

## **AD 3 year report for ICOFOM**

Three years ago, when I accepted your nomination as President of ICOFOM, I pledged to you and to myself that I would do the best I could, but that I, being human, would also make mistakes. Today, as I hand this committee to the next President, I acknowledge my mistakes and am grateful for the many good things we have accomplished. In a moment I will detail some of those failures and successes. A wise man said “Failures are made only by those who fail to dare, not by those who dare to fail.”

First thanks very much to you for your help and support. Without your friendship and encouragement, your knowledge and dedication, I would not have been able to carry on during an exciting and challenging period for ICOFOM and for ICOM. I especially recognize the very wonderful people in the ICOFOM executive who have worked so hard to advance our goals and acknowledge our problems.

One of our problems, and one that remains, is that what we do, theory, is not well understood, seen by some museum people to be airy-fairy, unnecessary compared to practice. This problem is actually internal to this committee as well as external to ICOFOM. The reality is that theory is difficult in and to any discipline, but that does not mean that it is not vital, for it is the very base on which museums should rest. We are a very important committee of ICOM and we must continue to struggle with theory.

Three years ago I said I had a number of goals. These were many, but here are the main ones. I hoped we would have a conference on mainland Africa, that we would encourage and promote youth and those from under-represented countries, that we would concentrate on improving the quality of the ICOFOM Study Series and the annual conferences, that we would continue our active publication thrust, that we would update our Rules, that we would develop further our two dynamic, regional subcommittees, and that we strive to improve communications. I am very proud to say that we have advanced on all those goals, though not necessarily exactly the way we might have anticipated or at the rate we might have desired. I will talk about each of these in turn.

### Annual meetings

In 2011 we held a fabulous meeting in Taiwan, thanks in very large measure to the concerted and brilliant efforts of our board member Chen Kuoning. Kuoning not only managed to put together a fascinating program, that included provocative keynotes, strong panels and visits to major museums all across the island, but also to raise 65,000 dollars US to pay for this. To my knowledge this is the most amount of money ICOFOM has ever raised, and it has allowed us to spend our 2011 allocation in 2012 and 2013.

Last year, 2012, we met in Tunis, although we were concerned that a horrid American movie might not allow this. But all was safe and productive, due in large measure to the wonderful work of Soumaya Gharsallah-Hizem and her excellent committee, including Samir Aounallah. Our attendance was exceptional, the greatest number of non-locals that we have had since I have been involved with ICOFOM. The quality of the keynotes, panels and discussions was very high. As well, due in part to Jennifer Harris' adept management, we had strong participation from youths and underrepresented areas, something we were aiming for, as was ICOM. One disappointment in this meeting was the small number of Arab and African participants. The reality is that they simply do not have the money required to come. If ICOFOM and ICOM really want to be truly international, this is a big problem that must be addressed.

And now here in Rio we have just experienced another wonderful meeting, with superb keynotes by two very different analysts, stimulating panels and strong discussions. I want to make special mention of Saena Sadighyan and our wonderful translators. What a great treat. A very big thanks to all who have worked so very hard to make this meeting a success. And there is more to come.

One of the reasons for our holding meetings in various different parts of the world is to increase membership from those parts. So, a number of years ago we held a meeting in Siberia which resulted in Olga and Hildegard forming an important sub-committee, ASPAC. Our meeting last year in the Magreb was similarly partly to attract Arab members. In fact one of the criteria for ICOM funding is whether a committee is increasing its membership. We must never be a closed club. Concerned about low membership from North America and the United Kingdom, I made a simple decision to clarify the English term Museology. I suggested adding the words "museum theory" in brackets beside the little known English word, "Museology", in order to explain this obscure word. The word is not obscure in Spanish or French, but it is in English. The result was a torrent of critical emails. Repeatedly I told the board - and people outside the board who felt that they had the right to comment - that the word "museology" is not commonly understood in English and that the use of this word might be an explanation for the low English language participation. I simply wanted to add a description so that English speakers would easily understand the word "museology". This was not an attempt to alter any matter of committee substance. How could this simple decision have generated a flood of emails? It was a simple matter of clarification which would have had no impact on the French and Spanish use of the word "museology".

