

## ICOM triennial meeting, Vienna, August 19-24, 2007: "Museums and Universal Heritage"

More than 2,200 ICOM members met to discuss and learn more about museum concerns while sharing ideas. General sessions were held at the Concert Hall with President Alissandra Cummins presiding. She presented a new publication describing "Our Global Vision" focusing upon the "challenge of preserving cultural identity while promoting cultural diversity." It outlines ICOM's role in "creating dialogue and developing capacities within the heritage community to meet this challenge." The 30 committees held meetings at the University of Vienna and also visited local sites. Evening events brought ICOM members together at the Maria-Theresienplatz and the Museums Quartier while special committees receptions were held on other days. Conference activities also included Excursion Days to historical sites and cultural areas.

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### DEMHIST General Assembly

Daniela Ball, chairwoman, and Peter Keller, secretary-treasurer and program chairman, welcomed 72 members from 28 countries. The new committee brochure "WHAT IS DEMHIST ALL ABOUT" includes five color photographs and has been printed in French and English with another in Portuguese planned. The Categorization Project to help recognize distinctive qualities of museums was discussed. This project will also compare like-with-like, find international partners, share best practices and will be published on the committee website. Developing a DEMHIST issue for the ICOM Study Series about committees and their activities is also being considered.. The 2008 committee meeting will be held in Bogota, Columbia, and the 2009 one in Stavanger, Norway.

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## A Kingdom for a House! Historic Houses as Local, Regional and Universal Heritage

### Committee program

AUSTRIA - "The Esterhazy Fairy Kingdom - Collections of Princes: An Overview of the History of the Esterhazy Family and Foundation, Collections and Houses" Stefan Körner, Head of Collections  
The Esterhazy collections are exhibited in three locations: Lackenbach House (natural history), Eisenstadt Palace (18th and 19th century art) and Forchtenstein Castle (treasury, gallery of ancestors and archives). Special collections include porcelains, prints and drawings, a library, coaches and arms as well as special buildings including graveyards, burial vaults and hunting lodges plus 700 family portraits.

The collections also include 12 kilos of documents as well as a music archives with previously unknown works by Hayden. The 19th century print collection has been given to the Austrian government while Hungarian collections were returned to that country. During the 18th century only princes could view the collections but in 1989 the last members of the family left properties and collections to the state. This "Fairy Kingdom" was opened to the public in 2005-2006. The Esterhazy Foundation has undertaken an inventory of collections and rearranged exhibits and established a trust fund.

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### -"Kremsmunster Abbey - Collections and Activities"

Klaudius Wintz, Curator of Collections, special exhibits, tours and conservation

One of the largest baroque monasteries in Austria, Kremsmunster was founded in 777 and renovated during the 17th and 18th centuries. Collections of art and science include an observatory ("mathematic tower") of seven floors which served as laboratories for noble students and friars.

The museum opened to the public in the 18th century and was reorganized in the second half of the 19th century. The history museum of nature and science is installed in the tower while a museum of art history is located in the residential rooms of the Lord Abbot. The art collection includes 1,500 pictures from the 19th century with small ones exhibited along the sides and underneath larger ones.

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- "Schonbrunn Palace - Culture Counts"  
Wolfgang Kippes, Technical Director, Schönbrunn Corporation

A World Heritage Site since 1996, Schönbrunn Palace is owned by the Republic of Austria but outsourced to a private company. It serves as a flagship for all initiatives concerning cultural tourism in Austria and this profitable management arrangement includes research and development. The company does not own the Palace collections.

The focus has been upon the "Key to Heritage" with 2,500,000 travelers to Austria in 2005 as well as 900,000 new jobs in the tourism field during the last 10 years. In addition to preservation and restoration, the goal includes creating "economic boxes and developing business fields." While art restoration is contracted out, ownership of the archives dates to 1995.

Approximately 250 paid staff members are involved with the buildings, grounds, collections and preservation of the Palace.

