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Museums for a sustainable society

The 2015 International Museum Day theme is “Museums for a sustainable society”. The theme begs the questions “What is a sustainable society?” and “Is it really museums’ role to contribute to a sustainable society?” A sustainable society lives in a sustainable natural environment. The best known definition of environmental sustainability is that of the Brundtland Commission: “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Museums can contribute to an environmentally sustainable society by:

- reducing the use of resources within the museum e.g. paper, electricity, water and space. Do you have to print everything? Are all those lights necessary? Do you really need air conditioning in all the rooms or are there alternatives? In term of space use, is deaccessioning really such a bad idea?
- producing exhibitions and undertaking public programmes that focus on environmental sustainability;
- undertaking research to find solutions to environmental issues to do with biodiversity, agriculture, climate change, and public and animal health issues.

A sustainable society is not only environmentally sustainable, but also socially and culturally sustainable. By tweaking the definition of social development used by the Department of Social Development, a socially sustainable society whose members can be defined as being:

- Empowered to manage their own interests and affairs;
- Able to access to adequate and affordable goods and services;
- Confident and skilled enough to present their needs to authorities;
- Capable of finding enduring solutions to their problems;
- Possessed of Ubuntu – a sense of community and responsibility for the welfare of your community;

- Empowered to transfer traditional skills and social insight;
- Able to agree on rules of engagement for dealing with difference;
- Possessed of the capacity to protect their interests;
- Functionally literate;
- Able to participate in 21st century knowledge economy;
- Members of a healthy society, informed about health issues and with access to health care;
- Given adequate levels of employment;

Museums are central to creating a sustainable society by

- Improving knowledge, understanding and awareness of our natural, cultural and social environment, to help people make sense of the world;
- Creating safe and creative spaces for cultural exchange and civic dialogue about community interests and policies affecting communities;
- Creating a sense of community and space that cut across generations;
- Validating local knowledge and transfer skills between generations ensuring cultural sustainability;
- Being part of the educational value chain addressing educational and literacy needs of all age groups;
- Providing spaces of innovation and critical thought contributing to an informed society able to respond to the positive and negative in their environment in a constructive way.

We would like to know what your museum is planning for 2015. Your contribution to the theme can take many forms:

- Frame your annual objectives and programmes in terms of its impact on society;
- Ensure a sustainability human resource capacity by training and capacitating your staff.
- Improve efficiency of work processes;
- Create platforms to share good practice;
- Create awareness of the environment through exhibitions to public programmes;
- Create spaces to discuss social and cultural concerns;
- Conduct and disseminate research on environmental sustainable issues;
- Conduct and disseminate research on concerns relating to social sustainability.

IMD 2015 asks you to think for a moment about how your museum makes the world a better place and to tell us about it.

New ICOM-SA Board members and volunteers

ICOM-SA is becoming more dependent on volunteers to manage its affairs. With this purpose in mind, two new members have been coopted on the ICOM-SA Board to assist with financial and membership administration respectively. Mohau Qalaza of Durban Local

History Museum is taking responsibility for membership administration while Anneliese Mehnert of the Anthropology and Archaeology Museum at UNISA will manage ICOM-SA's financial affairs. In addition, Vicky Heunis offered to assist with office administration on a volunteer basis. Marianne Gertenbach will still assist in a volunteer capacity, but in a much reduced role.



Anneliese Mehnert describes herself as having an enduring passion for everything archaeological, historical and museological since she was a pre-teen. This passion was developed further when she completed her BA degree in Archaeology, History and Psychology at the University of Pretoria in 1998. She continued with a BA(Hons) in Archaeology at the University of Cape Town in 2000.

An opportunity to work as a researcher at various museums around South Africa, including Robben Island Museum and the Luthuli Museum exposed her to the multi-faceted roles which museum professionals have to undertake in South African museums. In her time at these institutions she was involved in various aspects of research, archiving, collections management, digitisation and database management.

She is currently the assistant curator and assistant researcher at the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of South Africa. She completed her Masters in Heritage at the University of the

Witwatersrand in 2014. Although her research interests are wide reaching, she is currently exploring the decolonising of museums in a neo-colonial and post-modern world and how exhibition and information sharing strategies have to change to foster this move. She is also deeply involved in issues of digitisation and database management and how these strategies can provide new opportunities in the dissemination of information about museums and their collections to the various communities in Southern Africa and Africa.

