



ICOM-SA Office :  
3 Davann Court, 50 Bellair Road,  
Vredehoek, Cape Town, 8001  
Phone +27 461 2315.  
Email : [icomsamuseums@gmail.com](mailto:icomsamuseums@gmail.com)  
084-811 NPO

## ICOM-SA Newsletter No. 2, May 2014

In May we celebrate and commemorate. The month kicks off with Worker's Day, an international day of commemoration of the labour movement and especially of the struggle for labour rights. 18 May is International Museums Day. On 25 May we celebrate Africa Day, commemorating the founding of the Organisation of African Unity on that day in 1963. With National Election on 7 May as well, it will take special effort to ensure that International Museum Day takes its rightful place.

International Museum Day (IMD) has been celebrated since the 1977 with the aim to create awareness around museums. Each year has a different theme determined by the Advisory Committee of ICOM, with the objective of focusing on challenges and new innovations in the museum sector. This year's theme is "Collections makes Connections" indicating the renewed interest in collections and collecting as a core part of museum identity and practice.

Collections make connections in different ways. What we collect is informed about how we define ourselves. Collecting is never neutral and collecting practices in the past influence how we view the past. In the same way, future generations' view of us will be partly determined by our current collecting practices. Collections do not only cross boundaries between generations, but also between cultural groups. Natural history collections and associated research contribute to our understanding of our environment and our place in it.

Contemporary museum practice has to address new challenges. While collections are certainly not old-fashioned, what we collect has changed. We no longer make distinctions between high and low culture and we have extended collections to include memories and recordings of living heritage.

If collections connect through the information and beliefs they reflect, should we not renew our commitment to conserving, researching and communicating our collections. Against this background, the results of 2010 NRF Audit of natural history collections indicate not only a lack of understanding of the strategic value of natural history collections, but show the declining standards of collection management, with under-resourcing of curatorial staff a particular concern. The question is whether social history and art collections are doing any better. Is curating losing the

battle for resources against compliance and administrative responsibilities? And what are we doing about it?

Another challenge facing us is how to cross institutional boundaries in order for collections to become the shared heritage of the nation and not be restricted to the use by a specific institution. Should we exchange collections, share collections or provide unrestricted access to collections for researchers and curators from other institutions? Can collections connect institutions and communities outside the immediate communities of the institutions?

Please share your opinion about collections with us on our facebook page (see below)

Helene Vollgraaff  
ICOM-SA Chairman

### **ICOM-SA website and facebook page**

The new ICOM-SA website can be found at <http://network.icom.museum/icom-sa/>; <http://southafrica.icom.museum> will take you to the same destination. Please send information and images for inclusion on the website to the webmaster, Hamish Robertson ([hrobertson@iziko.org.za](mailto:hrobertson@iziko.org.za)). It would be particularly good to get feedback on your International Museum Day activities.

We now have a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/icomsouthafrica>. Please go there and click on "Like" so that you can receive ICOM-SA posts. You are also encouraged to share your museums news on our Facebook page (just go there and post a message as you would on your own page).

### **ICOM-SA Mini-Conference: Museum research in South Africa – relevance and future**

The mini-conference is planned for 26 – 27 August 2014 in Durban. The conference participants will reflect on the status and future of museum research and research

collections with the aim to set up a Museum Research Working Group to take recommendations of the conference forward. The mini-conference will deal with natural history, social history and art history research.

More information regarding venue details and registration will follow soon. The mini-conference will coincide with the AGM.

Comments and proposals can be directed to Hamish Robertson ([hrobertson@iziko.org.za](mailto:hrobertson@iziko.org.za)) or Luthando Maphasa ([lmaphasa@nmsa.org.za](mailto:lmaphasa@nmsa.org.za)).

