

Meeting date	10 June 2021
Agenda item	3a
Subject	Chair's Report
Author	Tonya Nelson, Chair, ICOM UK
Public Programme	<p>With the last AGM occurring only few days before the first Covid-19 lockdown, ICOM UK's work this year has been shaped by the global pandemic. The organisation swiftly moved to online provision and worked with a range of stakeholders to facilitate global conversations about the museum sector's response to the pandemic, Black Lives Matter and other important issues. ICOM UK also continued to advocate for and support changes in the way ICOM secretariat communicates and engages with its membership, particularly in the context of developing a new museum definition.</p> <p>Connected Museums Campaign As the doors to most museums closed across the globe, ICOM UK launched two Twitter campaigns aimed at sharing knowledge about the people who work in museums and the collections they love online. #ICOMConnectedCollections and #ICOMConnectedPeople attracted contributions from a range of UK museums as well as museum workers from as far away as New Zealand and Norway.</p> <p>International Museum Day 2020 Programme ICOM UK worked in partnership with the British Council to celebrate International Museums Day on 18 May 2020. The theme was <i>Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion</i>. The programme included the publication of a series of think pieces by Gus Casely-Hayford, Director V&A East, Raphael Chikukwa, Acting Director, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, and many other influential international sector professionals. We also hosted a series of online panel events exploring various threads of the theme including disability and access and digital technology, framed within the current context of COVID-19. In addition, ICOM UK curated a MuseumHour conversation on the topic. Finally, ICOM UK invited members to reflect on what they can do to increase museum diversity and inclusion and pledge action through an online message board. Partnership with British Council amplified and extended the reach of this work resulting in strong engagement across all strands of the programme.</p> <p>A Meeting Place: Online Global Discussions for Museum and Gallery Professionals Webinar Series</p>

From October 2020 to March 2021, ICOM UK worked with the British Council and Museums Association to deliver a series of webinars aimed at facilitating international discussion on key topics that are important to the sector.

- *From an unsustainable past to a sustainable future* was hosted by Henry McGhie, Founder, Curating Tomorrow, in conversation with Julie Decker, PhD, Director/CEO, Anchorage Museum in Alaska; Karin Weil González, Anthropologist and Heritage Officer, Wetlands Research Centre Río Cruces, Universidad Austral de Chile; Dr. Susanne Nawrath, Scientific Exhibition Manager, Klimahaus® Bremerhaven 8° Ost and Elena Trimarchi, Learning and Engagement Manager, David Livingstone Birthplace, Blantyre, Scotland.
- *Time for Change: tackling underrepresentation to bring about innovation and equity* was hosted by Esther Fox, Head of Accentuate Programme at Screen South, Artist and Researcher in conversation with Zeina Arida, Director, Sursock Museum, Beirut; Daniel Kotowski, Visual Artist and Educator at Zachęta National Gallery of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; Ruth McCarthy, Artistic Director, Outburst Arts, Belfast; and Hanna Wróblewska, Director, Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw and Commissioner of the Polish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.
- *Decolonisation: Moving Towards a More Holistic Perspective and Relational Approach* was hosted by Tonya Nelson, Director, London, Arts Council England, in conversation with Miranda Lowe, Principal Curator, Natural History Museum; Co-Founder, Museum Detox; Rachael Minott, Artist, Curator and Researcher; Museums Association Trustee; Professor Shahid Vawda, Archie Mafeje Chair in Critical Humanities and Decoloniality Director of School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics, University of Cape Town; and Peter White, Senior Manager, Aboriginal Strategy and Engagement at Create NSW.
- *Community Engagement: Inspiring Engagement* was hosted by Dhikshana Turakhia Pering, Head of Engagement & Skills, Somerset House, London, in conversation with Arta Agani, Professor of Typography at Akademia Evolucion for Communication Design and Director, National Gallery of Kosovo, 2016-2020, Kamini Sawhney, Director, Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), Bangalore, India and Nia Williams, Director of Learning & Engagement, Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales.
- *Leading Digital at a time of Uncertainty* was hosted by Professor Ross Parry, Deputy Head of School & Professor of Museum Technology at the University of Leicester, in conversation with Nikita Yingqian Cai, Chief Curator, Times Museum, Guangzhou, Niall Kerr, Making the Future Programme Manager at the Nerve Centre, Northern Ireland and Irini Papadimitriou, Creative Director of Future Everything.

