

Editorial



The discussions and debates in addressing the imbalances of heritage management have been critical in advocating the safeguarding of intangible heritage. The adoption of the *Shanghai Charter* of ICOM in 2002 and the outcomes of the Triennial General Conference of ICOM 2004 in Seoul have been turning points for everyone dealing with all forms of heritage (www.icom.museum). The UNESCO 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* has been a catalyst in galvanising State Parties across the world and promoting an understanding of what intangible heritage is and the challenges of safeguarding it (www.unesco.org/culture/ich).

ICOM *Strategic Plan* emphasises the holistic concerns of twenty first century museums and advocates that we take an integrated approach to preserving and safeguarding heritage resources beyond the binary oppositions of natural and cultural, tangible and intangible, and movable and immovable. The realisation of this paradigm shift is gradual and associated transformations are evident in the scoping of different approaches to rethinking heritage. Embedding multiple voices, cross cultural perspectives, a range of interpretations and management practices in promoting inclusive museology calls for a collaborative and strategic approach. (www.onmuseums.com).

During the ceremony for the proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, 18th May 2001, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) referred to the sites that have been inscribed on the World Heritage List as

...broadly representative of the "North". That imbalance in fact reflected a weakness in our system, which, being exclusively concerned with protecting the tangible heritage, overlooked the intangible heritage and thus left out a great many cultural features that are nevertheless fundamental in the map of cultural diversity, often belonging to cultures of the "South".

The 2003 Convention, often considered as complementary to the 1972 *World Heritage Convention*, has brought about significant changes in the way we deal with heritage resources. It is significant to note the inscription of Chief Roi Mata's Domain in Vanuatu on the World Heritage List in 2008, as an outstanding example of a landscape representative of Pacific chiefly systems. Although there are now several World Heritage inscriptions that are cultural landscapes or mixed sites, Vanuatu provides a significant departure in safeguarding intangible heritage through the *World Heritage Convention* and providing an integrated approach to both the tangible and intangible. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1280>).

I strongly recommend that the readers of this *Journal* familiarise themselves with the *Operational Directives* for the 2003 UNESCO *Convention* adopted by the State Parties in 2008. They provide a valuable avenue for the participation of primary stakeholders and their representative bodies in safeguarding intangible heritage. *These Operational Directives*, yet to be tested in practice, need to be understood within the intercultural dialogue of the past decade facilitated by the 2001 UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* and the 2005 UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. We are witnessing a profound transformation of the overall suite of UNESCO's Conventions, Charters and Recommendations, both hard law and soft law. The UN *Declaration on the Rights of World's Indigenous*

Peoples, September 2007, provides another critical step in rethinking our perceptions and perspectives of the location of intangible heritage in sustainable development.

It is within this context that the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, as the only global forum of its kind for scholarship, provides a critical space for meaningful engagement based on applied research. Volume 4 of the *Journal* demonstrates the importance of interrogating what is intangible heritage at the local, national, regional and global levels. We envisage that future issues will continue to bring to the readers case studies and fresh approaches from different parts of the world. All possible efforts have been made to facilitate contributions by authors from languages other than English in this volume.

The knowledge community created by the *Journal* is becoming even more important as we face new forms of globalising impacts. There is clear sense of urgency and the need for a sincere and open research engagement to interrogate intangible heritage and scope ways and means of safeguarding it. This is critical, as intangible heritage is an integral part of the cultural diversity of humanity. One of the key concerns is the impact of climate change and the threats to many intangible heritage systems whose contextual localities will be affected due to rising sea levels or changing landscapes.

Finally, I express my sincere appreciation of the leadership, vision and infrastructure support from Dr. Shin Kwang Seop, Director, the National Folk Museum and Chairperson of the Editorial Advisory Committee. We met to discuss the future directions ahead of the last Editorial Board meeting and Dr. Kwang Seop expressed a firm desire for the *Journal* to become one of the cutting edge think-tanks for research on intangible heritage.

I take this opportunity to thank Madame Alissandra Cummins, President of ICOM and Professor Chong-pil Choe, Chairperson, ICOM Korea, the Editorial Board and the International Advisory Committee for their active professional engagement and passionate and informed intellectual inputs in the development of the *Journal*. To my predecessor, Professor Patrick Boylan, I pay tribute for leading the establishment of the *Journal* with quality assurance and inclusive participation of scholars from across the world. The Secretariat of the *Journal* at the National Folk Museum has demonstrated outstanding commitment for providing a supporting environment.

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