

Museums and intangible cultural heritage: a memoir and a meditation

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Museums are not just educational; I have come to understand that they are essential to our wellbeing as communities. Museums may not be essential in the same way that hospitals, armies or schools are, enabling communities to survive a crisis and to thrive as a population thereafter. And they may not have been assigned an official value as a functionary unit of government in the same way that libraries and archives are usually incorporated. Yet, societies and communities the world over signal every day, even if they do not always articulate it in this way, that museums – especially community or small museums – are essential to them, to their needs, to their sense of self and of community.

But museums do have a critical role to play – and not just as storehouses of a nation’s history or its memories. In the way that they reflect, recover, and restore hidden or forgotten chapters in a community’s story, museums are also markers – and even makers – of identity. The critical issue is that they undertake such processes at the instance (and with the involvement and investment) of the communities they serve.

Museums’ collections reflect the life, history and identity not only of a particular community but also of humanity, and it is these aspects that are in danger of



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disappearing. The work that we have been engaged in with the International Council of Museums (hereafter

'ICOM'), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereafter 'UNESCO') and with individual communities has been crucial in helping us to understand and appreciate how passionate communities are about safeguarding their heritage, and how committed they are to communicating it to future generations. Museums are therefore a crucial factor in our efforts to preserve our heritage, our identity, our existence. Communities can and should be empowered to co-create, co-curate and communicate their knowledge, their skills and their practices. This empowerment is critical to the mental health of a nation and a people (Statement, Heritage Matters Webinar, May 2020).

Vulnerability can breed resilience: 2004 was a momentous year for me in many ways, both personally and professionally. It was the 20th anniversary of my start in the museological and heritage profession. UNESCO signalled the importance of promoting the flagship project 'The Slave Route' in highlighting memories of the slave trade and slavery. This was done by means of an interdisciplinary programme based on cooperation among international scientific networks that endorsed the celebration that year of the United Nations' (hereafter 'UN') International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition, in line with the proposed Programme of Action of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. At the same time, member states were urged to develop programmes to be implemented aimed at supporting dialogue among cultures and civilisations. The articulation of a key resolution around the importance of incorporating intangible cultural heritage (hereafter 'ICH') into the day-to-day work of museums was also a source of considerable satisfaction and inspiration, and I was looking forward to bringing this resolution to life in the professional practices that we instituted. But how to do this? The answers to this question came from many sources and directions (Statement, Heritage Matters Webinar, May 2020).

But before we return to this point and trace its progression to May 2006, it is important to look back at the vibrant context in which UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter 'ICH Convention') arose.

Values, vocality, visibility and viability

The adoption of the ICH Convention on 17 October 2003 following several years of denial, discussion, deliberation and negotiation, and a period of contested and volatile debate at the heart of which was a battle over meaning and identity, was important in and of itself, of course, as a critical conclusion to this 'decolonising' process. However, it also had huge significance in a number of ways for me and for Barbados, among many other countries. In the same context was the 32nd session of UNESCO's General Conference, where member states acclaimed the importance of the Proclamation of 2004 as the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition and, in particular, urged the Director General to 'continue the "Slave Route" project at least until 2007, the 200th anniversary of the beginning of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade'. The General Conference also decided on a draft charter for the preservation of digital heritage, which focused on ensuring the increasing accessibility and sharing of understanding and interpretation of various aspects of intangible and tangible heritage.

We also sought to ensure that the value and importance of the Barbados Programme of Action in respect of Small Island Developing States (hereafter 'SIDS') was acknowledged, appreciated and recognised by both the General Conference and the Director General, calling on him specifically to 'continue to undertake concrete measures for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in the context of UNESCO's programmes and projects, **giving special attention to the synergies of various kinds of interaction and cooperation – within and between societal sectors, within and between disciplines, within and between various stakeholder groups (government, civil society, youth, private sector, research and education communities), within and between regions, within and between institutions and organizations at various levels (local, national, subregional, regional, international)**', and recognising the need to translate shared principles and agreements, inspiring a dialogue among civilisations and cultures, into concrete activities and action permeating all UNESCO programmes.

