
This research topic emerged as the focus of a master’s thesis through a discussion on contemporary cleaning techniques with Columbia conservation professor George Wheeler. Despite 40 years of technological development and research, the number of conservation applications of lasers to clean stone in the United States is miniscule compared to what is taking place in Europe. This thesis articulates the reasons contributing to the disproportionate geography of projects utilizing lasers to clean stone, with particular focus on the preservation of historic architecture. Analysis is presented on areas of training, funding, literature, case studies, research, history of laser cleaning development, equipment, and other cleaning techniques.

This topic is particularly relevant because laser cleaning is a promising technology that is not evolving in a consistent way among international practitioners. The information presented here will hopefully contribute to an expansion of dialog between American and international conservation practitioners that will increase the potential for collaboration, training, education and, ultimately, more informed treatment choices for the conservation of stone.