



Cultural Centre of European Space
 Technologies, Vitanje, Slovenia.
 Photo: KSEVT.

Introduction from the Chair

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

Dear COMCOL Newsletter Readers,

I hope you will find this Newsletter a good read! I am very grateful that as always, the contributors and the editorial team made such a fine Newsletter. Being active in an International Committee is very rewarding, but it is also a lot of work and therefore it is so good to have concrete results at the end of a process. The Newsletter as such is a result of a lot of work, but particularly this Newsletter is content wise also very much about concrete results or at least reflections on actual tangible things that took place and were achieved within the COMCOL context. We had of course our Annual Conference in Celje. The conference was very well organized, the atmosphere intimate and the spirits

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high. You will find a reflection on some of the content of the conference in this issue of our Newsletter. I personally would like to thank Tanja Roženbergar and her whole team for their tremendous work. Together with the University of Ljubljana we want, and I am sure we will, publish the papers of the conference; the plan is to have a publication to take with us to our coming Annual Conference, which will take place in late October 2015 in Seoul. Another concrete output is the joint ICMAH, ICOM-South Africa and COMCOL e-publication of our Cape Town Annual Conference 2012. I would especially like to thank Shahid Vawda, who was the engine and soul of the whole publication process. You can find the publication on our website.

COMCOL is also a partner in an international research project on “queering the collections”. On 20th of March an International Conference took place in Amsterdam and in this Newsletter you will find a – again concrete – reflection of it from participating students from the University of Würzburg. The coming issue of *Museum International*, that we as COMCOL edited, will hopefully also be published soon, we keep you updated!

As you can see there is a lot of tangible output, and I am proud that we as COMCOL had all these opportunities to have established these. But we also need to think about the future of COMCOL and in a bit more than a year, a new board needs to take over. Dear COMCOL members, please think what you can do for COMCOL, become active! We will need to have a new chair, a new vice-chair, secretary and so on. It is good that new people take over, set new goals and priorities. I invite you all to think about a membership in the board, a working group or any other kind of COMCOL participation. Maybe you have an idea for an activity that we as board did not yet think about. Let's keep moving forward!



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COMCOL ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2015 – CALL FOR PAPERS

**Collecting and Collections – the
politics and praxis of social, economic
and intellectual sustainability**

**Seoul (Republic of Korea),
26-31 October 2015**

COMCOL's 2015 annual conference will be organised in cooperation with ICOM Korea and will be hosted by The National Folk Museum of Korea. The conference will be dedicated to the sustainability of collecting and collections. The theme links up with this year's theme of the International Museum Day, "Museums for a sustainable society", but will focus on the sustainability of the role of museums (and other heritage institutions) and their collections itself.

The most generally accepted definition of sustainability is the one given in the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) saying "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In its brochure, Sustainability and museums. Your chance to make a difference (2008), the UK Museums Association discusses how "concepts of sustainability have the potential to help museums improve their service to society, to make decisions about collections management, to secure long-term financial stability – and, of course, to serve future generations appropriately". Speaking about

collections, the Museums Association suggests that to flourish sustainably, museums should “acknowledge the legacy contributed by previous generations and pass on a better legacy of collections, information and knowledge to the next generation”, and “manage collections well, so that they will be a valued asset for future generations, not a burden”.

In its conference, COMCOL will explore the meaning of this in terms of the composition and structure of collections. **What specific methodological approaches towards collection development does sustainability require?**

As specific aspects of this main theme we would like to address following topics:

What does sustainability mean for institutional collections? Museums are said to work for eternity. Acquisition and de-accession policies and practices are always situated, and are results of decisions at specific moments, decisions with long term consequences. How can museums and other heritage institutions meet different – sometimes conflicting – societal requirements? Long term consequences have also to do with extended responsibilities in terms of storage, conservation, etc. Can all the “hidden” material be allowed to decay, while resources are used up on acquiring more which is not always displayed? What role can digitisation play in the sustainability of collections? Digitisation may enhance the use of collections without putting too much pressure of the physical condition of the objects. Does this mean that digitisation contribute to social, economic, intellectual and physical sustainability at the same time?

What does sustainability mean for private collections? What is the role of the collector? To what extent should the philosophy of the collector be respected after his/her death? What does this mean for autonomous museums based on a private collection? And, when a private collection is incorporated in a larger museum collection, should the specific composition and structure be respected as separate entity?

What is the impact of collecting on the sustainability of ecosystems and communities? Museums are often accused of disrupting ecosystems and communities by their collecting practices. There is a growing awareness that museums should adopt an activist attitude towards key social issues such as social injustice and environmental degradation. Following this attitude, should collecting be replaced by the ethics of guardianship, i.e. the abstinence of collecting in favour of protection in situ, in function? In other words, can

museums contribute to the sustainable development of ecosystems and communities by not-collecting? And, going one step further, can museums contribute to this development – in particular the sustainable development of communities – by returning items of cultural significance to their creators?

What are proper (sustainable) methodologies of documenting the present in a participatory way?