As a specialist in the visual arts, museums and heritage, I have come to understand that, for me, it is not so much the ICH Convention's subject matter or the

content of the different traditional practices and expressions that are of the greatest value. As intriguing as the various ICH elements revealed within our lists are, what matters most, I believe, is that this diversity of expression allows for a similar diversity of interpretation, and that carrier communities are enabled to give vocalicity and visibility to any heritage they consider to be theirs, not so much to claim it as such, but to be empowered to share it. Thus, evaluation and affirmation procedures are giving attention to critical **synergies of interaction and cooperation – within and between societal sectors, within and between disciplines, within and between various stakeholders ... within and between regions** – and shaping global consciousness and ethical considerations in this regard.

Reflection, revisioning and reform

However, what in my view gave ICH its true shape and dimension was ICOM's engagement in designing and developing the relationship between intangible heritage and museums. The organisation, emerging from a very energetic and visionary period in its history, acted as a fulcrum point between the formulations of the international governmental forum that was UNESCO and demonstrations of the day-to-day reality of what museums and heritage institutions would need to undertake in order to transmit and share these requirements with local communities. It was a period of both deep reflection and revision and reform, particularly through ICOM's Reform Task Force (hereafter, 'RTF'), with Bernice Murphy in the chair from its 1999 inception.

ICOM's Advisory Committee meeting in June 2000 welcomed the presence of Mounir Bouchenaki, representing the Director General of UNESCO, who indicated that the DG was 'also very concerned about oral and intangible heritage and wanted greater emphasis placed on this'. Bouchenaki gave great emphasis to my role as both a member of the UNESCO Executive Board and as chair of the Advisory Committee and saw me as a vital link between the two. I responded that I was 'delighted that UNESCO intended to reinforce its collaboration with ICOM' and asked Bouchenaki 'to give the Director General [my] assurance of ICOM's readiness to work closely with UNESCO and noted particularly ICOM's preoccupation with living and intangible heritage in the revision of its Code of Ethics and the orientation of its 2004 Triennial General Conference'. These had, in fact,

been in development from 1999/2000, accompanying modifications to ICOM's statutes and its missions articulated in the ICOM RTF report of March 2001.

Conservation, continuation and communication

At the same meeting, Geoffrey Lewis, chairperson of the Committee for Professional Ethics, noted a key amendment to ICOM's Code of Ethics for Museums to include mention of living and intangible heritage. ICOM's mission, as stated in its Strategic Plan 2001–2007, indicated that 'ICOM acts upon these core values – commitment to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage'. It further elaborated that ICOM was 'committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, *present and future, tangible and intangible ...*'. During the following June 2001 meeting of the Advisory Committee, the organisation enshrined its commitment in its DNA when it adopted the following modification of the ICOM statutes under Article 2, 'Definitions', to deliberately expand the scope of the museum to include: '(viii) cultural centres that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of the tangible or intangible (living heritage) heritage resources'.

Leading up to the June 2002 Advisory Committee meeting, a special session was designed by UNESCO, in conjunction with the Secretariat, to focus on a major issue relevant to aspects of ICOM's work. My introduction focused on the examination of and consultation on UNESCO's newly adopted International Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001 and gave careful consideration to the implications for museums and for the work of heritage management professionals.

For example, it should be noted that while this is a framework for intergovernmental activity, both bilateral and multilateral, several aspects of this convention will have relevance for the museum sector ... recognising as they do the importance of information sharing and cooperation, public awareness, and the ... reinforcement of the competent national authorities in the inventorying, research and management of the cultural heritage ... ICOM continues to reaffirm its commitment to the

fight against the illicit traffic in cultural materials; and the repatriation of cultural property to the competent authorities in their countries of origin. The consequences of allowing illicit traffic to continue unchecked are immense and threaten the very structure underpinning the development of national identity. The adverse effects on the future direction of developing nations as a result of depriving people of the knowledge of their past, and the removal (or destruction) of symbols of cultural identity from their communities, are immeasurable.

It was a critical session where the focus on the tangible, the underwater cultural heritage (hereafter 'UCH'), could also be seen as a mirror image to the ICH agenda, which had been fully part of ICOM's consideration. During the opening of the June 2002 Advisory Committee, as chair I remarked:

Museums as mirrors which reflect the mutability of the human experience take on an even greater significance and relevance for communities which have suffered the loss of identity, almost the loss of humanity, and must seek to re-establish their reality and presence as part of the human landscape.

