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## ICOM-SA Newsletter No. 3, September 2014

### Chairperson's Report to the Annual General Meeting, 27 August 2014

The report covers the period between 13 September 2013 since the current ICOM-SA Board was elected to date.

The ICOM-SA Board prioritised a number of areas to focus on. These include promotion of professional exchange, including exchange with colleagues from other countries, promotion of professional standards, ethics, enhancing communication and improving governance structures.

The **Conference on Museum Research** that was held in Durban 26-27 August 2014 was an important marker in ICOM-SA's objective of promoting professional exchange regarding matters that influence museums on policy and at a practical level. The natural scientists in the museum sector have long warned against the impact of the lack of support and capacity for research – a lack of support that has been ascribed to the unnatural space of natural science within arts and culture departments on all three tiers of government. A closer look at the problem indicated a lack of support of all research and the ICOM-SA Board decided that research should be discussed across disciplines in order to find a solution.

The conference attracted good support from researchers as well as generous funding from the national Department of Arts and Culture as well as our hosts, eThekweni Municipality. We would like to thank the team that worked so hard to make the conference a success. Luthando Maphasa liaised with DAC and the NRF while Hamish Robertson and Allison Ruiters worked hard to put a programme together. Allison, Leigh Richards and Mohau Qalaza led the local organising committee. Marianne Gertenbach was overall in charge of logistics and administration.

Focus areas for the coming years will be a programme around ethics, international exchange and implementation of ICOM resolutions. The latter include focusing on gender inclusiveness. ICOM-SA has been approached to host the ICOM ICEE conference next year in Johannesburg while we are in

discussion with the Durban KZN Convention Bureau to secure additional ICOM related conferences. We hope that the other metropolitan governments will follow this example.

Most progress has been made regarding governance and communication. Hamish Robertson had been working hard at creating a new website and a Facebook page. The new ICOM-SA website can be found at <http://network.icom.museum/icom-sa/> and the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/icomsouthafrica>. Members are encouraged to interact on Facebook and to submit contributions to the website page.

The ICOM-SA Board also started a Newsletter to keep members informed. Two editions have appeared in the reporting period. The National Heritage Council provided funding for the website development and newsletters.

On the more mundane side, the ICOM-SA Board has created an ICOM-SA Manual that contains policies, processes, important documents and contact details as well as a resolution register to ensure that the next Board to be elected in 2016 can hit the ground running.

Application for ICOM membership is one of the issues to be reviewed in the next year. ICOM membership is limited to museum professionals. However, there are no clear guidelines nor consensus as to who qualifies as a 'museum professional'. Some countries limit membership to museum managers while others recognise that the museum sector has changed and should encompass professional consultants, academics and government officials. The ICOM Executive Council is thus in the process of reviewing membership criteria. ICOM-SA would have to review its processes and application forms to ensure that South Africa complies with the ICOM Statutes.

Operational funding for the ICOM SA Office has been a concern from the start of this term of the Board. While the bank balance looked sound at the transfer between the two Boards, the current Board inherited financial obligations in the form of the Office contract which still had some months to run, as well as the ring-fenced funds of the ICOM-SA/ICMAH/COMCOL conference held in 2012. The conference funds can only be wrapped up on the completion of the conference publication that is managed by Prof Shahid Vawda.

ICOM-SA still faces a number of financial challenges that include fundraising in an unforgiving environment and the weakening of the ZAR against the Euro. Cost-cutting measures had been put in place. Unfortunately, this meant that ICOM-SA could not continue to operate an Office. Marianne Gertenbach continues to manage membership on a voluntary basis but has been employed by ICOM-SA to work on funded projects such as this Conference on Museum Research and the Communications Channel funded by DAC, eThekweni and NHC respectively. We would like to thank Marianne for her continued loyalty. In addition, ICOM-SA has not been able to support Board members to attend Board meetings. We would like to thank KZN Museum and Iziko Museum that supported the Board members on their staff in this regard. In addition, the Geoscience Museum, Iziko Museums and Durban Museums have hosted Board meetings.

## ICOM-SA Finances

The audited financial report of ICOM-SA for the financial year 1 January -31 December 2013 was presented and adopted at the ICOM-SA AGM.

Summary of 2013 financials as per audited financial report

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
COMCOL/ICMAH/ICOM-SA Conference income	R25,645.00	R108,807.00 <sup>+</sup>
Interest received	R1,689.00	R2,890.00
Membership fees	R73,930.00	R76,103.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>R101,264.00</b>	<b>R187,800.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
AGM and workshop expenses	R1,287.00	R18,668.00
Administration and management	R51,028.00	R48,600.00
Auditor remuneration	R5,700.00	R5,358.00
COMCOL/ICMAH/ICOM-SA Conference expenses	R0	R60,800.00
Bank charges	R1,657.00	R1624.00
Computer, internet, website	R5,500.00	R4,375.00
Executive Board meetings	R12,828.00	R26,892.00
IMD workshops	R0	R33,130.00*
Membership levies to ICOM	R72,724.00	R58,234.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>R150,724.00</b>	<b>R257,681.00</b>
<b>LOSS For YEAR</b>	<b>R49,460.00</b>	<b>R72,353.00</b>

\* Funded from DAC sponsorship received in 2010.

