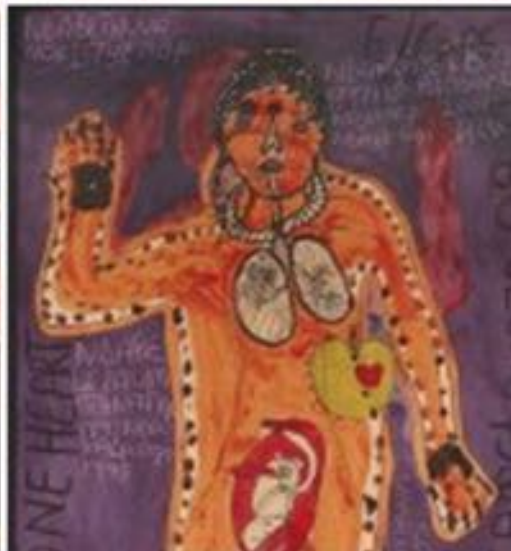
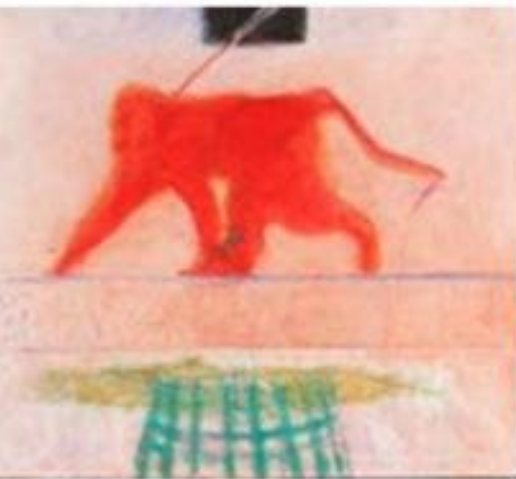




SAMANTICS

JANUARY 2021
+ SAMA 2020 CONFERENCE FEATURE

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

28 October 2020

Helene Vollgraaff

SAMA President 2019–2020

This year we were not able to have our national conference as usual, but organised a webinar instead. What a year 2020 has been. We have been living with the impact of Covid-19 for more than six months and this gave us an opportunity to reflect and to think about the future.

The outbreak of Covid-19 impacted on every aspect of our lives. And museums did not escape. The tourism industry, a major source of income for museums, came to a standstill. For museums that depend heavily on entrance fees and donations, their income streams dried up.

The already struggling South African economy shrunk even more. Approximately two million people lost their jobs. Government and government supported museums will feel the effects of less income tax revenue and redirected spending priorities for the next few years.

SOUTH AFRICA IS NOT ALONE.

The UNESCO study, *Museums around the world in the face of Covid-19*, found that there are 95 000 museums in the world. Of these, 90% of museums worldwide closed their doors during the Covid-19 crisis, and 10% of these museums may never reopen.

90% OF MUSEUMS WORLDWIDE CLOSED THEIR DOORS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS



10% OF THESE MUSEUMS MAY NEVER REOPEN

It also found a huge disparity between museums' ability to adapt and access to online media. With the above in mind, how did South African museums respond to this pandemic and what changes do we need to make.

Museums played an important role during this pandemic by providing entertainment during periods of lockdown with online programmes. However, for many smaller museums, digital programming was restricted to social media. Few museums in South Africa can compete with almost daily interviews and documentaries produced by European and American museums.

Locally many museums became involved in poverty relief efforts, especially in rural areas, for example by providing venues for soup kitchens or supporting schools to provide teaching materials to learners who have limited access to data.

Museums provide perspective. We experienced pandemics in the past. All pandemics changed society forever. To give a few examples:

- The smallpox epidemic in 1713 at the Cape wiped out 90% of the Khoekhoe population, thereby ending their chances of resisting colonial spread.
- The bubonic plague pandemic of 1901 fast-tracked the creation of residential areas separated according to race as people were forcibly removed to new townships for 'health reasons'.
- Between February 1918 and April 1920 one third of the world population was infected by the Spanish flu and 20 million died.

South Africa was the fifth hardest hit country in the world. The impact of the Spanish flu on South Africa was very similar to what we have been experiencing this year with Covid-19:

- Due to the large number of sick workers, many services had to be shortened or suspended.
- Shops, post offices, banks, schools, courts and churches closed.
- Stores were empty and long queues stood in front of pharmacies.
- Bread was scarce because so many bakers were ill.
- Cars stopped because of fuel shortages.
- The hospitals could not deal with all the cases and people were cared for in tent villages, at home or not at all.
- Farms came to a standstill.
- Some factories stopped and had to close down because they did not have enough staff.

Working on updating an exhibition for the Cape Medical Museum, it was the information on HIV/AIDS that made me think about our future in relation to Covid-19. And I am not referring to the AIDS denialism and the social stigma attached to the disease in the 1980s.

MUSEUMS PROVIDE PERSPECTIVE

In reading the exhibition text on how to prevent infection and the common misconceptions about the disease I realised how people adapt. Some of the lifestyle changes introduced as a result of HIV/AIDS are now such normal practice that we have forgotten that it was not always done this way. HIV/AIDS was feared in the 1980s. It was a death sentence. Though we still have no cure and it still is a serious disease, many people live with the disease. And the then radical lifestyle changes are now normal behaviour.

In similar vein, an article in the *Smithsonian Magazine*, 16 September 2020 stated the following:

Public behaviour and architecture were changed in response to a tuberculosis outbreak in 1890s in New York. Spitting in public and sharing cups were discouraged. Home builders began to construct houses with open porches and more windows, and doctors pushed for outdoor healing where patients could get fresh air and sunlight. Hospitals moved beds outside, and some wards were built as completely open structures.

