

05 The Intangible Heritage: a Challenge and an Opportunity for Museums and Museum Professional Training

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ABSTRACT

The main emphasis of most museums over the centuries has been on the material or tangible cultural or natural heritage. However, from very early times some museums have also been closely involved in preserving and presenting the immaterial or intangible culture as well. On 20th April 2006 the new UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 came into force, so it is timely to consider the implications of this major new development for museums. Will new organisations and services, a new profession even, be created to give effect to the new treaty that will challenge, threaten even, the traditional roles of museums and museum professionals in relation to the heritage? Or can museums, the museum profession, and not least museum professional training, respond positively to these serious potential challenges and take a major role in ensuring that the admirable aims of the Intangible Heritage Convention are achieved in relation to all, or most, of its five key areas: oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship?

Introduction

Concern with the tangible heritage (otherwise referred to as the material or physical heritage) has been the subject of many hundreds, indeed probably many thousands, of national laws and policies for many centuries, and of important international treaties and agreements for more than a century. The obligation to respect and protect historic, religious and educational monuments, sites and institutions was included in the 1899 Hague Convention on

the conduct of war at sea, and then in the subsequent 1907 Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land. Subsequently the protection of the cultural heritage during armed conflict was made the subject of a special international treaty in its own right with the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and with its 1954 and 1999 Protocols, and was written into the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949¹.

The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Cultural Property aims to protect movable cultural property, while the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (universally known as the World Heritage Convention) seeks to help in the protection of the immovable cultural property, such as buildings, sites, monuments, historic cultural landscapes and towns, as well as the natural environment².

It is fair to say that the main emphasis of most museums over the centuries has been on the tangible or material heritage, primarily through collecting, recording, researching, interpreting and displaying physical evidence of the past, and of the contemporary culture and environment. However, this arguably artificial distinction is by no means universal among different peoples and traditions. For example, in New Zealand the important Maori word 'taonga' – often translated as 'cultural heritage' but meaning literally 'treasure,' is used to cover all aspects of the heritage, both tangible and intangible, apparently without any significant distinction.

More widely, from very early times some museums have also been closely involved in preserving and presenting not just the physical relics of the past, but also evidence of the immaterial or intangible culture, history or values as well. This is very obviously the case with biographical and other memorial museums, where the main purpose and the programme of the museum is usually to use the physical collections to illustrate the cultural values and the historic or literary heritage of the person memorialised. But a much wider range of museums, archives, libraries and related institutions have also been very concerned with recording, preserving

and communicating many other aspects of the intangible heritage as well for very many years.

On 17th October 2003, the UNESCO General Conference in Paris adopted by consensus the new Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This had already been ratified by 47 States by 20th April 2006, when it formally came into force between the States Parties three months after the deposit of the 30th Instrument of Ratification or Accession³. Bearing in mind the often slow and complicated legal procedures that have to be followed by most countries under national law in order to adopt new treaties, the speed with which the new Convention has been officially adopted by the required minimum number of States is quite remarkable, and shows the interest and enthusiasm that exists in many countries in all regions of the world for action to preserve and promote the intangible heritage.

It is therefore timely to consider the implications of this major new development for museums. Will new organisations and services, a new profession even, be created to give effect to the new treaty and if so will these challenge, threaten even, the traditional roles of museums and museum professionals in relation to the heritage? Or can museums and the museum profession respond positively to these serious potential challenges and take a major role in ensuring that the admirable aims of the Intangible Heritage Convention are achieved?

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

The purposes of the new Convention are set out in Article 1 as:

- (a) to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;
- (c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof;
- (d) to provide for international cooperation and assistance.

In order to achieve these objectives the Intangible Heritage Convention provides for, among other things:

- (a) the preparation by the Member States of national inventories of the intangible cultural heritage
- (b) the establishment of an Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
- (c) the drawing-up of two lists by this Committee:
 - (1) the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and
 - (2) the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

Key aspects of the new Convention, particularly those relating to the practical implementation at both national and world-wide levels, generally parallel those already well understood in relation to the tangible or material cultural heritage, being largely based on the concepts and terms already well-established under 1954 Hague and 1972 World Heritage Conventions. The same is true of the defined duties of States Parties to the new Convention

