Architectural Heritage RecordIM** - Chair: Lazar Sumanov, ICOMOS Macedonia, Macedonia
 6. **Collecting, compiling, cataloguing and sharing Heritage Stereo views** - Chair: Walter Schuhr, U. Of Applied Sciences, Germany
 7. **Tabulation of task specific technologies for RecordIM activities in India** - Chair: Divay Gupta, INTACH, India
 8. **Rock-Art Science Task Group** - Chair: Daniel Arsenault, Institut du Patrimoine UQAM, Canada
 9. **Generic GIS Template for the Management of Heritage Places** - Chairs: Fulvio Rinaudo, Politecnico di Torino, Italy; Guliz Bilgin, METU Faculty of Architecture, Turkey; Gaetano Palumbo, World Monument Fund, France
 10. **Technical Monitoring of Large Archaeological Sites** - Chair: Peter Waldhäusl, CIPA, Austria
 11. **Documentation for World Heritage Nominations and Monitoring** - Chair: Giora Solar, ICOMOS, Israel
 12. **Persian Heritage Archive** - Chairs: Mahmoud Zolfaghari, RIGSI, Iran; Abbass Malian, Borde-Kootah Eng. Co., Iran
 13. **Documentation and support of restoration of the traditional architecture in Nias, Indonesia** - Chairs: Ulrike Herbig and Petra Gruber, TU Vienna, Austria
 14. **Multilingual Dictionary and Glossary of Terms for the Heritage Recording and Documentation in Internet** (in short: The CIPA multilingual glossary/dictionary) - Chair: Jozef Jachimski, AGH, Poland
 15. **Survey of architecture and cultural heritage by Photo-tacheometry** - Chairs: Michael Scherer, University of Bochum, Germany; José Luis Lerma, Politécnica de Valencia, Spain.
 16. **International Heritage Documentation Standards** – Chair: Bill Blake, English Heritage

Following are a few examples of Task Groups and what they accomplished during the five-year period of the RecordIM Initiative.

Task Group 7: Tabulation of task specific technologies for RecordIM activities in India .



Figure 4 Divay Gupta from New Delhi, India. Photo: F. LeBlanc

Divay Gupta, of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, chaired this Task Group that addressed the need for a publication on inventory and documentation that would be specific to India’s built heritage.

In 2007, the Task Group published “Conservation Briefs – Identification and Documentation of Built Heritage in India” A copy of the publication is available for download in PDF format at:

http://cipa.icomos.org/fileadmin/RECORDIM/INDIA_2007.pdf

Task Group 6: Collecting, compiling cataloguing and sharing Heritage Stereo views.



Figure 5 Walter Schuhr from Germany. Photo: F. LeBlanc

This Task Group was chaired by Walter Schuhr, of the University of Applied Science Magdeburg, Germany. Millions of stereo views were produced at the turn of the 19th century and were sold commercially. Because they are stereo pairs, valuable measurable data can be extracted from them. The Task Group's main purpose was to find ways of disseminating information concerning heritage stereo views, to create alliances with those that collect high quality stereo images, and to make them available on the web to those involved in heritage conservation activities. In 2007, the Task Group created a web site at: <http://3dsite.icomos.org/> and began sharing information and stereo images.

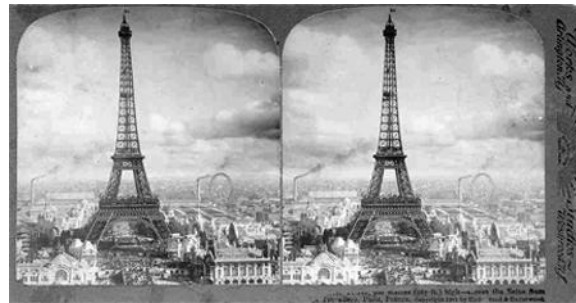


Figure 6 A commercial stereoview of the Eiffel Tower in Paris from the early 20th century. Photo: Walter Schuhr.

Task Group 4: A) Guiding Principles and Guidelines for the Recording, Documentation and Information Management of the Built Cultural Heritage. B) Illustrated Examples for the Recording, Documentation and Information Management of the Built Cultural Heritage.



Figure 7 François LeBlanc of the GCI in Los Angeles, USA. Photo: Dennis Keeley



Figure 8 Rand Eppich of the GCI in Los Angeles, USA. Photo: F. LeBlanc.