Another case of attempted clarification is that of the ISS. The review committee and I have worked hard to lift the standard. Clarifying the meaning of terms and outlining in a short paper useful approaches to writing a paper are strategies that were intended to assist in lifting standards. It is unclear to me and some other

board members why there was criticism of attempts to give suggestions - *only suggestions* - to potential writers.

Within this we also had a problem with lack of board confidentiality. Some members thought that it is quite acceptable to discuss board matters with anyone, especially past board members. This resulted in some non board members commenting on issues as if they had the authority to do so. I urge all members of the future board to respect confidentiality and the rules of committees.

I have sometimes wondered, as have some others, whether the anger directed at such simple decisions as clarification of a term or suggestions for writing were really something to do with antagonism towards the English language members of ICOFOM. If this is the case, then this is the ugly face of ICOFOM and I urge all of you to understand that ICOM is an international organization and that all museum people are welcome in it.

Publications I will give a fairly fulsome report as Suzanne Nash, head of publications, unfortunately is not here.

Beyond our annual meetings, publications have always been important to ICOFOM. First among these is the ICOFOM Study Series, often referred to as ISS, published annually in conjunction with our annual meeting.

In Shanghai, November 2010, the board decided to concentrate for three years on one topic: *Audience*: “The Dialogic Museum and the Visitor Experience”, ISS 40, 2011 (meeting in Taipei, Taiwan), “Empowering the Visitor: Process, Progress, Protest”, ISS 41, 2012 (meeting in Tunis, Tunisia) and “The Special Visitor, Each and Every One of Us”, ISS 42, 2013 (meeting in Rio de Janeiro).

One of our goals over the past years has been to elevate the quality of this publication. To do that we have continued the double blind evaluation system, most ably led by André Desvallées, and supported by a host of dedicated readers. After a paper is accepted, it might need some editing, and this has been done magnificently by Suzanne Nash and other kind volunteers. Suzanne has also done the layout, a big and important job. We have also tried to get abstracts in all three official ICOM languages. Here Mónica Gorgas and Nelly Decarolis have made invaluable Spanish translations.

Despite these efforts, we still find that we refuse many papers, not something we like to do. I believe there are four reasons for this. The author

- a. not understanding/reading the topic
- b. not using theory
- c. language not Eng, Fr or Sp
- d. cultural – local museums not at that point of development

I would very much like to have a discussion on these problems and how we might solve them.

***Collection of ICOFOM publications on compact disk and on the ICOFOM web site***

The project to scan all the ICOFOM publications from the first report in 1978 to the present was finally completed in 2012. All ICOFOM publications from 1978 to 2011 were presented on one CD entitled “Fundamentals of Museology” and distributed in Tunis in 2012 and at the Seminario of Spanish and Portuguese museologists in Petropolis in 2012. Publications will be added as they appear. Complete bibliographies, by author and by meeting, are included in both CDs.

***The Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de Muséologie***, edited by André Desvallées and François Mairesse, was published in 2011 by Armand Colin, containing 21 articles, is the culmination of an idea first launched by Georges Henri Rivière and approved by ICOM in 1978. Preparations are underway for an enlarged international edition of the Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de Muséologie in English. Translations of articles were begun in 2011. Professor Jennifer Carter of the University of Québec at Montreal is now coordinating the translations.

***Key Concepts of Museology***

The short booklet, *Key Concepts of Museology* introducing the 21 museological terms chosen and developed by the ***Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de Muséologie***, was presented at the ICOM General Conference in Shanghai in November 2010. It is available on the ICOM and the ICOFOM web sites. The booklet was first published in French, English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. Translations are completed or about to be so in Czech, Russian, Latvian, Italian, Japanese, Greek, Portuguese and Farsi.

***What is a Museum?*** Edited by Ann Davis, André Desvallées and François Mairesse, published in 2011 by Müller-Strassen Verlag in München is a translation and enlarged edition of the French language *Vers une nouvelle définition du musée?* edited by André Desvallées and François Mairesse, published in 2007. With 15 articles by an international group of ICOFOM members, the study is the outgrowth of a new definition of Museum launched by ICOM in 2003 for the revision of the ICOM Statutes adopted in 2007. Many of the papers on the new definition were first contributed to the ICOFOM meeting in Calgary in 2005.