The assumption is that documentation projects that engage the participation of communities contribute to empowerment in representation. How can this be achieved so that such documentation will remain relevant for future (academic) research?

For the topics as outlined above we invite papers that explore the issues from the perspective of theory, practice and/or ethics. Presentations are limited to 20 minutes. We are particularly keen to encourage submissions that cut across and between disciplinary vocabularies to provide new synergies, domains and inter-disciplinary possibilities. We warmly welcome proposals which go beyond traditional paper presentations and encompass also panels and workshops.

It should be noted that although the main institutional focus will be on museums, the experiences of other heritage institutions will also be regarded. Similarly we are interested in the whole scope of documentation (tangible – intangible, movable – immovable).

Submitting abstracts

Submissions (between 250 and 300 words) should be sent to L.Meijer-vanMensch@smb.spk-berlin.de by 24 May, 2015.

The following information should be included with the abstract:

- Title of submitted proposal. Please indicate if it is a paper, workshop or panel contribution
- Name(s) of Author(s)
- Affiliation(s), e-mail address(es) & full address(es)
- Abstract in English (between 250 and 300 words)
- Technical requirements for the presentations





An exhibited work by
Herman Potočnik.
Photo Eva Fägerborg.

Contemporary Collecting - Report on the working group session at the annual meeting 2014 in Celje, Slovenia

Arjen Kok

On Saturday December 6 the working group for Contemporary Collecting had a short plenary session at the annual meeting of COMCOL. As Chair of the working group, I presented a list of subjects that can be part of a toolkit for contemporary collecting, a project that the working group started at the annual meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2012. After having touched briefly on the thirty-something items on the list I asked the participants to pick one or two and discuss the possibilities to apply the item on the case of the Vitanje Cultural Centre and the local community. The inventory is a first draft and far from complete. At the moment it is used to discuss the dimensions of contemporary collecting: what should be included and where does contemporary collecting end? What is the essential need to know stuff and what can be categorized as nice to know?

Before elaborating on the list of subjects, let me tell a little more about the case that we used for the discussion. That morning the COMCOL party had visited the Cultural Centre for European Space Technologies in Vitanje, a small town some 20 kilometers north of Celje. This centre is created in the memory of the Herman Potočnik Noordung, a rocket engineer, visionary and son of Vitanje, who pioneered a number of concepts about man living in space. In the 1920's he figured out that centrifugal power could be used to simulate gravity in space. That way one could walk and stand with both feet on the ground even though there would be no gravity. We know what Potočnik meant, because of the film 2001 *A Space Oddity* in which the principle is visualized in the rotating space station. The film in turn must have inspired the architects of the centre, because the building makes the impression of being a spacecraft that landed in the little rural town of Vitanje. It is a beautiful building and an architectural statement of international allure, but at the same time an alien in this scenic Middle European landscape. The low clouds and misty atmosphere suggested that the spaceship had just landed.

Tanja Roženbergar of the Museum of Recent History in Celje told me that she has been involved in the project and that she still had an assignment to organize an event or exhibition (or both) to create a bond between the local community and the centre. Could contemporary collecting offer a format to focus that project, we wondered? If this alien object can invade the space of this small community, then what would that community have in the form of objects that could invade this object that symbolizes the infinity of the universe? Could the people from Vitanje claim their place in space by presenting their story and their identity in the Herman Potocnik Centre in the form of a collection of 'things', whatever they may be, that can be added to the exhibition as a time capsule of local history?

Our guide in the center took us on a fascinating tour through the history of space science and cultural phenomena such as art or cinematography. It was an exciting story that he told with much enthusiasm and great feeling for this complex and diverse subject matter. He was clearly someone who knew about what went on in the world and would feel at home anywhere in the international world. And yet he was a local and lived just a few houses down the road. In fact he was

a bit under time pressure, because he wanted to be home in time. December 6 is pig-slaughtering day in Slovenia, still a living tradition in the countryside, as we could see ourselves on our bus ride back to Celje. And since it is a family event he wanted to join his relatives to celebrate the festive slaughtering of the family pig. A vision of a future in space seemed to be still connected closely to a tradition that is rooted in a rural life in which the seasons dictated the cycle of life, scarcity and abundance.

The quick brainstorm on the question how contemporary collecting could be used to create a bond between the local community and the alien construction produced a number of suggestions and as many new questions about the nature of contemporary collecting. Tanja Roženberger collected the notes and will use them to develop a proposal for a project in Vitanje, to strengthen the relations between the local community and the international cultural centre.

What the working group would like to develop is a Contemporary Collecting Test Site or Laboratory. A virtual place that can be used to experiment with cases to develop the tools for the Contemporary Collecting Toolkit.

The Contemporary Collecting Tool Kit will be a flexible set of tools like practical 'how to' guides, good practices, case studies, fact sheets, background articles, references and bibliographies on a number of aspects that are related to contemporary collecting. The inventory in progress that was presented at the working group session in Celje is attached to this report as a supplement. The working group welcomes suggestions to add items or improve the inventory. Also any content in the form of literature, case studies or good practices is much appreciated. Feel free to draw my attention to anything you think is worthwhile and take the opportunity to contribute to the Contemporary Collecting Toolkit.