This Task Group worked on the preparation of two complementary publications that were coordinated respectively by François LeBlanc, and Rand Eppich of the Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles, USA. The first publication targeted decision makers and heritage managers while the second one targeted heritage professionals.

The two publications were finalized in 2008 and

are available for download in PDF format

at: http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/pdf_publications/recordim.html

Task Group 16: International Heritage Documentation Standards.



Figure 9 Bill Blake of English Heritage, London, UK, Photo: F. LeBlanc.

The Task Group was chaired by Bill Blake of English Heritage, London, UK. The group acknowledged that documentation achieved by one project is often unusable by others because of differing thematic, technical or data standards. It felt that international heritage documentation standards are needed to meet the needs of the heritage conservation community. The present practices and standards are localized, fragmented by a variety of work cycles and segmented by discipline. In the application of the ICOMOS Sofia principles there is a clear need for consistency, integration and transparency of documentation activities in both the conservation planning and heritage asset management aspects of our response to the historic environment.

In 2008, the Task Group produced a template for an international heritage documentation standard that seeks to improve the value of documentation for understanding, protecting, managing and enjoying our shared cultural heritage.

Quotes from colleagues who participated to the RecorDIM Initiative.

“I think it’s fair to say the RecorDIM Initiative has generated key texts and training programmes for the continuing dissemination of best practice in heritage Documentation. The teaching model of a balance between understanding information need and ‘hands on’ documentation skill adopted by English Heritage’s Metric survey team, RLICC and ICCROM would not have happened without the key contributors learning from the RecorDIM round-table discussions.” Bill Blake, English Heritage.

“I believe that the RecorDIM Initiative created a strong network between those interested in the subject, to share ideas, tools and methods. It generated teaching materials that are used by many trainers all over the world and resulted in the publication of several books that are being used in over 15 graduate conservation programs.” Rand Eppich, Getty Conservation Institute.

“The RecorDIM Initiative has impacted many professional colleagues. Through this experience, we have organized so many training courses and we are still very active. The work in Philadelphia, our just recently completed training course in Leuven are evidence of the results of the Initiative.” Mario Santana-Quintero, Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation.

FAMILY ALBUM

Another not so well known initiative by Robin Letellier was called Family Album. Robin understood early on that the task of recording, documenting, archiving and sharing information about our heritage was a gargantuan one that no individual or institution would ever be able to tackle alone.

Only if a whole generation of young people was convinced of the importance of documenting its heritage would it be possible to achieve anything. This is indeed how our colleagues in the natural environment conservation field managed to grow from a small group of radical people who chained

themselves to trees during the 1960s and 1970s, to a broad international movement to protect and care for our planet's fauna and flora. They engaged children of all age groups, raising their level of awareness to the importance of having a healthy and clean environment and not letting their parents and political leaders get away with piling up garbage and polluting the planet.

Robin developed and promoted his *Family Album* idea mainly in Canada during the 1980s. With the help and support of a group of teachers, he demonstrated that this could be done by inviting young people to collect family pictures and asking their parents or family members to tell them the stories behind the pictures. The pictures and stories would then be shared in the classroom where the teacher would initiate the children to the concept of heritage, its importance in our lives and the responsibility we all have to ensure that it is passed on to the next generations.



Figure 10 The Family Album Initiative. A typical family picture. Photo: F. LeBlanc

There have been and still are many programs that encourage children to discover and document their heritage. In the 1990s, the Getty Conservation Institute initiated a series of projects that encouraged young people to document through photographs those things they considered landmarks in their community. It published a manual that presents a practical method for documenting these landmark projects.

The free PDF is accessible online at:

http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/pdf_publications/landmarks_new.pdf

Similarly, UNESCO prepared the World Heritage Education Resource Kit, entitled "World Heritage in Young Hands". It is designed to be a resource kit for teachers, as their role is vital for the success of World Heritage Education. The Kit was initially published in English and French and was disseminated starting in 1999. Since then Spanish and Arabic versions have been published and Chinese and Russian versions are under preparation. Through an interactive and multi-disciplinary approach, the Kit helps teachers in different disciplines and students to explore heritage. As a concrete tool, the Kit provides background information and pedagogical guidelines; proposes classroom and extra-curricular activities and offers visual material, such as photographs, posters, World Heritage maps and thematic overhead transparencies for classroom discussions.

The Kit can be downloaded at: <http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-54-19.pdf>

These are but a few examples. Still, they illustrate the fact that if the international community of specialists in recording, documentation and information management of cultural places wishes to expand its influence and become truly relevant to society, then it must turn to young people and nurture their interest in this field.