Consistent leadership, collaboration, advocacy

Within the context of ICOM's own development, we have been given a new mandate by the membership as a result of the Barcelona conference. Our three principal strategic objectives are to:

- *enhance ICOM's international leadership in the museum field, and as a respected voice on issues affecting protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage*
- *advance the sharing of professional knowledge and museum practice internationally through mutual assistance and active encouragement of new models of collaboration*
- *achieve a dynamic, supple and consistent framework for communications and advocacy on behalf of museums internationally.*

... ICOM must actively address major issues on the redefinition of the museum – for example, meeting the challenges presented to the traditional museum

environment, the digital museum, virtual museums, indeed intangible heritage, which is the heart of our progress to Seoul.

The (un)authorised heritage discourse: the 'other'

The steady and consistent presence, since the 2000 ICOM Barcelona conference, of ICOM Korea's organising committee for the 2004 General Conference was another important characteristic of these sessions. Byung-mo Kim, supported by Kidong Bae and Inkyung Chang, along with other representatives of the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism as the sponsoring agency, gave visibility and reality to the intention that ICOM 2004 would not just be the first ICOM General Conference to be held in an Asian country – both a non-Western and non-European or Northern/American context; it also held to its mandate of the need to deliberate on the role of museums in the context of intangible (living) heritage. In both regards, it took steps to signal in a quiet, determined, deliberate fashion that the Korean authorities and Korea's museum community were prepared to disrupt what Laurajane Smith has identified as the Authorized Heritage Discourse, something which most of the 'leading' institutions had yet to come to grips with and which persisted somewhat in the articulation of the deliberations around the proposed consideration of the 'Universal Museum'. This concept, which was also doing the rounds at this time, was largely a protective measure against the momentum gathering around the need to rectify, both legally and ethically, their approach to museum acquisitions and the retention of cultural heritage that had characterised the action.

During the June 2002 ICOM Advisory Committee meeting, members debated a variety of activities involving the elements of illicit traffic in cultural property, including the successful preparation of a 'Red List' for Latin America. They also deliberated on the need for the protection of UCH and its relation to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, especially considerations (legal and ethical) for museums acquiring and inventorying maritime treasures possibly illicitly looted from shipwreck sites. This indicated a process from which museums had been effectively excluded until the present time. It shared space with debates arising from issues of repatriation of cultural property which also found space particularly on the agenda not just of ICOM's

Ethics Committee but also of its Legal Affairs and Property body. Preparations for the Museum Emergency programme and elaboration of the Blue Shield protocols also took shape during this session, alongside the development of many new communication tools and codes, such as a Cultural Tourism charter. Consideration was given to legal, technical and ethical issues, including the creation of a top-level domain, **.museum**, the evolution of virtual museums, broadening of access through the digitising not just of museum archival resources but of those of ICOM itself, as well as the definition of a 'museum', to better articulate the concept of collections not so much as objects but more as a knowledge base.

Mounir Bouchenaki, UNESCO's Assistant Director General for Culture, again spoke at the launch of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage and identified the two main axes of this programme: development, where museums are considered as a part of social and economic development and education; and knowledge of, and acknowledgement of the dialogue with, the 'other'. Bouchenaki made special reference to the draft ICH Convention and to the recognised role of museums in this regard. He was already signalling that, in the same way that the International Council on Monuments and Sites was the organisation positioned to evaluate new World Heritage nominations proposed by member states, ICOM was ideally situated to play a similar role with respect to the new convention, acknowledging that its progress in enhancing cultural diversity, particularly through intangible heritage, would not have been possible without ICOM's network and consistent support. Bouchenaki was also an early exponent of museums' capacity to address the trope of the 'other' through collaboration, partnership and continued communication with affected communities.

Intangible heritage and globalisation: redirecting, refocusing and rehabilitating the gaze

It was also a singular moment because both Patrick Boylan, for the International Committee for the Training of Personnel, and Amareswar Galla, for the ICOM Asia-Pacific regional alliance (hereafter 'ICOM ASPAC') (later the first two editors of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*), engaged with this point from the start: Boylan from the perspective of the need to provide

training resources for museum staff in the documentation and management of ICH resources without 'reinventing the wheel'; and Galla regarding care for respectful treatment of Indigenous peoples. Both supported the further development of ICOM's Code of Ethics for Museums, the promotion of cultural tourism, and the development of policy related to cross-cultural issues. They also made the case that ICOM should work to ensure that custodians of Indigenous knowledge systems are enabled to participate in this work through meaningful partnerships and mutual benefits. Both these individuals continued their advocacy of these agendas in the following years, including by making presentations on the ICOM 2004 agenda.

