

# Patrick John Boylan Esq. BSc FGS FMA MBIM

## In his own words - A tribute

**Patrick John Boylan**  
17 August 1939 – 8 February 2024

---

**Alissandra Cummins**

Director of Barbados Museum and Historical Society,  
former Editor-in-Chief of the IJH,  
and past President of ICOM

Patrick John ‘Paddy’ Boylan left an indelible mark on our professions and careers, our lives and our hearts. Much more than a colleague, he was both a mentor and muse, a source of wisdom and of inspiration, a committed educator and agent provocateur. Patrick was deeply curious, consistently rigorous, and always courageous in exploring and interpreting the unending opportunities which history, heritage and human endeavour afforded him to research and reveal, interrogate and celebrate. To say that he was the first Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* does not truly do justice to his legacy. He was in many ways the architect and advocate for significant change in the missions and mindsets of museums and heritage workers. In his view ICOM’s active support in ensuring the essential exchanges about living heritage between researchers and tradition bearers, was a new approach that was arguably “one of the most important steps forward taken by [ICOM] since its creation in 1946”.<sup>i</sup>

The many obituaries and remembrances which have poured in since the passing of Prof. Emeritus Patrick Boylan have provided appreciations of his life and service in the fields of museums, heritage, culture, conservation and education and have paid due attention to his support for the missions of the multifarious bodies with which he engaged, largely on an advisory or pro bono basis. While they require no repetition, giving evidence as they do of Patrick’s professional prowess and commitment, it is not easy to comprehend the scale of his farsightedness and dedication to these activities, all driven by his acute understanding, born out of his own experience of entering a field where no formal training programmes existed, of the need to broadly encode their foundational practices articulated within a framework of professional ethics and the law.



IJH 7th Editorial Committee

In his Keynote Address to the 1981 meeting of ICOM International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) held in Bergen, Norway, Boylan provided recommendations on some basic guidelines for museum training. He believed “that there are certain museological fundamentals that need to be covered in the basic initial training..., of those newly recruited to work in a museum” including the purpose of the museum, object handling, preventive conservation, the institution’s responsibility to both its community and its collections, the museum’s organizational structure and operations all “to ensure that museum staff at all levels have an adequate understanding of not only their own job, but that of their immediate boss and of any subordinates.”<sup>ii</sup>

Patrick remained steadfast in his commitment to this work into October 1989 with the finalization of ICOM ICTOP’s *Guidelines for Basic Training Workshops for the Development and Promotion of Museums*. These were then enshrined in the 1989-92 ICOM Triennial Programme and with Resolution No. 2 unanimously adopted by the 16th General Assembly of ICOM, ICTOP

(International Committee for the Training of Personnel), working in close cooperation with the ICOM Secretariat, will provide advice support and help for... (among other things) organizing training workshops for small museums, particularly in the less developed countries" (ICOM, 1989b, p. 34). This was a process of reflection and revision which Patrick was to repeat with significant success in successive ICOM conferences in particular the 2004 General Conference in Seoul where he drew the link with his international work with UNESCO and others.

Patrick's international profile developed rapidly following UNESCO's commissioning of his written reappraisal of the 1954 *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*. The comprehensive 'Boylan Report', published in 1993, concluded that "there is little that is basically wrong with present international law, particularly the 1954 Convention: the continuing problems are due to failures in implementation."<sup>iii</sup> He made it clear that it was not sufficient for individual nations to adopt the Convention, but it was necessary for them to activate "this quite fundamental instrument of international Humanitarian law"<sup>iv</sup>, through a number of steps to implement protective measures for cultural property, not just in times of war but in peace. He called on all museums "to think the unthinkable"<sup>v</sup> and examine their own positions, perspectives and disaster preparedness plans. He stressed that "We need to acknowledge that cultural heritage is always at risk: from the depredations of war, from nature, from urban development, political and economic pressures - as much as from the daily forces of slow decay, attrition and neglect".<sup>vi</sup> It was not enough therefore simply to act through governmental channels to restrict imports or exports of such cultural artefacts. Museums needed to comprehend that their responsibility was not merely to their own protection, but extended to the communities they served. Not content with making reports, offering public statements and assessments, Patrick did not merely talk the talk, but adamantly walked the walk, wherever and whenever necessary. Having already articulated the importance of the need for basic training within the museum field, Patrick now took on the critical task of inculcating the museum community with their ethical responsibility for supporting implementation of the intangible cultural heritage convention. He did this in his dual role as Professor of Arts/Heritage Policy and Management at City University, London, while at the same time taking on

the chairmanship of ICTOP and ICOM's Legal Affairs committee. Here he stressed the need to develop better methodologies for training of museum and other heritage professionals, joined with more credible processes which addressed community needs. Under his leadership ICTOP moved forward with continual reviews and refinements of the ICOM Syllabus and prepared a statement of Standards and Ethics for training programmes "in the light of new philosophies, ideologies, methodologies, technologies and changing economies" making sure at all times "to respect and understand the cultural tradition of minorities, to enable a presentation of those cultural specificities...[and] to directly involve minorities in the interpretation and representation of their cultures".<sup>vii</sup>