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COMCOL Annual Conference 2014.

Photo: Nataša MÜLLER.

Contemporary Collecting Toolkit/ Toolkit for Documenting the Present

This is a first draft of an inventory of items and subjects that can be included in the toolkit. It is a work in progress and suggestions to add to the list or edit the list are welcome. We also invite everyone to contribute texts or other material to the toolkit.

Please mail your suggestions to

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Åsa Stenström  asa.stenstrom@vbm.se

1. What is the purpose of Contemporary collecting? And why is Documenting the Present a better alternativ?
2. What is the purpose of this toolkit?
3. Defining the area in which you want to exercise contemporary collecting

4. Contemporary collecting collection plan
5. Object registration and documentation
6. Contemporary collecting in different museum domains
 - a. art and applied art museums
 - b. history and city museums
 - c. natural history and science museums
 - d. ethnographic and open air museums
 - e. thematic museums
7. Source community
 - a. different types of source community museums
 - i. city museums
 - ii. company museums
 - iii. ethnographic museums
 - iv. 'single issue' museums
 - b. developing a sustainable relationship with the source community
 - c. inclusion and exclusion
 - d. official and informal networks
8. Participative collecting
 - a. collecting as a social process
 - b. training the participant
9. Oral history
10. Ethics
11. Shared ownership and responsibilities
 - a. contracts
 - b. obtaining mutual benefits
 - c. specialist groups
12. Intellectual property
13. Intangible heritage
14. Case studies
15. Literature and other sources
16. Definitions
17. Volunteers
18. Networks and partnerships with other museums
19. Types of contemporary collecting
 - a. snapshot
 - b. guide fossil
 - c. time capsule
 - d. rapid response collecting
20. How to involve your colleagues at the museum, embedding contemporary collecting in the organisation
21. Collecting by projects, a project-based collection strategy
22. Collection review
 - a. monitoring and evaluation.



Debate at the Museum of Recent History, Celje, COMCOL Annual Conference 2014.

Photo: Nataša MÜLLER.

The meta-documentary value of collections.

A few personal reflections from COMCOL's Annual Conference 2014

Peter van Mensch

In my reflections I would like to focus on the Friday morning session, dedicated to the role of collections to commemorate war. In doing so, I would also like to go beyond this specific issue and use the session to address some general issues.

As museum professionals we know too well that any decision concerning what to collect is as biased by prevailing ideologies as what not to collect. This means that when the ideological framework changes, the relevancy of existing collections is questioned. However, in retrospect a contemporary collecting project represents an interesting time capsule documenting how contemporaries perceive the event or timeframe. A retrospective collecting project documents how perceptions of the event or timeframe have changed. The documentary value of the first type of collection is not necessarily higher (i.e. more "true") than the documentary value of the second type. In addition, any post-acquisition interference in the first

type of collection adds a new layer of interpretation, bridging the difference between the first and the second type of collection: to some extent a currently (re-)interpreted old collection is as much a document of the present as a new collection. The conclusion might be that the relevancy of a collection is not (or at least not only) in its connection with the prevailing ideology at the time of collecting, but in its continuous re-interpretation after the time of collecting.

Re-interpretation often involves the addition of evidence. The term evidence is used here to broaden the scope from objects to other types of “documents” including intangible “documents”. In terms of availability, contemporary as well as retrospective collections might be biased by a limited choice of evidence that has been collected. In contemporary collecting, constraints as to space and time might hinder a well thought-out collecting programme, especially in participative projects. There will usually be a strong focus on the here and now at the cost of contextualising evidence from other places and other times. This requires a more distant approach. Such a distant approach might be part of later re-interpretations. The retrospective re-interpretation of collections could compensate for evidence that was not available at the time of collecting. At the same time it may include the addition of “new” types of evidence, i.e. evidence that was not considered before. An example is the addition of oral histories to object-oriented technical collections. “New” types of evidence might also be necessary to compensate for objects that are no longer available because they have been destroyed etc. The conclusion might be that post-acquisition re-interpretation stimulates the broadening of the scope of evidence, thus enriching the “museality” (documentary value) of collections.

The papers presented during the sessions provided examples of all options listed in the preceding paragraphs. It is not my intention to give summaries of the papers (which were excellent, all of them). They will be published in due time. My point is that the insights summarised here developed during the days after the session, and I wondered to what extent it would have benefited me or the speakers if this typology of options had been made available beforehand. The advantage of writing an introduction to a publication is that all texts are at hand. So, perhaps it is better to take advantage of the spontaneity of the lecture and to save a thorough analysis for later.

The problem of the 2013 Rio de Janeiro sessions was, in my opinion, that many speakers did not make a clear distinction between collections as such and exhibitions, even though exhibitions can, of course, also be understood as collections. Fortunately, the 2014 conference showed a stronger focus on collections. This made it possible to explore concepts such as “hidden treasures” and “deep sleep”. Are “forgotten collections” a burden or an opportunity? The assumption behind the so-called “boulders-project” as presented by the Reinwardt Academy students on Saturday – and in fact behind collection mobility as a whole – is that forgotten collections or collection items that might be forgotten because they have lost their importance for the museum’s mission might regain relevancy when transferred to another museum.