So how are we going to adapt to Covid-19? How is it going to change our world in the long-term? And as we are museums, how are we going to document this change? I will briefly touch on the following:



MUSEUM DESIGN



MUSEUM PROGRAMMES



MUSEUM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS



MUSEUM SUSTAINABILITY

MUSEUM DESIGN

- Museums will have to adapt by either allowing fewer people, or by creating larger spaces. It is suggested that – where in the past we talked about allowing people to find their own route – public flow will now have to be curated to avoid bottle necks and double loops. But one still wants people to make their own decisions. And museums are innovating. One solution is to coordinate audience flow with floor squares – squares are measured out and people are free to move as they like, as long as they keep to one person per square.
- **Gardens can be used effectively for outside exhibitions, including drive-by exhibitions.**
- Spaces where people used to gather such as lobbies need to be redesigned.
- **And how do we deal with interactive space? The new trend is touchless spaces and services. These include buying entrance tickets, shopping, hands-free doors and using materials on which viruses do not have a long survival rate.**

MUSEUM PROGRAMME

Most of our museums quickly adapted by introducing online exhibitions, public events and increasing their social media output. The questions that arise are:

- **What is the future of museum buildings? One of the arguments I heard is that it does not make a difference if museums become digital or virtual as their main role is to disseminate information. But I believe that museums are about more than just knowledge. Museums are about experiences. There is a difference in seeing an artwork in real life and seeing a digital version of it. This is true of many digital works where the way the work is projected at a site contributes to the experience.**
- Museums provide opportunities to share experiences while online information consumption tends to be a solitary activity.
- **How do museums find a voice in the plethora of online events? With so many institutions relying on digital programmes, the already rich variety of information sources became even more congested**

during the pandemic. How can we build our own online audiences and develop online programmes targeted at specific (and often local) audiences? The museums that did well are those who placed emphasis on backroom activities such as collection management in the past. It was the museums with good documentation systems that were able to put out unique and informative online information.

MUSEUM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Living in a managerial world orchestrated by accountants, museum performance became equated with visitor numbers. We now have to review that perspective while at the same time avoiding elitism with museums accessible to a few.

MUSEUM SUSTAINABILITY

- Interestingly enough, it is thought that small museums with strong community links rather than large costly projects are expected to have a better chance of surviving. They know how to survive on a small budget and they can depend on community support.
- **The challenge for museums that depend on entrance fees, especially with the majority of visitors coming from international tourism, is to radically rethink their sustainability model.**
- Museums have to understand their place in the value chain to attract funding. Museums support small businesses such as caterers and the creative industry. Museums will have to position themselves as part of economic stimulation packages that provide multiple outcomes, for example, a museum buy an artwork in so doing creating an income for the artist and a public asset to be enjoyed at limited expense by others.

I'm going to leave you with these thoughts. After the AGM we will listen to experiences from a number of museums.

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FROZEN FACES

the pleasures
and perils of 4IR
– crisis communication
at the Castle of Good Hope,
Cape Town, South Africa

Calvyn T Gilfellan
CEO, Castle Control Board

Over the last five years the Castle Control Board (CCB) made considerable progress in establishing itself as a dynamic, critical voice in the global heritage, cultural and tourism landscape (Gilfellan, Hendricks & Sipoyo 2019). This progress was rudely interrupted by the March 2020 global outbreak of the deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 pandemic (Covid-19) in South Africa. The resultant lockdown meant no access to the Castle of Good Hope (Castle), no tourists, no events, no filming, no work – no income (Castle Control Board 2020). In communication terms the Castle of Good Hope experienced an interregnum.

A siege-mentality dawned upon the organisation and its people working in the fort. The impact on staff, Board and client's morale was instantaneous and severe. But this moment of 'siege' also afforded much-needed space for reflection, introspection, and revaluation. Since all Castle inhabitants became home-based, the CCB's state of crisis-preparedness and its 'crisis communication strategy' (or lack thereof), was put through the proverbial crucible.

This paper aims to share the Castle team's experiences during this time of global tumult with particular emphasis on corporate (internal) and marketing communications. We endeavour to provide an exposé of the dynamics, challenges, strategies, frustrations and learnings of the Castle Control Board to interact with

itself, its governing structures, executive authority, parliament and most importantly – its user-communities – during this extraordinary time.

This article concludes with the assertion that the lack of a crisis communications plan, over-reliance on face-to-face interaction, absence of a virtual heritage strategy, absence of online and virtual exhibitions and a dearth of elementary social media hard and software aggravated the ability of the CCB and its key partners to maintain and enhance the contact with itself and its constituency and the latter with its heritage tourism offerings.

THE CONTEXT

This paper stems from our 28 October 2020 presentation at the South African Museum Association's (SAMA) 2020 Annual General Meeting and webinar aptly dubbed 'The trials and tribulations of interacting at a distance'. We want to express our gratitude towards SAMA for inviting our modest contribution as well as keeping the heritage and museum sector connected. A particular word of thanks must go to SAMA Chairperson Dr Helene Vollgraaff for keeping the museum and heritage ship sailing over the proverbial stormy Covid-19 waters. Incidentally, Helene has also briefly touched on some of the perplexing matters of 'new-media' communication as discussed in our paper.

THE SPEAKER'S FACE WOULD
GO INTO 'FREEZE' MODE
– MOSTLY IN AN UNFLATTERING FRAME –
IMPRINTED ON THE SCREEN

In the context of the museum and heritage sector, we use 4IR communications in the broadest sense of the word. The reasons for this generic approach are the lack of consensus of what 4IR communication currently entails, what it ought to be and what it shall be in the future. Whatever the future holds, the museum and heritage sector must indeed embrace this new communications realm to promote their products, services and ideas to a diverse, tech-savvy audience.

We concur with Foreman (2017) that the concept would encompass the recent advances in social media communication and marketing, webinars, hybrid-events, digital and virtual exhibitions, video calling, virtual discussion forums, bookmarking and content curation networks, consumer review networks, blogging, publishing networks, interest-based networks, social shopping networks, sharing economy networks and anonymous social networks.

We contend that the pandemic has undoubtedly activated Information and Communications Technology (ICT) developers into more significant action and that robotics, artificial intelligence, the internet of things and automation will further revolutionise digital and virtual communication (Morgan 2020).

CRISIS COMMUNICATION: EMPLOYING THE 'FROZEN FACES' METAPHOR

Why did we choose this peculiar title? The frozen phases metaphor has a couple of origins. A scene in a motion picture spurred the initial idea wherein the husband, working overseas, stayed in touch with his family via Skype. Whenever his family confronts him about his shenanigans, he would keep a dead-still (frozen) face to skilfully dodging their questioning and accusative gazes. The reactions from the family members after discovering his bluff were amusing.

Secondly, it picked up on to real-life experiences during virtual lock-down communication when, due to either connectivity or software problems, the speaker's face would go into 'freeze' mode – mostly in an unflattering frame, imprinted on the screen. We are confident that colleagues in the museum sector would be able to share more of the awkwardness and comicalness associated with virtual communications.

In the heritage sector (and society at large), we employ this metaphor to refer to the contemporary moment of chaos, paucity and instability in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The latter compels us to ponder and reconsider the meaning of life, nature, heritage and culture during these uncertain times. The metaphor exposes the fallacy of the museum as a stable, reliable subject in a sea of uncertainty and otherness. The same holds for the Castle of Good Hope. As a symbol of impenetrability, masculinity and stability, the pandemic rendered this citadel as vulnerable and unstable as the people, users and other constituencies surrounding it.

