SPECIAL REPORT
Merchandising
t’s no secret that today’s economic climate, museums in many countries are struggling to sustain their financial stability. Investment in culture has taken a hit and museums are finding themselves in precarious situations as a result. In April of this year, an international conference entitled Public policies toward museums in times of crisis was held in Lisbon. Participants studied the diversity of public policies towards museums and their relation to the financial, social and cultural crises currently developing in Europe. This conference led to the release of the Lisbon Declaration to Support Culture and Museums to Face the Global Crisis and Build the Future, an appeal to the European Parliament and Commission, the parliaments and governments of European countries and to regional and local governments, to support European museums in challenging economic times.

The state has a significant part to play in sustaining cultural institutions, but museums themselves are also finding solutions to generate funds needed to keep activities and programming alive. Our Special Report (pp 10-15) looks at that coveted cultural institution – the museum shop – and the creative techniques museums are using to generate much-needed revenue through innovative merchandising. In addition, cafés and other entertainment platforms can attract new visitors to a museum. But beyond the financial benefit of these activities, the museum shop and café also serve to create lasting memories, positive associations and a connection with the collection. In some cases, merchandise can even strengthen a population’s sense of collective identity, as is the goal of the Singapore National Heritage Board’s brand, Museum Label (p 11).

This issue of ICOM News has been published in time for the ICOM General Conference Rio 2013, and many of you will be reading it in situ. Every three years, the ICOM General Conference brings together an international group of museum professionals of various disciplines to debate and discuss the museum issues at stake. It will be a tremendous honour for me to inaugurate this conference, giving way to a week of dialogue, workshops and networking opportunities.

In discussing the conference theme, Museums (Memory + Creativity) = Social Change, participants will address a range of issues that are crucial to the positive development of our museum community. I urge you to take this wonderful opportunity to create a platform, with the dynamic Brazilian museum scene as a backdrop, from which we can shape the future of museums together.

Hans-Martin Hinz
ICOM President
Communication

To mark its first anniversary, the Museum of the Great War in France, France, launched two advertising campaigns created by the agency, DDB Paris. The first uses eight images from the museum's vast collection of glass photographic plates to bring the diverse human realities of World War I through to the far-removed generations of today. This effort was recently awarded the 2013 Grand Prix in Advertising in the category of publishing, culture and communication from French weekly magazine Stratége, geared for communication professionals. Alongside this traditional advertising campaign, DDB Paris employed the tools of our times in the second campaign, imagining the “Facebook 1914” page of Léon Vivien, a French soldier in 1914 – an event that was recognised with a Gold Lion for Best Use of Social Media at the 2013 Cannes Lions Awards.

Events

In the Taiwanese capital, the Taipei Children’s Arts Festival opened from 1 July - 11 August, 2013. The latest edition of this annual event, jointly organised by Taipei City’s government, Department of Cultural Affairs and Culture Foundation, features the theme Dynamic Body,Soothing Imagination. According to Taiwan News, the festival is seeking to inspire Taiwanese children by combining art and technology, with a multidisciplinary programme that includes a range of free and ticketed performances outdoors and in Taipei theatre venues, installation and exhibitions, animated artworks, an animated film festival and workshops allowing children to make toys and build robot models.

Commemorations

The Dhaka Museum was inaugurated on 7 August, 1913, and in 2013, was reincarnated as the Bangladesh National Museum. The museum, one of the largest in South Asia, has multi-dimensional collections of archaeological artefacts, historical documents, art objects, ethological materials and natural history specimens from pre-history through to the present. In connection with the 100th anniversary of its founding, the museum organised an international seminar on 8-9 July, 2013, addressing a range of museological topics as well as heritage issues in Bangladesh. The museum, which houses 44 galleries, a library, two auditoriums and an exhibition hall, is also undertaking a three-year modernisation, renovation and development project for its galleries, storage facilities and security services, with an additional focus on improving catalogue and information activities.

To commemorate the 125th anniversary of its founding, from 15 May-7 July, 2013, the Bardo National Museum in Tunis organised a photography exhibition in partnership with the French National Institute of Art History and the Luxembourg Museum, featuring 50 photos that have never before been presented to the public. This celebration comes in the wake of a restoration of the Temple of Dendur and expansion that duplicated the surface of Tunisia’s Ouâda Museum, who cast collection of archaeological artefacts retraces the country’s history and the monumental buildings present over the millennia. This overhaul was launched in 2006 as part of a national initiative for the development of cultural tourism and was, however, in the wake of the Tunisian Revolution of 2011-2012, visitor numbers country-wide dropped and are only now in the process of being clawed back up, according to French newspaper Le Figaro.

In honour of the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr’s powerful “I Have a Dream” speech, the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. has opened One Life: Martin Luther King Jr., an exhibition devoted to the US civil rights movement leader. Using photographs, prints, paintings and memorabilia from the museum’s collection, this exhibition retraces the key moments of King’s career as a civil rights and anti-war activist and advocate for impoverished Americans. Open from 28 June 2013 to 1 June 2014, the exhibition will be accompanied by Portrait Story Days, inviting visitors to hear stories about King and create a piece of art, in January, 2014.

Discoveries

Two major archaeological discoveries have recently been made in Israel. According to Art Daily, at the Tel Hazor excavation site in the northern region of Galilee, Hebrew University volunteers have unearthed part of a statue of a Sphinx containing a hieroglyphic dedication to Egyptian Pharaoh Amenemhet. A part of the statue, containing the inscription, was found during his reign (circa 2,500 BCE). This is the only monumental Egyptian statue to have been discovered in the Levant (modern-day Israel, Lebanon and Syria). At the Ophel excavation site near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the earliest alphabetic written text ever found in the city has been discovered: an inscription in the Canaanite language on a pithos, or large storage container, dated to the 10th century BCE – predating the earliest known Hebrew inscription uncovered in Jerusalem by nearly 250 years. The inscription’s meaning is as yet unknown.

Partnerships

The launch of the Global Cultural Districts Network (GCDN) was announced during the NewCities Summit, a global event on the future of the urban world, organised by NewCities Foundation and the City of Amsterdam. NewCities Foundation, in São Paulo, Brazil, in June. A partnership between the NewCities Foundation, Dallas Arts District (picture), and AEA Consulting, GCDN will be the first network of its kind with a mission to facilitate and expand co-operation and knowledge sharing between those responsible for conceiving, funding, building, and operating cultural districts internationally. The Network aims to ensure that these projects are vital assets for their communities, contributing to the vitality of 2,000 cities, according to AEA Consulting Director Adrian Ellis. “The idea of GCDN is to support the leadership of cultural districts – both planned and existing – wherever they are,” he says. “There are clearly many differences between Seoul, San Francisco, Vancouver and Mexico City – to take a random four – but there are many similarities too, in a world where ideas, people and capital are highly mobile.”