***Book on Audience*** Cambridge Scholars Publications in the UK has approached us about publishing some of our work. The publications secretary suggested that the cycle of three symposia on audience could be a publication, composed of articles that best dealt with the theme from each issue of ISS thus making different chapters: *The dialogic museum* (2011), *Empowering the visitor* (2012), and *The special visitor* (2013). It was further suggested that I could be the editor for this monograph.

*Pubs of LAM and ASPAC:*

- a. *Argroup* working away
- b. Conference papers: LAC: Papers of the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of LAM, in 2011; Working Papers of the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting in 2012, and, to come later this year, final papers of the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. 2012 // *Seminario Investigación en Museología de los países de lengua portuguesa y española.*

Rules I will not be expansive here because we have Lynn Maranda, who has valiantly shepherded all the modifications to the Rules

- Prepared and submitted amendments to the *Rules*, approved 5 July 2009 at Liège, Belgium, for approval at the 2011 Annual General Meeting; amendments approved 23 October 2011 at Taipei, Taiwan
- Received ICOM Secretariat review of and amendments to the ICOFOM *Rules* in July 2012; many of these amendments were of a minor nature; reviewed these and made whatever adjustments needed to be made to the *Rules*; amendments approved 3 November 2012 at Tunis, Tunisia
- An Addendum to the Rules in respect of Sub-Committees and attending Guidelines, was prepared and presented 3 November 2012 at Tunis, Tunisia; the Addendum was submitted for information as an attachment to the *Rules*; the next step in the process is to implement the Guidelines with the compliance of the Sub-Committee

## LAM & ASPAC

I don't want to preempt their reports, so I will give some brief highlights:

ASPAC has been most instrumental in partnering with a variety of universities and other institutions to mount impressive museum schools, that in Barnaul and Kemerovo in November 2011; Munich in April 20112; and earlier this year a conference and museum school which attracted over 500 participants. Wow!!!

LAM is also very active holding a joint meeting with CECA LAC in Ecuador in 2011; a meeting in Petropolis in November 2012 with the participation of UniRio, which was preceded by the important *Seminario de Investigación en Museología de los países de lengua portuguesa y española 05 a 11 noviembre*; and a planned regional meeting in Costa Rica this coming November.

Need better communication

## Communications

Challenge re corrupted membership date base  
Bruno redone website  
Anna LinkedIn over 700 participants  
AD 6627 sent or received emails; Lynn too  
AD chair IC, active in ICOM: chair of ICOM committee on ICs; Rio UNESCO meeting  
AD various meetings: China keynote as ICOM ASPAC, Italy jury  
ICOFOM booth

## Future Plans

While this will be up to the new board to determine the specifics, I want to tell you a little about possible meeting places for next year and 2015. We have been invited to the Czech Republic, India and France for next year. Then, in 2015, we are invited to Japan. I thank most sincerely all those who are keen to have us in their wonderful countries. That we have such fantastic invitations is an indication to my mind of the strength and value of ICOFOM.

## Election of new Board

In closing I would like to make a few remarks about the upcoming board election. First let me say I am very pleased see have so many excellent people running for the board. To me this is another indication of the worth of this committee. So, out of this great group, how do you choose 12? Clearly we need good geographic distribution; certainly we want people who will work hard; we look for a distribution in age and gender; we consider what needs to be done and vote appropriately. For example it has been most helpful having Bruno here in Rio to lead us through the many facets of a triennial meeting. At the next triennial in Italy, we would be strengthened by having an Italian on the board to guide us.

Overall I believe ICOFOM is in pretty good health. We are definitely one of the most active committees. But, as well, and this is important, we have worked hard at being a good ICOM committee; we have struggled to be diverse, to include youth, to feature under-represented areas, to expand our communications, to advance museums, museum theory and museum workers all around the world. And we are being recognized for our considerable strengths: our 2013 ICOM subvention was increased by 1000 euros, to about 8,500 euros in round numbers. In fact, we had the third highest subvention granted (apart from those committees that were not given any subvention because they did not transfer their bank accounts) despite the fact that we are about the fifth largest committee.

Finally, let me reiterate my many thanks and wish ICOFOM continued success and growth.