THE CASTLE OF GOOD HOPE IN LOCKDOWN MODE

March 2020, like all before – arrived with its usual year-end angst and dramas: the frantic searches for reports, invoices, orders, receipts, head-counts, inventories, stock-sheets and other 'forensic evidence' required to prepare for that 'dreaded' governance obligation – the annual visit from the Auditor-General of South Africa to perform our external audit.

But who could ever have predicted that the very last month would bring the CCB's financial year to such a crushing and theatrical end? Yes, on 19 March 2020 the CCB was struck by the harsh reality of arguably the biggest news story of the century: a global advent of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. The management team of the Castle was compelled to close the Castle's doors – for the first time in 354 years (Barker 2003). This after two of its staff members encountered a Covid-19 positive Commonwealth Museum Association Conference goer.

Not long after this induced closure came President Ramaphosa's hard lockdown on 26 March that would turn our operating environment on its head. This radical disruption meant no business, no tourists, no events – and for the first time in decades – zero income. Never was it necessary to interact about serious matters like these in the fashion we did. How do we go about communicating sensitive financial and human resource issues to the staff, Board, political offices, portfolio committee, ministry and the media? All from a distance?

THE CASTLE CLOSED ITS DOORS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 354 YEARS

During this initial frantic period we identified at least four critical lockdown events that required a serious rethink of our communications strategy:

- The fact that two staff members were in proximity to a Covid-19 positive person.
- The closure of the Castle's operations and subsequent working from home.
- The high-level lobbying and negotiations to at least salvage the salaries and save the jobs of nineteen fulltime staffers of the CCB.
- The 'business unusual' approach when staff returned to work on 1 September.



COMMUNICATING FROM A DISTANCE

After receiving a call and the following communique from one of the organisers of an international museum conference held at Iziko Museums of South Africa's headquarters a chain of events, some dead-serious, others near-comical, unfurled:

Further to our e-mail from yesterday, we are very sorry to inform you that one of the participants has since tested positive for Covid-19 coronavirus. Please follow your country's guidelines regarding self-isolation for the next 14 days, monitor yourself for symptoms, and please contact your local health authority if you demonstrate symptoms. Please continue to stay in touch (Erickson, Molnar & Black 2020).

Our kneejerk response was to call an emergency staff meeting. But where would we meet given that no-one was sufficiently informed about the steps to be taken to mitigate this unknown risk? How would staff members react to the two colleagues who were in direct contact with the infected Commonwealth Museum Association (CAM) conference delegate?

The team eventually convened on the lawns before the Kat Balcony in the front courtyard of the Castle. That move carried with it a historical irony unbeknown to those assembled on the day. Many a colonial commander, governor or commanding officer would have called the citizens or soldiers of the Cape Colony to the exact spot in their moment of crisis! Who could also have predicted that it would be the CCB's last face-to-face engagement for almost seven months?

After informing the CCB's Board Chairperson Lieutenant General JS Mbuli (who is also the Department of Defence's Chief of Logistics), board members expressed their empathy, support and guidance to deal with this crisis. All from an impersonal distance of course. Simultaneous engagements took place between the CCB management and key personnel in the Minister's Office as well as the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans (Xaba, 2020). The primary medium of choice was simple (proved to also be not so simple): WhatsApp messages, with Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) and Zoom the most frequently used meetings platforms. Because the Castle falls under the custodianship of the Defence Ministry, one of our initial actions was to inform our executive authority, Minister Mapisa-Nqakula:

Good Day Mam. I hope this short message finds you in good health and high spirits. I have informed your office that we have closed the Castle as from today until 2 April 2020. This radical step was prompted by IZIKO's announcement that one of their Board Members, who frequented a four-day conference in their Museum opposite Parliament, tested positive. Some of us also attended the Conference and are now taking all the prescribed and necessary precautions. Gen. Mbuli and I shall keep you updated. Keep well Minister (Gilfellan 2020).

FIRST SAVE LIVES, THEN LIVELIHOODS

In an interregnum as described above, over-communication (often referred to as an 'infodemic'), fake news and misinformation thrive (Cohut 2020). The CCB staff, due to their diverse socio-economic backgrounds, were particularly prone to this phenomenon. The available social media communication tools (short messaging) provided the ideal breeding ground for the exacerbation of the situation, aptly summarised by this outcry from one of the CCB staffers:

Thank you, sir. So ja, I am just battling with these people at home about this WhatsApp and Facebook news by people who always believe they know best. So, I will wait on the posts on this chat and updates as you said at the beginning (Roberts 2020).

Our anecdote was to communicate a simple, central message that stressed the fact that the safety and lives of our staff were paramount. Second, but also important, was to look after our livelihoods. These messages served as our communications anchor during times of news, fake news, innuendo and everything in-between.

ASSURING THE STAFF THAT THEIR POSITIONS WERE SAFE – FOR THE MOMENT

Most of the CCB staff are general workers in the low-income bracket. They were in a state of panic after hearing that the CCB only had a surplus that would last for a month and a half. Amid building tensions and anxiety our communications strategy needed to be open, honest and regular.

Our first action was a submission to the Defence Ministry for an R1.6m relief support package. Initially the Departmental officials, who for the past 25 years never had to process such an application, scoffed at it. The determined efforts of the Chief of Logistics and his office ensured that the application followed all the correct channels. The R1.6 m relief amount was based on an overambitious August 2020 return to some form of normal business operations. Fortunately for the CCB, the politicians and Departmental officials convinced us about the improbability of our August assumption and the relief application was subsequently changed to R3 m.

While the Department endeavoured to speed up the CCB's application (it even took them to work over the Easter weekend), the Board and staff had to communicate this significant uncertainty to the team. The latter, in turn, needed to share it to their families and loved ones.

The harsh reality was that the CCB could only pay full salaries for March and then 75% to non-managerial staff for the month of April. Messaging this was difficult and scary! A negative response to the cry for relief would have spelt disaster. The organisation was in suspense – a 'frozen face' moment. The media speculation around the Castle and CCB's precarious position added fuel to a simmering situation (Mlamla, 2020 & South African Broadcasting Corporation 2020).

What aided the CCB management team from a moral and communications point of view was the fact that we lodged a parallel application to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) for relief.

In another genuine gesture of goodwill, the CCB Board announced that it would not pay management's salaries until it has clarity on a positive funding application outcome. These two acts were arguably the communications game-changers. The subsequent expressions of sympathy and commendations that followed these interventions provided the social capital for all other engagements.