<sup>+</sup> R60,000.00 ring-fenced for publication



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

The conference took place from 26-27 August 2014 at the Durban Natural Science Museum Research Centre. The conference was generously sponsored by the national Department of Arts and Culture and EThekweni Municipality.

For over a day and a half, 93 delegates discussed the perceived decline in research output in museums with a view to identifying causes and developing a strategy for the promotion of museum research.

Delegates included representatives of university research programmes, the National Research Foundation, the provincial administrations of KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape ; as well as museums at national, provincial and local level. Several government officials from the national Department of Arts and Culture and the national Department of Science and Technology participated in the conference.

The need for a national strategy on museum research was identified to:

- Define a value chain for museum research that could be perceived as adding value to society;
- Create cooperative platforms for research across institutions, disciplines and funding authorities;
- In measuring performance make provision for the open-endedness of research projects particularly rewards for creativity and innovation.
- Build capacity in terms of the number of research jobs and mentorship programmes (that include equity goals).
- Develop an ethics framework based on the ICOM Code of Ethics to address specifically South African issues.



*The organising team from ICOM-SA, Department of Arts and Culture and eThekweni Municipality*

The ICOM-SA Board is obtaining input from all the delegates in order to complete a report and make recommendations about the future of museum research. The report will be circulated for comment on completion.

Members who have not been able to attend the conference are welcome to send their comments to [icomSAMuseums@gmail.com](mailto:icomSAMuseums@gmail.com) to be considered as part of the recommendations.

### **International Museum Day 2015**

The International Museum Day provides the opportunity for museum to alert the public regarding the challenges that museums face. International Museum Day therefore serves as a platform to raise public awareness on the role museums play in the development of society today. This form of public engagement is becoming increasingly important to ensure that the value of museum work is recognized at all levels.

The theme for 2015 is 'Museums for a sustainable society'. It is proposed that the National Committee for ICOM SA, in line with its objective of involving the membership more actively in its strategic priorities, will appoint representatives in different parts of the country to explore key questions which arise from this theme. These representatives will be asked to liaise with ICOM members within their regions as well as with members of SAMA to compile a position paper that responds to the key questions below and make recommendations to be addressed at the 2015 Annual Conference. The representatives may consider arranging public engagement meetings to deliberate on the roles that museums could play in growing a sustainable society.

The regional groups will be invited to consider the following questions:

- What does a sustainable society look like
- What does it mean to advance the social engagement of museums?
- How are museums addressing human and social needs through their programmes, services and operations?
- What kind of training and staff will be required to undertake this effort?
- What benefits (for museums and society) derive from the social role of museums and how do we measure success?
- How do museums identify the social problems that we have the capacity to help solve? What strategies should we employ?
- How will museums communicate the valuable role we play as a collective, in addressing social issues?
- How do museums balance its preservation and knowledge

generation roles with the social responsibility role?

The 2015 ICOM SA Conference will take a multidisciplinary approach that examines the mind-shift required to meet this challenge. The programmes will address *inter alia*:

- Human Resources
- Research
- Education
- Exhibitions
- Social Engagement Initiatives
- Public and Business Partnerships

**NARA Workshop, Hosted by Robben Island Museum and Africa World Heritage Fund,  
8-9 July 2014**

The 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity was conceived in the spirit of the Charter of Venice of 1963 in response to the expanding scope of cultural heritage concerns across the world. Aspects considered under authenticity may include form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, spirit and feeling, other internal and external factors.

Overall the Document provides a broader technical framework for authenticity analysis and assists in practical decision-making in the heritage conservation field worldwide.

Background and objectives of the seminar: A seminar was held recently entitled 'From Himeji (Japan) to Robben Island (South Africa); the future of the Nara Document in Africa. Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Nara Document (on authenticity) and Democracy in South Africa.'

Co-hosted by the Robben Island Museum and the African World Heritage Fund the seminar was attended by a number of participants including experts and scholars of heritage from a number of African countries as well as representatives from some of the world heritage sites in South Africa. Representatives from the DAC, DEA, ICOMOS SA, ICOM and the NHC were also present.

The objective of the seminar was to review and discuss the future of implementing the Nara document on Authenticity in the context of World Heritage on the African continent on this, the occasion of the (joint) 20th anniversary of the Nara Document and democracy in South Africa. The outcomes of the seminar include a number of recommendations as to how to improve the implementation of the Nara Document in Africa, these detailed draft outcomes and resolutions have been attached to this short report.

Broadly the intention of the seminar was to reflect on the experience of and future for the implementation of the Nara principles on the African continent. Throughout the two- day seminar emphasis was placed on:

- The impact that the document has had on the management of sites on the continent;
- The integration of local and global values that inform the authenticity and significance of heritage on the continent;
- Understanding the intricate relationship between authenticity and integrity especially as to how they relate to the practice of heritage management in Africa;
- The assessment of the credibility of sources used to determine authenticity;

- The development of processes, tools and frameworks that can facilitate community participation in the negotiation of management strategies for heritage sites in Africa;
- The integration of the cultural dimension into the discourse on sustainability and the extension of heritage management systems beyond traditional planning concepts and existing governance strategies.

