

**Annual Report of the Chair
July 2016 – October 2017**

This report covers the period between the annual conference and ICOM Triennial in Milan, Italy, July 2016 to the present, a period of 15 months.

1. Conferences

Milan, Italy, 4th- 7th July 2016 – *Historic Houses and the Interpretation of the Cultural, Social and Urban Landscape*

The 24th General Conference of ICOM was held in Milan 3rd -9th July 2016, examining the relationship between museums and cultural landscapes.

The DEMHIST conference focussed on the potential of historic house museums to describe ‘human’ landscapes. Historic houses can illustrate cultural and economic change, showing how developments in society contributed to creating and modelling the environment as we perceive it. Milan was a major centre for the booming development of Italian industry and provided an excellent case study of historic houses as a means of reading urban change, of exploring modernity together with the sense of the past, forged in the changes in industry, commerce, and society. We heard insights into the central role that historic house museums play as witnesses to all this.

London, United Kingdom, 14th-18th October 2017 - *Are we doing enough? Keeping heritage relevant in the 21st Century*

The 2017 annual conference is hosted by Historic Royal Palaces and is a collaboration between ICOM’s international committees DEMHIST and CECA. The conference asks: Are historic buildings and museums working in the best way to ensure maximum impact on audiences in today’s society. Are we engaging diverse audiences? There is a wide range of exciting international speakers to share their knowledge and experience of engaging with audiences in new and authentic ways, through objects and stories that unlock meaning and make them relevant to the 21st century. In a new format, we have papers, panels, and poster sessions, which means that more speakers than ever will have the chance to contribute.

Themes within the conference will explore ways in which the sector can:

- Connect with audiences within the local community

- Ensure key narratives stay relevant for our audiences as ideas of national identity change over time
- Explore the sector's value as a tool for education and learning – staying relevant for formal and informal learners
- Remain relevant in a rapidly changing technological society

Future conferences

In 2018, we will be in Chicago, USA, in a collaboration of house museums from across the City.

In 2019, we will be in Kyoto, Japan, as part of the next ICOM Triennial, and we will be hearing from representatives of the event as part the London conference.

2. Training Courses for professionals

Mexico City, 6th-17th November 2017

DEM HIST held its first ever training course for professional in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in September 2015. Our next training course will take place in Mexico City in November and will target young professionals working in historic house museums: conservators, curators, administrators, interpreters, designers etc. Students in their final year also qualify to attend. We have been able to keep the cost of the attending the course very low but participants must pay for their own travel and accommodation. There will be 25 participants.

We hope that bringing together professionals in this way will help to develop a body of excellence in this field of museum practice and form networks that will create legacies for the future.

3. National DEM HIST Groups

A key part of the DEM HIST strategy is to encourage and support national groups to provide more easily accessible activities that are relevant to members in those locations, and to increase membership. Our **National Groups** continue to grow in strength and we now have active groups in Italy, Portugal, Mexico, Brazil and Turkey.

Affiliated events

I would like to remind all members that the annual conferences do not need to be the only events held by DEM HIST. 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 DEM HIST Board has agreed some simple guidance about events that qualify as DEM HIST activities and can therefore be affiliated to the international committee and to ICOM. A small budget is available to support some of these events at the discretion of the Board.

4. The Jeanne Watson bursary for young professionals

Last year I reported that Bill Watson had made a generous donation of 6,000 Euros to DEMHIST for a bursary for young professionals in the name of his wife, Jeanne Watson, who died last year. For the past twenty years Jeanne Watson was a well-known personality within the ICOM Community. She was one of the driving forces in advocating a separate international committee for historic house museums (DEMHIST). She was active in the campaign which led to the recognition of DEMHIST as a full ICOM International Committee. Sadly, since then, Bill has also died. However, the DEMHIST Board has now awarded the first bursary to Paulo Correa from Brazil, who will be at the London conference. We were very pleased with the applications, which were all of a high quality and came from southern America and northern Africa. Our thanks to past DEMHIST Chair, Daniela Ball for her assistance in managing this programme.

5. The General Assembly 2015

DEMHIST held its General Assembly in the MICO Centre in Milan on 5th July 2016. The minutes are included with the papers for the London General Assembly.

6. DEMHIST Board

The DEMHIST Board met in Milan in July 2016, in Copenhagen in March 2017 and in Paris in June 2017, as part of the ICOM Annual General Meetings.

Elections for the next DEMHIST Board will be concluded at the General Assembly in London. There is one candidate for the Chair, Elsa Rodrigues, and the presumption, therefore, is that she will be elected. There are a further 13 candidates and, currently, the DEMHIST statutes presume 10 places on the Board excluding the Chair. The General Assembly can agree to increase the numbers on the Board (there is no limit set by ICOM) and I would recommend that we do this to allow all the candidates to serve on the Board, because:

- The candidates will bring good skills and/or a connection to the location of the next two conferences.
- As volunteers it is difficult to carry out the work of the Board unless it is shared.
- We will gain much better representation from around from more countries.

I will ask for the approval of the General Assembly to this when we meet in London.

7. Communications

Our Twitter and Facebook accounts are now established. On Twitter we have 187 followers and on Facebook it is 290 followers.

Our relevance Twitter account has 383 followers.

8. Secretary Treasurer

The DEMHIST Secretary Treasure, Elsa Rodrigues, has prepared a separate report on her activities. DEMHIST members will know and appreciate the communication that they receive from Elsa and the many individual queries that she answers. This requires a lot of hard work and personal commitment, which we greatly value. Once again, I am very grateful to her for her hard work in administering the International Committee on our behalf.

John Barnes

Chair of DEMHIST

October 2017