People

Irina Antonova, 91, is stepping down as director of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow following 52 years in this position, and an additional 6 years on the museum’s staff prior to being named director. She will continue to serve as the museum’s president. Marina Loshak has been appointed as her successor, and assumed the directorship on 1 July, 2013, moving on from her position as art director at the Moscow Museum of Modern Art and Exhibition Centre, another major Moscow cultural institution. A specialist in Russian avant-garde art, Loshak is expected to modernise the revered Pushkin Museum through technical innovation and expansion, and to increase exhibition and storage spaces.
BEST PRACTICES STOCKING COLLECTIONS

Change of heart

The Musée Rodin’s repositories have seen substantial improvements in recent years

by Sara Helt, with reporting by Solène de Bony

T

he Paris site of the Musée Rodin, which houses its permanent collection in the 19th-century Hôtel Biron, is in the midst of a three-year improvement project. Between museographic renewal, renovation of the existing exhibition and creation of new ones, and implementing accessibility measures, the museum has a tough task ahead. This effort devoted to the exhibition spaces, which Diane Tytgat, registrar at the Musée Rodin since 2007, refers to as a new lease of life for the museum, comes in the wake of the 2007, which houses its permanent collection in the heart of the museum.

The museums and the heart of the museum.

Repositories are intended to preserve works as well as allowing the collection to be viewed for study purposes

The repositories and harmonising aisle and exhibition spaces on these works – between the Paris ones cover 180 m². In Meudon, the space reserved for the permanent collections exceeds 500 m² while in Paris it spans 1,200 m². 300 m² of which are for temporary exhibitions, where the museum holds exhibitions twice a year presenting 60 to 200 works. The overall collection comprises 6,745 sculptures, 9,200 drawings, 12,000 photos and 200 paintings, as well as 6,500 antiques originating in Egypt, Greece, Rome and the Far East. It is not surprising, then, that the repository is where the bulk of the artworks are preserved. “Very little of the collection is exhibited, only around 10%, but we tend a lot,” says Tytgat.

Enhanced visibility and space

Improvements to the museum’s storage spaces were carried out “in fits and spurts”, given the high costs involved. In Meudon, storage systems were gradually replaced using several outside service providers and specialised companies. Closed wooden cabinets were thus replaced with glass cases, for example, “so that curators walking through the collections can see the works straightforward. Repositories are intended to preserve works as well as allowing the collection to be viewed for study purposes.”

On the Paris site, alongside existing storage rooms for museographic elements, modern frames, works in transit and sculptures, two basement repositories were built for graphic and photographic works with a consulting room for researchers, a space for works in transit and conservation studios. “Basement repositories entail specific problems in terms of soil infiltration and watertightness, as well as accessibility in case of an emergency evacuation. From a registrar’s point of view, ground-level repositories are much easier to deal with.”

While working as an archivist at the Musée Rodin prior to 2007, Tytgat helped to oversee various phases in the repository renovations. Her appointment as registrar, a position created after more than 2,000 instances of artwork movements were counted in 2006, demonstrated the need to coordinate and develop a methodology for subsequent activity. In this new role, she sought to implement additional improvements to the repositories.

“I was already familiar with how the repositories operated, how objects were prepared for travel, and I saw room for potential improvement,” says Tytgat. “The first thing I did [as registrar] was to clear areas at the entry of each repository. The sculptures are the part of the collection loaned most frequently, and I had large tables installed here to allow works to be taken out for study or assessment of their state prior to travel or packing for shipment.”

Tytgat also emphasises the need for an administrative workspace with computers to track the movements of collection items if there is no office nearby.

Signage and security

Creating clear signage was another objective. The museum set about ensuring a consistent archiving system for all of the repositories and harmonising aisle markings in order to facilitate the location of works for loans and exhibitions, and enhance traceability.

Maintenance signs placed at the storage room entrances at both sites were “simple measures to motivate the many users of these storage rooms to pay attention to their proper upkeep,” explains Tytgat.

Ground cleaning – to fight dust, a major problem in storage – and climate control were among the most important. The museum’s technical-logistics department, hand in hand with an outside maintenance company, manages the air treatment and cooling systems used in the Meudon and Paris repositories, regularly verifying their functioning. Monthly temperature and humidity measurements, however, are overseen by the conservation department, principally supervised by the person in charge of preventive conservation.

Floor markings were also placed in the storage rooms to indicate transit and work areas. “We demarcate the storage area for all of the material and lifting equipment necessary for handling the sculptures in a well-indicated space,” says Tytgat. “We also had all of the worktables and trolleys placed on wheels. Our storage rooms are extremely large and this makes things easier for staff.”

Despite their size, it is only possible to welcome groups of 10-15 people at a time due to the delicate nature of these sites. Repository access for staff and museum professionals is monitored by a security and reception service.

Restrictive measures go hand in hand with these numerous efforts made in recent years to facilitate the flow of Rodin’s thousands of works – and scholarships on these works – between the repository aisles and exhibitions spaces and libraries in Paris and beyond. Tytgat concludes by describing the role of repositories in the museum as “a place to store but also conserve, restore and prepare works before shipment: repositories are the heart of the museum.”

AS

Rik Nijsen is Coordinator of Museum Projects at Bruynzeel Storage Systems, the European market leader in innovative storage systems. He has been involved in furnishing repositories of museums as diverse as the Van Gogh Museum and the new Louvre-Lens. He shares his tips for furnishing a new museum repository.

Optimise space and minimise vibrations

The goal of a museum repository is to preserve the cultural and historical treasures in the best possible conditions. One of the most common issues is limited space. By using mobile systems the number of aisles can be reduced and storage capacity can be increased. However, movement causes possible harmful vibrations on the often fragile stored artefacts. Storage systems with the smoothest possible running characteristics are very increasing space but avoiding any possible damages to the items.

Adapt the climate to the stored objects

Optimal humidity and temperature varies by material. This can cause difficulties for example when storing wooden spears with an iron head, because both materials require different temperature and humidity levels. When designing a new storage room and archiving system, also be aware of the position of the air vents in the climate system in relation to the stored items. For example, when storing paintings, make sure the airflow is parallel to the paintings and not aimed directly at them at a right angle, so the first stored painting is catching all the wind like a sail. Also make sure that the storage systems are emission free, using for example fully powder-coated steel, and limiting the use of chipboard material with hazardous emissions.