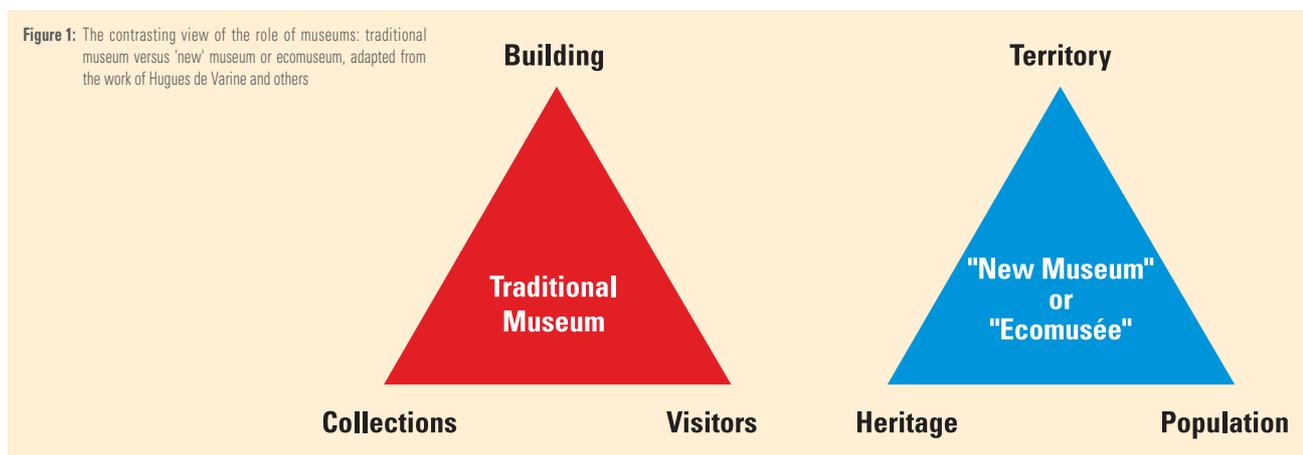
(listed in Article 2.3 in particular) and other matters relating to its practical implementation.

At the national level States adopting the Convention agree:

- to take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory (Article 11);
- to ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory. These inventories are to be regularly updated. (Article 12), and
- to designate or establish one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory (Article 13).

Contributing to the safeguarding and promotion of the intangible heritage

In considering whether or not the new Intangible Heritage Convention is really relevant or not to museums and to the wider physical heritage sector, it is important to first recognise that today there are least two very different visions of the purpose and role of the museum current: what might be termed the traditional museum and museology, with a major emphasis on collections and objects in the museum, and the écomusée (ecomuseum or 'new' museum) and 'nouvelle muséologie' (new museology), with their emphasis on the overall evidence, both tangible and intangible, of the cultural or natural



environment of the location or territory served by the museum, whether or not this is represented by objects within the museum.

These contrasting perspectives have been summarised by a number of researchers and museologists over the past thirty years or more, most notably by Hugues de Varine, a former Director-General of ICOM (who among many other things coined the word 'ecomusée' (ecomuseum) in 1971 to describe a new kind of museum focused on the community and its environment rather than on traditional collections), and his mentor, the pioneering Director of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires (ATP), Paris, Georges-Henri Rivière.

Though it is perhaps an over-simplification to do so, these two very different perspectives can be represented in graphic terms in the two triangles shown in Fig. 1 which contrast what might be termed the traditional museum versus new museum or ecomuseum. This international *nouvelle muséologie* ('new' museology) debate focused to a considerable extent on one underlying question: should a museum be viewed as an admittedly complex interaction between a building, collections and visitors as in the traditional view of museums, or should far wider perspectives be adopted, as argued by de Varine and other proponents of *nouvelle muséologie*? They argue that narrow physical and, perhaps even more important, psychological limits of the museum's building or boundary fence should be replaced by a commitment to serve a defined territory, that the physical collections within the museum should be seen as just a small part of the total human and natural ecology and heritage, fixed, mobile and intangible, of the 'new' museum's agreed territory, while the museum must seek to serve not just its actual visitors, but the total resident and visitor population of the territory⁴.

Clearly, if a museum adopts the new museum or ecomuseum model and vision, then the intangible heritage of its territory and its population becomes an important part of its total mission. To take just one example, from the mid-1930s Georges-Henri Rivière was building the foundations of the future national Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires just as much on the sociological surveys and research on the cultural traditions of the people of rural France as on the collecting of the physical collections. By the time the museum opened its own purpose-designed building in the Bois de Boulogne more than three decades later, the

curators caring for the collections and exhibitions were greatly outnumbered by the staff researching the intangible heritage and historic landscapes and sites across the country, most of them funded by the national scientific research services, (CNRS).

The new Intangible Heritage Convention identifies five key domains in which the intangible cultural heritage is manifested, and all of these can potentially be of relevance to some or all museums, as follows.