Some of the case studies presented in Celje showed how important it is to reflect upon the history of the collection and the documentary value that is embedded in this dimension. This reminded me of an important book I recently read: *Unpacking the collection. Networks of material and social agency in the museum* edited by Sarah Byrne, Anne Clarke, Rodney Harrison and Robin Torrence (Springer 2011). The book aims to uncover “new ways to think about relationships formed between object and individuals and among diverse groups spread across the globe” (p. 3). “Museum collections have been and are still active in forming social relations between varied persons and groups, including creator communities, collectors, anthropologists [the authors focus on ethnographical museums, PvM], curators, auctioneers and museum administrators, all of whom have also been shaped through interactions with each other and with the material objects” (p. 4). It is obvious that the authors are strongly influenced by the Actor Network Theory of Bruno Latour and others. It is a major challenge to make a step from analysis to strategy. The key concept here is transparency: a sustainable museum is a transparent museum, a museum that integrates the biography of its collection in its general narrative.



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Research group photographed by Pelikan studio in Celje: Annosh Urbanke, Sarah van Ree, Jolijn Boland, Charlotte van den Hoed, Carlien Lammers, Charda Jansen (from left to right).

The Boulders Project, two years on

Annosh Urbanke

In December 2014 our group of research students from the Reinwardt Academie Amsterdam, was invited by Leontine Meijer-van Mensch to attend the COMCOL Annual Conference in Celje, Slovenia. We were asked to talk about our experiences in the Zwerfkeien Project (Boulders Project). Boulders/odd-balls are high quality objects or parts of collections which do not fit in the collection of the institution any longer. Five museums¹ in the Netherlands, which have all been collecting Modern Art, made plans to exchange these kinds of objects within their Modern Art collections. The aim of this project was to improve collaboration in terms of collection development. (More information about this project was presented in *COMCOL Newsletter 24*: “The Boulders Project, a collection mobility research project”, J. Boland).

We came together as a research group (seven students) in September 2013, in the last year of the Bachelor Degree course in Cultural Heritage. Each of us followed an internship at two of the five participating art museums where we studied their museum- and collection policies, so our findings were based on our individual experiences of more than one museum as well as our collective group experience. We looked

at the collective history, opinions and experiences of curators, collection managers and directors. We used them to establish character sketches of the Modern art collections in all these museums.

In the meantime, we also gathered a lot of information about mobility plans from interviews during the internships in the museums and policy plans from the past ten years. The collection mobility theme is a very important topic in the Netherlands and our research group has had a lot of experience with this matter. It has been on the agenda since the term ‘Collection Netherlands’ (the aggregate of all public collections in the country) was introduced by former Minister of Culture Hedy d’Ancona in the 1990s. The idea was that a general Collection Netherlands should stimulate collection traffic (exchange, loan, donation). Unfortunately this did not lead to change. It appeared that the practice of collection mobility was clearly far from the plans of the government.² We hoped that the Boulders Project would increase further exchange and create new opportunities to boost collection mobility.

During the three days at the COMCOL conference there were very different types of lectures by international speakers from the museum world: theory, practice and ethical issues were discussed, in which the main focus was on social context and prevailing ideologies on the development of collections. A lot of the topics discussed were quite delicate, such as the question of how to deal with “taboo” in heritage. Very frequently, the topic of presenting the process in which museums are involved - and showing it to the visitor was discussed by very different speakers. Former Reinwardt Master student Marija Jauković talked about increasing the transparency of museums to discuss museological issues. Rajko Muršič, Professor of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Ljubljana continued: “cultural heritage is a field of dispute, it’s part of our own creation”. It is not possible for a museum to be politically objective, which makes it more important to let visitors create their own visions and question them. Nina Gorgus, Curator at the Historisches Museum Frankfurt, concluded that

1 The Centraal Museum (Utrecht), Kröller-Müller Museum (Otterlo), het Bonnefantenmuseum (Maastricht), Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (The Hague) and the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam).

2 G. Luiten, “De gedachten en de praktijk” in: Richard Hermans, Wim Hupperetz, Gitta Luiten, Taco de Neef, Marineke van der Reijden, Astrid Weij, e.d., Voor de eeuwigheid?, Over collectiebeleid in Nederland. (Rotterdam: NAi Uitgevers. 2008), 4.

collections are basically 'time capsules' that should be reanimated.