Inventory of the collection

The design of a space-efficient depot starts with a detailed inventory of the collection. Make detailed lists of all stored objects, including dimensions, weight and specific climate demands. Based on this data, the best suited storage systems can be designed for the items. During this process you will define the necessary storage systems like drawers, shelves, industrial racking, mesh panels for painting storage, etc. With this information a layout can be designed and the required storage space in squared metres can be determined.
IN FOCUS MUSEUMS (MEMORY + CREATIVITY) = SOCIAL CHANGE

Unexpected synergy

A museum programme for young offenders offers a new perspective

by Ronna Tulgan Osterheim, Head of Public Education, the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA

Since 2005, the Responding to Art Involves Self Expression programme (RAISE) at the Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts, USA, has served as an alternative sentence for adjudicated youth in Berkshire County. The programme aims as a vehicle to remind participants of their unique potential for constructive interaction with the world so that they may choose to behave in a more socially appropriate manner. Essentially, at the heart of the RAISE programme is the equation, Museums (memory + creativity) = Social Change, the theme of the Rio 2013 ICOM General Conference. The programme was conceived during an informal conversation with a local Juvenile Court judge. In Massachusetts, the Berkshire County Juvenile Courts are leaders in developing innovative alternative sentencing programmes, i.e. sentencing juvenile offenders to educational programmes instead of punishment, by partnering with the multitude of cultural organisations in the area. Programmes involving theatre, dance, creative writing and even studio art already existed, but there were none that involved looking at art in a museum. At the request of the judge, the Clark set about developing and hosting a museum-based alternative sentence programme.

The Clark’s education programme philosophy is that engaging with art can enrich the lives of people from all strata of society. Art can make us more aware of our own constructive tendencies and help us to appreciate differences in others. What audience could be benefited from programmes more than a group of young people caught in a cycle of destructive behaviour? I brought the idea back to the museum and although some of my colleagues had concerns, the programme had the full support of our director and soon everyone was on board. The five-week programme is now part of our regular programming.

Twice a year, 10 to 12 teenagers ranging in age from 12 to 17, spend time at the Clark, as part of the RAISE programme. Most of these teenagers are from households with a poverty threshold income and have required the involvement of social services due to concerns with the environment in their home and the activities of people living there. Many are failing in school. Hardly any have ever been in a museum before. They have committed range of crimes, including vandalism, assault, larceny, drug abuse and running away from home.

Look, think, talk

The participants generally arrive the first week looking miserable, angry and uncomfortable. After quick introductions we have a tour of the galleries and engage with the art. We look carefully, and we think and talk about what we are seeing. We set it up so the participants will experience the process as something they are good at, something that is interesting, and even fun. After the gallery talk, we do a related activity designed to help them reflect on their “offence” (the reason they were sentenced to the programme) in new ways, focusing on their own perspectives and interpretations. After the last session, custodial adults and court and school personnel join the programme. The participants act as their guides in the galleries, leading people through the works of art, and these educators (where RAISE staff read carefully crafted letters about each participant’s strengths that have been observed throughout the programme. The young people have a voice in explaining the artworks, their custodial adults and court personnel have all been together since the time of sentencing, it is a powerful moment.

Feedback on the programme has been very positive. Court personnel have described the programme as “one of the most effective and uplifting alternative sentences ordered”, the probation department has reported that the recidivism rate for RAISE participants is next to zero. The Clark’s at the beginning of a three-year formal evaluation of the programme and it is too early to draw any conclusions. However, we have discovered that reminding young people (memory) of their constructive potential (creativity) really does give them new ideas about their possibilities for belonging to the larger world (social change).

Exploring and interpreting social change

CAMOC’s Insight Favelas project aims to develop a resource for the collection of urban narratives

by Suay Akoz, Chair of the ICOM International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities (CAMOC)

CAMOC had its first encounter with the museums of Rio de Janeiro in August 2012, when it was approached by the Cultural Secretariat of the city and state of Rio to collaborate on the rehabilitation of the City Museum. This proved to be a great opportunity, on the eve of the ICOM Triennial Conference, to get a feel for the cidade maravilhosa (marvelous city), the vast urban transformation it was undergoing, its favelas, its museums of course, and its extraordinary World Heritage setting. Above all, it was a chance to meet the people of Rio, the Cariocas, who ultimately give the city its identity.

Getting to the heart of the city was crucial to our discussions. Based on the conference theme of ICOM Rio 2013, we collaborated with the very active Favela Museum (MUF) and the ICOM Affiliated Organisation, International Movement for a New Museum (IMeM). RAISE project called Insight Favela, which encapsulates the mission of city museums today.

From memory to evolution

In essence, the contemporary city museum is about social change, just like its only artefact: the city. This artefact is too complex and evolving to be captured only through its history; however, without reference to its past, it would be devoid of the vital component that defines its identity: memory. Our past is our foundation; it defines us and gives meaning to our lives today, the same is true for cities, which are built on memory, on yesterday. Traditionally, the museum served to collect and safeguard the past. However, today it aims to capture urban change, interpret and communicate it for today as well as for posterity, and in doing so it helps, however modestly, to maintain the layers of history, perhaps more than we had visualised initially. The museum has access to a group of skilled people from the community who will participate in CAMOC’s seminal anthropological work in the favelas to collect evidence of everyday life by filming and photographing the process. CAMOC members will record the oral history helped by students from Rio’s universities who will be translating and interpreting from Portuguese.

The designed development of an online crowdsourcing resource, leveraging the wisdom of crowds and achieving broader participation, will allow for the steady input of new material and the promotion of this approach internationally. Thus inciting more people to create content themselves. Additional expected output will be a photo- graphy exhibition at the favelas, an e-book and a listed archive with visual material.

In essence, the contemporary city museum is about social change, just like its only artefact: the city.

SPECIAL REPORT

MERCHANDISING

Museums get creative with merchandising

by Aedín Mac Deitt

or many museum-goers, a trip to the museum shop or café is an essential part of the visit. Taking away a tangible representation of the collection or exhibition reinforces the connection to the objects and provides a constant reminder of the experience. Museum shops are also, quite simply, an elegant source of gifts or souvenirs for those visiting from abroad. Likewise, the museum café has become synonymous with style and offers a tranquil backdrop for lengthy discussions or quiet reflection, even for non-visitors.

But beyond the visitor’s perception, museum shops and other commercial activities are providing much-needed resources that allow institutions to grow and develop their missions; in some cases, it helps them to stay afloat financially in a context of reduced funding. Although sometimes criticised as distracting institutions from their core missions, these practices are increasingly being accepted as necessary to facilitating mission-related activities. 

In conceiving any museum shop, a good place to start is by determining who your customer is. Market research can provide details on visitor demographics, but regardless of their profile, most visitors will want an object that reminds them of their visit, or one that is relevant to the collections.

Paula Röhss, Director of Information, Marketing and Sales at the Nationalmuseum, in Stockholm, Sweden, explains the importance of taking into account the target customer: “If you are Tate, MET or Van Gogh [Museum], you will have a lot of tourists and they will ask for one type of merchandising. The Nationalmuseum only receives 20% of tourists, which means we have returning customers, so we can’t offer the same thing all the time.” She also emphasises the importance of branded merchandise but admits that it’s not always an easy option. “Everything in the store can’t be branded with the Nationalmuseum. It’s expensive to create your own merchandise so we have to work out a strategy for our assortment that’s a good mix for our visitors. In the summer we have more tourists than at Christmas, so it depends on the time of year.”