Patrick Boylan delivered an incisive presentation, through the International Committee of Museums of Ethnography (ICME) programme, on the ICOM Curricula Guidelines for Museum Professional Development and the extension of ICOM's official role into living intangible heritage, particularly for career development in this field. Throughout these consultative debates, appraisal of the key information resources, tools and their editorial policies and production, including *Museum International* and *ICOM News*, as well as of the anticipated case studies providing the framework for developing parameters for the UNESCO manuals, with guidelines for those on the ground entrusted with the task of safeguarding living heritage in practice, was very much to the fore. Amar Galla also continued to develop the ICOM ASPAC agenda, emphasising the need to define a number of issues, such as:

- What is a museum – a virtual exhibit or cybermuseology?
- What elements should be preserved within the digital media?
- How can one protect Indigenous peoples from the detrimental effects of digital techniques and the exploitation of their intangible heritage?

ICOM has a duty to address the vast discrepancies created by digital technology. This ultimately led to the articulation of the Shanghai Charter, adopted at ICOM's 7th Asia Pacific Regional Assembly held in Shanghai in October 2002, which recommended the establishment of 'interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial approaches that bring together movable and immovable, tangible and intangible, natural and cultural heritage' and the

development of 'documentation tools and standards in establishing holistic museum and heritage practices'.

In this way, the research function of museums could take on a new lease of life by engaging with living meanings and memories. However, the issue of exhibitions merited careful scrutiny, in consultation with those with different vested interests in what is to be exhibited. Given that intangible heritage consists of processes and practices, what was needed was a different safeguarding approach and methodology than those utilised in safeguarding tangible heritage. Both perspectives pointed to the critical work necessary to create the resources for museums and professionals to undertake this work. The charter affirmed, in particular, 'the significance of creativity, adaptability and the distinctiveness of peoples, places and communities as the framework in which the voices, values, traditions, languages, oral history, folk life and so on are recognised and promoted in all museological and heritage practices', and recommended museums as 'facilitators of constructive partnerships in the safeguarding of this heritage of humanity'. The positioning of local museums among the various fields of interest that converge upon a particular form of living heritage makes them key players in the complex processes of identity negotiation between the various levels and parties involved.

UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura addressed this key point in his introduction to a May 2004 special issue of *Museum international*:

The adoption (without a dissenting vote) of the International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage marked a decisive turning-point in several ways. Most importantly, it filled a gap in the legal system of international cultural heritage protection, which hitherto had been focused exclusively on the safeguarding of tangible heritage ... As I delved deeper into this issue, I came to recognize that, through its exclusive focus on tangible cultural heritage and natural sites – most of which are located in the 'North' – the 1972 World Heritage Convention was unable to deal adequately with the living cultural expressions of the 'South'.

... The preparation and adoption of this convention led us to revisit our understanding of the concept of 'heritage' ... and accepted the need to recognize the

living and continuing traditions which link people and place and had added a new category: 'cultural landscapes'.

Matsuura's mission to ensure that intangible heritage is seen as a broader framework within which tangible heritage takes shape and acquires its significance continued. The Istanbul Declaration, adopted at the Roundtable of Ministers of Culture that convened in Istanbul in September 2002, stressed that 'an all-encompassing approach to cultural heritage should prevail, which takes into account the dynamic link between the tangible and intangible heritage and their deep interdependence'.

Matsuura coordinated a series of expert meetings throughout 2002, chaired by the eminent Algerian jurist Mohammed Bedjaoui, which reiterated key concepts to be captured in the ICH Convention's terminology. He indicated the need to recognise 'that the intangible heritage, by virtue of embracing all the practices, representations, spaces and forms associated with human creativity, plays a vital role in the construction of our identity, culture and *imaginaire*, and consequently in the achievement of a truly sustainable development'. I particularly remember this meeting where, as one of the Caribbean experts, I made the following case:

Every attempt should be made to find the right mechanism to address intangible heritage in a way that gives it its own life (identity), setting it apart from other instruments ... We are of the view that it is critical to avoid overlap with the parameters covered by international intellectual property treaties. Rather, we anticipate that the ICH Convention will provide clear grounds for UNESCO's role in the areas of education about intangible cultural heritage, as well as facilitation of its conservation, documentation and promotion, particularly through capacity-building activities, [which are] essential to meeting the needs of small states and developing countries and should therefore provide for complementary activity rather than inherent competition.