Article 2.2 (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage

Far more of the total heritage of a people, whether in a developing country or a so-called developed country, is recorded and preserved in verbal terms rather than in physical objects. However, traditionally the world has placed far more emphasis on written records than oral ones, and thus elevated the history and culture of countries and peoples with a written history as against those with a predominately oral tradition and culture. The new Convention aims to at least reduce, if not eliminate, this imbalance. However, at the same time the great majority of local, regional and even national languages are themselves under threat. In the face of globalisation, and the promotion through education and audio-visual media policies of a designated national language within countries, out of the perhaps more than 6,000 languages that have survived to our times, probably less than a hundred are really secure in the longer term, with many becoming extinct every year.

For very many years, many very successful museums, especially those working in the field of ethnography, folk life and traditional culture, have been working with communities and recording and diffusing their oral traditions and languages alongside the collecting of their material culture. Some have played an important role in maintaining and promoting traditional languages. For example, this was seen as a central role of the Museum of Welsh Life at St Fagans, near Cardiff, established in 1948 just 36 years after the death of the country's last monoglot speakers of Welsh, and there is no doubt that the Museum has played a vital role in the revival of the Welsh language - once the first language of large areas of England and southern Scotland, and quite recently finally recognised as one of the two official languages of Wales.

Similarly, in some countries, for example Spain and, increasingly, France, ancient regional languages that had been forcefully suppressed by the state for many decades (nearly two centuries in the case of France) knowledge of traditional languages is now being very actively promoted, for example by the use of bilingual or multilingual labelling of exhibitions and through audio-visual presentations. For example, two of the important new regional museums developed in France with guidance from Georges-Henri Rivière, the Musée Bretagne in Rennes, on which he worked in the 1940s and 1950s, and the Musée Camarguais in the Camargue, near Arles, his final major project, opened in the early 1980s, soon before his death, both emphasised and celebrated the importance of France's traditional regional languages (Breton and Provençal respectively) even though their use was still officially suppressed under the 1795 law establishing French as the only permitted language of the country and suppressing all traditional minority languages.

However, far more can be done by museums of all types to respond to the call for the active support of traditional culture and languages (and indeed those of important recent immigrant groups) within their territories, and the adoption of the Intangible Heritage Convention could give a new impetus to this, demonstrating the relevance of museums to the whole of their society and their cultures, not just to the culture of a national elite.

Article 2.2 (b) performing arts

Both historic and traditional performing arts have in fact been well represented in the collections and activities of many museums concerned with national and local history and culture, as well as in specialist museums of theatre and music, and biographical museums of important composers and playwrights. Also, many museums already serve as important cultural centres for their own communities, very actively presenting to both visitors and special audiences performances of both traditional performances as well as medieval, classical and modern drama, music, dance and opera within the museum setting. Some have special auditoria or outdoor performance spaces for such programmes, and also either employ directly, or actively encourage, performing arts groups and individual musicians, storytellers, actors, dancers etc. as an integral part of the museum's

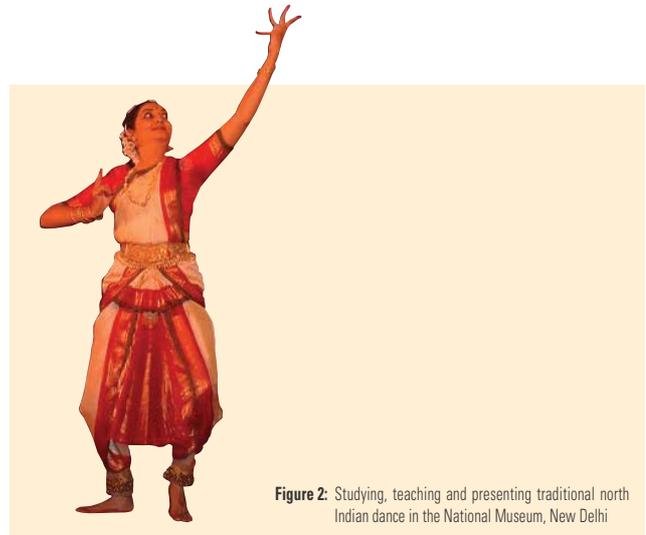


Figure 2: Studying, teaching and presenting traditional north Indian dance in the National Museum, New Delhi

programme. For example, the National Museum and the associated National Museum Institute in New Delhi, India, have an active programme of training and promotion for Indian traditional 'Kathak' and other forms of classical dance, (see Fig. 2).

Again, there are many more opportunities for museums in this sort of area of activity, which would offer a twofold benefit: actively supporting and promoting the intangible heritage, and at the same time demonstrating the value and importance of the museum to their wider community.