Röhss explains how visitors to the museum are broken down into three categories: very interested, quite interested and a little bit interested. These three groups make up two-thirds of Stockholm’s population. “So almost one million are at least a bit interested,” she says. “It’s huge.”

Indeed, museum bars and events are becoming more popular, and can be a way of attracting new visitors to a museum. The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam is one such example. Friday Nights at the museum are organised on a particular theme with a DJ, cocktail bar and free guided tours from 6 till 10 pm. Meals are also served in Le Tambourin café for less than 10 euros on Friday evenings.

Balancing act

But in developing merchandising, how can museums get the right balance between culture and commerce? MUSEUM LABEL (ML), a brand and retail concept created by Singapore’s National Heritage Board (NHB), attempts to do just that. The brand was developed with the aim of telling Singapore’s story through merchandise inspired by Singapore’s national collection and its art and cultural heritage. The brand collaborates with local artists and designers in various formats to create every day, functional objects inspired by art, with revenue channelled towards programming in Singapore’s museums. Its Great Singapore Souvenirs (GSS) collection — a series of museum merchandise inspired by uniquely Singaporean quirks and habits — won the award of Best Merchandise at the International Design & Communication Awards (IDCA) 2013.

“MUSEUM LABEL could be seen as an extension of NHB’s efforts to tell the Singapore story through well-designed, functional merchandise ranging from stationery, accessories and apparel to objects d’art,” says NHB Director of Business Development Jessie Oh. “At the heart of this, of course, lies inspiration from Singapore’s art, identity and heritage, as well as promoting the national collection. ML is the retail arm of the National Heritage Board, which allows us to bring the Singapore story closer to everyone through the medium of retail and merchandise, as well as to raise awareness of our heritage and who we are as Singaporeans.”

ML merchandise is currently available at Singapore Art Museum, the National Museum of Singapore, and the Asian Civilisation Museum, but there are plans to reach out to a wider audience by expanding its distribution points. The brand’s products can now be found at about 20 local retail shops and department stores. “We have experimented retail points at Tangs on Orchard Road and at Changi Airport. We are further engaging such retailers for more easily and effectively than those in physical outlets. The information can be used to create a typical visitor profile, thus identifying potential visitors to the museum. “We have a tracking system on our website making it possible to get statistics on our customers,” says Dovzhikova. “Our shoppers are mostly from the USA and Europe. [Their] average age is 35. About half [of customers] find our e-shop through search systems; another half comes to our internet shop through the main museum website.”

As museums continue to be challenged by reduced funding, they must go to greater lengths to generate revenue and ensure a satisfying experience for visitors. Attractive museum merchandising can go a long way to boosting resources and the institution’s overall image.

The e-shop boom

As online sales continue to increase their percentage of global retail turnover, museum shops are also following this trend albeit to a lesser extent. The e-shop of the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, offers souvenirs inspired by art objects from the Hermitage collection.

“We try to create souvenir collections presenting, on the one hand, different types of products, but united with one theme or idea, whether it an art object, an art style or a historical epoch,” says E-Shop manager Elena Dovzhikova. “We also prepare for various museum exhibitions creating a range of products intending to reflect the exhibition topic and giving visitors the possibility to acquire a nice souvenir.”

Visitors to e-shops can often be tracked more easily and effectively than those in physical outlets. The information can be used to create a typical visitor profile, thus identifying potential visitors to the museum. “We have a tracking system on our website making it possible to get statistics on our customers,” says Dovzhikova. “Our shoppers are mostly from the USA and Europe. [Their] average age is 35. About half [of customers] find our e-shop through search systems; another half comes to our internet shop through the main museum website.”

As museums continue to be challenged by reduced funding, they must go to greater lengths to generate revenue and ensure a satisfying experience for visitors. Attractive museum merchandising can go a long way to boosting resources and the institution’s overall image.
A capital space
The museum shop: a guarantee of financial performance

by Guy Nordmann, Director of Acentis Conseil, tourism and cultural sector consulting firm

The shop and bookstore, a crucial asset for creating resources, is nowadays present on most tourism and cultural sites in museums of all sizes. It is a tool that has become indispensable on more than one account, satisfying visitor demand, conveying an image, values and message, and contributing to vital operating income.

From museums with high traffic to more modest establishments, the objectives are the same but the issues that arise in attaining them differ greatly. In smaller spaces where product stock is limited, there is less room for error, for instance. But in all cases, creating, optimising and managing a museum shop calls for careful consideration, imagination, rigor and professionalism. The museum shop should instil emotion and meaning, where visitors instantly feel at home. The space is strongly contingent on measures taken in the preliminary stages as well as operators’ demands. A cultural establishment, whose teams by definition have scientific but not necessarily commercial expertise, has every reason to turn to a specialised service provider in order to produce profitable financial results and avoid harmful errors.

Tight budgets complicate matters when it comes to shop layout and furniture, which is often extremely costly. To circumvent this difficulty, it is strongly advised to opt for standard furnishings, to be subsequently enhanced and personalised with colours and elements of the institution’s museography. Standard furniture, which is adjustable, adaptable and versatile, is suitable for transformations over time—and above all, substantially less costly than tailored furniture that is specially designed and produced for the shop.

Successful management
Products branded with the museum’s name, and soprano products consistent with its themes, help to convey the site’s image, values and message. It is vital that they respect the museum’s character. To encourage responsible purchasing, it is advisable to prioritise contact with suppliers in the area, who frequently prove more flexible although their purchase prices may be slightly higher. This choice is coherent in terms of the site’s image, logically fitting in with its role as a social agent on the local market, and is also beneficial for the supplier, who for the most part will be able to deliver truly personalised products in reasonable quantities, helping to strengthen its image and reach.

In museums where fewer than 100,000 visitors pass through each year, the average visitor purchase (taxes included) generally ranges from €1.50 to €2.50 in Europe, amounting to total turnover (tax incl.) of €150k-€250k. It is important not to increase the number of suppliers in order to preserve buying power.

Another good way of buying is to pool purchases. This approach consists of three to five sites receiving suppliers and placing orders together, not necessarily selecting the same products (each establishment preserves its specificity), but simply purchasing through the same supplier. This appeals to suppliers because it reduces the need for prospecting; they are therefore more likely to accept commercial compromises, leading to a relationship that is advantageous for all involved.

For smaller sites, the breadth (variety of products) and depth (number of items in a given product line) of the assortment is trickier to determine. For sites that receive 50,000 visitors and transform 25% into buyers, the situation is more complicated than for those receiving 150,000 shop customers. Each item selected for purchase in the shop of a modestly sized museum is extremely important, given that the number of items is more limited. It is thus essential to focus on safe bets—popular items such as children’s books, goodies and local sweets.

In bookstores, this difficulty may be circumvented by looking past local or extremely specialised publishers to wholesalers.