In addition to the Departmental application process, the CCB presented its case to the Defence Portfolio Committee on 3 May (Castle Control Board 2020). Contrary to expectation (because the CCB reckoned there were thousands of organisations and millions of people worse off than us), the Committee expressed empathy and concern and promised to engage the Minister directly (Xaba, 2020). They praised management for their willingness to take the severe pay cut and instead offer it to the general workers.

From a technical point of view the MS Teams meeting with the said Committee, the first of several to follow, was all but plain sailing. Our crucial presentation was disrupted by weak connectivity, and it was only the ingenuity of the CCB's Audit Committee Chairperson, Advocate Dave Mitchell, who saved the day for all and sundry. He instantaneously created a hybrid communications platform by combining a WhatsApp call with the MS Teams meeting that could be heard (though not viewed) by the Portfolio Committee members. Not ideal, but effective and efficient for the CCB's pleas to reach the politicians' ears. Subsequent lobbying and engagement – at a distance – ensured a reliable platform with the Committee and the Deputy Minister ensuring an eventual positive outcome.

Finally, on 20 May, the CCB's funding conundrum ended. The Department of Defence transferred the highly anticipated R3 m relief funding to the CCB. Quite gratuitously the CCB's UIF application was also successful, and an amount of R57 565 paid over on 28 May. After a management meeting the CCB decided to return the UIF funds on 11 June. The remaining 25% of staff's April salary could be paid on 21 May. Management's outstanding April salaries were settled on 31 May 2020 and all wages returned to normal as from 30 June. This experience was indeed a case of a communications nightmare turned into a dream outcome.

Perhaps words, especially for people removed from our near-traumatic situation, cannot express what we went through. The coordination and synchronisation of all the communications, messages, conversations, calls, submissions, pleas, lobbying – all without person-to-person, face-to-face contact in a pressure-boiler environment – was no mean feat.

SOME PERILS OF DISTANCE COMMUNICATION

Although virtual communications were not entirely terra-incognita to the CCB team, like air travel, one can never wholly get used to it. There is always that subconscious fear that something will go wrong. And of course it did. The first CCB Zoom staff meeting was such a disaster that we abandoned the idea and opting for WhatsApp messaging instead. The fact that everybody says that this form of communication would become the 'new normal' was not concerting at all.

FROZEN FACES

Suddenly virtual meeting applications like Zoom, Skype, Google Messenger, Microsoft Teams and others became our new boardrooms and meeting venues. The fact that people tuned them into verbs meant that they were here to stay. And with it came all the trials and tribulations: broken sentences, no images, low-res images, disrupted connections, low sound, no sound – à la the ‘frozen faces’ metaphor. In one phrase – ‘lost in cyber-translation’.

Herewith a summary of some of our first-hand experiences with this new form of communications:

The impersonal nature of this kind of communication was one of the standout features. The fact that one cannot always see your counterpart and not sure that they see you were frustrating and alienating. Often meeting conversations were punctuated with phrases like ‘Can you see me?’ ‘Can you hear me?’ ‘Can you repeat please!’ ‘What’s that noise in the background?’ ‘Can you feel me?’

Despite their infrequency, virtual meeting and webinars are taxing. One feels more tired from a forty-minute virtual meeting session than a three-hour contact meeting. It is probably the psychological effect of the technology that causes feelings of exhaustion.

Many of the CCB staff did not dialogue when management or the Board sent out lockdown updates on their WhatsApp group. However, when one of their own sends something, the dialogical activity was more frequent and varied. This dialogical trend once again sensitised us to the importance of the human factor in technology and communication.

Management only very late in the lockdown picked up on the inter-organisational inequalities, e.g. the taken-for-granted access to airtime and data that the lower-income workers often struggle to afford. A simple move to allocate a monthly ‘data allowance’ of R50 per staff member flipped this situation around.

It is one thing to say that we want to engage as equals whilst the environment militates against it. Staff feel uncomfortable to engage. It could be the language barrier, writing culture or merely the power relations at play.

A simple lockdown regulation like social distancing is working in a spacious, suburb house. In an informal township settlement it is a delusion. So communicating about it from a distance proved to be unrealistic.

POST-SCRIPT: BACK TO BUSINESS AS USUAL-‘UNUSUAL’

The Castle of Good Hope reopened its doors on 1 September. The opening occurred without any fanfare other than updating the website and social media. We arranged for a more media-friendly start to coincide with the Spring Equinox, 21 September, to build up to South Africa’s National Heritage Day (24 September) and World Tourism Day (27 September).

Given the strict Covid-19 protocols of museums, we could only offer a significantly reduced heritage offering to Castle patrons. We communicated clearly to potential visitors who so far have not complained about the fact that three of our four museums are closed on a Monday, that we offer no canon-firing, no traditional key-ceremonies involving marching soldiers and that we imposed early closures. All these changes were affected at the same entry fee of R50 per adult and R25 per child. And so far we have received no negative comebacks.

At the time of publication of this article we still experienced a slump in visitor and revenue numbers. For the period 1 September to 27 November we have made a mere R206 000 – that is lower than our weakest month in the previous year, i.e. R305 000 in June 2019. There are signs that a recovery is imminent, but the lessons from the past seven months have certainly steeled us for the future.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The preceding paragraphs have exposed the perils (but also joys) of communicating from a distance. There are inherent systemic features of these so-called 4IR communication platforms that will always militate against meaningful, rich and personal human engagement. The fact of the matter is that this new communications regime – hate it or love it – is here to stay. The Covid-19 pandemic served as a reminder and hastener of this reality.

As heritage professionals we need to take serious note of these new technological advances and provide for them at the level of strategic planning, operations and day to day interactions with our user communities. Some of the high-level findings emanating from our experiences discussed above are:

-  The current high levels of inter-and intra-organisational **DIGITAL ILLITERACY** undermine engagement and meaningful communication at staff, stakeholder, funder and client levels. We strongly recommend that management mainstreams digital empowerment and enrichment programmes in museum and heritage institutions.
-  The lack of a **CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN** and over-reliance on face-to-face interaction is affecting most organisations/individuals we engaged virtually.
-  The absence of a **VIRTUAL HERITAGE STRATEGY** (online and virtual exhibitions) frustrates interaction and dialogue.
-  A dearth of elementary social media hard and software aggravated the ability of the organisation to maintain and enhance the **CONTACT WITH ITS CLIENTS** and the latter with its heritage tourism offerings.