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FINLAND - "Sinebrychoff Art Museum - Between Eastern and Western Cultures"  
Minerva Keltanen, Chief Curator

The only museum in Finland specializing in old European art, the collection includes Old Master works from the 13th century to the 1850s and is part of the Finnish National Gallery. The Sinebrychoff family history (with roots in Russia) is linked to what happened in Europe after they opened an industrial brewery in Helsinki in 1819. After the last male heir and his wife visited castles and manors as well as royal and noble art they decided to create similar collections in Finland.

This art museum includes international exhibits as well as temporary ones. The house museum has a permanent collection and is also part of the Finnish National Gallery. A current project involves restoration of old black and white photographs to their original condition.

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UK - "How to Exhibit Apsley House - The Duke of Wellington's London House"  
Susan Jenkins, Senior Curator

Apsley House, which requires special care, is one of more than 400 historic properties managed by English Heritage. This prominent site focuses upon presentation, preservation and collections management as well as research and documentation. Interiors are being recreated but some areas are not yet correct. One English Heritage house has specifically not been furnished but can be used for temporary exhibits.

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- "The Message not the Medium - Sustainability of the Museum as a Medium of Engagement with Cultural Heritage"  
Peter Stott, Principal Officer, Falkirk Museum, Scotland

Clinging to familiar terrain is an instinctive defense against challenge. In the UK reaction to closure of museums as a symptom of disastrous decline reflects the profession's self-definition in terms of its institutional structures. Decline of structure, however, does not entail the decline of flow. Sustainability depends on an holistic and longer-term vision.

Our institutional structures are largely of 19th century origin, designed in response to the social circumstances of the time. As those social circumstances disappear, we should expect the institutions to do the same. The museum is one medium through which people exercise their need to engage with cultural heritage. This engagement is the purpose of museums, so we should insure the sustainability of that engagement, rather than protecting the transient institutional structure designed for the purpose.

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USA - "Re-Thinking the Historic House Museum for the 21st Century"  
Jim Vaughan, Vice-President, Stewardship of Historic Sites, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Historic House museums in the US have experienced declining attendance and increasing financial difficulties for the past three decades. The National Trust, located in Washington DC, has 28 historic house museums throughout the US. It has hosted two invitational conferences to discuss and evaluate causes of declining attendance and include financial stability as well as endowment issues.

Many visitors are more interested in other aspects of history than the collections so interpretation focuses upon architecture, lifestyle, landscape, and cultural programs including heritage tours. At one historic house

architecture and life style are interpreted but this site does not include furnishings. Community involvement as well as collaboration with other sites, innovation and experimentation also bring results.

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- "New Networks Protect Historic Houses"

Carl Nold, President, Historic New England, and Vice-Chairman, American Association of Museums

Mergers and development of systems for houses allow those that are popular and funded to support ones that are important but not able to be self-sustaining and networking is important. Models for "old" and "new" buildings are also important because many calls are received about turning a home into a museum and the establishment of Historic Districts can be helpful when private houses do not meet museum standards.

If not in use these buildings can still be protected by deeds concerning preservation so a "broader view" is necessary. Historic New England has 36 historic house museums that are sustainable due to funding raised by its organizations. Networking includes joining a coalition to help. Today many people are looking for ways to meet others by developing specific projects and sharing information. As an example: regional groups working together on historic gardens can accomplish much while networking through DEMHIST.

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- At the end of the afternoon a discussion, lead by Maria de Jesus Monge of Portugal, included comments and information about other DEMHIST programs and concerns.

#### DEMHIST SPECIAL EVENTS

Our committee joined with others (ICDAD, ICFA, ICOM-CC and MPR) for special tours during an evening at the Liechtenstein Museum. Another evening event was held with ICDAD at the Museum fur Angewandte Kunst (Museum of Applied Arts) also known as MAK. Other tours included the Upper and Lower Belvedere museums as well as the gardens in the park, the Mozarthaus and the Postsparkasse. An example of Secession architecture and the Jugendstil, designed between 1904 and 1906, it is the Austrian Post Office Savings Bank. Members also visited Franzensburg Castle at Laxenburg and the "Imperial Festival Palace Hof" with its restored Baroque gardens; built in the 17th century for Prince Eugene from Savoy, it was the summer residence of the Empress Maria Theresa and is being restored. The day ended with a tour of the 12th-18th century Klosterneuburg Abbey, its Museum plus a reception in the wine cellar.