Using a wholesaler may slightly reduce profit margins, but above all grants access to the catalogue of nearly all major publishers, allowing for thorough item listing consistent with the museum’s themes. Developing a personalised product line for larger establishments will require more work, research and consideration but will certainly prove worthwhile. For museums drawing in fewer visitors, this effort may prove extremely harmful for the quality of the stock, and represent a non-negligible risk. Stock that rotates infrequently grows stale and unattractive, visitors must discover new items with every trip to the shop. A healthy stock rotation should be done 60 to 90 days on average. Museum and tourism site shops, large and small alike, must convey imagination, well-being and pleasure. Respect for basics in terms of merchandising and marketing as well as management and steering—guarantees of proven professionalism—will lead to the optimisation of financial performance and build loyalty among visiting customers.

It is up to those running the shop to attain excellence through their efforts and talents in order to make the most of the shop and bookstore. This invaluable tool to leverage growth.

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Operation: training

This year, ICOM Switzerland developed a tailored training course for managing museum stores

by Marie-Agnès Gainscour, training course coordinator

This year, ICOM Switzerland developed a tailored layout, flow and signage organisation, the partner for the project, which required a great deal of research, a French organisation Museum raising awareness on museum shop issues, professional, ICOM Switzerland decided to With the aim of making practices more sustainable, and a chance to buy gifts for friends and family. It is therefore important to offer an assortment of items that meet these demands.

The additional revenues generated by a shop can represent up to 30% of an museum’s annual budget. However, there is no denying that what is often referred to as a “shop” is no more than an unattractive book store area laden with old publications and postcards, at times faded and thumbed-through. And yet, the existence of a shop in a museum holds clear potential. In order to ensure revenue, it is necessary to have the proper skills and tools. ICOM Switzerland wished to address this issue by offering a specific training course in the area.

A tailored encounter

With reference to the diverse practices more professional, ICOM Switzerland decided to put in place an inaugural session devoted to raising awareness on museum shop issues, held on 27th and 29th May, 2013. After extensive research, French organisational and cultural activities was identified as a suitable partner for the project, which required a great deal of experience in training and consultation for shops in cultural and tourist sites. The course content was developed around units addressing marketing, merchandising (skills pertaining to space layout, flow and signage organisation, the presentation of items, decoration, ambiance and furniture, the choice of the range of products) and management (calculating sales price, overseeing orders and stock, developing performance indicators).

Beyond the theoretical contribution and practical examples provided by the two trainers, Joëlle Marty and Cécile Vignesoult, emphasis was placed on sharing experiences by holding the course in two different museums with well-performing shops: the first day at Château de Chillon, the second at the Swiss Museum of Games in La Tour-de-Peilz. Museum visits, respectively led by Mireille Kamenez and Maria Doris Santos and by Marianne Schott, were included in the programme.

Shared foundation, varied needs

The 20 participants represented institutions of varying size and status (cultural and municipal museums, private foundations, etc.). Participants ranged from shop assistants and heads to administrators and directors, all describing their needs at the start of the session.

Six of the participants were initiating projects for new shops while another six were overseeing the transformation of existing shops, and voiced their desire to procure tools and skills allowing them to successfully carry out the anticipated projects.

The eight other participants voiced general demands pertaining to the optimisation of shop operations, alongside more specific, technical needs, such as the adaptation of management software and the ordering system in particular, as well as equipment, profit margin calculation, the hunt for new suppliers, improvement of the offer through the development of less traditional products, the definition of a strategy, techniques for product presentation, and the improvement of an existing shop given a reduced budget.

Over the course of the discussion, particular attention was paid to constraints arising from the site or architecture of the shop space, which may strongly influence the functioning (or creation) of a shop. Architects thus should take the opinions of shop directors into account during preparatory discussions on the construction of the space.

For this reason, architects should take the opinions of shop directors into account during preparatory discussions on the construction of the space. One notable example of an innovative practice shared by participants was that of a mobile shop operated by a museum located in a protected historical building containing a vast and tall central hall.

At the end of the training course, participants concluded that it was extremely important to take the opinions of shop directors into account during preparatory discussions on the construction of the space. For this reason, architects should take the opinions of shop directors into account during preparatory discussions on the construction of the space.

The creation or development of a shop may strongly influence the construction of the space, which may also be factored in the planning of the space. For this reason, architects should take the opinions of shop directors into account during preparatory discussions on the construction of the space.

Architects should take the opinions of shop directors into account during preparatory discussions on the construction of the space.

Top museum cafés

Jasper Visser is an independent media and communications strategist, and former project manager of digital at the Museum of National History, Netherlands. He is also editor of the blog The Museum of the Future and a fan of good coffee. Here are his top-three museum cafés of all time.

1. The outside café at the Museum of Broken Relationships, Zagreb, Croatia

I visited the Museum of Broken Relationships on a hot summer’s day in 2012 and fell in love with it. We spent about six hours in the museum, most of them seated on the beautifully located outside terrace listening to soft jazz music. Few museums get everything right, but the Museum of Broken Relationships in Zagreb comes close.

The coffee is great and the staff showed the kind of warmth that the Balkans population are known for.

It is likely that few people will leave the Museum of Broken Relationships untouched. The heart-warming and tear-jerking stories about love lost provoke discussion and debate. Fortunately, the museum café serves a delicious local wine, which accompanies perfectly discussions of love and life with friends and fellow museum visitors. I would go as far as to say that no visit to the museum is complete without a stop off at the café. And as the museum is a must-see, I recommend you start saving for that return ticket to Zagreb.

2. The downstairs café at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

A good museum café energises visitors and encourages them to prolong their visit. The downstairs café at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (NSW) does just that, and at least did so for me half-way through a three-hour marathon visit to this classy art gallery. There is a special energy about the place, probably a combination of the friendly Sydney sider chatter and the tasty fare on offer, which gives you the boost you need to continue exploring the museum.

The café at the Art Gallery of NSW adds to the welcoming vibe the museum exudes. When I visited, there was a concert in one of the galleries, several youngsters reading books leisurely and a friendly rugby game on the lawn outside. The café serves as a link between the art world and the outdoorsy lifestyle that Australia is famous for.

3. The garden café at the Camden Arts Centre, London, UK

Throughout 2010 and 2011 private circumstances brought me to London many times, often with work to complete or books to read. The best place to do so, for many reasons, was the café and restaurant at the Camden Arts Centre. Why? Because of the independent workers, travelling consultants and any other individuals with a laptop and credit card are perhaps the quickest growing demographic in the developed world. Anyone that welcomes them and makes this clear is sure to generate an audience. All you need is a (shared) table, Wifi network and — of course — great coffee. The Camden Arts Centre has it all.
The museums of Timbuktu were forced to close for lack of visitors, and lost some of their most important collections around the globe. As for Timbuktu’s manuscripts, their uncertain fate and heroic exfiltration stirred an international community concerned about the welfare of these treasures. In the wake of these events, UNESCO and a number of its partners, including ICOM, gathered together on 18 February, 2013, to develop a plan of action to safeguard Malian cultural heritage.