In conclusion, the fact that the perils of virtual communications ended in a positive (pleasurable) short-term outcome for the workers at the Castle of Good Hope, one of the biggest lessons from this near-traumatic episode is the fact that the global pandemic seemed to have transformed us into more flexible, adaptable, patient and tolerant beings. Dare we say, almost more humane. We hope that these and other positive traits will overshadow the dark sides of humanity also unearthed during this epoch-changing, global disruption.

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BUILDING UBUNTU THROUGH ZULU IDIOMS AND PROVERBS

Zameka Yamile

Collections Manager
KwaZulu Cultural Museum

The KwaZulu Cultural Museum, Ondini, is a project of the KZN Amafa and Research Institute which is situated in Ulundi. The vision of our organisation is 'Custodians of shared history of the people of KwaZulu Natal'.

The Museum offers services to the public in various ways: through education, skills development, research and the provision of facilities to the community. We believe that the social responsibility issues that affect the community are crucial. The Museum is the education centre for all ages, despite their socio-economic status and cultural background. The crucial thing is to impart long-lasting knowledge to our visitors, with factual information on our exhibitions, representing the history and heritage of the province. This also gives visitors an opportunity to share their views on the development of the exhibitions.

Changing of exhibitions can be expensive. KZN Amafa and Research Institute has come up with ways to upgrade our

museum displays. Temporary exhibitions have been a way to proceed for our museum.

We had an exhibition *Building Humanness (Ubuntu) through Zulu Idioms and proverbs* which related to other languages – isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans. Ubuntu involves hospitality of strangers, which is why there is a saying 'unyawo alinampumulo' – a foot does not have a nose. This saying propounds that people should be treated with care and hospitality as one does not know where he or she will end up one day. This resulted in a demand from educators and learners for this exhibition to be up for a longer period than we expected. This has illustrated that every language is rich in terms of literature. Items used might be different but the meaning of the proverb or idiom is the same. Learners benefited from this exhibition as did the community. It encouraged respect for other cultures as we are situated in an area with cultural diversity, where more than twenty-two cultures live together in harmony.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ENCOURAGING HERITAGE CONSERVATION

LEARNING

SOCIAL COHESION

PROMOTING ONDINI AS AN EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

REVIVING HISTORY

THE BENEFITS OF THE EXHIBITION

Iggabi aliwi kude
emthini walo

the leaf does not fall far away from its tree

2020 IN REVIEW

Constitutional Court Art Collection

Francois Lion-Cachet
Assistant curator of the CCAC

Amidst the challenges faced due to Covid-19, 2020 was a fertile year for the Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC). Sustained donor funding made possible the continued efforts towards the conservation of the CCAC, as well as a greater focus on public engagement activities that will continue in the coming years. The public gallery of the Constitutional Court, showcasing a rotating selection of works of the CCAC, is open to the public over the holiday period.

The CCAC is a unique collection of predominantly South African artworks, many of which are internationally acclaimed, that stimulates and enriches education, critical debate and research on the transformative role of the Constitution and the Constitutional Court of South Africa. The collection provides a visual interface between art and justice for the public entering the highest court in South Africa.

The collection explores and interrogates the themes of transition, human rights, constitutionalism, identity, reparation, reconciliation and social justice in the South African context. Many works in the CCAC portray the political agency and lived experiences of the artists. Others are more abstract and traditional, using form to evoke emotion and understanding – and to celebrate cultural diversity.

A new exhibition from the CCAC's permanent collection was installed in the public gallery at the end of June 2020

as part of the biannual rotation of artworks on public display. Descriptive signage enables self-guided tours. The public gallery is open to the public seven days a week at no cost.

The monthly Art & Justice tours of the CCAC resumed on Heritage Day in September, following the relaxing of Covid-19 protocols. The tours usually are hosted on the last Saturday of every month and bookings can be made by sending an email to ccac@concourtttrust.org.za. Due to the intimate nature of the tour as well as social distancing protocols, tours are limited to ten people and are often fully booked. Rebecca Gore, law clerk at the Constitutional Court who attended the September tour, said that the Art & Justice tour is 'enriching and fascinating. It shows, through the carefully curated artworks, how the constitutional project and the Court building itself is not just about the law but how the law, history and art are all intricately connected. Every brick, every door and every wall has a story'.

Artist Kim Lieberman completed her *Landscape of the Court* (2016/2020) sculpture installation in the Constitutional Court between June and July 2020. This large sculpture, on loan to the CCAC and on display in the public gallery until February 2021, contains conceptual symbolism of how the Constitutional Court was established. It includes depictions of Justices Pius Langa, Arthur Chaskalson, Kate O'Regan, Albie Sachs, Yvonne Mokgoro, Edwin Cameron and Ismail Mahomed.

2020 IN REVIEW



The photographs that accompany this article show a number of views of the public gallery of the Constitutional Court. Artwork from, others, works, include Dumile Feni, Leonard Matsoso, Kim Berman, Peter Clarke, Amos Miller, Thea Soggot, Velaphi Mzimba, Greg Marinovich, Mikhael Subotzky and Karel Nel. Photographs by Francois Lion-Cachet © CCT.

This year the CCAC team prioritised research and conservation, in no small part due to the lockdown, that included work on starting *Art & Justice: A Constitutional Court Art Collection* series of short monographs about CCAC artworks and artists, published by the Constitutional Court Trust. The series also showcases the critical behind-the-scenes conservation work undertaken to document, stabilise, store and preserve artworks in the CCAC. Other research included signage development and the start of the CCAC artist and affiliate interview project. Multiple in-person and online interviews were conducted with, amongst others, CCAC artists Sipho Ndlovu, Kim Lieberman, Jaco Sieberhagen, Amos Miller, Joanne Patterson and Eugene Hön.

Conservation of the CCAC continued to be a core activity in 2020. Conservation treatment and framing work was completed on a range of artworks, including Joseph Ndlovu's *Humanity* (the very first work of the CCAC) and *Inspired by L'Ancêtre (Ancestor) 69-71* Oil on canvas by Ernest Ngungunyane Methuen Mancoba, Joanne Patterson's *Pangolin*, Jaco Sieberhagen's *Judge*, Eugene Hon's *Exquisite Slave*, *Popsie*, *Popsy*, Amos Miller's *Nelson Mandela in New York*, Robert Hodgins's *Hotel Room* and Jan du Toit's *Fruits of Labour*. The team made considerable strides towards the creation of a safe environment for the storage and display of the CCAC, closely monitoring humidity, temperature and light levels in the Constitutional Court, and improving security. An outsize storage rack was custom-made for the CCAC, in addition to the CCAC's other artwork storage.

