

ICOM Prague 2022

26th General Conference, 20-28 August

THE POWER OF MUSEUMS

How fantastic it was to meet colleagues from all over the world again in real life! And those who couldn't attend had the possibility to participate online in the first hybrid conference in ICOM's history ever. As the President of ICOM, Alberto Gerlandini, said "Museums have no borders, they have a network".

The Conference was extremely well organized in the Prague Congress Center. It was also very easy to find your way around the city with metro, trams and buses using a special ICOM conference card.

For me as member of the first UMAC Board (University Museums and Collections) twenty years ago (2001) it was very special to join old colleagues again and present them my new book "Reflections on University Museums, UMAC – University Museums and Collections in My Mind".

Marta Lourenco, Chair of UMAC, opened our meeting 22 August on behalf of UMAC-NATHIST-ICME-ICR committees, under the title: **The Power of Museums: Sustainability.**

Session 1, 22 August

Block A, Inclusion

This first afternoon gave us presentations from eight countries around the world, like "Cotton cultivation: From museum collections to farmers' experience", Slovenia; "Sustainable New Year's Dinner Tables – Dining in the Anthropocene", Taiwan; "Contested heritage and decolonization in the university museum: Dealing with the colonial past of the Colegio Mayor del Rosario, Bogota", Colombia; "Egyptian sustainable development strategy and the promotion of social inclusion: Authority and opportunity for Egypt's museums advocating inclusive practices", Egypt.....

The evening was spent at the National Technical Museum/National Museum of Agriculture. It was raining and the buffet was organized in tents outside, it was absolutely crowded and it seemed like all 3 400 visitors of the General Conference were there!! Inside the museum was a bit calmer and it was really a wonderful museum, especially for technique loving people.

Session 2, 23 August

Block B, Sustainable Development Goals

Fiona Cameron from Western Sydney University, Australia talked about "Revisioning Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals: Museums and the promotion of diverse habitability practices for planetary futures." How can traditional knowledge contribute to developing sustainable living, eco-systems for good life, a neo-colonial development.

Henry McGhie, Curating Tomorrow, UK, who talked on the title “Museums and the Paris Agreement: reimagining museums for climate action”, said that we all “should look around outside the museums, not back on challenges versus what museums do and not do – the big gap”. Sustainable development is much more than just climate, and we are not working fast enough! 30 years have gone since the Framework Convention on Climate Change - Human rights – Code of Ethics was taken. We must support people to take action for climate, that’s what we can do he said.

From Scandinavia came two interesting papers: First Reet Mäki, University of Tartu, Estonia and Agnes Aljas, Estonian National Museum, Estonia presented under the title: “Transparency accountability and empowerment in fostering museum sustainability activities”. They talked about a “Green museum program”, reusing materials and a total review over Estonian museums sustainability criteria.

The second was Pia Edqvist, The Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Norway, under the title “Social sustainability: A people-centered approach to museum practices.” She talked about our social responsibility to give everyone good quality of life in a sustainable way. “Map your own impact!”

In this session there were papers focused on Botanic gardens, sustainable gardens and how to make the garden sustainable for tourism. Also the importance of using accessibility standards for disabled people in gardens and exhibitions. Another suggestion was to create mobile museums to reach out to different ethnical groups.

Session 3, 23 August

Block C, Authority and Networks

This session started with the paper “Recalibrations: Towards a new methodology”, by Simone Grytter and Ken Arnold from, Medical Museion, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. The talk was about how to bridge research with society, meaning “The third mission”.

Other talks were about building museum networks on different cultures, challenges of representation and transdisciplinary as praxis.

Now after the second day I could state that 24 papers had been presented and 44 posters were on show in the Conference Center.

The evening was spent on 12 different museums in the center of Prague as it was “Museum Night”.

August 24

I followed the theme about Museums and new technologies in the Congress Hall and the Roundtable Discussion “The Power of the Museum Definition: a common ground for museum”.

The discussion on new technologies ended up with the conclusion that “institutions will not learn to use IT properly until there is a leadership who knows how to do it!” And as twenty

years ago the museum people need to put the questions “what do we want from technology?” Storytelling is between people!