Assessing the damage
A UNESCO evaluation mission, to which ICOM contributed, was held in Mali from 6–9 June, 2013, in order to measure the scope of the damage to cultural heritage and the manuscripts. The mission’s assessment was clear: the destruction in Timbuktu is in reality much more extensive than what had initially been reported. Armed groups in Timbuktu destroyed nearly 14 manuscripts classified as World Heritage. For the city’s populations, the saints to whom the mausoleums paid homage, celebrated since the 15th century, are above all scholars who devoted their lives to serving God, to university teaching and scientific production. They contributed to the development of some of the ideas that have guided the social and culture life of Timbuktu residents for centuries. Their destruction, combined with the pain and difficulties brought about by war, had something of a shock effect, wreaking havoc on many of the area’s points of reference in terms of identity and culture.

Beyond the destruction of the mausoleums, lamentably, a number of mosques are in a poor state: their annual maintenance by communities, notably the famous “replastering” techniques ensuring their preservation, was banned by rebel troops. The façades and minaret of the Djingareyber mosque, dating back to the 14th century, were partially destroyed. One of the so-called secret doors of the Sid Yahya mosque, dating to the 16th century, was entirely destroyed, and the roof requires urgent restoration. The museums of Timbuktu have also been affected by the city’s occupation: they were forced to close for lack of visitors, and lost some of their most important collections. One of the museums, the Musée Arstände Kiblé, which retracts the city’s history, was vandalised, and a sizeable portion of its collections was destroyed. The UNESCO-led mission also observed that the El-Farouk monument, emblematic of the city, was completely razed.

Given the situation, no one believed that the famous manuscripts of Timbuktu, attesting to the region’s historical intellectual produc- tion, could have been saved. And yet, over the course of the conflict, community members discreetly and urgently smuggled them to Bamako and other Malian cities. According to initial counts, it is believed that 4,200 manuscripts housed in the Ahmed Baba Institute of Higher Learning, whose building was occupied by armed groups, were burnt or stolen. They were located in the conservation rooms and had not yet been digitised. However, it is now apparent that the courage and audacity of the Timbuktu community allowed 27,000 documents to be saved; alongside 10,000 other manuscripts housed in the building’s underground rooms, which fortunately did not attract the attention of the occupiers. Other manuscripts belonging to private libraries were luckier: 275,000 are now thought to be in Bamako, having escaped destruction or looting by the fighters. Unfortunately, all of these manuscripts that have found sanctuary in Bamako are now exposed to the prevailing humidity brought by the rainy season.

Storage conditions and conservation equipment for the manuscripts are far from adequate; the drier climate in Timbuktu provides more appropriate conditions. Facilitating the manuscripts’ return is thus a priority for local communities.

The area’s occupation also affected Northern Mali’s intangible heritage, harmed by the banning of everyday ceremonies ranging from the construction and restoration of mud buildings to traditional dances, forbidden by the extremist fighters. The relatively quick liberation of certain regions fortunately meant that the effects of the ban on intangible cultural practices were minimised.

Organisation of aid efforts
Following the assessment of this evaluation mission, UNESCO has called on its traditional technical partners to restore Malian movable cultural heritage. ICOM has thus been asked to contribute to this effort, in keeping with its mission to promote the protection of movable heritage and the experience gained by its Disaster Relief Task Force (ICOM-DRTF).

UNESCO’s call was quickly met with a response, and organisations such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture agreed to undertake the restoration of mosques and reconstruction of the main Malian mausoleums destroyed by the jihadists. A number of countries also promised precious aid for the safeguarding of Malian cultural objects. The private and public sponsors who supported the transfer of Timbuktu’s manuscripts to Bamako continue to work with the guardians of these ancient writings.

The main forces for organisation in the museum sector, ICOM and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., are preparing to imple- ment an important programme for the protection of movable cultural goods, capacity strengthening and restoration of the country’s museums. This safeguarding plan also provides for emergency aid for the Musée National du Mali, located in Bamako. This African gem of museology has seen its annual visitor numbers drop to 17,000, down from 70,000 prior to the conflict. Its income has thus radically diminished. In this context, it appears urgent to support this museum in order for it to be able to guarantee the security of its collections and maintain standards of excellence for its museum practice.

Furthermore, a Red List of West African Cultural Objects at Risk is being prepared with support from Switzerland and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). Complementary aid from the United States Department of State will allow for a special action illustrating the urgent situation faced by Malian objects to be included in this Red List.

These various proposals for intervention demonstrate the solidarity of the international cultural sector and the importance placed on the preservation of the country’s cultural heritage. In the case of Mali, one of the most difficult tasks is to restore social cohesion, all but destroyed by the conflict, its fragility is illustrated by the deterioration suffered by the country’s cultural heritage.

In recent months, the media have focused on the vulnerability of Syrian and Malian cultural heritage in the face of the violent conflict rocking these countries. Precious sites and objects that resolutely crossed the centuries are facing serious threats if they haven’t already been completely destroyed. At the risk of seeing them obliterated, a number of stakeholders from the international cultural sector are calling for their protection, with some organising efforts to preserve what may still be saved. While the severity of the Syrian conflict has rendered the country all but inaccessible to international observers, a group of experts travelled to Mal in June 2013 to assess the scope of damage to heritage.

The country’s cultural objects have been severely affected by the occupation of armed groups in Northern Mali. Timbuktu and Gao, two cities whose names immortalise the greatness of ancient Sudanese empires, have been particularly hard-hit, with images of the destruction of objects classified as World Heritage seen around the globe. As for Timbuktu’s manuscripts, their uncertain fate and heroic exfiltration stirred an international community concerned about the welfare of these treasures. In the wake of these events, UNESCO and a number of its partners, including ICOM, gathered together on 18 February, 2013, to develop a plan of action to safeguard Malian cultural heritage.

What does the future hold for Mali’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage?
by France Desmarais and Lazare Elboudou Assomo

Safeguarding Timbuktu’s heritage

What does the future hold for Mali’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage?
Bem-vindos to Brazil’s museums

Rio de Janeiro, host city for the ICOM General Conference being held from 10 - 17 August, combines stunning landscapes with an inspiring array of cultural activities. In a country whose reputation for natural beauty, a strong musical tradition and melodic language stretches far and wide, how do Brazilian museums display this rich heritage for visitors?

By Mariana Gomes

From Cartola to Paulinho da Viola, samba is the emblematic music of Brazil for many – a rich and varied genre encompassing a number of sub-categories. Samba de roda from the north-eastern state of Bahia was proclaimed intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2005 at the request of then-Minister of Culture and beloved musician Gilberto Gil. Samba carioca now has its very own museum: the Museu do Samba Carioca presents the history of samba in Rio, highlighting its Afro-Brazilian roots through dance, music and stories, notably displaying instruments and traditional costumes worn by dancers from the city’s legendary samba schools during annual Carnival festivities.

