



ICOM-SA

Email : icomsamuseums@gmail.com;

Membership: icomsa.membership@gmail.com

<http://network.icom.museum/icom-sa/>

<https://www.facebook.com/icomsouthafrica>

084-811 NPO

ICOM-SA Newsletter No. 6, July 2015

Celebrating 70 years of ICOM – where to for museums

Next year, ICOM will celebrate its 70th anniversary. With SAMA celebrating its 80th anniversary in the same year, 2016 should become a year of celebration.

While ICOM Memorial Lectures are planned as part of the ICOM 2016 Milan, ICOM is also reviewing its statutes and the definition of museums. Both these processes reflect the changes in museums over the last decade or so. During the recent Advisory Committee and General Assembly meetings that took place in Paris from 1-3 June 2015, both these issues were discussed. Unfortunately, the workshops were dealt with as parallel sessions and I could not attend the one on the definition of museums because I was at the discussion on governance that looked at making recommendations for the revision of the ICOM Statutes. From the summary of the feedback session, however, it is clear that the discussions at last year's SAMA conference are aligned with the thinking about museums worldwide.

One can take three different approaches to a definition of museums, namely:

- Legal definition, or how museums are established and structured – *A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in service of society and its development...*;
- Technical definition, or what are the functions of museums – *... which acquires, conserves, researchers, communicates and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment*;
- Societal definition stating why museums are important - ???

It was argued that the current definition of museums is dealing with the legal and technical aspects, but the societal purpose needs to be expanded. Though still very far from a new definition, the following ideas were raised:

- Museums are universal, interdisciplinary, artistic, deal with past and future, public spaces, honest and transparent;
- The concept of permanent is problematic and it is suggested that it should be replaced with continuous;
- The concept of non-profit is becoming awkward as museums can exist within a corporate environment and it is suggested that non-profit should be replaced with mission driven;
- Tangible and intangible heritage should be expanded specifically to include virtual.

In terms of functions, it was suggested that museums;

- Conserve/preserve, research/investigate, and exhibit/communicate; and
- Promote heritage.

The question is being asked whether acquisition is still a core function of museums.

Discussions regarding the societal role of museums include:

- Museums are in service of society: implying that museums must be relevant to society, congenial places, work for the well-being of communities;
- Museums are agents of social change: implying that museums must have empathy for communities;
- Museums are places of inspiration and enjoyment;
- Museums involve people and must therefore focus on participation and building relationships. Museums do not only communicate knowledge and ideas, but also receive and absorb knowledge and ideas from communities;
- Museums are creative spaces where new knowledge and ideas are conceived.

The discussion regarding revised statutes and by-laws also reflect changes in the way museums function. The term 'museum professional' was originally interpreted as someone working in a museum within the core functions of museums, but it is noted that, today, many museum professionals work as consultants or freelancers while others teach museology. The discussion raised the issue of ICOM having to face a changed world, and consequently needing to set standards to ensure a relevant basic level of museological competency in museum positions.

Please let us hear your opinions? What would you like to see in the definition of museums? How would you define a museum professional?

Helene Vollgraaff
ICOM-SA Chairperson

ICOM June meetings in brief

International Museum Day themes:

- 2016: Museums and urban landscapes
- 2017: Museums and contested history (painful history – conflict, war, oppression, colonialism)
- 2018: Hyperconnected museums (dealing with people with disabilities, digital communication)
- 2019: Museums as cultural hubs: The Future of Tradition.

Membership:

- 114 National Committees
- 34 000 plus members
- 5.7% increase in membership numbers
- Renewal rate of 89%
- 39% of members belong to an International Committee.

2019 ICOM General Conference and Assembly
host city: Kyoto.

ICOM ICEE is coming to Cape Town 16 – 19 November 2015

ICOM-SA in association with the SA Apartheid Museum is hosting the 2015 Conference of the ICOM International Committee for Exhibition and Exchange at Martin Melck House, Cape Town from 17-19 November 2015. The conference is preceded by a joint workshop of ICOM-SA, ICOM ICEE and SAMA on the 16th of November 2015 at the District Six Museum.