The Boulders Project has been dealing with this view, that collections are time capsules. Boulders may sometimes have had relevance during the direction by a certain curator or director, but this dynamic changes, especially in art. In the past many similar objects have been collected by modern art museums in the same country, which has caused 'duplicates' in art museums in the Netherlands. We noticed that collection history, especially recent history, is a very delicate subject, and raises emotional reactions from curators. Collection history is often linked to individual collectors and curators who wanted to make a specific statement. It is part of the history of the museum, and the curators have built upon the directions of the previous collecting approaches. It has, to a certain degree, to be adjusted to allow for new directions. It is a sensitive matter to adjust and renew objectives, but the past should function as a guide, not as a straitjacket. In more traditional thought it is possible to argue that the objects which are now considered as 'Boulders' could have a future function as *Boulders becoming pioneers*. They can attract new points of view or directions because of their 'special position' in the collection, which can also be very valuable. It is now accepted that there needs to be a more open and engaged policy so it would be nice to work with a more structural exchange plan; a bottom up plan to exchange on a large scale, not just on occasion. There is always somehow an argument to justify the importance of certain Boulders, but most important is that they can be seen by museum visitors.

After almost two years no object has yet been exchanged within this project. The museums have not allocated lot of time to discuss the clear results of this research. The directors of the particular museums have their own opinions about how to continue this project. Responsibility has been divided, and it has now become a very 'quiet' project. There is a plan under discussion to test a boulder exchange but details have yet to be finalised



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St James Major, Attributed to the Dunois Master, Coëtivy Hours, Paris, c. 1444, CBL W 082 f.262r,

© The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

For the husband who has everything ...

Jill Unkel

The mining magnate and bibliophile, Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875-1968) assembled possibly the finest collection of manuscripts and printed books in private hands in the twentieth century. While renowned for its Biblical Papyri, illuminated Qur'ans and Japanese hand-scrolls, the museum houses a much wider variety of material originating from the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia, and Europe. The breadth of the collection helps to tell the story of the book across time and space. Chester Beatty first opened his library to the public in 1954 in a

purpose-built museum located on Shrewsbury Road, Dublin (Ireland). Following his death, this priceless collection was bequeathed to a trust for the benefit of the Irish people and is today located in grounds of Dublin Castle. The Chester Beatty remains the only Irish institution to have been named European Museum of the Year (2002).

Beatty acquired much of his collection through public auction or directly from dealers with whom he had established relationships. Dealers often sent him manuscripts and other items on approval, and Beatty returned any that did not meet his high standards. He employed experts, many of whom were staff of the British Museum, to advise with purchases and write catalogues; he also had agents scour bookshops in search of further additions to his shelves. Other objects were acquired through gifts and bequests, such as the Merton Papyrus. Beatty himself made gifts of snuff bottles to friends, although these acts of generosity seem to have done little to reduce the size of this collection which still amounts to over 900 examples.

The museum continues to acquire material along the distinctive lines of collecting established by Sir Alfred Chester Beatty whose leitmotif was 'quality'. On occasion, objects previously in Beatty's possession but which were sold in his lifetime for various reasons have been acquired by the museum. The Chester Beatty has also selectively engaged with contemporary Asian and European artists working within the traditions represented in the Collections and commissioned works related to special projects: a series of contemporary Irish prints were produced for the exhibition Holy Show (2002) based on stories from the Hebrew Bible or the Christian Old Testament.

In the early years of his collecting, Beatty's interests matched the tastes of other 'gentlemen bibliophiles', with the acquisition of primarily European illuminated texts. He was interested in religious manuscripts over secular ones, particularly beautifully decorated Bibles, Breviaries and Books of Hours. Although Beatty later sold much of his Western manuscript collection through auction - in the 1930s to free up funds with which to collect Islamic manuscripts and in 1968-9 to fund bequests to family and friends - the Chester Beatty retains some forty spectacular examples of European illuminated books. One particular treasure is the Coëtivy Hours,

so-called because it was commissioned by Prigent de Coëtivy (1400-50), Admiral of France, himself a well-known bibliophile.

The manuscript is a masterpiece of fifteenth-century illumination, attributed to the workshop of the Dunois Master. It was produced with 148 miniatures painted in demi-grisaille on 364 folios, 144 of which were removed from the bound volume by Beatty in the 1920s and housed between glass plates for ease of handling and research (a custom no longer performed but not uncommon at the time). Each exquisite folio is ornamented with foliate borders and a variety of entertaining marginalia. The marginal illuminations are particularly engaging, with subjects ranging from games and pastoral scenes, to grotesques and hybrids. Marginalia accompanying miniatures complement the main scene, either by participating in the narrative or by telling a separate but related story.

The inclusion of numerous painted examples of Prigent de Coëtivy's quartered arms in the margins has been used to date the manuscript to c.1444. Following his marriage to Marie de Rais he was required to quarter his own arms with those of the barony de Rais (a cross of sable on gold). These arms were later over-painted with the single charge of Cardinal Coëtivy (a barry of sable and gold). When Prigent died without issue at the siege of Cherbourg, the manuscript became the property of his brother, Alain de Coëtivy, Cardinal of Avignon. Evidence of further ownership is found on the nineteenth-century binding which is stamped with the arms and monogram of Count Bardi. It was for sale through the Florentine dealer, Guiseppe Pallotti by at least 1894 when it was examined by Léopold Delisle; then acquired by Henry Yates Thompson in April 1900, through Gustave Pawlowski in Paris.

