

ICTOP: Training Professionals, Developing the Profession(s)

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From 19-23 October, 2005, ICTOP held its Annual Meeting at the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP) in the Galerie Colbert in Paris, France. This ICOM International Committee's mission is "to encourage and promote relevant professional or technical education and training, to appropriate standards, for all people working in museums and related areas, including students in museum-related pre-entry training programmes."

> This was my first ICTOP meeting, but with that caveat, as a professor and doctoral student, I felt welcome at ICTOP.

> The theme for the meeting was "Training and Professional Development for Museums: what is ICTOP's role in a globalised world?" 26 attendees from 16 countries discussed the matter over the three days of working sessions and two days of museum visits.

> Angelika Ruge, President of ICTOP, opened the meeting along with INP Director, Geneviève Gallot, former ICOM President Jacques Perot and ICOM-France President, Dominique Ferriot. The museum context of the host country was thus presented along with the importance of ICOM's work in general and ICTOP's role, in particular, given its transversality within the organisation.

> Elisabeth Caillet (Musée de l'Homme, long-time museum activist) reflected on the concept of the museum and the evolution it has undergone over the past 25 years. Given the diversification in museum activities, the types of heritage concerned, political, economic, and financial interests as well as the modernisation of traditional func-

tions within the museum thanks to new technologies, and the advent of new functions, many museum jobs are being outsourced. The problem is museums' consequent loss of identity and power. International organisations are faced with the challenge of developing criteria for general competencies for professionals that can adapt as needs evolve.

> The afternoon session was devoted to a discussion of cases of "partnerships". The practicum given by Nancy Fuller (Center for Education & Museum Studies, Smithsonian Institution) showed how to identify, develop, nurture, and dissolve partnerships, if necessary.

> The following day, all participants chose to attend one of two simultaneous workshops: "Cooperation and Alliances" chaired by Marie-Clarté O'Neill (Muséologie, Ecole du Louvre) and "Standardisation of Training Programmes: Good or Bad Idea?" chaired by Raymond Silverman (Museum Studies, University of Michigan). From the presentations, specific case studies, experiences of colleagues, and observations made, the following conclusions were drawn at the final plenary session:

- The concept of the museum is rapidly changing. In fact, despite a moratorium on new committees while review is continuing, ICOM has been thinking of creating new committees and disbanding others to adapt to present realities. (Gary Edson, ICOM Executive Council)
- There should be an ICOM glossary, developed with ICTOP in conjunction with other committees, to favour communication among professionals

from different countries by clarifying museum terminology (for example, the term "curator", "conservator" and "commissaire d'exposition").

- Standardisation should refer to a general vision, act as a guide, and be dynamic, adaptable to different situations. However, it should not be forgotten how it acts as a means to professionalisation and recognition within a larger international community. (Monica Abadom, Institute of Archaeology and Museum Studies, Jos, Nigeria)

- Heritage and cultural tourism institutions are proliferating and this should encourage ICTOP to establish professional profiles for those workers who may not be "museum workers".

- If we define competencies, skills and responsibilities of professionals, without assigning specific names or titles, perhaps we will facilitate this work and know what we are talking about when we discuss professions in divergent cultural and linguistic contexts. (Lois Irvine, Nancy Fuller, Elisabeth Caillet, etc.)

- The standardisation in European higher education, based on the Bologna Declaration, has created similar diplomas and the ECTS (European Credit Transfer Scheme). ICOM and ICTOP in particular should explore joining forces with this new European university community to develop heritage and museum studies and training.

- The boom in the number of specialised studies courses has been phenomenal. According to Patrick Boylan, in less than twenty years, we have gone from approximately 30 such programs to more than 600, worldwide. If it weren't for the lack of professional evaluation and oversight of such programs this might be a positive development. How can ICTOP go about evaluating such programs given its limited resources?

- The plan to specifically include intangible heritage in the ICTOP-ICOM Curriculum Guidelines is underway with Lois Irvine, Ana Labrador, and Monica Abadom.

> It was interesting to see how ICTOP was able to be self-critical, recognising its own need to adapt and anticipate changes in the future... Should ICTOP be a step ahead and attempt to define the museum professional of the 21st century? Some agreed that the specificity of museum studies remains critical to the profession... and some felt that ICOM's focus as an international organisation has to look beyond museums to ensure their future... Should ICTOP become a "clearinghouse" for information on professional training via the web? Should ICTOP enlarge its scope to include training for other cultural heritage professions? What does it mean to recognise the existence of all the different kinds of museums and museum professionals?

> Where to go from here? That indeed was the question.

Rendez-vous in Mombasa, Kenya in 2006 for the next instalment.

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At the Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (EPA) in Porto-Novo (Bénin) the first university course took place in 1986 in the framework of ICCROM's PREMA programme. EPA's partnership with the INP has developed the workshop seminar "Territoires et patrimoines." For more information, see icom.museum/news.html

ICTOP's 2005 Annual Meeting was hosted by the Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), located in the Galerie Colbert, Paris (France).