

Report of Hans Manneby, Bohusläns museum:
ICR's annual meeting 2003 in Merida, Mexico

Chairman's letter:

Dear colleagues,
our ICR Annual Conference, this time in Merida, Mexico last week of October 2003, is over. This was actually not the first time ICR held an Annual Conference on Yucatan, Mexico. In 1993 we had a conference on the island of Cozumel, discussing Museums and Tourism. Now, 10 years later, ICR came back to the same geographical region and to a theme that includes what was discussed in 1993. Museums and Regional Development was, as you know, the main topic for the Merida conference 2003.

After four years of exploring the topic Museums and Quality on conferences and workshops, we decided to change focus in the work of ICR. But before entering a new topic in Merida, we could proudly present our lathes ICR publication Guidelines to Improve Museum Quality and Standards in Spanish: Museos - guía para la exelencia. For managing the translation of the book on a minimum amount of time and money - and at the same time being the main organizer of the conference in Merida - I am deeply thankful to our board member Rosalinda Jinich. On behalf of the whole 2003 conference: Thank you very much again Rosalinda!

Another strong positive factor I will mention here is that the Museum and Quality publication is now also available in German. Hartmut Prasch and Rainer Hofmann on the board of ICR made this happened quick and elegant and I like to thank them both for their dedication and great contribution.

In Merida the conference looked into other aspects of vital importance for regional museums, namely the role of museums in local and regional development. We had the privilege to have two members from ICOM Executive Council on our conference. Vice President of ICOM, Yani Herreman from Mexico, opened with thoughtful reflections on the topic of regional development, while the ICOM board member, Elisabet Olofsson from Sweden, gave an inspiring key note speech on the value of international collaboration and how it contribute to develop museums.

Other prominent keynote speakers on the opening day where Georgina De Carli, representing the impressive organization Instituto Latinoamericano de Museos (ILAM), and talking about regional museums in Latin America as potential agents in developing their communities. A colleague from Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia (INAH) was talking on the subject of museums and their public and Torill Thoemt from Valdres Folkemuseum, Norway, talked on tourism and influences on traditional culture.

During the following days there were 14 papers presented by colleagues representing 12 countries. In Merida the Regional Museum of Anthropology were our base and the place for conference opening, exhibition inauguration and welcome party. Almost every evening in Merida there was folk music, dance and theater on different squares, free for the public to visit. The city obviously loves to bring culture of all kind to its population and its tourists. And of

course, being on the Yucatan peninsula, we traveled and saw astonishing Maya sites, among them Uxmal, more museums and haciendas and the bird life in Celestun Nature Park.

Our contact person in Korea, Ms In-Kyung Chang, was not able to participate in Mexico. But she sent her greetings and a brand new program for the General Conference in Seoul October 2 -8, 2004 on Museums and Intangible Heritage, to be distributed. As you can see in this Newsletter, we will approach the theme in our own way. By doing so we will deal with the main topic of the General Conference and at the same time further develop our own theme. Already now I will take the opportunity to challenge all ICR members to think about papers and presentations on our special theme and I do invite you to our ICR conference in Seoul 2004!

After the Merida conference I am convinced that the topic we are investigating Museums and Regional Development will give us additional interesting Annual Conferences ahead. And most important, it will give us opportunities to open our museums for new perspectives on the subject, new knowledge and wider network that we need in order to better contribute to the development of our societies.

Hans Manneby
Chairman ICR