Article 2.2 (c) social practices, rituals and festive events

As with (a) above, many ethnographic, social history and local history museums are already very actively engaged in recording and promoting such practices and events, and are often the official custodians of important physical artefacts of central importance to such rituals and events. For example, one of the most important national rituals in Thailand follows the death of a King or Queen, and extends over a period of a year. In the usually very long periods between such events, all the elaborate special artefacts relating to the funeral processions, rites and final cremation are cared for, and on display, in the National Museum in Bangkok, accompanied by detailed displays explaining the rituals.

Similarly, one of the most important annual ceremonial rituals in England, dating back to the 14th century, is the journey that each newly elected Lord Mayor of London makes on the first Saturday of

November each year to the Royal Courts of Justice, accompanied by the rest of the Corporation of London, in order to swear allegiance to the Sovereign. Since the early 18th century the Lord Mayor has made this short journey in the same large, and very elaborate, horse-drawn State Coach specially designed and built for the purpose. For 50 weeks of the year the coach is one of the most popular exhibits on display in the Museum of London. However, in late October each year this is taken out of the museum to be serviced and prepared for the Lord Mayor's Show (see Fig. 3), and it is then returned to the museum for another year soon after the ceremony. There are very many examples of much smaller museums similarly supporting and promoting local traditional 'calendar customs' and similar events. For example, the municipal museum of the small historic town of Ptuj in the Panonian region of north-west Slovenia, displays and interprets the remarkable animal mask costumes typical of the region which are worn in the town's traditional intangible heritage events such as the region's annual carnivals (Fig. 4).

Almost every museum could, if it wished, respond to such traditional rituals or annual 'calendar customs' that are important to some of their local populations with special exhibitions, events or performances, whether religious (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Diwali, Eid, Yom Kippur

etc.) or secular (e.g. national days or other important national, regional or local anniversaries etc.).

Article 2.2 (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

This is an area that is already of great interest to many science museums as well as to ethnographic and historical museums. For example, over the past 20 years or more many member institutions of India's National Council of Science Museums have researched, and presented both exhibitions and special activity programmes on traditional views of the world and the universe, and on the contributions of Indian science to these, from the central importance of the introduction of the concept of zero to mathematics, through to Indian astronomy and astrology. In the same way natural history and ethnography museums in many parts of the developing world are now very actively researching traditional herbal medicines. Quinine and aspirin are two long-established examples of modern medicines which were first recognised in traditional medicines, and there are now many others, with large numbers of very promising prospects under development through such cooperation, while traditional approaches to fields such as agriculture and water conservation may offer many

Figure 3: Lord Mayor of London's 18th century State Coach

Figure 4: Animal mask costumes worn in traditional intangible heritage events displayed and interpreted in the Ptuj Museum, Slovenia



benefits for the future in an increasingly crowded, not to forget rapidly warming, planet.

Article 2.2 (e) traditional craftsmanship

Across the world there must be many millions of examples of traditional craftsmanship preserved and displayed in museums. However, overwhelmingly these artefacts are presented as static, completed, objects, which in many cases are indistinguishable from accurate replicas. Arguably, the two most important aspects of an object of traditional craftsmanship are the way in which it has been made, and the way in which it was used - the intangible expressions of the physical object. Not only should museums be investigating and recording manufacturing techniques and methods of use, but they can play an important role in ensuring that these techniques and skills are maintained. For example, since 1947 the museums and cultural centre of the Arab Womens' Union Bethlehem has been both training local women in traditional Palestinian embroidery skills and marketing the craft products on their behalf. They now run two museums: the Museum of Traditional and Popular Art opened in 1972, and the Museum of the

History of Bethlehem of which the first part opened in 2000. The museum programmes and collections, the training and promotion of traditional crafts and the marketing operations including microfinance help to the craftswomen are all closely integrated⁵.

In a very different field, when I became Director of Museums in Leicester, England, in 1972, my predecessor, Trevor Walden, warned me that while I was inheriting from him the world's largest collection of historic knitting machines, the last generation of workers who had operated the traditional hand knitting frames first developed in the late 16th century had almost completely died out. Even though the country had had hundreds of thousands of highly skilled hand-frame knitters less than 120 years earlier, there were by then probably less than a dozen people, all above retirement age, who fully understood the maintenance and operation of the museum's highly complex 18th and 19th century machines. Without urgent action, very soon these crucial parts of our local industrial history would become little more than curious pieces of inanimate sculpture, rather like those enigmatic human figures on Easter Island.