Mohau Qalaza is currently employed as a Senior Curator for Local History Museums within the Parks, Recreation and Culture unit of the eThekweni Municipality. She manages four of the seven Local History Museums namely; Bergtheil Museum, Cato Manor Museum, Old House Museum and Pinetown Museum.

Last year Mohau launched a “passbook/ dompas” competition with the aim of promoting and marketing the museums that she manages through the experiential learning. This year one of the main prizes was a trip to Bremen-Germany to represent Durban at the Night of the Youth Festival. Five learners from grade 7-11 and an Educator won the above mentioned trip for two weeks where they participated in various



educational and intercultural exchange programmes.

Vicky Heunis studied at the University of Pretoria, obtaining a BA-degree in Heritage and Cultural Tourism, a BHCS Honours-degree in Heritage and Museum Studies and a BHCS Masters-degree in Cultural History. She worked for 5 years at the Voortrekker Monument and Nature Reserve Heritage Site in Pretoria as Archival and Museum Collections Specialist. Thereafter she moved to Bloemfontein where she has been the Collections Manager at the War Museum of the Boer Republics since 2009. As Collections Manager she has been involved in standardizing documentation of the War Museum's collection as well as providing access to information through the digitization of the collection. Vicky has a special interest in the important role that women played in South African history and is also currently doing research for a PHD-degree proposal in Cultural History focusing on Anglo-Boer War Trench Art.

Update on ICOM-SA Conference on "Museum Research in South Africa – Relevance and Future", August 2014

Following the conference, a draft conference discussion document was made available for comment to ICOM-SA and SAMA members as well as delegates to the conference. The ICOM-SA Board would like to express their appreciation to all who took the time to comment on the rather lengthy document.

A final report has been completed and will be available on the website from 17 December 2014. Copies will be submitted to the Departments of Arts and Culture, Science and

Technology and the National Research Foundation as well as other interested parties.

New membership application process:

On request of the ICOM Secretariat, new applications for ICOM membership will be submitted to a screening process. This is to ensure that all members comply with ICOM membership criteria. All new applications will be submitted a committee of the Board consisting of three Board members. Renewals by paid-up members are not subject to the screening process. These criteria are:

Individual members:

- Persons who work in institutions that qualify as an institutional member or are involved in such institutions in a professional capacity who have received specialised training, or possess an equivalent practical experience in any field relevant to the management and operations of museums and who respect the ICOM Code of Ethics;
- Persons who have a professional relationship with museums, including government officials responsible for matters relevant to museums and who respect the ICOM Code of Ethics will be considered;
- Membership in ICOM shall not be available to any person or institution (including its employees) that promotes or deals with commercial products and equipment required for museums and museum services;
- Membership in ICOM shall not be available to any person or institution (including its employees) which trades (buys or sells for profit) cultural property, including works of art, and natural and scientific specimens, taking into consideration national

legislations and international conventions. This disqualification applies to persons or institutions engaged in an activity which could cause a conflict of interest.

Institutional members:

- Institutions that comply with the 2007 ICOM definition of museums.
- In addition to institutions designated as ‘museums,’ the following qualify as museums for the purposes of this definition:
 - natural, archaeological and ethnographic monuments and sites, and historical monuments and sites of a museum nature that acquire, conserve and communicate material evidence of people and their environment; institutions holding collections of and displaying live specimens of plants and animals, such as botanical and zoological gardens, aquaria and vivaria;
 - science centres and planetaria;
 - non-profit art exhibition galleries;
 - nature reserves; conservation institutes and exhibition galleries with permanently maintained libraries and archive centres; natural parks;
 - international or national, regional or local museum organizations, ministries or departments or public agencies responsible for museums as per definition given above;
 - non-profit institutions or organizations undertaking conservation research, education, training, documentation and other activities relating to museums and museology;

- cultural centres and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible and intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity);
- such other institutions as the Executive Council, after seeking the advice of the Advisory Committee, considers as having some or all the characteristics of a museum, or as supporting museums and professional museum personnel through museological research, education and training..”

2015 Membership fees

The ICOM-SA membership fees remain unchanged from 2014. Membership fees are:

We have a new address for membership related matters, namely:

icomsa.membership@gmail.com.

Individuals	
Individuals	R380
Retired	R185
Student	R185

Institutional (per operational budget)		
A	Less than R450 000 per annum	R3570
B	R450 000 – R1 500 000 per annum	R4460
C	R1 500 000 – R15 000 000 per annum	R6420
D	R15 000 000 – R75 000 000 per annum	R9870
E	R75 000 000 – R150 000 000 per annum	R11 250
F	More than R150 000 000 per annum	R13 730

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