

## Foreword



It is a great pleasure for me to take part in the meetings of the Editorial Advisory Committee for the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*. For some years I have been receiving the wonderful volumes of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* with its valuable contributions. They are a permanent source of inspiration and encourage us to reflect on the theory and practice of intangible heritage in general and especially how intangible heritage is becoming an increasingly important aspect of the everyday work of many museums.

The continued work of the *Journal* over the past few years is a very good indicator of sustainability, a keyword that has gained great importance in museum practice as it has in so many other fields. With the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO's General Conference in 2003, and its ratification by many countries in the following years, a solid basis was established for ICOM to implement the principles of the Convention.

The ICOM General Conference in Seoul in 2004 was a milestone for an international and professional dialogue on 'Museums and Intangible Heritage'. The Shanghai Charter of ICOM of 2002 provided a solid foundation for our efforts. For many colleagues and museums from all over the world, the General Conference was a forum for exchanging ideas, and for many curators it was a starting point from which to reflect on how to deal with intangible heritage in practice, even though in museological terms many aspects of intangible heritage have been part of museum work for a long time, through concepts such as 'New Museology', 'Ecomuseum' or 'Everyday life'.

ICOM took major steps forward in improving the continuing work on Intangible Heritage: Resolution No 1 of the General Assembly in Seoul in 2004 and encouraged countries, cultural authorities and museums all over the world to pay attention to intangible heritage and to include it in a broader framework. Museums, particularly in times gone by, collected objects from the past while neglecting to record related knowledge and insights. Extending knowledge beyond the actual objects is important in order to present a complete picture. The material and the immaterial are sometimes treated as being opposites. The truth is that they belong together, but a new awareness seems essential if we are to have a more inclusive view of the past.

Since 2004, many museum conferences on intangible heritage have taken place, often organised by the International Committees of ICOM. As a result of ICOM's initiative, all these discussions are focused on exhibitions which integrate both material and immaterial aspects of historic and present-day cultures.

Finally, it is exhibition visitors who will also profit from this discussion. A broader view of the past, as well as of today's cultures, is represented in today's exhibitions and helps the visitor to learn about social and cultural development, which in turn creates a fuller understanding. Broader and deeper knowledge helps people to understand the past and the present in order to work in a more confident, sustainable manner for the future of our world.

This concerns both individuals and society as a whole, when they develop, maintain and preserve aspects of their cultures. Memories and traditions form part of the public's cultural self-knowledge. In their turn, museums are the most significant centres of commemoration along with memorial sites and historic buildings and spaces. Museums as centres of commemoration have a great responsibility for the transfer of knowledge by means of exhibitions and other types of cultural dialogue. Intangible heritage should therefore be a natural element of this transfer of knowledge.

The *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* is a successful model for the effective and sustainable exploration and promotion of an important cultural theme which is also made accessible to a wider audience. It is my pleasure to congratulate the members of the Editorial Board, the Editorial Advisory Committee, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, ICOM Korea and - of course and most importantly - the National Folk Museum of Korea, its Director Dr. Cheon Jingi and staff and the Editor-in-Chief, Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla.

I wish the *Journal* a great future. I am sure that its international circulation ensures that ICOM members are kept up to date with experiences and ideas to assist them in their everyday work when preparing exhibitions for the general public. The *Journal* is a brilliant communication tool that connects museums and ICOM members. It is an excellent example of a service agent that benefits all who are interested in intangible heritage.

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