We therefore immediately decided that a top priority for the museum service should be to train up a new

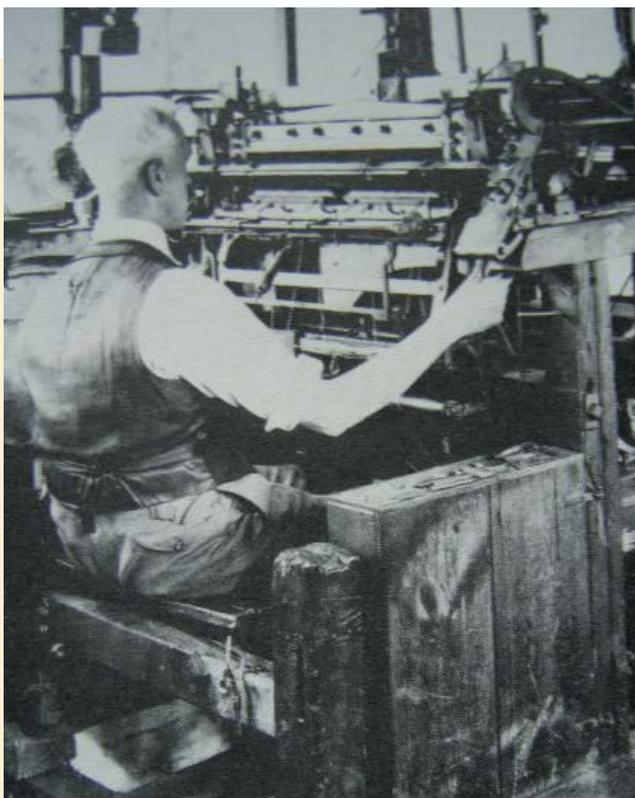


Figure 5: A retired hand-frame knitter demonstrating the almost extinct traditional skills involved in maintaining and using these complex 17th to 19th century machines

generation of staff and other volunteers in the use and maintenance of hand-frames (and to locate sources of supply or manufacture of key maintenance items, such as needles). With the generous help of a retired Polytechnic lecturer, one of the very few really competent hand-frame knitters still living locally, and one or two other very elderly knitters (see Fig. 5), we quickly built up a substantial number of expert hand-frame knitters, mostly young - aged in their 20s or 30s. Happily, today there seems to be no danger that this important skill will die out in the foreseeable future. One unexpected result of the informal training programme is that commercial manufacturing of hand knitting using such machines restarted when a young, well-qualified engineer gave up his secure job, bought several derelict hand-frames, restored them and set up his own business making and selling very attractive knitted scarves.

The museums profession and the Intangible Heritage Convention

In the same way that there are two different visions of museums - the traditional collection-centred one, and that of the 'new museology', there are today also at least two very different visions of the museum profession. The more traditional view, still predominant in some countries, sees the museum staff as being built largely around a corps of what I have termed the 'Scholar-Curator', whose central focus is the physical collection of objects cared for by the museum. In marked contrast with this, through the past 20 or 30 years the museum profession has been increasingly defined as a team of multi-tasking professionals covering a very wide range of specialisms and skills beyond curatorship in that traditional sense⁶.

This trend is seen very clearly within the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which today recognises over 30 specialist International Committees and Affiliated Organisations. About half the international committees are focused on specialist curators of particular types of collection. In contrast the rest reflect the wide diversity of professional specialisms found in a growing number of museums, for example:

- conservator-restorers and other specialised technical personnel, [Conservation]
- registrars and other documentation specialists [Documentation]
- museum teachers and other education, communication and community liaison staff

- [Education, Audio-visual and New Techniques]
- museum-based researchers [Museology]
- museum architects, designers and interpreters [Architecture & Museum Techniques]
- exhibition personnel [Exhibition Exchange, Modern Art, Fine Art]
- directors, and general, personnel and financial managers [Management]
- security and services professionals [Museum Security]
- marketing and public relations staff [Marketing and Public Relations]
- training officers and the staff of museum training organisations [Training of Personnel]
- university museums and collections [University Museums]

In 1947 ICOM established an international specialist Committee for Personnel & Administration, the work of which included advising on museum training. Between then and 1967 ICOM adopted many recommendations on training issues, and particularly the need for professional recognition and specialist training for a range of museum professional workers, including curators (in the traditional sense), conservator-restorers and museum teachers and other educational staff.

In 1968 ICOM's International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) was established on the initiative of the ICOM Executive Council: chaired by Raymond Singleton of Leicester University, England, with Jan Jelinek of the Moravian Museum & University of Brno, Czechoslovakia as Secretary. As with all ICOM committees of that time the membership was by invitation or election and was limited to 25 members, not more than two from any country. ICTOP began its programme of annual meetings (held every year since 1968 except in 1975), and its programme of research and development of models and techniques for training of museum professionals, especially curators, but also actively promoting the need for professional training for museum work of all kinds and at all levels.