In 1900 the Coëtivy Hours was the subject of a scholarly article by Delisle entitled, 'Les Heures de l'amiral Prigent de Coëtivy'. It was also included in both Yates Thompson's *Descriptive Catalogue of the Second Series of Fifty Manuscripts* (1902, no. 89) and in volume five of *Illustrations of One Hundred Manuscripts in the Library of Henry Yates Thompson* (1915). The latter publication included manuscripts which primarily 'belonged to some Individual of Note'. Through these publications Yates Thompson's collection became widely-known, which, no doubt, helped to boost prices when many of his 'Hundred Manuscripts' were later sold through Sotheby's.

In 1919, Sotheby's announced the first of three monumental sales of Yates Thompson's illuminated manuscripts and printed books. Beatty attended the auction, on 3 June 1919, but while he successfully bid for a ninth-century Latin Gospel (£1775) he was unable to acquire other manuscripts that he had noted interest in; Beatty's copy of the catalogue is annotated with the hammer price of all lots.

A few weeks after the sale, probably chagrined by what he would have considered the overinflated prices obtained in the auction, and on the sixth anniversary of their marriage, his wife presented him with a gift: the Coëtivy Hours. The inscription on the flyleaf reads: 'To A. Chester Beatty from his loving wife Edith Beatty'. Beatty noted that the manuscript was 'purchased privately from Mr. Yates Thompson and presented to me by my wife 21 June 1919'. Whether Edith had acquired the manuscript before the auction or after is unknown but she could easily have made a discreet visit to Yates Thompson over the summer while at their house in London, 24 Kensington Palace Gardens (Baroda House); Thompson resided at 19 Portman Square, a little over two miles away.

Beatty's coded annotation (C=£KKK) reveals that Edith paid £3000 for the Coëtivy Hours. The Hours of Joan II, Queen of Navarre, had sold for over £11,000 in the Yates Thompson auction (the highest price then paid for any illuminated manuscript, acquired by Edmond de Rothschild). That being the case, Mrs Beatty negotiated a rather good deal. She seems to have made an impression on Yates Thompson, as he later presented her with an inscribed copy of the catalogue (dated 29 January 1920) for the next instalment of his sale (March 1920).

From one bibliophile to another and from one marriage to another, this story helps to answer that age old question, what do you give the husband who has everything ... a fifteenth-century Book of Hours, of course.



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Riemer Knoop, lecturer, Cultural Heritage (Reinwardt Academy) and moderator at the Queering the Collections Conference.

Photo: Joeri Kempen.

Symposium “Queering the Collections” – A Review

Patricia Pfeiffer, Susanne Ries, Mona Zimmer

On March 20th, The Amsterdam Museum, COMCOL, Reinwardt Academy for Museology and Heritage and IHLIA (International Homo/Lesbian Information center and Archive) organised the Symposium *Queering the Collections* at the Public Library in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. With keynote speeches, workshops, best practice examples, discussions and a visit to the exhibition “I believe I am gay” in the Bijbels Museum, over 70 museum professionals discussed how to integrate ‘queer’ in collections and exhibitions.

After a warm welcome by Lonneke van den Hoonaard (IHLIA), moderator Riemer Knoop (Reinwardt Academy) and Siebe Weide (General Manager Museum Network), keynote speaker Richard Parkinson, professor for Egyptology at the University of Oxford, opened with his speech, “A little gay history: from ancient Egypt to the modern museum”. As he had done in his book *A little gay history: desire and diversity across the world*, he portrayed objects with a queer

background and suggested that they are viewed as important for the past, the present and with a personal connection. Parkinson's personal commitment and the message he had for the participants at the symposium were welcomed with cheers.

The second key note speaker Richard Sandell, Professor of Museology at the University of Leicester, had a more theoretical approach. His strategy for showing queer items in a museum was to reveal hidden stories, to pluralise narratives and to use Queer Theory to broaden the scientific approach to museum objects. Most importantly, Sandell highlighted the importance of visualising 'queer' in a museum: when a LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersexual, queer) person enters a museum and can find content to identify with.

COMCOL's president Léontine Mejer-van Mensch combined the interpretation and collecting of queer items in her talk. To her, collecting queer objects needs to be linked to the already existing collection and will always influence the museum's objects. Additionally, the importance of heritage communities – communities with a shared heritage (objects, memories, rituals) – was emphasised. Being sensitive towards those heritage communities can mean that the heritage the museum wants to collect and exhibit is still an active agent and, thus, remains within the community.


Our contribution for the symposium was part of the presentations of best practice examples. We study museology at the University of Würzburg. Since September last year, we have been working on our Masters study project on queering the museum. We didn't want a purely theoretical approach to this issue so we started a collaboration with the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (MEK) in Berlin because it focuses on concepts of identity and diversity with an emphasis on cultural diversity. To further develop the main ideas of identity and diversity, we think that the MEK should extend the narrative of its permanent exhibition to sexual diversity to include queer representations. By broadening the exhibition *Cultural Contact. Living in Europe*, we wanted to visualise queer stories behind objects that are already part of the exhibition. With an app (Blinkster), four objects are presented: a Conchita Wurst sculpture, an Aids Quilt from the Netherlands, football jerseys

from the German National teams (male and female) and carnival masks from different European regions. Alongside queer stories, other narratives will be prepared by the MEK.


