



## **Working Internationally**

**27 February 2014**

**A conference organised by NMDC, ICOM UK and the V&A.**

**Held at the V&A Sackler Centre, London.**

The aim of the conference was to share good practice, experience and information between the museum sector regarding international partnerships and activity. The audience was made up mostly of project managers, curators, international programme managers and museum managers from museums of all sizes. The conference was working on points raised at the Working Internationally Conference 2013.

This is the first of three guides containing the main points raised at the conference and reference to the help available for museums embarking on pursuing an international profile.

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### **Implications, outcomes and benefits of international work**

**Dr Mark O'Neill, Director of Policy and Research, Glasgow Life**

#### **Only Connect: Museums Working Internationally**

Access, social justice, urban regeneration and repatriation have been central themes to Mark's work. What is fascinating is how central the internet has been in forming the 'new world' that we know. Place matters as well and is central to ensure that we remain connected to the local. We can approach international work by looking at how museums were established; as cabinets of curiosities to show off the new findings that scholars and travellers found on their journeys around the world. Scientific and religious perspectives were both important in forming the museums that we know today and for broaching alternative approaches that asked: "where are the

kangaroos in the bible?”. Museums were invented to look at dealing with new findings from globalisation.

Pre-industrialised Glasgow held a position on the periphery of the commercial world but soon became the fastest growing city in Europe moving its position to the centre of the Atlantic, as an important port and trading centre. Between 1980 - 90, 60,000 jobs were lost and the city went through de-industrialisation. The City has since gone through a cultural renaissance, culture has been a central component to this new vision of the city. Glasgow’s development connects it to the world. Huge inequalities still exist however culture has remained central to the vision of the city, with £26 spend per head on the arts and a quarter of the population from the poorest of the city’s areas still visiting museums.

Glasgow Life has numerous sustainable and important international connection. Projects currently taking place range from: a set of research programmes between Glasgow and Japan, Glasgow owns a living tree exhibit in Ecuador, strong links remain in Northern India. A group recently travelled to Palestine and have been to Bulgaria on an experience sharing trip. Since 1990, the Open Museum has worked with excluded communities from Brazil and South Africa. A touring programme has been established that enables audiences from around the world to view collections from Kelvingrove and the Burrell Collection in their own countries.

International Work has to be justified when there is still so much poverty present in Glasgow. Working internationally only works because it is such a central part of the social inclusion story. Museums are part of the future story of the city.

<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk>

### **Professor Hans Martin Hinz, President ICOM**

ICOM’s mantra is to work internationally and to enable capacity building to protect cultural heritage. Museums should help people to understand the world, to look at identity and to aim to be more inclusive. ICOM is a partner in the inclusive museum.

Museums were established to provide a new view on international collaboration. They aim to make integration and immigration better understood. It is important to reflect on re-interpretation of collections so that previous and narrow perspectives are widened to incorporate the contemporary need to make collections relevant to all. ‘This is our common past’ should be said when visitors leave exhibitions. Diverse stories need to be told. There are 31 international committees within ICOM who exchange ideas and best practice across the world. There are more challenges for working internationally, these are highlighted in Europe’s past history, during the Nazi era in Germany and the Apartheid system in South Africa. The increase in international exchange reflects a general global perspective. Hans Martin

recommends looking at the ICOM and UNESCO exhibition: 'Imagining the Balkans' as an interesting case study for positive reasons for working internationally.

<http://icom.museum>

<http://www.unesco.org/>

<http://onmuseums.com/home>

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**The International Council Of Museums** is the global organisation of museums and museum professionals committed to the conservation of the world's natural and cultural heritage.

**ICOM UK** is the national branch of ICOM in the United Kingdom. It is a gateway to the global museum community and the only UK museum association with a dedicated international focus. To join ICOM UK <http://uk.icom.museum>