Artwork donations as a result of the generosity and goodwill of artists, galleries and donors see to the strategic and sustained development of the CCAC. In 2020 Richard' Specs' Ndimande, born in 1994, donated three of his drawings to the CCAC, becoming the youngest artist represented in the collection. The works grapple, in part, with the artist's father, a political dissident in the later years of the apartheid, who spent time incarcerated at the notoriously violent Number Four Prison on the Constitution Hill precinct. The inclusion of Specs' works into the CCAC represent the youth of South Africa taking their place in driving South Africa forward.

A series of photographs that resulted from a joint project between the Constitutional Court Trust, custodian of the CCAC, and the Dutch Embassy in South Africa, came into the CCAC in 2020. The photographs depict the Amsterdam Rainbow Dress, made from the flags of all countries in the world where homosexuality is illegal, modelled by transgender activist and model Yaya Mavundla in front of the Constitutional Court.

When the discriminatory legislation is changed that country's flag is replaced with a rainbow flag. Established artist Usha Seejarim donated her *Affairs of the Home* to the CCAC this year, speaking to the refugee crisis. The sculpture is to be exhibited next year, along with the other recently donated works. The CCAC artworks committee considers donation proposals of artworks that could form part of the CCAC, in line with the mission of the CCAC, and its acquisition policy.

2020 also saw scholar Eliza Garnsey's *The Justice of Visual Art* published. Garnsey's study looks at how art can shape ideas and experience of justice as a form of visual jurisprudence and cultural diplomacy; it is a valuable contribution to understanding the role of the CCAC.

Monthly artwork covers for *without prejudice* also appeared between February and November.

The CCAC is managed by the Constitutional Court Trust (CCT) for the benefit of the public, tending to its preservation and presentation through conservation and curatorial programmes. It is dependent on grants and donor funding to carry out this work. The CCT would like to thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Bank of America Conservation Program, the Ford Foundation, the Foundation for Society, Law and Art in South Africa and the Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation for the financial support aiding its work on the CCAC over the last year.

The CCAC can be followed on social media:

Instagram and Twitter - @concourt_art

For more information visit the CCAC website:

ccac.concourttrust.org.za



25 YEARS OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH INTO BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

Andrew Martin

Curator

Amazwi South African Museum of Literature

In September 1995 the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature (formerly the National English Literary Museum) launched a project to address gaps in its holdings, particularly relating to writing by black South Africans. During the apartheid years black writers had been marginalised, with only limited access to mainstream publishing, relying largely on smaller independent presses to be published. With limited print runs and little marketing, copies of these publications were difficult to procure. Many writers faced banning and censorship, which meant that their publications were removed from distribution and destroyed. Some of these writers went in to exile in other countries where they continued to write and publish. Many of these publications were not available in South Africa. In addition there was a need to locate journals published before the museum's founding, especially the more popular magazines such as *Drum*, *Bona* and *Zonk* which contained works by leading black South African writers.

The main task of sourcing the material needed was done through several channels. These include consulting existing bibliographies, library catalogues, second-hand bookseller sites and journal archives. In addition, several leading academics and scholars of South African literature were consulted and over 90 authors were contacted. Their assistance was invaluable, particularly in identifying publications in which their works appeared.

From the outset the project had three main goals: to search for, and wherever possible, obtain a specimen copy of each publication for conservation and future use, to record the bibliographic details for future reference on Amazwi's electronic databases and to make all this material available for research purposes and the promotion of South African literature. Every effort was made to obtain original material. Where originals were not available, photocopies were made from the originals. These copies, though less valuable, provide useful information for the development of publishing history and research purposes.

As a result of this project the museum identified, collected and documented a significant amount of literature, which has greatly augmented its collection. Several publications have been generated from the research undertaken for the bibliography, including articles, chapters in books, exhibition texts and conference papers.

Amazwi has benefitted from the personal contact and interest in this project and has been able to assist several academics and students with their own research. It has been heartening to see a significant growth in interest in black South African literature over these 25 years. It is hoped that this trend will continue. As Amazwi begins a new chapter of working with the literature of other South African languages the experience gained with this project will be of enormous value.

Exiled South African writer Peter Abrahams. Abrahams penned numerous perceptive and powerful novels about the injustices and complexities of racial politics. Photograph Carl Van Vechten, LOC

ROYAL SOCIETY MEDAL GOES FULL CIRCLE

A medal for the country's top scientist has come full circle. The Royal Society of South Africa's Marloth Medal, which was originally awarded to coelacanth discoverer, JLB Smith, has been awarded to his biographer, Professor Mike Bruton of Cape Town.

The Marloth Medal is the equivalent of a lifetime achievement award, a rare honour and highly sought after by scientists belonging to the Royal Society of South Africa, the country's premier network of scientists.

Making the announcement, the President of the Royal Society, Professor Stephanie Burton, said: 'Professor Michael Bruton's career epitomises the ethos of Herman Marloth's varied life achievements as embodied in this medal. It is only awarded in honour of highly distinguished individuals who have given exemplary service to science, nurturing younger professionals, and fostering the public understanding of science'. She added: 'By awarding this medal, the Society wishes to celebrate the pioneering contributions of the botanist Hermann Wilhelm Rudolf Marloth, born in 1855, and his son Raimund, born in 1904. Both father and son were Fellows of the Society and left generous bequests that enabled the Society to continue awarding the medal'.

Rarely awarded, the Marloth Medal was once bestowed on Dr JLB Smith, an ichthyologist and organic chemist and his student, Doug Rivett. Smith was the first scientist to identify a living coelacanth, which was thought have gone extinct. Burton added: 'The breadth of Professor Bruton's academic and public career in the communication of science is remarkable and rare. He is a fully deserving candidate for the award of the Royal Society of South Africa's Marloth Medal, in recognition of his lifelong contribution to academic science and the public understanding of science', she said.

Professor Bruton, who was born in East London, now lives in Rondebosch, Cape Town. He received his MSc and PhD degrees from Rhodes University in Makhanda/Grahamstown, based on research he conducted on freshwater fishes in Zululand and elsewhere in Africa. His career initially focused on ichthyology and aquatic ecology but later broadened into a study of the life-

history strategies of animals. He was the first Head of the Department of Ichthyology & Fisheries Science at Rhodes University and took over from Professor Margaret Smith as the Director of the JLB Smith Institute of Ichthyology (now the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity, SAIAB) in Makhanda. He was later appointed as the Head of Education at the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town where he developed the education and public awareness programmes.