In 1970 ICOM published a substantial book based on this research by ICTOP and the ICOM Training Unit⁷. As well as papers by several experts, this included about 30 examples of curricula in use by museum training programmes - mainly university postgraduate professional diplomas or Master's degrees. In 1971 ICOM received a contract from UNESCO to review programmes of the international bilingual museum training centre at

Jos, Nigeria. This resulted in the publication of the first recommended UNESCO-ICOM detailed curriculum for museum professional training, based on the ICTOP surveys and analysis of 'best practice'⁸. The original language was French and entitled a 'programme-type', probably best translated into English as 'model programme', but this title was soon being mistranslated as 'Basic Syllabus' and the title *UNESCO-ICOM Basic Syllabus (Syllabus du Base* in French) for Professional Museum Training was quickly adopted.

The original text mainly consisted of a very detailed and complex list of themes and topics that should be included in a museum training programme, with little indication of the relative weight or importance of each. Nevertheless the 'Syllabus' was very widely used by training programmes of all kinds, especially postgraduate university courses in museology or museum studies for future curators. The *UNESCO-ICOM Syllabus* was formally recognised, adopted and recommended by ICOM, and was revised at intervals by ICTOP in the light of changes in the museum world; updates being formally approved and adopted by either an ICOM General Conference or by the Executive Council.

However, as this was becoming out of date in concept, ICTOP began a complete revision in 1996 led by Nancy Fuller of the Smithsonian Institution, working with a small number but wide range of ICTOP members and other experts. It was soon agreed that though the 1971 structure had served the profession and ICOM very well for a quarter of a century a basic change of concept was now required, a completely new approach. Nancy Fuller and her group soon agreed that:

- a new document should not be aimed solely or mainly at the initial professional education and training of future curators and other professionals
- instead it should also be a guide for the very necessary continuing professional development and updating throughout the working life, that ICOM sees as essential in both practical and ethical terms
- the replacement for the 'Basic Syllabus' should focus much less on detailed lists of factual information that should be taught and learned, but on the learning outcomes of professional training and continuing professional development.

The recommendation was that the underlying question in the assessment or examination at the end

of any training, whether initial or updating, should not be 'what has this student learned and remembered?' (though factual knowledge is of course necessary on some points), but 'what is this future or actual museum professional competent to do?'

Consequently, the final outcome of the revision is based on the two key concepts of:

- continuing professional development through lifelong learning.
- the acquiring (and the assessment where required) of competences relating to both the specifics of museum work and the professional's own specialisations and to general skills.

This completely new approach required a new title: *The ICOM Curricula Guidelines for Museum Professional Development*⁹. In this form the *Guidelines* were adopted by ICTOP in 1998 and after further consultation by the ICOM Executive Council in 2000.

The Curricula Guidelines for Professional Museum Development and the intangible heritage

The team who developed the current *Curricula Guidelines* was already aware of the rapidly growing importance for museums of the living intangible heritage. The *Guidelines* therefore already included under *Museology Competences* a section on 'Community Museology' and a relevant reference under 'Types of Collections', for example emphasising the need for training programmes to develop an awareness of the need to understand the interactions between communities, their heritage and economic development and the processes which originate from community efforts. It was also recognised that certain kinds of collections are likely to be of special significance, including associated information of special relevance to the intangible heritage within cultural heritage collecting and recording, for example in relation to oral history, folklife and language, and also among ancillary collections including audiovisuals, slides, negatives, documents, manuscripts, archives. It was also recognised that museum and heritage services frequently have responsibility for buildings, other structures, sites and cultural landscapes which may have a special association with, and significance for, the

intangible heritage, for example as locations where traditional ceremonies and rituals are practiced.

ICOM and the intangible heritage

The October 2004 General Conference of ICOM, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, had as its main theme *Museums and the Intangible Heritage*, and on the final day the General Assembly adopted as Resolution 1 the 'Declaration of Seoul' as follows:

Considering the undeniable importance of intangible heritage and its role in the preservation of cultural diversity, the 21st General Assembly of ICOM, held in Seoul on 8 October 2004:

1. Endorses the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage;
2. Urges all governments to ratify this convention;
3. Encourages all countries, and especially developing countries where there is a strong oral tradition, to establish an Intangible Heritage Promotion Fund;
4. Invites all relevant museums involved in the collection, preservation and promotion of the intangible heritage to give particular attention to the conservation of all perishable records, notably electronic and documentary heritage resources;
5. Urges national and local authorities to adopt and effectively implement appropriate local laws and regulations for the protection of intangible heritage;
6. Recommends that museums give particular attention and resist any attempt to misuse intangible heritage resources and particularly their commercialisation without benefits to the primary custodians;
7. Urges regional Organisations, National Committees and other ICOM bodies to work closely with local agencies in the development and the implementation of such legal instruments and in the necessary training of staff responsible for effective implementation;
8. Recommends that all training programmes for museum professionals stress the importance of intangible heritage and include the understanding of intangible heritage as a requirement for qualification;
9. Recommends that the Executive Council, working with the International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP), introduce the necessary

adjustments as soon as possible into the *ICOM Curricula Guidelines for Museum Professional Development* (1971, latest revision 1999);

10. Decides that this Resolution shall henceforth be known as the 'Seoul Declaration of ICOM on the Intangible Heritage'¹⁰.

In response to the paragraph 9 of the *Seoul Declaration*, as noted above, the current version of the *ICOM Curricula Guidelines for Professional Museum Development* already includes a considerable number of topics which are arguably of as much relevance to the intangible heritage as to the traditional role of museums in relation to the tangible heritage. However, after consultations, ICOM's International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) is proposing that at least thirteen topics within the *Curricula Guidelines* should in future be highlighted as requiring special attention from the intangible heritage viewpoint within museum training and career development programmes in future, and also proposed that the explanation of these changes should be added to the preamble to the official *Curricula Guidelines*:

The new ICOM initiative encouraging museums to become places responsible for safeguarding and transmitting intangible heritage has set in motion changes that will significantly affect traditional institutional roles and procedures. The initiative will require museum personnel to possess new and different knowledge, skills and attitudes, just as its corollary, staff training and professional development offerings and programs, will be obliged to revise their content and methodology.

Intangible heritage is by definition people-oriented rather than object-centred. At its core, implementation of the new initiative will transform the relationships between museums and their audiences and stakeholders. Among the results will be requests by people from diverse backgrounds to participate in substantive dialogues about their intangible heritage, and to share authority in defining and curating a museum's interpretation of their heritage. The outcome of these efforts will be a paradigm shift of exceptional magnitude. During the transition, museums will be in a state of flux. But as professionals in the field, it is a task we must

undertake. Understanding and respecting both tangible and intangible heritage and their relationships is critical if we are to make closer connections with our visitors and our communities.

In keeping with the aim of the *ICOM Curriculum Guidelines for Professional Development* 'to respond to the continuous learning needs of the profession', ICTOP has considered the implications of the new initiative from a training perspective and suggests additional competencies for inclusion in the document. Many of the competencies museum personnel need for presenting and documenting intangible heritage are already included in the ICOM Curriculum Guidelines. However, because our understanding and emphases are often culturally specific, the scope of intangible heritage may not be fully understood or incorporated into practice. For that reason we have starred specific topics where extensive reference to intangible heritage is warranted and where, in some instances, closer connections with our visitors and communities could forward our aims of becoming a more valuable resource.

If an item is not starred, it does not mean that reference to intangible heritage should not be included, but rather that its application will depend on the goals of a specific syllabus developed by an institution or practitioner. Perhaps while using these guidelines, it is most important to also ask yourself:

How can reference to intangible heritage improve learning about this topic¹¹?

Conclusion

The growing recognition of the great importance of the intangible heritage to the total patrimony and culture of peoples, and particularly the adoption through UNESCO of the 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention, have very important implications for museums and related bodies. It is important that all museums (and indeed library, archive and monuments services) review their current and potential future support for traditional cultures and the wider intangible heritage in relation to all their programmes and activities. They need to ensure that they seek actively and publicly to take a leading role in national and local measures adopted in the implementation of the new Convention, otherwise they may well find that governments will establish and fund new bodies for the support of the intangible heritage in accordance with the obligations they accept when they adopt the Convention.

Similarly the members of the museum profession needs to adopt an open, outward-looking, view of their own role and that of their institutions within society, and in particular in relation to the protection and promotion of the intangible heritage, which can be at least as important as the traditional collections of physical objects that have been the main, or in many cases only, concern of museums over the past centuries. 🇬🇧