### **National Heritage Council Grant**

ICOM-SA received R31,000.00 from the National Heritage Council (NHC) as bridging funding with a promise to engage further regarding additional funding. The NHC has been an important partner of ICOM-SA since its re-establishment in 2006 at a meeting chaired by Adv Sonwabile Mancotywa, the CEO of the NHC. The NHC funded several initiatives of ICOM-SA, including a conference at Maropeng in 2007 as well as travel grants for ICOM-SA members to attend international events between 2007 and 2010.

The main purpose of the funding is to improve communication in the museum sector, including the revamped website, newsletter and circulars.

### **ICOM-SA and SAMA to work together**

ICOM-SA and SAMA are in a process of concluding a formal Memorandum of Understanding. The background of the MOU is an acknowledgement that we serve the same sector and share the same principles and commitment to an innovative and excellent museum service for the South African public. The two organisations share an interest in ensuring sound museum policy and governance. While ICOM's emphasise international relations, SAMA's strength is its local network through its regional committees. SAMA is therefore better placed to drive training and accreditation processes.

While the discussions with SAMA indicate that we consider SAMA ICOM's primary partner, discussions with other heritage related professional organisations are also either planned or underway as a reflection of ICOM-SA's commitment toward a sound heritage sector in South Africa.

### **ICOM International Observatory**

The website of ICOM's International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods was launched officially during ICOM's Executive Council meetings held in Paris, France, on 4 and 5 April, 2014. Now available to the public at <http://obs-traffic.museum>, the website marks an important stage in the initial triennial phase of the project.

The website, core of the Observatory, will act as a hub for all information related to illicit traffic in cultural goods, aimed at centralising and disseminating all kinds of resources and

instruments relating to illicit traffic in cultural goods and the means to fight it.

A large number of external resources are compiled on the Observatory's website:

- 2,171 items of reading materials and 396 video and audio recordings
- 831 practical tools collected from institutions and organisations
- 137 normative ethical instruments
- 89 international legal instruments
- links to 114 information websites
- 549 stakeholders concerned with the issue

In addition, it offers an extensive glossary, technical sheets on good practices, a news section, and links to websites offering legal and criminal case studies, identified and produced by the team and groups of experts working in this field.

### **In Brief**

**ICOM-SA Financial Audit:** The auditing firm, Valentine & Sargeant has been re-appointed to conduct the 2013 financial audit. Financial documents were delivered to the auditors on 3 April 2014. Audited reports will be circulated as soon as they are available.

**ICOM-SA AGM:** The AGM will take place on 27 August 2014 in Durban. We hope to see you there.

**Membership fees cut-off date 15 May 2014:** Membership fees are due on 1 January of the year and the fees have to be transferred to the ICOM Secretariat in July of each year. Although we, and the Secretariat in Paris, have been lenient in the past, a stricter approach will be followed from this year. Membership fees are the main source of income and timely payment by members enable us to fulfil our financial obligations.

We hope that we can rely on your support in this regard.

***The ICOM Advisory Committee meeting and AGM*** is taking place from 2 – 4 June 2014 in Paris. ICOM-SA will be represented by the Chair. ICOM has a travel grant programme for chairpersons of category 3 and 4 countries and the ICOM-SA Chair is one the successful applicants.

***ICOM Young Membership Grants:*** ICOM has made grants available for young members (under 35s) to attend ICOM events as part of a programme to grow leadership in the organisation. Unfortunately, neither of the two South African applicants was successful. However, these grants, in the years they are available, are advertised around December.

We therefore urge our younger members to be on the lookout for these notices and to be prepared for completing the application forms on short notice.

***Chinese Museum School Grants:*** No applications were received. Again, we urge members to make use of these opportunities.

***The Danish Agency for Culture donated a few copies of the book “Museums: Social Learning Spaces and Knowledge Producing Processes”*** to ICOM-SA to distribute. The first 10 institutional members to renew their membership will receive a copy. The book has been produced by the Danish Agency for Culture and is edited by Ida Braendholdt Lundgaard and Jacob Thorek Jensen.

Newsletter sponsored by



**nhc**

National Heritage Council  
SOUTH AFRICA

an agency of the  
Department of Arts and Culture