



Demeures historiques-musées
Historic House Museums
Residencias históricas-museos

Annual Report of the Chair

November 2012 – July 2013

This report covers a period of less than one year due to the timing of the ICOM Triennial in Brazil in August 2013.

1. Conferences

Los Angeles, USA, 2012 – *The Artifact, its Context and their Narrative: Multi-disciplinary Conservation in Historic House Museums*

From 6th – 9th November 2012, the DEMHIST annual conference took place in Los Angeles. The theme of the conference focussed on the inevitable deterioration of structures and materials and the need to maintain both public access and good standards of conservation practice. Papers and case studies illustrated the benefits of a taking a holistic view and multi-disciplinary collaborative approaches. Four keynote lectures were given in addition to a wide variety of papers:

- Sarah Staniforth, Museums and Collections Director for The National Trust (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) spoke on 'Historical and Current Perspectives on the Care, Presentation, Interpretation and Use of Collections in Historic Houses'.
- Carl R. Nold, President and CEO, Julie Solz and Benjamin Haavik, from Historic New England spoke about 'Collaboration and Preservation: Historic New England and the Proactive Preservation Interpretation and Planning Process (PPIP)'.
- Deborah Lee Trupin of Villa La Pietra in Florence spoke on 'The Narrative in Context: Building an Effective Decision-Making Model for conservation Treatment for the Acton Collection at Villa La Pietra'.
- Linda Young of Deakin University, Melbourne spoke on 'House Museums are not all the same: Understanding Motivation to Guide Conservation'.

Excursions over two days went to The Gamble House and Fenyes House in Pasadena, the Huntington Art Gallery and gardens, the Eames House in Los

Angeles, the Adamson House in Malibu, and Will Rogers Ranch House, Villa Aurora and the Getty Villa on the Pacific Palisades.

It was a joint conference of DEMHIST and three working groups of ICOM-CC, and co-hosted by the Getty Conservation Institute, the Getty Research Centre, the University of Southern California School of Architecture and The Gamble House. We are very grateful to the organising committee of the conference for their hard work and the care with which the conference was delivered. Local organisers were DEMHIST Board member Ann Scheid and Trudi Sandmeier, University of Southern California. The program was prepared by Peter Keller, Chair of DEMHIST, with the help of the ICOM-CC coordinators Jonathan Gration, Kate Seymour, Malgorzata Sawicki and Elsje Janssen. The publication will be prepared by the ICOM-CC members.

The conference had 96 attendees, 71 of which were ICOM members. An evaluation report was prepared giving detailed feedback on the organisation and content of the conference. The main lesson to learn was the importance of strict time-keeping for the lectures and papers, so that there is time to ask questions and to discuss the topics.

Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2013 – *Places for Reflection: Museums as Connectors of Cultures, Times, People and Social Groups*

This year's conference in Brazil examines the relationship between museums and their locality: how they honour the cultures and memories of people, and connect with the interests of today's communities. In recent years there has been a growing appreciation of the role that museums can play as places for reflection and where issues facing society can be explored. This newer model for museums promotes dialogue between historic and cultural assets and the people to whom they belong, fostering opportunities for communities to discover what they care about in their past, present and future.

The conference has the participation of the international committees for Museums and Collections of Glass (GLASS), for Museums and Collections of Decorative Arts and Design (ICDAD) and for Museums and Collections of Fine Arts (ICFA). It also has the support of the State government of Sao Paulo without which the programme of events would not have been possible.

The organisers are DEMHIST Board members Ana Cristina Carvalho and Maria de Jesus Monge.

Palais de Compiègne, France, 2014 – *Authenticity in the conservation of Historic House Museums*

In 2014 the conference will be held in France, in collaboration with the Palais de Compiègne and will be joint conference of DEMHIST and the Association des Résidences Royales Européennes (ARRE). The theme will explore questions of authenticity in the conservation and presentation of house museums and palaces.

In our work we are faced with many choices created by layers of history, the condition of fabric and what survives. We will hear from participants about the challenges they have faced and how they have selected courses of action from among many alternatives.

Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico, 2015

ICOM Mexico wishes to host the 2015 conference and will be present to make a proposal to the General Assembly in Rio de Janeiro.