... We are of the view that the identification of intangible cultural heritage to be safeguarded needs to be based on clearly defined criteria with full respect for human rights. And [we] take this opportunity to indicate that the elucidation of the

criteria is a critical part of our work and may not be left to the other bodies to be determined, for in the end they form the heart of the ICH Convention itself.

The key moment of engagement was ICOM's 20th General Conference and 21st General Assembly, held in Seoul, South Korea, on 8 October 2004. Robust discussions and presentations over the course of the meeting resulted in the critically important Seoul Resolution, which would guide the work of the organisation over the coming decades. Resolution No. 1 resolved that ICOM:

1. Endorses the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the 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 intangible heritage to give particular attention to the conservation of all perishable records, notably electronic documents.
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 to, and resist any attempt to misuse, intangible heritage and particularly its commercialisation.
7. Urges regional organisations, national committees and other ICOM bodies to work closely with local agencies in the development and implementation of such legal instruments and in the necessary training of staff responsible for effective implementation.
8. Recommends that all training programs 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 as soon as possible the necessary adjustments 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'.

Resolution No. 4 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage During and After Armed Conflicts stated that 'the tangible and intangible heritage is a crucial part of cultural identity' and recognised 'the vulnerability of this heritage and our moral duty to ensure that present and future generations have access to it'.

The intangible heritage of ICOM

October 2004 also had a huge impact on my own professional life. At ICOM's 21st General Assembly, I was elected to my first term as President of the International Council of Museums, the first woman in the history of ICOM to be so designated, the first person to be elected from Latin America and the Caribbean, and the first such appointee from a SIDS. At first, I was unaware of these 'firsts'; they became part of my self-knowledge and understanding only gradually. In my acceptance speech, I recalled my first ICOM General Conference (held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1986) almost 20 years previously. I recognised then that each general conference generated its own form of intangible heritage whose value would remain an important part of our lives for years to come. I later reiterated many of these points in my first presidential statement in an editorial in *ICOM News*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2004, Special Issue: '20th General Conference of ICOM 2004'.

Against the rich backdrop of Korean cultural traditions, ICOM's 20th General Conference confirmed the organisation's enduring value in the lives of museum professionals. On such occasions, ICOM itself creates its own 'intangible heritage' by fostering a climate of mutual support and collegiality, and by influencing the lives and careers of young professionals who benefit from the wisdom, skills and guidance of experienced members. The enthusiastic participation of so many members and new committees allowed us to collaborate in analysing the relevance of certain aspects of intangible heritage and the most effective means of documentation and safeguarding. We also had the privilege of discovering, thanks to our Asian colleagues, highly effective models of managing the rich global intangible heritage.

Two major elements emerged: protection of the

traditional intangible culture of the past; and promotion of the intangible heritage of the future, in the form of human creativity. For museums to play an active role in the preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage, they must discover innovative ways to interpret and present it in museum spaces, both real and virtual, while recognising that information resources and databases themselves constitute forms of intangible heritage that deserve respect and protection. The inextricable link that binds them will, in the future, represent a precious resource for humanity. One of the most important outcomes of the 21st General Assembly was the adoption of the Seoul Declaration, which endorsed the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

ICOM calls on all governments to ratify the Convention and to adopt and implement legislation and policies that will ensure its proper implementation. Over the next three years, ICOM has committed to encouraging States to sign the Convention and to contribute to the management and promotion of intangible heritage, notably through the development of skills and resources.

How will ICOM fulfill its mission to help museums so that they can in turn help others? Strategic partnerships will be necessary for the successful implementation of an ambitious programme, bringing together organizations from fields such as cultural diversity, urban planning, tourism, and biodiversity to form an essential support base. Inter-regional cooperation in the fight against illicit trafficking; ... specialized training to help the media understand the concept of cultural heritage, its value and the dangers that threaten it, all these actions offer ICOM and its members opportunities to achieve these objectives. Above all, the rapid dissemination of the recently revised ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, which represents a remarkable achievement and will constitute a resource for the future, will provide a solid basis for promoting ICOM's objectives in the foreseeable future.

ICOM Seoul was a hugely energising and invigorating forum that generated a new vision for the future direction of ICOM and for the focus of museums in safeguarding intangible heritage (of the present) and in supporting and

promoting the creativity of humanity, representing the ICH of the future.