During the whole day, and especially during the workshops and the final discussion, the urgency of queering collections and museums was highly emphasised. As Richard Sandell already asserted in his keynote speech, representing LGBTIQ in history and present is important for the self-conception of queer people and queer communities in general. To achieve queer identification in museums, a lot of the participants called on museum professionals to simply start 'queering'. Museums should realise their own social relevance and the importance of representing 'queer'. Collections should be searched for queer objects, and when collecting new objects (collecting the present), they should fit into the collection's profile and broaden and deepen its scope. Additionally, museums are not the only institutions in charge of representing 'queer' but the government should also be aware of its educational mandate.

For future work in the museum, queering should be seen as a process. To further promote this process, a publication of the symposium's speeches and discussions is in preparation. To break the symposium down to simple information and recommendations, a pamphlet for museums might be the first step to bring 'queer' to mind and present initial guidelines on how 'to queer' museums.

Finally, we want to thank COMCOL for their support and for giving us the opportunity to attend such an inspiring symposium.

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Goranka Horvat and Janos Panca at Museum@Digit conference in Budapest in June 2013.

eCult**Observatory** 

Goranka Horvat

Working under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the European Museum Forum, which is also an ICOM partner, is dedicated to promote best practice examples in the museum sector and to create partnerships with other museum organisations. The common objective is to strengthen the position of museums in the times of crises and implement activities to widen and exchange knowledge in cooperation programmes.

A good opportunity for joint activities is the eCultValue project that received a grant from the EU 7th Framework Support Action Programme. Several events have already been organised within the project, from Dialogue Days to specific workshops and one summer stage was held in Slovenia in Vitanje museum. The event had a focus on different aspects in the process of bringing new technologies into museums. The project tackled topics like 3D storytelling and social media, digitization or cooperation between museum and ICT sector and discussions took into account different aspects of future collaboration and developments. The examples presented at events came from different EU projects that had been already financed by the EU and their valorisation can be best seen through implementation of the results. Museum professionals from Slovenia also took part in the project Dialogue Day. Tanja Roženberger Šega and Andreja Rihter

actively participated at the meeting in Dubrovnik in 2013 that has been organised in partnership with the Best in Heritage.

The target participants in eCultValue workshops and summer stages are younger museum professionals interested in new technologies and the project gathered a significant group of experts who will act as ambassadors in cultural heritages institutions. The on-line platform www.ecultobservatory.eu is still open for those who would like to present their museum achievements related to new technologies, join in as individual supporters or to create their museum profiles and promote success stories from their institutions.

The project has also opened a vivid discussion on new technologies and how their future usage can influence museum organisations, create new jobs and develop new audiences. The eCultValue project was presented at the ICOM NATHIST meeting in Croatia and ICOM ICR meeting in Taiwan. The project consortium member Goranka Horjan, who is also the EMF Chair of the Board of Trustees and member of the ICOM Executive Council, participated as invited guest and speaker at opening of the ICME annual meeting in Zagreb (Croatia) and COMCOL annual conference in Celje (Slovenia). ICOM project ICOM Observatory for Illicit Traffic, which also won EU funding, was included in the programme of the 3rd eCult Dialogue Day in Dubrovnik in September 2014.

The eCultobservatory platform offers different models of participation. Museums can create their profiles, specify their needs related to new technologies or showcase their success stories and promote best practice from their own institutions. Museum professionals can make their individual profiles or if they want to be more actively involved, they can become eCult ambassadors. The platform gives information and links to EU projects and offers a series of on-line and off-line initiatives that facilitate the promotion of the identified new technologies to stakeholders and foster the dialogue between technology providers and end users such as museums.



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Meet a new COMCOL member

Eva Fägerborg interviews Tamara Patten

Since we would like to find out a bit more about our members and their interests we have introduced this section of the newsletter where new members present themselves. This way we hope to get to know each other better in the committee and create connections between members. New members are approached and asked if they would like to contribute with a brief Q & A.

Perhaps “old” COMCOL members would also like to introduce themselves? We kindly invite you to contact the editors!

This time we meet Tamara from New Zealand:

Can you please tell us a little about yourself, your work and your institution/museum?

My name is Tamara Patten and I'm 33 years old. My academic background is in Ancient History and Museum Studies. I graduated from my Museum Studies course into the pit of the global recession, when jobs were hard to come by. I took any contracts that came my way, and as a result I have a wide-ranging professional background. I've worked mainly in collection-based roles, but I have also spent time working front-of-house, as a training coordinator, and in curatorial positions.

I currently work as Communications Officer for National Services Te Paerangi, at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa). National Services Te Paerangi is a team that provides support and advice to the museum sector and iwi (Maori tribes).

Can you tell us something about the museums in New Zealand?

New Zealand has roughly 450 museums, which is a very high number per capita in a country with a population of only 4.5 million. Te Papa is the national museum, and receives partial funding from the New Zealand government. Most cities and towns have



Tamara Patten.