Patrick was unequivocal about the fact that "Without argument, priority must be given to saving people's lives in a disaster situation. However, it would be an error to think that these people only need material help. They're hungry, they're cold and they're frightened. But their heart, their soul and their memory have also been wounded. Natural disasters - earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and landslides - take a terrible toll on our cultural heritage".<sup>viii</sup> Museums therefore needed to work collectively with both the communities concerned and with other memory institutions (as well as governments at all levels) not simply to document, conserve and interpret the heritage but at the same time ensuring access for all, responding to the responsibility for social change. He called on all museums to "take an active role in promoting tolerance [of all peoples] and understanding through their exhibitions and education programmes...".<sup>ix</sup> Patrick also advocated for ICOM "to develop an official [ICOM] policy on the role of museums in relation to the understanding and tolerance of racial and cultural minorities and of indigenous peoples."<sup>x</sup> ICOM President Jacques Perot made clear his appreciation for this commitment paying homage to "Professor Patrick Boylan, the present Chairman of ICTOP and a former Vice-President of ICOM, for his longstanding professional and personal commitment to the Organisation."<sup>xi</sup>

These proposals gained considerable advancement in the context of the United Nations Decade for the World's Indigenous People (1995–2004) which generated a number of significant events more specifically in relation to *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of*



IJH 7th Editorial Meeting

*Indigenous Peoples*, drawn up in 1994/95, underscoring the importance of their cultural rights in relation to their intangible heritage. By 2001 with UNESCO at work on the preparation of the *International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage*, Patrick Boylan was already well placed to advise and facilitate this work, having already had two decades of experience in the field of heritage policy and its operationalization, both nationally and internationally. He closely monitored the progression of this new standard-setting instrument, recognising the responsibilities and modalities which would be required to ensure that this legal instrument would become fully functional. He fully appreciated the evolution of cultural policies and at times played a catalytic role in encouraging a parallel process of capacity building to provide the needed support and standard references for the complementary roles that different governmental and non-governmental actors particularly memory institutions, would need to play in its execution. Most specifically Patrick Boylan recognised the evolving nature of the *ICH Convention*, coherent with/informed by considerations developed around a series of expert meetings and consultations. UNESCO's formal adoption of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003 was reinforced the following year when UNESCO published a major series of papers about the intangible heritage in a double issue of its quarterly journal *Museums International* (no. 221/2, May 2004). This was probably a key source of inspiration for the development of this *Journal's* concept, "originally conceived as the result of informal discussions during the ICOM 2004 General Conference"<sup>xii</sup> and extensive consultations thereafter.

Patrick's comprehensive understanding of what was required of non-governmental actors such as memory institutions to help fulfill the mandate of the *ICH Convention* broadening of the concept of heritage, where "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."<sup>xiii</sup> This was instrumental in informing the resulting ICTOP curricula and related resolutions adopted at the ICOM's 2004 Triennial General Conference in Seoul. Museums/memory institutions and their personnel would need to be cognizant of and prepared to respond to "heritage as process and practices rather than end products, ... recognition of this heritage as a source of identity, creativity, diversity and social cohesion, ... its constantly evolving and creative feature ...observance of universally recognized human rights. ...as "the most powerful driving force in fostering self-motivation for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage."<sup>xiv</sup> In their introduction to Volume 1 of the new *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, then director of its host institution, the National Folk Museum of Korea, Hongnam Kim and Editor-in-Chief Patrick Boylan sought "to raise and confirm awareness of the importance of intangible heritage and of the need for greater opportunities for academic and professional publication and information exchange in relation to it."<sup>xv</sup> They identified the increasing activity of academics, researchers and professionals across the cultural sector in "collecting, systematising, documenting and communicating the intangible heritage" as critical to this enterprise, because it was this shift in focus from the purely tangible heritage to acknowledge and include the

intangible which required the *IJIH* to serve as “a spotlight on this important and growing aspect of heritage studies”.<sup>xvi</sup> The intent of the Journal would therefore seek to aid in this activity by “creating new knowledge...[and] an irreducible bond between cultures across the world... consolidat[ing] common values...and celebrating both the differences and similarities that are the intangible treasure of humanities’ heritage”.<sup>xvii</sup>