Milan, Italy, 2016

In 2016 the ICOM General conference will take place in Milan. We assume that we will hold our annual conference to coincide with it, but have not yet discussed a theme.

Additional conferences/seminars/meetings

The annual conferences do not need to be the only events held by DEMHIST. National working groups can propose and organise conferences, seminars and meetings on themes of their choice within their own country or regionally. Such events can cover subjects of particular relevance to a region, and be more practical in terms of travel and cost. The Executive Board has discussed how it can support these events and, in so doing, encourage consistency and more 'branded' DEMHIST activity.

2. The General Assembly 2012

DEMHIST held its General Assembly in The Huntington Library, San Marino, California on 7th November 2012. The minutes are published on the committee's website:

<http://demhist.icom.museum/shop/shop.php?detail=1315923503>

The General Assembly approved changes to the DEMHIST Statutes to bring them in line with changes from ICOM. These have been updated on the website. The General Assembly also noted the intention of Peter Keller to stand down as Chair in April 2013 and the Executive Board's decision to elect John Barnes as Chair for the remainder of the term.

3. Executive Board

The Board has met twice, in Los Angeles in November 2012 during the DEMHIST conference with five members, and in London in April 2013 with seven members.

The meeting in Los Angeles covered the full range of executive business as well as the detailed preparations for the DEMHIST conference happening at the same time and the early preparations for the conference in Brazil. The meeting in London examined the detailed arrangements for the conference in Brazil and approved two grants to enable speakers from Mexico and Canada to attend. The Board discussed a new DEMHIST Strategy for 2013-2016 (see below). Peter Keller had submitted a report on DEMHIST's activities to ICOM and the Board noted the grant of a new subvention that was an increase on the previous year. The Board also received an update on changes taking place within ICOM.

There are 9 positions for members of the Executive Board in the DEMHIST Statutes, including the Chair, vice-Chairs and Secretary/Treasurer. Peter Keller has resigned so that he can stand as a member of ICOM's Executive Council, so we have one place vacant. In 2014 the Executive Board must be re-elected and we should begin looking for suitable candidates to apply. In addition, we could consider amending our statutes to allow Executive Board members to serve three terms rather than the current two terms so that experienced members can continue on the Board. And we might consider increasing the number of members from 9 to 11 to increase the workload that we can cover and ensure greater attendance at meetings. The Executive Board will consider these options and make recommendations.

4. DEMHIST strategy 2013-16

A new three-year strategy for ICOM will be agreed by the General Assembly covering the years 2013-2016. At the Executive Board meeting in London, we discussed the focus for our work in the coming years, which will need to align with ICOM's in due course. We propose that our work should be within the following areas:

Annual conferences, held in different countries and across continents, to examine important themes relevant to the care and management of historic house museums.

Affiliated events, organised by National Working Groups, on subjects relating to historic house museums, organised within a consistent framework to maintain standards and to enable the events to be 'branded' DEMHIST.

Training for young professionals in historic house museums, especially from countries where conservation practices are in earlier development, delivered through events, mentoring and self-managed modules.

Communication about DEMHIST's work and outputs, to encourage participation and increase membership, delivered through increased activities, dissemination of the outputs and the website.

This would be an ambitious increase in activity that could only be delivered through the wider engagement of the National Working Groups and the ability of the Executive Board members to take on specific areas of responsibility. The views of the General Assembly would be welcomed.

5. National Working Groups

An item has been put onto the agenda of the General Assembly for members of National Working Groups to report any meetings and activities that have taken place since the last Assembly.

6. Website

The website has been updated with the amended DEMHIST Statutes, the publications from the conference in Antwerp in 2011, information about future locations for conference as and the changes within the Executive Board.

There is occasionally a problem with uploading files to the website and, although the administrator can resolve these, we may have to move the website to the CMS platform offered and maintained by ICOM.

7. Secretary Treasurer

The DEMHIST Secretary Treasure, Elsa Rodrigues, has prepared a separate report on her activities. I am very grateful to her for her hard work in administering the International Committee on our behalf. Through her efforts DEMHIST members are better connected to ICOM and to each other.

John Barnes

Chair of DEMHIST

London, August 2013