I noted that the environment of ICOM has had a long and enduring influence on me, and I acknowledged 'the intangible heritage of ICOM which surrounds us on every occasion'. The wide range of activities and experiences that were offered to us with such kindness and generosity was almost overwhelming. The organising team had thought of everything.

The Conference was not, however, devoted solely to work. The delegates attended an impressive range of events featuring traditional ceremonies and rituals, providing an opportunity for visitors from other countries and continents to discover Korea's rich cultural heritage and to admire the remarkable costumes, masks, music and dances, food and drink that are integral to it.

One special event among all the various offerings during the Seoul General Conference was a programme held for members of the International Committee for the Training of Personnel at the National Folk Museum of Korea: the opening of an exhibition titled 'Wood and Papers in Korean Traditional Crafts'. Also included were traditional performances and a welcome reception with traditional Korean foods. It was a feast on many different levels.

I was impressed by the continued commitment of the Seoul team beyond merely hosting a wonderful occasion; and I was struck by the realisation that, rather than marking the end of an event, ICOM's members were heralding a new future. The General Conference saw the launch, by Professor Amaeswar Galla, of ICOM's programme on the Role of Museums and Communities in the Promotion and Protection of Intangible Heritage. The aim of the programme was to advocate for, and advance awareness and understanding of, the deep-rooted interdependence between intangible heritage and tangible cultural and natural heritage, as well as to enhance and facilitate the role of museums and communities in safeguarding heritage. This programme impacted the ICOM 'Universe' and was a catalyst for continued reflection.

By the end of the meeting, new ideas had taken root in fertile ground and were beginning to grow. During the 106th session of ICOM's Executive Council, held in

December 2004, Jongsok Kim, Curator of the National Folk Museum of Korea (hereafter 'NFMK'), advised members of several positive results following ICOM 2004, in addition to its financial benefits. 'As a direct outcome of the Conference, ICOM 2004 decided to create a special Fund for the Protection of the Intangible Heritage and to prepare a publication on Intangible Heritage' (Minutes EXCO, December 2004). NFMK Director Professor Hongnam Kim also wrote to me in May 2005 to elaborate on these plans. She outlined that her museum had 'initiated a new project of publishing an international journal focusing on museums and intangible heritage' and was 'considering inviting ICOM's distinguished members upon their consent to key functions within both the advisory committee and the editorial committee'. She proposed that NFMK and ICOM establish a joint partnership to give effect to ICOM's programme on intangible heritage, with the publication to be entitled *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* (hereafter 'IJIH'). The NFMK would take responsibility for all the costs of both the IJIH's secretariat and production. This was not a hard sell in the stimulating environment of the post-conference period.

A year later, in May 2006, Hongnam Kim and Patrick Boylan introduced the concept of the IJIH in volume 1, and described how the original project had proceeded.

Originally conceived as the result of informal discussions during the ICOM 2004 General Conference in Seoul, over the subsequent 18 months there have been extensive contacts with museum directors and intangible heritage experts from many countries and many specialisations, seeking 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. In order to support these efforts the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Korea has now allocated funds to support this Journal project through the National Folk Museum of Korea.

It is very important to stress that though the original idea for this Journal as well as its organisation and management lie within the museums sector, and most notably with the staff and other resources of the National Folk Museum of Korea, the International Journal of Intangible Heritage is intended to cover all aspects of the intangible heritage as defined above, and not just the work of museums in relation to it.

In the same volume, it was my special honour and pleasure to offer a warm welcome on behalf of ICOM to the emergence of this new resource, where we anticipated that the IJIH would

... help create new knowledge that will be disseminated to all corners of the world. We trust that this will help to create an irreducible bond between cultures across the world and consolidate common values [while] celebrating both the differences and similarities that are the intangible treasures of humanity's heritage ... [and] would therefore be a major service to cultural and community development ...

It is very much hoped that [the IJIH] will help shape the discourse and improve understanding of how intangible and tangible heritage are inextricably linked to one another ... in the spirit of the gift.

Two decades later, I think the results speak for themselves and indicate that the IJIH has proven to be a gift that keeps on giving.

I would like to offer my deepest appreciation of all the efforts of my former and current Executive Assistants: Mrs Angela Boyce, who as the Barbados Museum and Historical Society's Former Collections Registrar was able to locate and identify many of the resources from our ICOM, UNESCO and IJIH archives on which this memoir was based; and Ms Casandra Griffith, who captured and transcribed portions identified in the paper documents that were assembled for this exercise. A special thank you is owed to them both. 🇧🇧