Museu do Samba Carioca
Rue Venceslau de Alencar 1296 - Mangueira - Rio de Janeiro
Mon-Sat: 9am-5pm; Sun & holidays: 9am-2pm

Alongside Fernando Pessoa, Carlos Drummond de Andrade is one of the greatest Portuguese-language poets of the 20th century. His statue beckons strollers at Post 6 of Copacabana, a landmark for lovers of literature and beach-goers alike. In São Paulo, the Museum of the Portuguese Language – the world’s first museum entirely devoted to a language – strives to preserve and expand knowledge on the dynamic and ever-changing cultural entity that is Brazil’s national language. This unique space demonstrates how Portuguese is fundamental to Brazilian cultural identity, also exploring its linguistic variations in Portugal and other Portuguese-speaking countries.

Museu da Língua Portuguesa
Praça da Luz, s/nº, Centro - São Paulo
Mon-Fri: 10am-5pm; Sat: 9am-2pm

Via the proposal of then-Minister of Culture and beloved musician Gilberto Gil, Sambic Brazilian roots through dance, music and stories, notably displaying instruments and traditional costumes worn by dancers from the city’s legendary samba schools during annual Carnival festivities.

Museu Villa-Lobos
Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) greatly influenced the history of Brazilian music. The maestro experimented with a wholly new musical language: incorporating indigenous influences and traditional Brazilian melodies, he created compositions combining the finesse of classical music with the sincerity of folk traditions in unprecedented fashion. The museum devoted to the artist, which opened its doors in 1960, oversees the preservation and circulation of objects attesting to the importance of this ambassador of Brazilian culture.

Museu Villa-Lobos
Rue Sorocabá, 200, Botafogo - Rio de Janeiro
Mon-Sat: 9am-5pm

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Inaugurated in 2008, the Museu do Meio Ambiente (Museum of the Environment) is located in Rio’s 137-hectare Botanical Garden, which opened to the public in 1822 and is today classified as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, containing some 3,200 plant species from Brazil and beyond. The museum strives to raise awareness on environmental topics through debates and educational activities geared for ever-growing numbers of visitors.

Museu do Meio Ambiente
Rue Jardim Botânico, 1008 Jardim Botânico - Rio de Janeiro
Tues-Sun: 9am-5pm

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Tues-Sun: 9am-5pm

Named after the Brazilian poet and novelist Manuel Bandeira, the Museu da Língua Portuguesa is dedicated to the Portuguese language. Inaugurated in 2008, it houses an important collection of Brazilian literature and is the world’s first museum dedicated to a language.

Museu da Língua Portuguesa
Praça da Luz, s/nº, Centro - São Paulo
Mon-Sat: 10am-5pm; Sun: 9am-2pm

The country code for Brazil is 55. For intercity calls in Brazil, dial 0 + operator code (21, 31 ...) + city code (Rio: 21, São Paulo 11) + phone number. Important numbers to remember: 193 (fire brigade), civilian police (197), helicopter (198), military police (199).

Time zone
Don’t miss the General Conference sessions: change your watch to GMT -3.00!

Climate
In winter the temperature can vary between 18ºC and 23ºC so make sure you always have a sweater and umbrella to hand.

Vaccinations
No vaccinations are required for visits to Rio de Janeiro. However, if you are planning on exploring the rainforest, make sure you have an anti-mosquito product with the appropriate strength.

Currency
Introduced in 1994, the currency in Brazil is the Real (R$/BRL). The current exchange rate for 1 Euro is approximately 2.96 BRL, while 1 USD is equal to around 2.25 BRL.

Telephone
Don’t miss the General Conference sessions: change your watch to GMT -3.00!
Celebrating IMD 2013

International Museum Day 2013 was held on the theme Museums (memory + creativity) = Social Change. Some 35,000 museums in 145 countries participated actively in this multicultural event that goes further each year in raising awareness of the role of museums around the globe. ICOM expresses its heartfelt thanks to all participating museums for engaging in open dialogue with their visitors. ICOM News provides a snapshot of some of the most memorable events from IMD 2013 during International Museum Day week, Google announced 1,500 new high-resolution artworks, adding to the Google Art Project’s collection of more than 40,000 total works and over 250 cultural organisations around the globe. On 16 May, the Museo Nacional de Arte MUNAL in Mexico participated in a Google Art Project Art Talk on: New technologies, new audiences: does the museum respond to the demands and conditions of the contemporary world?

History highlighted in Czech Republic

On International Museum Day, the Czech Ministry of Culture and the Association of Museums and Galleries of the Czech Republic organised jointly Gloria Museum, the 11th edition of the national museum awards in the country, which reward institutions that have been particularly active in the past year. In 2013, the Lidice Memorial took away the special prize awarded by ICOM Czech Republic. Honoured for its permanent exhibition, the Memorial recalls the historical events that resulted in the mass destruction of the village of Lidice, located in north-west Prague, during the Second World War. The Lidice Collection features works by 264 artists from 28 countries that could not be publicly exhibited after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The Collection was praised by the National Committee for its historical, artistic and ethical quality.

A conference for all in Qatar

A public conference on this year’s IMD theme took place at the Museum of Islamic Art of Doha on 16 May. With the participation of representatives from the National Museum of Qatar, the Ministry of Information of Bahrain, as well as the under-secretary of Cultural Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, the event highlighted the important role museums play in preserving Qatari collective memory. The conference was also attended by members of the public as well as key members of Qatar’s art community to discuss major issues in the local museum landscape. The event took place under the auspices of the Qatar Museums Authority, a governmental organisation established in 2005, which ensures the protection, conservation, and promotion of Qatari cultural heritage, and celebrates International Museum Day each year.

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A medley of events in Mongolia

Special events took place in Mongolia this year for International Museum Day, concentrated in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. It was the first time the Minister and Vice-Minister of Culture attended the IMD events. A host of activities entitled the city on 18 May, starting at the Choijin Lam Temple, which organised a festive circus art event for their Night of Museums. On the same day, the National Museum of Mongolia gathered a school choir, who cheerfully sang at a nearby nursing home, while the Bogd Khan Palace Museum held an open house for a group of disabled people, which included a lecture on architecture. Finally, following this year’s IMD theme, the Fine Arts Museum launched an exhibition named Our Memory.

Ecuador gets festive

On 18 May, parade floats, ballerinas and musicians adorned the streets of Cuenca in southern Ecuador to celebrate International Museum Day. Organised by the Ministry of Culture of Ecuador, the Pumapungo Museum and the Museum Network of Cuenca, the festive event attracted local residents thanks to the participation of 20 local museums. This year, Ecuador actively participated in IMD, particularly in the south-central part of the country where the cities of Riobamba, Cuenca and Loja organised a variety of activities throughout the month of May. In Quito, celebrations began with Night of Museums on 17 May on the theme Museums and citizenship in movement. The activities were spread over several days during which 20 institutions in the capital staged an interactive quiz game with public participation.

