

ICOMON REPORT 2012 for INC

Christel Schollaardt reports:

In 2012, the XIX Annual conference of ICOMON was held at Rabat, Morocco, October 15–17, hosted by the Bank Al-Maghrib.

The theme was “Money and Banking Museums: New challenges and perspectives”. Globalization is eroding cultural and national identities and making their world more uniform, and unfortunately the global financial crisis is exacerbating this. In this context, museums, and among them money and banking museums, have a greater role to play in the preserving and embedding of national identity. However, cost savings, budget restrictions and human resource reductions have been the key words for every company and institution since 2008, and have not spared museums.

Participants were expected to discuss how museums can play an integral role in reinforcing national identity in both developed and developing countries even if at first glance they may not appear to have the same priorities as education, agriculture or health.

In 3 days, there were four sessions on the following topics:

- A. Make museums more accessible to the public
- B. Play a major role in educating new generations
- C. Preserve and promote the national heritage of the country
- D. Research

On Monday, we had two sessions at the premises of the Bank Al-Maghrib itself:

In Session A Catherine Eagleton of the British Museum, Weirong Zhou of the China Numismatic Museum and Megan Gooch of the London Tower presented their new exhibitions. Eagleton talked about the choices the BM made in redecorating the Money Gallery and how they consulted the public in that. Zhou showed us the very high tech digital exhibition of the China numismatic Museum and Gooch showed us some difficulties using digital techniques in a medieval surrounding at the Tower of London.

In Session B Takashi Uemura, (Insatsu Choyokai Foundation Japan), Houdi Khaldi (Bank Al-Maghrib Museum), Hasti Adiani Dwiputranti (Museum of the Bank of Indonesia), Karla

Santos de Sá (Central Bank of Brasil) and Kelvin Kizito Kiyingi (Bank of Uganda) talked about their experiences in reaching out to the public in new ways. Fascinating to hear about educational experiments in Japanese malls and about using the museum as a tool for financial literacy and economics education in Uganda.

Afterwards there was an excursion to the Archeological Museum and a fine diner with a copious Moroccan banquet.

In the morning, we had a fascinating tour at the premises of the Brasil Mint and Banknote factory, Dar As-Sikkah. In the afternoon, we had Session C on preserving and promoting the national heritage of the country.

Pavel Sidorenko (Central Bank of Venezuela) talked about the new banknote designs of Venezuela, used as tools for education by depicting national birds on it. Vesna Kovac of the Serbian Bank showed us the design for a specific exhibiting-educational centre and Boo Kian Seng talked about Eclecticism, relevance and sustainability at the Malaysian bank.

In Session D Cecilia von Heijne (National Museum of Economy, Stockholm, Sweden) explained her research into connections between the Vikings and the Caliphate, Rajae Benhsian showed us the historical aspects of bank Al-Maghrib's collections and Karen Lee of the Smithsonian Museum told us how a sketchbook of a United States Engraver can tell us about the world.

At the third day, we had a round table discussion on all topics brought up by our participants, which led to a very lively discussion. Afterwards we had the formal Annual Meeting.

Despite the disappointing number of participants, this meeting was very successful in terms of exchanging ideas and creating an open, respectful environment for all members. The impeccable organization and unbelievably warm welcome of the Bank Al-Maghrib was a very important factor in this.

The present economic crisis impacts ICOMON in different ways: some colleagues could not afford to attend the conference in Rabat. Other institutions suffered from serious cutbacks, the Geldmuseum in Utrecht, The Netherlands, eliminated the entire Department of Collections and Research resulting in a lay-off of nine people.

On the other hand, the crisis exemplifies how useful numismatic studies can be: monetary unions come and go, and in fact, this crisis is not that different from crises in the past. ICOMON's task is to point out to the public that lessons can be learnt from the past. ICOMON developed a program to reach out to parts of the world that are not represented amongst our members, we now have seven African countries as members, and the Rabat meeting was the first ever held on African soil. This outreach program also fits wonderfully into the strategic goals of ICOM, our mother-organization, and resulted, together with our work on a collection-management manual and our proceedings on the internet, in a grant for the third time with more tuition from ICOM.

In 2013, the Annual Meeting will be held at Rio de Janeiro as a part of the large, triennial ICOM conference. Date: August 10–17, Theme: {Museums (memory + creativity = social change)}. Our host will be the Central Bank of Brazil.