2021 Working Internationally Conference

This year the conference was a 3-day online event with each day focussing on a major global issue: (1) Social Justice: Museum responses to decolonisation, restitution, Black Lives Matter, representation and youth; (2) Museums and Sustainability: Challenges of working in and responding to a changing climate

<p>Policy & Advocacy</p>	<p>and (3) The Future of Museums: Where are we now, and where do we go from here? The conference content was co-curated for the first time with cultural consultancy Barker Langham. The online format gave us unprecedented access to museum leaders from across the globe. Over the 3 days of the conference, over 300 people attended whereas a typical in person event draws 70-100 people.</p> <p>ICOM Secretariat. ICOM UK continues to support the Secretariat to capture the views of members on the new museum definition exercise. ICOM UK has conducted a number of workshops inviting members to feedback on key words and terminology that should be part of the definition. A new Museum Definition Working Group has been established with the intention of presenting a revised definition for adoption at the 2022 Triennial in Prague.</p> <p>ICOM UK has also supported the Secretariat’s work to collect intelligence and data throughout the pandemic in order to aid in its advocacy efforts. ICOM UK met with Director General Peter Keller to report on the experiences of museums in the UK.</p> <p>Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). ICOM UK was invited to participate in range of meetings held by DCMS in response to the Pandemic in order to share intelligence on the impact of COVID-19 globally and the interventions to support museums in other countries.</p> <p>British Council. There have been a number of high-level personnel changes at British Council but ICOM UK continues to work closely with the organisation (as demonstrated by the public programme discussed above). The new Director of Arts, Skinder Hundal MBE, participated in our webinar series and there appears to be a great willingness to leverage our respective networks to support best practice in museum across the globe.</p> <p>Arts Council England (ACE). ICOM continues to participate in the quarterly museums sector body meeting. ACE’s new 10-year strategy has a section on international activity and ICOM will seek opportunities to support ACE in meeting its objectives in this area.</p> <p>Museums Association. ICOM UK has continued to work with the Museums Association this year. They were our partner in the <i>A Meeting Place</i> webinar series and discussions continue about joint project work related to decolonisation.</p> <p>National Museum Directors’ Council (NMDC). We continue to work effectively with NMDC in delivering the annual Working Internationally Conference.</p>
<p>Membership</p>	<p>2020 membership (Oct 2019- July 2020) saw membership grow from 2,326 to 2,418 members. Unsurprisingly, in 2021, existing members have been slower to renew and the number of new members has not matched previous years. The most recent report shows that membership stands at 1,315. With the UK museum sector re-opening this month and staff returning from furlough, we expect to see numbers increase significantly. The Committee has developed a</p>

<p>Farewell note</p>	<p>number of campaigns aimed at reminding members of the value of ICOM membership should numbers remain low. Even if membership numbers do not return to pre-COVID levels this year, from a finance perspective, ICOM UK remains financially viable given its level of reserves. However, it should be noted that the income from membership is what funds the ICOM International Committees and there could be an impact on the amount of funding they have to draw upon for future conferences and events.</p> <p>This is my last Chair’s Report as I am stepping down this year. I joined the ICOM UK Committee in 2017 to support business development and moved into the Chair role in 2018. I have enjoyed every minute of my time working with all of you.</p> <p>A lot has changed over the last 5 years. The significance of ICOM as a policy setting body was revealed through its work to update the official definition of a museum. While the controversy surrounding the first proposal was unsettling and uncovered a number of governance issues the ICOM Secretariat needed to address, it also unleashed a great deal of energy and engagement amongst the membership and brought international attention to the question of what is a museum in the 21st century. This has all been for the good, as ICOM has improved its communication with national and international committees and introduced new ways of working to aid closer collaboration. The conversation about the definition of a museum also revealed differences in the way museums are being developed in different parts of the world, and I would encourage members to endorse a definition that is broad and inclusive.</p> <p>ICOM has also started to have a stronger voice in issues such as restitution, decolonisation and climate change. I am really pleased that ICOM UK has been able to make significance contributions to these discussions (including curating sessions on decolonisation and proposing the resolution ‘On Sustainability and the Implementation of Agenda 2030, Transforming Our World’ at the ICOM Triennial in Kyoto). As truly global issues, I look forward to seeing ICOM UK leverage its unique position within an international network to promote action in these actions.</p> <p>Finally, this past year has shown how much international knowledge exchange can happen online. ICOM UK was able to significantly increase the content it was able to deliver to members using digital formats. While we are desperate to get back to travelling and connecting with people in person, new hybrid models of collaboration that use digital technology to extend access to the network should not be discounted.</p> <p>In short, the future of ICOM UK is bright and filled with opportunities. It has been an absolute pleasure to serve as Chair and I want to thank Executive Director Dana Andrew and the Committee for their hard work and for being great colleagues. I fully endorse Catherine McDermott and Christian Baars as the new Co-Chairs. They bring the right set of skills, experience and energy to the role and will ensure ICOM UK goes from strength to strength.</p>
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