

Survey report and recommendations re ICME web self-presentation

Dear ICME members,

The replacement of the ICME self-presentation text on ICME's web site last year with a new text, caused some objections. In order to address this issue, ICME's chair Viv Golding, former ICME chair Annette B. Fromm and former ICME chair Per B. Rekdal formed a small working group, cooperating on conducting a survey among the ICME members about their opinion, with Rekdal being given the task of forwarding his recommendations based on the results.

Thus, some time ago, you were asked about your opinion on ICME's self-presentation on its web-site.

A new text

ICME is dedicated to promoting and safeguarding the human rights of all the peoples of the world, their cultures, societies and environments as well as the tangible and intangible heritage held in museums. Since ICME views identities as dynamic, fluid and multiple rather than essentialist and fixed it is committed to contemporary collecting and collaborative action together with diverse global heritage communities. ICME recognises the colonial histories and the sexist legacies that underpin so many of our traditional ethnographic collections and pro-actively engages with colleagues worldwide to progress intercultural understanding amongst museum audiences as opposed to prejudice and stereotype.

had for some months replaced the old text

ICME is the international committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) devoted to ethnographic museums and collections from local, national and/or global cultures and societies. ICME is concern[ed] with the challenges facing ethnographic museums and collections in a changing world while representing people and their cultures. Ethnographic collections are found in all types of museums – ethnography, art, folk, history, natural history

on the front page of ICME's web site.

After some complaints, the old text was put back above the new text on ICME's front page.

In essence you were asked which text you preferred and whether the two could be combined somehow. The answers were so few that it is hard to claim that it is representative for ICME's members, but the result was clear:

Out of 8 responses, 7 preferred the old text and also rejected the new text as a description of ICME. 3 could not see a possible combination of the two, while 4 could, but with strong changes in the new text, avoiding activist formulations. 1 (one) saw it the opposite way.

Some of the respondents have given proposals as to eventually improve the texts. These have been accessible to you as posts on ICME-Yahoo and will of course be useful for a proposed working group (see below).

My recommendations are:

- ***Take away the new text until an eventual new one can be written (see below).*** It may be argued that the new text may be seen as changing the content of what ICME is

about to virtually initiating a different International Committee (or ICME going from International Committee to NGO, like one of the responders write). That is not a good starting point for a discussion.

- ***Make a working group looking at what ICME is, is for, is about, how, what does (in real life), etc.*** The members of the working group should not only have opinions, but also include some who are good at sorting out and has an eye for the down to earth practicalities. It can contain board members and ordinary members – they should all be there as individuals and not positions – and must work independently of ICME’s highest leadership. The working group should circulate its results – possibly also its process – to ICME’s members for comments.

Closely related to the above, I think the working group could include looking into questions like:

- **How and by which means does ICME inform about itself to outsiders? Is it efficient?**
It can be assumed that the web page is the most important information source for newcomers. It is both an information site and a recruitment site. ICOM’s web-site describes shortly what each International Committee is about, and ICOM’s own website never took away the old text about ICME. From ICOM you go to each International Committee’s own web site.
- **How and by which means does ICME inform about itself to its members? Is it efficient?**
Face Book and the ICME Yahoo list are low cost, easy to handle, news streams and commentary arenas that are both indispensable.

What about ICME News? *Our chair has informed us that information about the new web text was published in several issues of the ICME News, with no reactions.* So, how many of us read ICME News? We live in a reality where we are bombarded with messages trying to catch our attention. The job being done with ICME News is excellent, but is it sufficiently efficient in making us read? Newsletters, digests etc. have a great potential for articles and more in-depth information which is sorely needed, but are more difficult to make the receivers read.

This leads us back to the ICME web page which has the doubtful honour of being everything for everyone. Perhaps a study of the other International Committees’ information to their own members can be enlightening?

- **Did so few respond because most of ICME’s members “couldn’t care less”?**
If possibly so: why? ICOM is constantly growing in members. What is ICME’s member growth rate as compared to other International Committees’? ICOM’s International Committees may possibly be asked to re-think themselves and maybe eternal life for International Committees is not to be taken for granted? What would ICME in that case give as reason for its continued existence?

Perhaps 2018 can become a year for ICME to re-find itself, in what unites us and in how we are fruitfully diversified.

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Per B. Rekdal