MANAGING AND SHARING INFORMATION

Another inspiring focus of Robin’s professional activity was information management and sharing. If we consider that documentation is the primary activity in heritage asset management and all who work in the cultural heritage sector are responsible for it, that it is the first step in understanding and that it is the action that expresses the desire to share knowledge, then why aren’t the professionals involved in the conservation of our heritage places not sharing their information? Why aren’t the archaeological and historical reports readily and freely available for all to read? As well as the recording and documentation material, the photo surveys, the condition and investigation reports, the restoration plans and specifications, the monitoring and evaluation strategies?

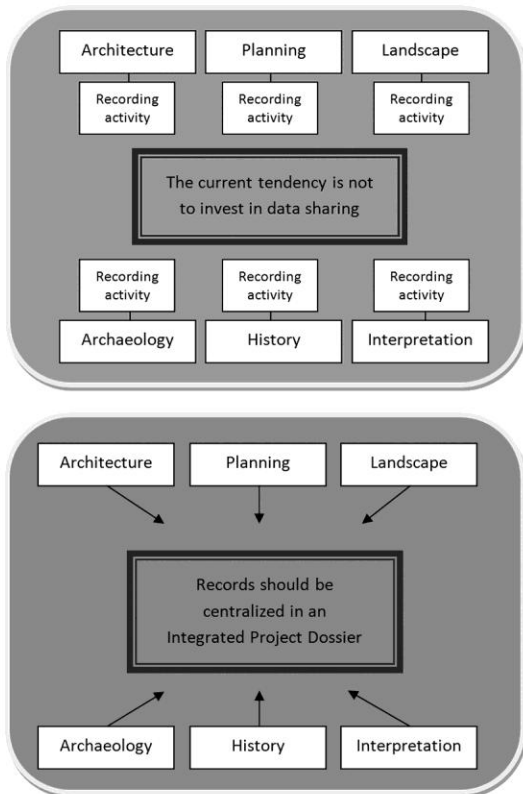


Figure 11 The diagram illustrates the fact that the tendency with many organizations it not to invest in data sharing. Illustration: F. LeBlanc

Robin exposed the fact that the tendency with many organizations it not to invest in data sharing. There is no link between existing documentation centers. There is little and sometimes no communication among conservation professionals and reluctance to share data. There are no consistent standards for recording, documentation and information management. There is duplication in recording and documentation activities, and in storage of data. There is a lack of awareness of cost benefits of well-organized and managed documentation centers.

On the other hand, Robin advocated the benefits of information management as a central activity to conservation practice. It enables everyone involved with the conservation of a place to share all records and documents that exist. It avoids duplication in recording, facilitates research and analysis and expedites investigation, design, and maintenance. It ensures accuracy and consistency in recording and satisfies monitoring requirements. He strongly

advocated the creation of “Integrated Project Dossiers” using contemporary Internet tools to store and share project data. Only by sharing and professionally managing our information will we be

able to fully understand a heritage place and the values attributed to it and ensure that the resources associated to those values are adequately protected and passed on to the next generations.



Figure 12 The diagram illustrates the six phases of the Conservation Process with a few examples of typical documentation produced during each phase. Illustration: F. LeBlanc

Robin also encouraged us not to underestimate the power of preaching by example. Are the records of your professional work archived according to best practices and easily accessible? Does your institution, agency or firm take record-keeping seriously? How about your own family's records? Is your own family album and history in order? Most professionals working in historic preservation will have extraordinary lives; they will be in contact with precious cultural treasures in a privilege way. How do you plan to share this unique knowledge and experience with your children and grandchildren and with others? If you

can't keep your professional and personal records in order, how do you expect to convince others to do so?

CLOSING REMARKS

More and more people realize how important it is to preserve great places and traditions created by our forefathers as well as outstanding natural areas of our planet. They are reminders of the beauty and magnificence of life on Earth. Regrettably, much of this heritage will continue to deteriorate or disappear due to natural or man-made causes.

Professionals in recording, documentation and information management are a first line of defence against the loss of much of this heritage and play a crucial role in what future generations will remember and understand of our world today.

I urge all of you to have a vision, to figure out where you stand in a global situation. Don't just focus on developing new or better tools. Determine what is the rightful place and role of recording, documentation and information management in the cultural heritage conservation process and in our society as a whole. Then strive to attain it with determination and commitment. I finally encourage you to engage youth, to share your professional work as broadly as possible and to lead by example.