NOTES

1. Boylan, P.J., 2001. The concept of cultural protection in times of armed conflict: from the Crusades to the New Millennium. pp. 43 - 108 in Tubb, K.W., & Brodie, N. (editors), 2001. *Illicit Antiquities* (London: Routledge)
2. See for example Clément, E., 1995. The aims of the 1970 UNESCO Convention ... and action being taken by UNESCO to assist its implementation. pp. 38 - 56 and Prott, L.V. 1995. National and international laws on the protection of the cultural heritage. pp. 57 - 72, both in Tubb, K.W. (editor), 1995. *Antiquities: Trade or Betrayed* (London: Archetype Publications)
3. The UNESCO web portal for culture now has an extensive presentation on the intangible heritage generally, and the new Convention in particular. The index page for this is at: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2225&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html and there are links to the full text and to the list of countries that have adopted it. The States Parties to Intangible Heritage Convention at date of coming

into force (20 April 2006) are as follows (with date of ratification or deposit of other instrument of adoption): 1. Algeria (15/03/2004), 2. Mauritius (04/06/2004), 3. Japan (15/06/2004), 4. Gabon (18/06/2004), 5. Panama (20/08/2004), 6. China (02/12/2004), 7. Central African Republic (07/12/2004), 8. Latvia (14/01/2005), 9. Lithuania (21/01/2005), 10. Belarus (03/02/2005), 11. Republic of Korea (09/02/2005), 12. Seychelles (15/02/2005), 13. Syrian Arab Republic (11/03/2005), 14. United Arab Emirates (02/05/2005), 15. Mali (03/06/2005), 16. Mongolia (29/06/2005), 17. Croatia (28/07/2005), 18. Egypt (03/08/2005), 19. Oman (04/08/2005), 20. Dominica (05/09/2005), 21. India (09/09/2005), 22. Viet Nam (20/09/2005), 23. Peru (23/09/2005), 24. Pakistan (07/10/2005), 25. Bhutan (12/10/2005), 26. Nigeria (21/10/2005), 27. Iceland (23/11/2005), 28. Mexico (14/12/2005), 29. Senegal (05/01/2006), 30. Romania (20/01/2006), 31. Estonia (27/01/2006), 32. Luxembourg (31/01/2006), 33. Nicaragua (14/02/2006), 34. Cyprus (24/02/2006), 35. Ethiopia (24/02/2006), 36. Bolivia (28/02/2006), 37. Brazil (01/03/2006), 38. Bulgaria (10/03/2006), 39. Hungary (17/03/2006), 40. Iran (Islamic Republic of) (23/03/2006), 41. Belgium (24/03/2006), 42. Jordan (24/03/2006), 43. Slovakia (24/03/2006), 44. Republic of Moldova (24/03/2006), 45. Turkey (27/03/2006), 46. Madagascar (31/03/2006) and 47. Albania (04/04/2006). UNESCO has also now launched a free newsletter with brief news items about intangible heritage developments and activities in three languages: English (*The Intangible Heritage Messenger*), French (*Le messenger du patrimoine immatériel*), and Spanish (*El mensajero de patrimonio inmaterial*). All three language editions are also available as PDF downloads from the UNESCO Intangible Heritage website (see above).

4. See in particular: de Varine, H. 1978. L'Ecomusée. *La Gazette (Association des Musées Canadiens)* no. 11, pp. 28 – 40 and 1979. *Le musée peut tuer ...faire vivre. Techniques et Architecture* no. 326 (Sept. 1979), pp. 82 – 83; also Rivière, G-H., 1992. L'Ecomusée, un modèle évolutif (1971 – 1980). pp. 440 – 445 in Desvallées, A., 1992. *Vagues: une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie I*. (Mâcon: éditions W); Boylan, P.J., 1992. Ecomuseums and the New Museology: Key works on ecomuseums, p. 16 and Definitions. *Museums Journal*, April 1992, pp. 29 - 30.
5. The Bethlehem-based Arab Womens' Union has a very informative website at: <http://www.arabwomenunion.org/index.htm>
6. I have recently reviewed and discussed these issues: Boylan, P.J., 2006. The Museum Profession. Chapter 25, pp. 415 – 430 in Macdonald, S., 2006. *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Malden MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing)
7. International Council of Museums, 1970. *The Training of Museum Personnel* (London: Hugh Evelyn for ICOM)
8. International Council of Museums, 1972. *Professional Training for Museum Personnel in the World: Actual State of the Problem* (Paris: ICOM)
9. ICOM Curricula Guidelines for Museum Professional Development: the text is hosted and maintained online by the Smithsonian Institution at: <http://museumstudies.si.edu/ICOM-ICTOP/index.htm>
10. Resolutions adopted by the 21st General Assembly of ICOM, Seoul, Korea. Friday 8 October 2004: <http://icom.museum/resolutions/eres04.html>
11. Recommendations from the ICOM International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) to the Executive Council, 2005. (ICOM Executive Council Working Papers, Paris, June 2006 meeting – in press)