These recommendations will form the African contribution to the debates around the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Nara Document and will be presented at a further international meeting to be held later in the year (in Japan); this meeting is intended to be a follow-up to the Himeji workshop held in Japan in 2013, which was entitled “Heritage and societies, towards the 20th anniversary of the Nara document and beyond identified”. It is further understood that the resolutions will also be tabled at the upcoming ICOMOS General Assembly to be held in Florence, Italy in November 2014.

Over the course of the two days a number of presentations were made by the delegates; these focussed mainly on the experience and challenges faced by site managers responsible for a number of World Heritage Sites on the continent. Topics included the maintenance of authenticity when faced with challenges relating to visitor numbers, repairs/ restoration of the property and the further deepening of the understanding of the significance of the sites. On day two a number of parallel sessions were held during which groups interrogated issues arising from the presentations and developed recommendations that were intended to feed into the final recommendations coming out of the seminar as a whole. Many of the issues are encapsulated within the draft

recommendations and will not be covered here however it is worth noting that there was emphasis placed on the human rights approach to heritage (this was referenced by both the Deputy Minister in her keynote address as well as several other speakers), the placing of people at the centre of cultural heritage, particularly within the African context (the concept of building an African authenticity), and research as a key informant to the development of an understanding of significance.

The quote below, drawn from the draft recommendations of the seminar seem to me to best encapsulate the overarching outcome of the approach to authenticity in the African context and the response to the further celebration of the Nara Document in the year of its 20th anniversary.

In an African context, form and spirit, tangible and intangible, authenticity of the object and authenticity of the experience is one inseparable entity and must be considered in its entirety. If the Nara Document is to be truly adopted (on the African continent) it must move away from its fixation with materiality of our sites and begin to reflect an understanding that the physical fabric is sustained by its intangible values and its spirituality. There is a need to redefine authenticity as 'progressive' to account for changes and evolutions in values and physical fabric over time, especially as it applies for the transmission of heritage between generations.

*The report was compiled by Laura Robinson, who represented ICOM-SA at the workshop. A full report and recommendations is available on the ICOM-SA website.*

### Glyn Balkwill

**23 March 1953 -16 August 2014**



It is with great sadness that we received the message of Glyn Balkwill passing away on 16 August 2014. Glyn has been a founding member of ICOM-SA and managed the secretariat and finances of ICOM-SA up to 2006. Glyn has also been an active SAMA member and has managed SAMA's finances the last few years. Trained as a geologist, Glyn made his name in the museum world as a collection manager and especially in development documentation systems. He is remembered for the enthusiasm with which he promoted the digitisation of museum documentation systems in the days when having a computer was not common.

In a tribute compiled by Ditsong Museums, Glyn is remembered as often saying:

*"Are you winning?"*

*"How are you, young man/lady?"*

*"People usually say: think out of the box, I say: throw the box away!"*

*"Hoe lyk die lewe vir een pond sewe?"*

Glyn served the Museum since 1990 and eventually became the Head of the Accessioning and Inventory Management Department of Ditsong: National Museum of Cultural History in Pretoria. He was a

respected leader, especially in dealing with problems quickly and directly and providing a clear vision and direction for this Museum. When asked what made him a good supervisor, staff listed the following qualities:

- He was a master of multi-tasking – even under the most demanding of work conditions.
- He gave us the opportunity to do a job and only coached when needed.
- He foresaw outcomes and results and entrusted us to do it as we saw fit.
- He was flexible and adaptive. We learned from him that you have to prioritise and work effectively.
- It was the way he trusted and never judged that made the difference.
- He was a dedicated and loyal person and went the extra mile to keep the Museum and his Department running.
- He had a very good sense of humour.

Yet, his greatest gift was to give us the liberty to grow independently in our respective fields and to encourage us to make his colleagues' jobs fun.

Glyn sadly passed away on 16 August 2014 and we will miss him very much. Our thoughts are with his family at this time of sorrow.

Those we love remain with us for love itself lives on and can never be more than a thought apart. Those from whom we learn something valuable will always be with us and in the positive actions we live out.

We thank you Glyn, for being a great person, an exceptional mentor, an amazing colleague and a dear friend. We will miss you.

#### In brief:

**Screening of membership applications:** The ICOM Executive Council is revisiting the membership criteria for ICOM membership. ICOM membership is limited to museum professionals. As the working environment of museums has changed, the definition of museum professionals has to be reviewed as museum professionals work as academics, consultants and museum work is increasingly overlapping with that of heritage resource managers.

The National Committees of ICOM are expected to screen new members to ensure that all members are museum professionals. New applications for membership will therefore be screened from this year onward. A short motivation has to be submitted with the application form. Existing members who no longer employed as museum professionals membership can be terminated. The exception is retired members.

Until the definition has been finalised, museum professional will be loosely defined as someone who works at a museum or who have a professional relationship with museums. Professional relationship with museums include museum related research, museum consultant and government officials whose responsibilities include museums.



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