

2006/DIV.12



International Council of Museums

Operating Policy

OP 01.02

SUBJECT: Museums**DATE:** June 1, 2007

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Operating Policy is to describe the range of institutions that for the purposes of ICOM including ICOM membership fall within the institutional and Organisational category of museums.

REVIEW

The Operating Policy (OP) will be reviewed by January 15 each even numbered year by an ICOM Vice President appointed by the President and the chairs of the Legal Affairs and Ethics Committees with recommendations for revisions forwarded to the ICOM Director General by March 1.

POLICY

The ICOM *Statutes* define a museum as a non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, that collects, conserves, exhibits, researches, and communicates for purposes of education, study, and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity.

- The term non-profit making (not-for-profit) refers to a legally established body—corporate or unincorporated—whose income (including any surplus or profit) is used solely for the benefit of that body and its operation.

This Policy confirms that the above definition of a museum shall be applied without any limitation arising from the nature of the governing body, the territorial character, the functional structure or the orientation of the collections of the institution concerned.

The *Statutes* also allow the Executive Council, after seeking the advice of the Advisory Committee, may recognize other institutions as having some or all of the characteristics of a museum or as supporting museums and professional museum *personnel* through museological research, education or training.

Therefore in addition to institutions designated as "museums," the following qualify as museums for the purposes of membership in ICOM:

- i. 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;
- ii. Institutions holding collections of and displaying live specimens of plants and animals, such as botanical and zoological gardens, aquaria and vivaria;
- iii. Science centres and planetaria;
- iv. Not for profit art exhibition galleries; conservation institutes and exhibition galleries permanently maintained by libraries and archives centres;
- v. Nature reserves;
- vi. International or national or regional or local museum Organisations, ministries or departments or public agencies responsible for museums as per the definition given under this article;
- vii. Non-profit institutions or Organisations undertaking conservation, research, education, training, documentation and other activities relating to museums and museology;
- viii. Cultural centres and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible or intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity)

General Museum Definition Statement

It is not the intention of ICOM to limit the nature of museums or other museological institutions, Organisations, or entities by a restrictive definition. It is, however, ICOM's responsibility as the International Council of Museums to describe those museological institutions, Organisations, or entities that qualify to be ICOM members and to receive benefits associated with membership.