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Google Art Project joins in the IMD celebrations

During International Museum Day week, Google announced 1,500 new high-resolution artworks, adding to the Google Art Project’s collection of more than 40,000 total works and over 250 cultural organisations around the globe. On 16 May, the Museo Nacional de Arte MUNAL in Mexico participated in a Google Art Project Art Talk on: New technologies, new audiences: does the museum respond to the demands and conditions of the contemporary world?

How do you relate to the IMD 2013 theme, Memory + Creativity = Social Change?

This is a theme that really resonates with me because it sends a strong message about the transition that is taking place within the museum world. It’s very topical. Museums hold an incredible amount of knowledge, history and indeed stories. Developments on the internet and digital space are enabling the sector to get creative about how they make this information more accessible, find new audiences, create new ways for people to interact with well-known and established content and perhaps renew the enthusiasm of society for museums as a whole. This is the power of online initiatives such as [Google] Art Project — the internet breaks down physical, social and in some cases financial barriers to make worldwide treasures available to anyone with a click of a mouse.

Why is it important for Google Art Project to celebrate IMD with the museum community?

It is our [museum] partners that have created the Google Art Project and therefore we wanted to acknowledge their role on a day that matters. Google has of course built the technology behind the Art Project but the artworks, the sculptures, the textiles, the furniture, the manuscripts — all this has been contributed by over 250 museums and cultural organisations worldwide. We wanted to mark the day by adding a swathe of new content and showing how, thanks to our partners, the Art Project experience is becoming richer, more diverse and more informative.

Who is Google Art Project aimed at?

It really is for anyone who has access to an internet connection. Of course, it is a very useful resource for art students and teachers because it brings together such a wealth of content from diverse institutions in one place. Not everyone is lucky enough to be able to visit MoMA in New York or Musee d’Orsay in France but by having the content from these museums online, it allows everyone from amateurs to enthusiasts to interact with art. And it is that interaction that is key — zooming into a painting at brushstroke level, comparing two stages of the same painting side by side, creating a personal online gallery or inviting your friends to a video tour of that collection makes the online experience exciting. This is what has encouraged people who didn’t know they liked art to suddenly discover it.

How can museums get involved?

In terms of partners, we are open to any museum that has digitised content, that is, high resolution photographs of their artworks in a format that is suitable for the internet. If you look at the partners on the Art Project today you will find large and small, well-known and niche and some, such as The White House, which are not generally considered museums. If anyone is interested we encourage them to signup at http://g-cultural-institute.appspot.com/signup.
various options open to museum visitors with regard to the use of the controversial flash.

The approaches featured here are not limited to France, which is unfortunate in that other cultures, from Asia to North America, diverge widely from common French practices in the realm of photography.

The work’s multidisciplinary approach is noteworthy and invaluable in bringing forth the views of legal experts, sociologists, curators, communications professionals, art historians, visual and digital culture specialists, journalists, anthropologists and ethnologists.

Preconceptions are shattered — for example, the notion that flash represents a major risk for the preservation of works.

In examining the issue of photography in museums, this book leads readers to more fundamental questions concerning the institution of museums, notably their role in the missions of preserving heritage as well as satisfying visitors, who place a great deal of importance on the collection of personal memories; their information, communication and training policies; respect for property rights and authors’ rights, which may go beyond the artist alone to apply to certain photographers or even museum staff members; the need to distinguish between the ultimate aims of photographers — amateur and professional alike — and the ways in which photos are used; and the necessity for museums to generate revenues via sales of spin-off objects in order to fulfill their primary missions.

In short, the work covers a broad field of enquiry and merits close reading.

Visiteurs photographes au musée, collection “Musées-Mondes”

GLASS, International Committee for Museums and Collections of Glass


The second issue of this annual periodical published by the ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Glass contains lectures presented in Barcelona in 2011. Several papers were given on Spanish glass production and on glass collections in Spain. Other papers covered European glassmaking technology in China, artistic production of the Bohemian-Moravian glassworks and a review of an exhibition at the Corning Museum of Glass in 2011 entitled From the Gilded Age to the Roaring Twenties: The Mt. Washington and Parkpoint glass companies and their creations. The issue also features an interview of the contemporary Spanish glass artist Javier Gómez.

Available online: http://www.icom.org/pla/resevoirdeglace/resevoir_on_glass_2 or in PDF format from the committee’s website.


Audiovisual media in museums are debated in the latest issue of ICOM Spain’s digital magazine, with a special focus on archaeological and historical museums. It presents points of view from museum professionals, audiovisual creators and design professionals, as well as university professors.

Available online: http://www.icom.org/pla/_revistaaudiovis/icheremaricam7.html#ndd=

Endorsing excellence

In keeping with its close, long-standing collaboration with UNESCO, and its commitment to promoting excellence within the international museum community, ICOM will carry on with the journal’s traditional approach, with the aim of fostering knowledge sharing through interdisciplinary research and encouraging best practices for the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage in a fast-changing world. ICOM will continue to provide museum professionals, scholars and enthusiasts with a fundamental instrument for reflection and dialogue on museums and cultural heritage on an international level.

Each issue will feature a theme of particular interest and research-based articles will deal with various aspects of these themes. Museum International will continue to keep readers up to date with museum- and heritage-related topics, including ethics, new technology, training, conservation, education, collection and many more.

The journal for museums and museum professionals worldwide

A new edition published by ICOM

Published since 1948 by UNESCO, Museum International is an important and influential academic journal for museum professionals in a variety of disciplines. UNESCO recently transferred the journal to the International Council of Museums [ICOM], and Museum International will from now on be published by ICOM in partnership with the existing co-publisher, Wiley.

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www.wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/MUSE
3 GOOD REASONS TO JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS

1. BE PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM COMMUNITY
   - CONNECT with 30,000 world-class museum experts
   - BUILD a strong international professional network in every speciality you can think of
   - BROADEN your horizons with over 200 conferences organised yearly around the globe
   - PARTICIPATE in the extensive programme at the Triennial General Conference including the next edition in Rio de Janeiro in 2013

2. GET INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS
   - SHAPE the future of the museum profession
   - ADVOCATE museum standards of excellence and museum ethics
   - PLAY A ROLE in the fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods
   - COOPERATE in emergency preparedness and response actions in museums worldwide

3. BENEFIT FROM ICOM SERVICES
   - GET INSIGHT ON trends and innovation in museums thanks to ICOM News, the magazine for museum professionals, and monthly electronic newsletters
   - SEARCH the 2,000 publications produced by ICOM's Committees through the online publications database
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