Follow Up : Compilation of Objects from Ethnographic Museums

Wikimania, Alexandria July 17-19, 2008

Since Wikimania Taipei a workgroup was built and consisting of:

- **ICOM =International Council of Museums, Paris**
  ICME =International Council of Museums of Ethnography, Florida, US

- **UNESCO Paris**

- **Wiki**
  Wikimedia Board& Advisory, France, Belgium
  Wikipedia France, France

- **Ethnographic Museums**
  Antwerp, Belgium
  Leiden, The Netherlands
  Quai Branly, France

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- General agreement of the concept

- Recommendation to start with pilot museums (four) and have been identified: Belgium, Norway, South Africa, South Corea;

- Compilation of the dat by museum personel and volunteers (friends of the museum);

- List of meta-data exists in the ICOM/ICME documents;

- Larger Museums have ICT installed or are doing it, each with own data structure.

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- Topic language to be used for description of the objects :

- language of the country of the Museum;

- language of the culture or ethnic group, if available;

- language with 'universal' character (English).

This agreement was understood to be minimal and remains open to local situations.

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- Technical concerns

    - For the pilot projects local working team should be built, with the presence of a Wiki-knowledge;

    - No technical major problems are to be expected;

    - Existing museums with web-site access can be linked with Wiki, ICOM/ICME will have to promote such links.

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- Previous to start: Wiki is expected for give strong support

- Project start January 1st, 2009

-Financial means:
to start a small budget was proposed to look after :
US$10,000.- 20,000.- The chair of ICME will prepare a
proposal for submitting to possible donors.

Suggested Sources: ICOM and Wiki

- After this meeting ICME will then promote the concept and
mobilize its members.

Tapei Slides : Compilation of Objects from Ethnographic Museum Reserves

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Content of Presentation at Wikimania 2007 in Tapei :

I. Sustainability concept includes the *Cultural domain.*

II. *Cultural diversity* is *threatened*

III. Frame of the Proposal
  1. *Some data* about collections & museums
  2. A few e*xamples* of museums

IV. Methodology

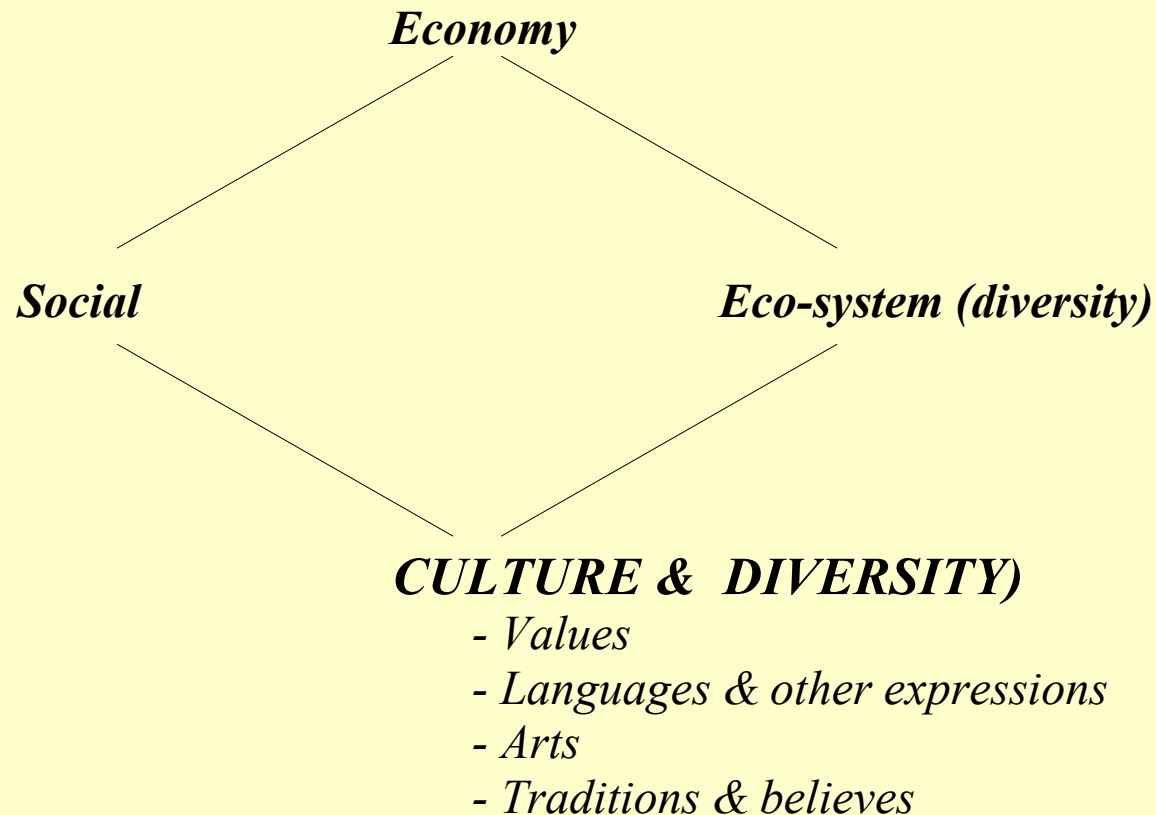V. Support: *UNESCO, ICOM* (International Council of Museums, Paris)
  & private contacts