Mike Bruton was the founding director of what is now the Cape Town Science Centre and later served as the founding director of the Bahrain Science Centre and as advisor to the director of the Museum of Science & Technology in Islam at the King Abdullah University of Science & Technology in Saudi Arabia. Now retired, he continues to contribute knowledge and understanding as a specialist consultant on science education, an author of popular science books, and a sought-after public speaker on science and technology. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa in 1984 and serves on the Society's Council and Western Cape branch committee. He is also chairman of the advisory committee of SciFest Africa, the national science festival. His parallel careers in scientific research and science communication are reflected in his extensive publication record which comprises over 120 peer-reviewed scientific papers and chapters in books, 31 books and over 800 popular articles. His next book on African innovations will be published in June 2021. He has also published six children's books on fishes, whales and insects.

Professor Bruton has lectured at universities, science centres and museums throughout Africa and in Europe, North and South America, Asia and Australasia. He has supervised the research of over forty postgraduate students and acted as external examiner for African, European, Australian and American universities. He is married to Carolyn and they have three children, Craig, Ryan and Tracey. His hobbies include hiking, cycling, gardening, and nurturing his ecopool and beehive.

On hearing news of his award, Bruton quipped that 'all the late nights were worth it'. For further info please contact Prof Mike Bruton at: mikefishesbruton@gmail.com

SAMA 2020 CONFERENCE REPORT Interacting at a distance

Bongani Ndhlovu and Talita Fourie

After so much speculation about the nature and the character of the 2020 conference, members of the South African Museums Association congregated virtually on 28 October 2020 at their AGM and conference. Under the conference theme *Interacting at a Distance*, delegates discussed how they navigated challenges associated with doing museums and museology under Covid-19 lockdown regulations. The further explored opportunities presented by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). In her presidential address Dr Vollgraaff briefly explored how SARS-Cov-2 altered the heritage landscape. She further looked at how museums and heritage institutions grappled with their new realities. It was within this context that presenters tackled this question in more detail in the two sessions that followed.

MUSEUMS AND PANDEMICS, DISRUPTIONS, RESPONSE AND REPOSITIONING: Africa's Perspectives

Dr Pascall Taruvinga gave a detailed analysis of *Museums and Pandemics, Disruptions, Response and Repositioning: Africa's Perspectives*. Pascall gave a systematic of analysis of past disruptions and pandemics. He argued that the history of humanity has showed that there have never been storms that lasted for eternity. He therefore requested museums to look at innovative approaches to tackling new challenges. In seeking solutions Taruvinga encouraged a bottom-up approach and challenged museums in Africa to reposition themselves from within instead of waiting for solutions from the global north. Taruvinga concluded by arguing that pandemics were in fact opportunities for a new normal to be established and maintained that they position museums to respond better to unknown future disruptions.

FROZEN FACES: The Pleasures and Perils of 4IR-Crisis Communication at the Castle of Good Hope

The CEO of the Castle Control Board, Calvyn Gilfellan, continued from where Pascall left by deliberately starting his presentation with a technical glitch disruption. Gilfellan's paper was titled *Frozen Faces: The Pleasures and Perils of 4IR-Crisis Communication at the Castle of Good Hope, Cape Town, South Africa*. Calvyn gave a candid analysis of the impact of the SARS-Cov-2 lockdown on museum programming, staff, Board and museum visitors. He maintained that the lack of a crisis communication plan, over-reliance on face-to-face interaction, absence of a virtual heritage strategy, absence of online and virtual exhibitions and a dearth of elementary social media software (and hardware) aggravated the ability of the Castle and museums in general to maintain and enhance the contact with their clients. However, he concluded by observing that the pandemic also afforded the sector with much needed space for reflection, introspection and revaluation as most entities had to explore alternative ways of programming in order to keep their activities running. He challenged museums to review their communication strategies and requested them to be disaster prepared.

FOUJD IN TRANSLATION: Engaging Multiple Audiences in the Creation, Installation and Reach of a Museum Exhibition

Richard Kilpert's *Foujd in Translation: Engaging multiple audiences in the creation, installation and reach of a museum exhibition* explored in detail how the Zeitz Moccaa Centre for Art Education (CFAE) developed new content that



Interior of Zeitz MoCaa Centre Photograph Iwan Baan, www.dezeen.com

was accessed through online and mobile formats. In his presentation Kilpert looked at how museum content found new articulation through innovation and translation to different languages. Through an art project the CFAE was able to translate written and recorded stories into children's languages for greater access. Furthermore, the presence of the project online enabled communities and community art centres to productively engage with their content, transforming the project into a broader educational experience. Richard's presentation demonstrated how a project that was initiated before the outbreak of a pandemic was translated into a valuable tool. Prior to the outbreak the 'And So the Stories Ran Away' project focused on encouraging children's mental and physical interaction with museum content. Through his presentation Kilpert also demonstrated how parents spent time reading accompanying stories and how larger groups created their artworks. These works were to find expressions in their homes and schools. In an interesting parallel, delegates noted the 'Home Is where Art Is' project where artworks found their way to the museum.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF EARTH DAY with Mbali – Iziko's super explorer

Devonne Kortje, Robyn Simons, Louis Jonk, Amy Sephton, Nkosingiphile Mazibuko and Claire Browning presented *Celebrating 50 years of Earth Day with Mbali – Iziko's super explorer*. This team shared the results of a collaborative work between Iziko Museums and Council for Geosciences' experts. They detailed how designers and researchers created a virtual exhibition using a super explorer named Mbali during the SARS-CoV-2 hard-lockdown. In making this exhibition, they wanted to cultivate future ambassadors of climate change. Their target was school children hence Mbali, a comic character that they could relate to. In an attempt to make their content accessible and to effect behavioural change, they created a comic book with activity printouts and saw to it that it was in a sharable format, including social media friendly formats. They concluded by looking at the effect of such museum programming for the future.

Mbali – Iziko's super explorer, Image Iziko





MANAGING AND CONSERVING HERITAGE OBJECTS HOUSED IN STATE- SUPPORTED/AIDED INSTITUTIONS

Nolitha Ngcai, Themba Monnye, Cuan Hahndiek and Regina Isaacs focused on a close analysis of Managing and conserving heritage objects housed in state-supported/ aided institutions. As a collective they looked at lack of resources, future uncertainties and the impact they have on the conservation of heritage objects. In their analysis they maintained that Covid-19 has exacerbated the problem and that it has exposed gaps in future planning. They argued for a legislative framework that will enable state aided institutions to effectively manage heritage objects in their care and emphasised the need for mutually beneficial partnerships.