This year's theme is *Get Connected! New Markets, Audiences, and Perspectives in Exhibition Exchange*. Sub-themes include:

- *New Markets in Exhibition Exchange*: The market for touring exhibitions is diverse and unpredictable. Market segmentation

and analysis are now essential components of every marketing plan for touring exhibitions, but the lack of consistent business models for touring exhibitions represents a challenge for museums and traveling exhibition services. How can we identify new markets for exhibition exchange? Are the existing partnership models (museum to museum, cultural-commercial, international collaborations) a way to build business networks?

- *New Audiences in Exhibition Exchange*: The success of exhibitions often depends on a clear understanding of target audiences, yet this can be challenging in the touring exhibitions environment. Do traveling exhibitions demand flexibility in the light of different audiences and/or different museum goals around the world? What is the role of marketing to attract new audiences? Can we produce exhibitions on demand, also for an international market?
- *New Perspectives in Exhibition Exchange*: The world of touring exhibitions is an ever-changing one. In order to keep in step with the demands of audiences, meet the needs of institutional goals and financial realities and stay relevant, touring exhibitions must constantly innovate and evolve. What innovative ideas have been most successful in your experience with touring exhibitions? Which ideas weren't so successful? How have you tried to foster innovation and new perspectives in the development of your organization's touring exhibitions?

The purpose of the workshop is to discuss ways in which South African museums can exchange or share ideas and resources (collections, joint exhibitions) in order to broaden access to our rich heritage resources

and to improve our service to society within a resource-poor environment.

Two post-conference excursions are planned:

- Sutherland Astronomy Tour – 2 day tour;
- West Coast Tour that includes a visit to the West Coast Fossil Park and !Khwa Ttu.

For more information and updates on the programme, visit the www.icee2015.org.za

Thanks to generous sponsorship by the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, the conference fee should be kept to an affordable rate, especially if you register before the end of August. Note that it is possible to register for the workshop or conference individually. The Western Cape sponsorship includes 10 grants to Western Cape based museum professionals who either work at a Western Cape affiliated museum or have submitted a proposal to read a paper at the conference.

Other sponsors include:

- SA Apartheid Museum in association with Martin Melck House: logistical and administrative support; partial sponsorship of the conference venue and an evening function;
- Rupert Art Foundation: evening reception;
- Iziko Museums of South Africa, Castle of Good Hope, SA Jewish Museum, Cape Town Holocaust Centre, Solms-Delta and West Coast Fossil Park: Free museum tours or tours at a reduced fee.

We would also like to acknowledge the input of the Local Organising Committee: Helene Vollgraaff, Catherine Snel, Stefan Hundt, Wandile Kasibe, Wayde Davy, Anneliese

Mehnert, Nadia Harris and Bridgette Hendricks.

Update on Milan 2016

The Italians are going all out to make ICOM 2016 a fantastic experience. The website (www.milano2016.icom.museum) is up and running. Please note that the early bird registration deadline is end of December 2015 and that there is a significant difference in the registration fee if you register before then.

ICOM 2016 will offer participants a unique number of social events in Milan and other historical cities in Northern and Central Italy. It is confirmed that the opening party will be in the 15th century Castello Sforzesco situated in the centre of Milan. The Castle will be opened only for ICOM participants. Participants will visit the museums and cultural institutes of the Castello, the new museum of Michelangelo's Pietà Rondanini and Leonardo's newly restored frescos in the "Sala delle Asse". A number of other excursions are being organised for participants. Confirmed excursions include a concert in the Duomo, Milan's 15th century gothic cathedral together with free guided visits to the new Museo del Duomo and to the roofs of the cathedral with its exciting views of thousands of marble statues and the cityscape. The National Museum of Science and Technology Leonardo da Vinci, the largest museum of science and technology in Italy will arrange access to the historical sections and to experience the activities in the interactive labs during one of the evenings.

Please visit the website for affordable accommodation options. This include hostel rooms at the Milan's University Colleges at 45€ per night as well as a list of B&B.