VI. How to proceed further?

VII. Conclusions

I. Sustainability concept includes a *fourth dimension*: CULTURE

Economy

Social   *Eco-system (diversity)*

CULTURE & DIVERSITY)
- *Values*
- *Languages & other expressions*
- *Arts*
- *Traditions & believes*

II. Cultural Diversity is threatened

- **Human cultural heritage is disappearing**
    - *UN 6,912 spoken languages in 2005*; of which nearly extinct 516
    - **by 2050 only a few hundreds remain.**

- **Spoken Languages** (From : *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 2005*)

Country	#	%
Papua New Guinea	820	11.86
Indonesia	742	10.73
Nigeria	516	7.47
India	427	6.18
USA	311	4.50
China	241	3.49
Brazil	200	2.89

III. Frame of the Proposal

- This proposal deals with: in general cultural diversity, especially *compilation ethnographic museum objects* (in reserves ~90%):

    - recent history & still living ethnic communities & groups: 19th-20^{ed} century

    - safeguard & testimonies about their *creativity*, diversity of *traditions & believes, values* (ecosystem), *visions*,....

    - compile in a *systemic way information* about objects: arts expressions & creation, artifacts of all kind, etc.

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The discussions on cultural diversity in some UN publications:

World Culture Report (2000);
Universal Declaration of UNESCO on Cultural Diversity (2003);
Towards Knowledge Societies (2005);

The present and future challenges of diversity loss focus on:

- *Globalization and homogenization* to a one-culture world
 (McDonaldization);

- Cultural diversity and *poverty*: the North-South situation.

Ethnographic contributions in these considerations are mostly absent and the heritage is not a direct issue.

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From Wikipedia. *Category: Museums*

"A museum is a *non-profit making*, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, ... "

"Modern museums concentrate on a particular subject, and most museums belong to one or more of the following categories: fine arts, applied arts, archeology, *anthropology, ethnology*, history, cultural history, science, technology, natural history."

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1. Some data about collections & museums

Total Number of *Museums & Public Galleries* World Wide   **53,017**

Total countries   **202**

ICOM (International Council of Museums)

Museum Institutions members of ICOM	1,700
Professional persons members	21,000
National Countries & Committees	115
National Countries members	140
International Committees	?
Ethnography	?
Other	

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ICOM (International Council of Museums, Paris)

        Affiliated International Organizations
                Africom : African Countries   53
        Regional Organizations
                Asia-Pacific Countries   23
                ICOM-Arab   9
                ICOM-LAC   18

ICME (International Council of Museums on Ethnography)
        Ethnographic Museums World wide   1,750
        Estimated number of Objects   ?
                In museum reserves   90.00%
                Per continent in %
                        Africa
                        Arab
                        Asia
                        Latin America & Caribbean

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ASEMUS (Asia-Europe Museums Network) &
ASEF (Asia Europe Foundation)

    bi-& multi-lateral association of ethnographic museums, comprising
    about 60 museums (2003)

        - facilitate the sharing of our joint Eurasian cultural heritage
        - historical relations have a legacy of major asymmetries in museum
          collections
        - many European museums hold large collections of Asia with key
          Asian heritage not available in Asia itself
        - develop mechanisms, instruments and projects to redress
          'asymmetry' and form pools of resources (virtual museum)

2. A few Examples

2.1. Anthropological Collections of the *American Museum of Natural History (AMNH)*

Anthropology Collection Statistics

Archeology	329,000
Ethnology	*188,000*
Physical Anthropology	29,000
Total number of catalog records:	**540,000**

The division's collections are comprised of three general types: archeological (excavated), *ethnographic (material collected from living people)*, and biological materials (human remains).