Patrick was always direct and to the point in addressing some of the key issues and important questions raised. With the ICH *Convention* coming into force in April 2006 he stated that “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”.<sup>xviii</sup> It was clear that he recognised the opportunities and potentials which this new Convention offered to create “ a new cultural insight and ... a new cultural paradigm that has long been overlooked or at least seriously undervalued. More active exchanges between international researchers and heritage bearers, for example through this Journal will, we very much hope, rapidly increase to the benefit of the understanding and sustainable development of the intangible heritage.”<sup>xix</sup> He opined further that “members of the museum profession need 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...”.<sup>xx</sup> At the end of his formal stewardship of the new Journal with the publication of Volume 3 of *IJIH*, Patrick did not walk away from this mission. He continued to contribute generously with timely advice, intriguing articles and reviews, and active participation on the Editorial Advisory Committee for more than a decade after the end of his tenure in 2008. Paddy’s constant attention and support were invaluable. Pamela Inder, in reflecting on her husband’s contribution, stated “Patrick always enjoyed his visits to Korea and was very committed to the idea of preserving intangible heritage. He liked the fact that it was an initiative that was not Eurocentric and was proud to have been the first editor of the *IJIH* and of the fact that one of his former students was involved in setting up the project.”<sup>xxi</sup> That same student, Jongsok Kim, reflected on Patrick’s role and contribution saying that “After Professor Boylan joined the Editorial Committee of the Journal and was elected as the Editor-in-Chief, I can attest to his significant and inspiring contributions and leadership. Having worked with/for him as the curator of the publication secretariat of the *IJIH* at the NFMK, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of his dedication and expertise.”<sup>xxii</sup> Their insights and assistance were essential in crafting a deeper appreciation of Patrick’s contribution and commitment.

**Patrick, we hope we can continue to promote your remarkable legacy through the *IJIH*. Your memory will continue to inspire us, and your legacy will live on in the work we do and the way we do it. Rest in peace dear Friend.**

- 
- i. Hongman Kim and Patrick Boylan, 2006, ‘Introducing the International Journal of Intangible Heritage’, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, Vol.1, p.10
  - ii. Karyl A. Robb and Alissandra Cummins, 1992, ‘Caribbean Museum Training Workshop Final Report,1991’, IC-ICTOP General Assembly, Quebec-1992\_proceedings, icom.jibinfo.info, pp.249-250
  - iii. Patrick Boylan, 1995, ‘Protecting the cultural property: UNESCO reviews the Hague Convention’, *Museum International*, vol. 47, n° 185, UNESCO, pp.59-60
  - iv. Patrick Boylan, 1995, ‘Thinking the Unthinkable’, *ICOM News*, vol. 48, n° 1, p. 4
  - v. Patrick Boylan, *ibid*, p.5
  - vi. Patrick Boylan, 1999, ‘Come Hell or High Water’, *Sources – Whose Bright Idea was that?*, November - No. 117, UNESCO, p.11
  - vii. Alissandra Cummins, Amareswar Galla, and Cornelia Meran, 1998, ‘ICTOP Resolution No. 1, Museums- Catalysts for Community Development’ in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the International Committee of the training of personnel*, Lubbock Texas 1996, Texas Tech University, p. 144
  - viii. Patrick Boylan, 1999, ‘Come Hell or High Water’, *Sources – Whose Bright Idea was that?* November - No. 117, UNESCO, p.10
  - ix. Patrick Boylan, 1995, ‘Thinking the Unthinkable’, p.5
  - x. Patrick Boylan, 1995, p.5
  - xi. Jacques Perot, 2002, Foreword, *ICOM/ICTOP Study Series* Vol. 10, ICOM, p.1
  - xii. Hongman Kim and Patrick Boylan, 2006, ‘Introducing the International Journal of Intangible Heritage’, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, Vol.1, p.11
  - xiii. Patrick J. Boylan, 2006, *IJIH* Vol.1, p.63
  - xiv. Noriko Aikawa, 2004, ‘An Historical overview of the preparation of the UNESCO International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage’, *Museum International*, vol. 56, nos. 1-2, p. 146.
  - xv. Hongman Kim and Patrick Boylan, 2006, ‘Introducing the International Journal of Intangible Heritage’, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, Vol.1, p.11
  - xvi. Hongman Kim and Patrick Boylan, 2006, *ibid*, p.10
  - xvii. Alissandra Cummins, 2006, ‘Welcome to the International Journal of Intangible Heritage’, *The International Journal of Intangible Heritage* Vol.1, p.8
  - xviii. Patrick J. Boylan, 2006, ‘The Intangible Heritage: A Challenge and an Opportunity for Museums and Museum Professional Training’, *The International Journal of Intangible Heritage* Vol.1, p.55
  - xix. Hongman Kim and Patrick Boylan, 2006, ‘Introducing the International Journal of Intangible Heritage’, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, Vol.1, p.10
  - xx. Patrick J. Boylan, 2006, *IJIH* Vol.1, p.64
  - xxi. Pamela Inder, Personal communication, April 2024
  - xxii. Jongsok Kim, personal communication, May 2024