Photo Dudley Meadows, ©Tairāwhiti Museum.

their own regional museum, often funded by local government, and then there are many other small museums which are often run by trusts or volunteers. Collections and themes are diverse, particularly in the smaller museums – in New Zealand we have everything from a rugby league museum to a museum specialising in beer cans! I am always struck by the dedication of staff and volunteers in museums of all sizes throughout New Zealand.

How did you get to know about COMCOL and what made you interested in the committee? Why did you decide to become a member?

I discovered COMCOL when I joined ICOM this year. I decided to join COMCOL primarily because I'm interested in the ethics around collecting, and particularly the repatriation of objects from museums



Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Photo Michael Hall, ©Te Papa.

to their countries or people of origin. Te Papa runs a world-leading repatriation programme which does amazing work in returning koiwi tangata (Maori ancestral remains) to New Zealand and to their iwi (tribe) or hapu (subtribe) of origin.

What topics related to collecting and collections development would you like COMCOL to focus on particularly?

I'd like to see COMCOL focusing on encouraging sound and ethical collection policies. It would be great to see more museums forming strong policies around consultation with local communities and indigenous groups regarding collection development. It would also be great to see more museums recognising collective ownership of cultural objects, especially in regard to providing access to collections.

Any more thoughts about COMCOL and/or ICOM that you would like to share with us? Expectations, suggestions...?

It is great to see ICOM New Zealand growing and positively influencing the museum sector in this country. I am looking forward to seeing ICOM NZ continue to develop.



*Tamara Patten
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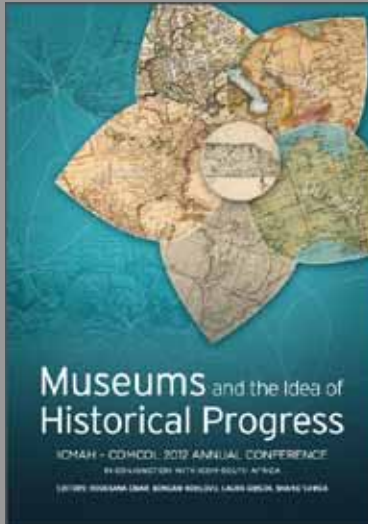


Eva Fägerborg, COMCOL Secretary, Solna, Sweden



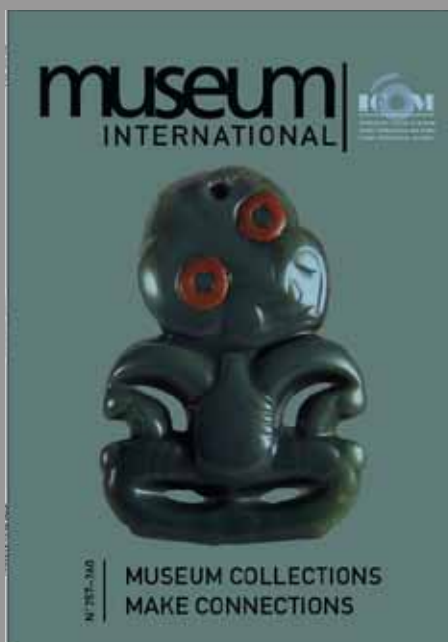
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Publications



It is with great pleasure that we announce that the publication from the conference **Museums and the Idea of Historical Progress**, held at the Iziko Museums of South Africa in Cape Town in November 2012, has now been completed. Many thanks to the editors, our colleagues from ICOM South Africa for their fantastic work!

The publication can be accessed online through the ICOM-SA website: <http://network.icom.museum/icom-sa/publications/books/> and COMCOL website: <http://network.icom.museum/comcol/publications/museums-and-the-idea-of-historical-progress/>.



We are very proud to announce that the next Museum International publication has been edited by the COMCOL board with Léontine Meijer-van Mensch as Editor in Chief. The theme is Museum Collections make Connections. Inside you will find a wide range of articles that cover the topic of connecting collections through digitisation, accessible and participatory curatorship and new and inventive ways of connecting particular groups in society to collections.

ICOM members have access to current and past issues of Museum International via ICOMMUNITY.

We are very grateful to all contributors and hope you enjoy reading this special issue!



Audiovisual performance at the close of the COMCOL Annual Conference 2014, Goran Bojčevski and Stane Spegel.

Photo: Nataša MÜLLER.

COMCOL – Committee for Collecting – is the International Committee of ICOM dedicated to deepening discussions and sharing knowledge of the practice, theory and ethics of collecting and collection development.

COMCOL Newsletter provides a forum for developing the work of COMCOL and we welcome contributions from museum professionals and scholars and students all over the world: short essays on projects, reflections, conference/seminar reports, specific questions, notices about useful reading material, invitations to cooperate, introductions to new research or other matters. Views and opinions published in the newsletter are the views of the contributors. Contributions for the next issue are welcomed by **1 August 2015** to the editors, and contact us also if you wish to discuss a theme for publication.

COMCOL Newsletter is available at COMCOL's website <http://network.icom.museum/comcol/>

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