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Collections Database

Over *160,000 objects* from Pacific, North American, African, Asian, and Textile *ethnographic collections with images and detailed description.*

The data-base can be searched by *country/region, culture, object name, material, geographic locale, catalog number,* and *donor name*; explored by viewing objects on display in AMNH exhibit halls.

- **Pacific Ethnographic Collection**   **27,000 objects on line**
- **North American Ethnographic Collection**   **49,000**
- **Asian Ethnographic Collection**   **45,000**
- **African Ethnographic Collection**   **37,000**
- **Textile Collection**   **10,500**

2.2. *National Museum of the American Indian*, **Washington DC, US**

The collection includes more than 800,000 objects, as well as a photographic archive of 125,000 images.

2.3. *Royal Museum for Central Africa*, **Brussels (Tervuren), Belgium** (Wiki)

Collections   10,000 animals
250,000 rock samples
180,000 ethnographic objects
20,000 maps
56,000 wood samples
8,000 musical instruments

2.4. Museum *Quai Branly*, Paris

In total **267,417 objects** belong to the collection. Since 1998, the museum acquiered 8,168. Over 3, 600 objects are exhibited (1.35%).

Continent:	America	97,372 objects
	Afrique	70,205
	Asie	54,041
	Oceanie	28,911

Additional objects : music instruments

2.5. *The J. Paul Getty Museum*

As a museum and educational center dedicated to the study of the arts and cultures of ancient Greece, Rome, and Etruria, ...

The Villa houses approximately *44,000 work*s of art from the Museum's extensive collection of Greek, Roman, and Etruscan antiquities, of which over *1,200 are on view. (2.72%)*

IV. Methodology

- Museums in general exhibit only a very small part of their collections; the *reserves* can be as high as *~90 %* of the collections

  - Focus on *reserves*
  - *Hidden treasers*
  - Building Virtually *geographical ethnographic* museums

- Compilation:

  - *Catalogue like:*
      picture (max 2), material, size, geographic & ethnic info,
      description in native &'other used' languages, period of origin,
      acquisition info, etc.

  - *Standardization* and structure of *meta-data*

Action models for compilation:

    1. *volunteers* with museum authorities (access?) : in principle anyone in the spirit of Wikipedia;

    2. museum authorities in partnership with *volunteers, ethnographic experts,* and *local Wiki-teams* for data structures and other technical matters;

    3. museum authorities in partnership with *cultural associations &* (e.g. Friends of the Museum .....), *academics & experts,* and *local 'Wiki-teams'.*

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Difficulties and Obstacles:

- administration : museums function frequently under State, City and/or local authorities or the like;

- copyrights related to objects;

- propriety considerations, theft (Interpol), pending claims;

- larger museums have already inventories or are in the process of setting them up;

- ....

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V. Support:

- **UNESCO:** first discussions with the *Director of the Division of Foresight, Philosophy and Human Sciences,* indicate a real interest in the proposal and some "parnetship or collaboration" with Wikipedia.

- **ICOM** (International Council of Museums, Paris) affiliated with UNESCO, is very interested as well as with Wikipedia in general. This proposal will be announced at their Annual Conference in August (Vienna), provided a clear signal comes from the Wikipedia organization.

   For both organizations is a *win-win situations* feasible.

- **Local museums** show similar interests as well.

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VI. How to proceed further?

- Evaluation of what *exists already* in Wikipedia;

- Elaborating a *several year* work program -five year or more- for the compilation process;

- Finding funding partners: *Foundations, Intergovernmental Organizations, Academics, National Governments, ...* ;

- Suggestion was already made to have a first meeting (in Paris) in the near future: *UNESCO-ICOM-Wikimedia Foundation*;

- ....

VII. Conclusions:

- The proposal addresses
    - the *cultural diversity* issue under the umbrella of sustainability;
    - the *encyclopedic character* of the compilation of ethnographic objects, Wiki is the appropriate frame;

- Culture in general& its heritage belong to *the common goods of humankind*; conceptually they are present Wikipedia; the ethnographic dimension enlarges the scope;

- *Preliminary support* is encountered at international organizations and some local museums;

- A *win-win situation* for these international organizations and Wikipedia is achievable; if agreed, Wikipedia will have other benefits;

- Difficulties will emerge in the process of implementation.