The Core group of the “Museum Definition working group”, presented the two final definitions and how they had been working. The voting gave more than 90 percent to the suggestion I had voted for in my UMAC group.

Finally the Flag Relay Ceremony took place in the renovated National Museum, Historical Building. More beautiful than ever, but it was a bit difficult to see exhibitions and collections because it was absolutely crowded.

August 25, UMAC at Charles (Karlova) University, Prague

Department of Chemistry, Hlavova 2030/8, Prague

After Welcome coffee, the first session was opened by Martina Laznickova-Galetova, Hrdlicka Museum/ICOM CZ who told us that Charles University had 45 000 students and Marta Lourenco Chair of ICOM-UMAC, said that she was very pleased to have this “UMAC on its own day” at the Charles University.

Session 1: Museums and Collections in Czechia

First presentation was about Mendel Museum, Brno, Blanka Krizova’s talk had the title “Under the Gaze of Masaryk and Mendel: The Collections of Masaryk University”. She told us that they had established new exhibitions on Mendel’s discoveries in molecular biology, in a special “Mendel room”. Their collection also contains mineralogy, paleontology, medicine collections and fine arts.

Next to be presented was Hrdlicka Museum of Man. Zuzana Schierova, gave us a glimpse of “The Anthropology Collection”. Thereafter followed a presentation of the Anatomical Theatre at the first faculty of Medicine, by Andrej Shbat.

Last in this session was a presentation of “Herbarium collections at Charles University”, the largest in Czechia, by Partik Mraz.

Now we were all well prepared to what we should see in the guided tours during the afternoon. But first I presented my new book “Reflections on University Museums. UMAC – University Museums and Collections in My Mind” to the present Board members of UMAC.

Session 2: THE POWER OF MUSEUMS (continued)

Miranda Stearn, The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge Museums, UK, talked over the title “Harnessing the power of networks: innovation in a transdisciplinary museum consortium.” She focused on transdisciplinary ways of working, giving opportunity to learn from different parts of the University, like –shared resources, -shared advocacy, -shared expertise, - shared partnership, -shared purpose. Museums and wellbeing, environmental sustainability and society identity had been important topics in different case studies.

Sian L. Tiley-Nel, from University of Pretoria Museums, South Africa gave us perspectives from “The power of artology”.

Nicole M. Crawford, University of Wyoming Art Museum, Laramie, USA talked about “Stealing Culture: Is it digital colonization or digital repatriation?” She meant that sharing data is not repatriation...

Supreo Shanda, Department of Museology, University of Calcutta, India presented “Museums actions for sustainable development: Efforts in Indian museums.”

Andrew Simpson, Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney, Australia pointed out the importance of defining moments and the Museum definition. He also invited us to the upcoming UMAC Conference in Sydney next year.

Chung-Ping Young, National Cheng Kung University Museum, Taiwan, talked about “Reviving Siryaya: Language regeneration of an extinct Austronesian language”. Indigenous people in Taiwan who had lost their original language, a loss gone forever and therefore a loss of possibilities to understand the past.

The following debate: “The Challenges of Displaying Anthropological and Medical Collections in Universities”, was very interesting and showed how different views among museums/universities can be, from those who will not have human remains on show at all, to those who have a more radical approach and go behind the law, moral ethics and using just informed consent from ancestors, if possible. Some museums performing reburials of skulls and other hiding skulls behind a curtain for the visitor to decide to see or not see. Here I could take part in the discussion adding how we in Uppsala University have used Egyptian material on show and how we also have sent back the indigenous skulls for reburial of the same population I far north of Sweden

The debate will go on.....

Now it was time for lunch and starting the guided tours in Charles University Collections to: Institute of Anatomy, First Faculty of Medicine (no photos allowed); Stomatological Museum; Hrdlicka Museum of Man; Chlupac Museum of Earth History; Herbaria and Botanical Garden.

What a fantastic Day we had!

Ing-Marie Munktel, Uppsala University, Sweden