THE AGE OF THE VIRTUAL COLLECTION: How Technology and a Pandemic is Driving the Revitalisation of a Historic Collection

In The age of the virtual collection: how technology and a pandemic is driving the revitalisation of a historic collection
Louis Jonk, Samukelisiwe Mtshali and Cameron Penn-Clarke collectively looked at how the Council for Geosciences (CGS) embarked on a project to transform its 120 year-old historic palaeontology collection into a multi-disciplinary digital database. They argued that the 'virtual collections' and the associated database will integrate up to date taxonomic, geological and geographical context for all the palaeontological specimens. They observed that the modern

digital database that was under construction at CGS will give researchers and visitors inclusive access to the 'hidden' scientific and cultural treasures in the CGS's care.

COLLECTING FROM A DISTANCE: How to balance collection management and social distancing

Louis, Samukelisiwe and Cameron also gave a second presentation, this time focusing on *Collecting from a distance: how to balance collection management and social distancing*. In this presentation the CGS collective systematically focused on challenges associated with effectively managing collections without aiding the spread of SARS-CoV-2. In the process of integrating collections and in creating virtual collections, the collective looked at how conventional collection management procedures were radically modified to allow for stringent social distancing protocols. The new procedures included a heightened focus on data mining and offsite data migration. They argued that such adaptability has enabled CGS to qualitatively capture thousands of new data entries and to record and uncover numerous scientifically and culturally valuable specimens.

The conference concluded by noting challenges and opportunities presented by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and observed that it was important for museums to adapt in a changing environment.

THE AGE OF THE VIRTUAL COLLECTION: HOW TECHNOLOGY AND A PANDEMIC IS DRIVING THE REVITALISATION OF A HISTORIC COLLECTION

Louis W. Jonk, Samukelisiwe P. Mtshali,
Cameron Penn-Clarke, Council for Geoscience

A core function of museums and institutional collection houses entails acting as massive resources for academic study. By allowing researchers access to their vast collections, museums and other institutional collections play a crucial role in the generation of knowledge in arts, culture, and science. Unfortunately, this access has been heavily limited by the current Covid-19 pandemic, forcing the academic community to strongly consider the value of large digital databases or 'virtual collections'.

The Council for Geosciences (CGS) has become aware of the value of these 'virtual collections' and has, therefore, embarked on a project to transform their 120-year-old historic palaeontology collections into a modern, multi-disciplinary digital database. This database will integrate up to date taxonomic, geological and geographical context for all the palaeontological specimens in their collections and present it in a geographical-reference based user interface using ArcGIS or similar software packages. By coupling the database to a visual geographic-reference system, users will be able to navigate the entire database using a visual representation of the object's geographic map reference, much like the widely used Paleodb.org database. Ideally this system will also allow the addition of data sources such as associated literature, collection metadata and repository location for the specimens as they become available.

By building this modern digital database, this project will allow for far-reaching inclusive access to the many scientific and cultural treasures within a collection that has long been hidden to the world.

COLLECTING FROM A DISTANCE: HOW TO BALANCE COLLECTION MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

Samukelisiwe P. Mtshali, Louis Jonk, Cameron
Penn-Clarke, Council for Geoscience

Institutional collections such as museums curate and manage vast collections of objects within their care, thereby preserving many symbols of cultural and scientific importance and facilitating their academic study. The challenge faced by all institutional collections today is how to effectively manage their collections, without aiding in the spread of the current Covid-19 pandemic.

As the national custodian of geoscientific knowledge, the Council for Geoscience (CGS) has amassed an impressive collection of geological and palaeontological specimens from the last 120 years. A project to completely revamp this antiquated collection has recently been undertaken. This revamp includes the migration of analogue catalogues to electronic spreadsheets, auditing and reclassification of all specimens, and the construction of a multi-disciplinary, integrated database. Due to the pandemic, many of the typical collection management procedures to achieve this renovation have been heavily modified to allow for stringent social distancing protocols.

These revised practices include a heightened focus on data mining or 'digital detective work' and offsite data migration using a mixture of high-resolution photography and online data-sharing platforms. Additionally, by staggering onsite days between project members and utilising cloud-hosted spreadsheets, collections can be accessed and specimens inspected safely with live work updates between collection staff.

To date these methods have allowed the capture of some twenty-five-thousand data entries, with numerous scientifically valuable specimens and at least one culturally valuable specimen having been uncovered. The lessons learned during this project have greatly aided in continuing the essential work of collections management at the CGS during these trying times and will hopefully form the groundwork for safe collection management in future crises.

SAMA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

President's Report
SAMA Annual General Meeting
28 October 2020

The overriding emphasis during the last year has been the development of SAMA as a professional body. To this end a revision of the constitution has been undertaken. Efforts are being made to register SAMA as an accredited body and to develop accredited courses for the museum profession. At the same time SAMA training programmes are being expanded to include all aspects of museum work. SAMA is also keen to develop partnerships and to play a leading role in the museum and heritage sector.

GOVERNMENT LIAISON

Several opportunities for collaboration between SAMA, DSAC and other governmental agencies such as SAHRA have arisen and warrant the creation of a special Government Liaison Committee. The SAMA President has in the meantime received invitations to attend DSAC consultative forums on heritage policy and economic stimulation funding.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

SAMA drafted the SAMA Covid-19 norms and standards for museums that were circulated to members. It provided museums with practical tips on how to implement the regulations issued by government in terms of the Disaster Management Act. These norms and standards received very positive feedback. The SAMA Office and Council also assisted museums seeking assistance with interpreting and applying regulations issued by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Arts in terms of the Disaster Management Act as well as the SAMA Covid-19 norms and standards.

VISSA

SAMA has linked up with the Visitor and Interpretation Studies South Africa (VISSA), a network of free-choice learning organisations. SAMA and VISSA agreed to cross-market events and share information resources. SAMA took responsibility for the VISSA Virtual Coffee Chat on 3 November 2020. The President thanked Heidi Boise and Sonja Warnich-Stemmet for organising this event on behalf of SAMA.

DUTCH SHARED HERITAGE PROGRAMME

Invitations were also received from the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands to take part in consultative discussions from 2 to 4 June regarding the Programme's activities for the period 2021–2023. SAMA is an existing participant in the Shared Heritage Programme and benefitted from expertise and funding provided for conservation training.

DECOLONISING AS A VERB WEBINAR

SAMA organised a joint webinar on decolonising collections with COMCOL & ICOM-SA. The webinar, Decolonising as a Verb, was sponsored by the ICOM Special Projects Fund. The webinar was held on from 25 to 26 November and attracted speakers from across the world. The aim was to move away from theory and talk to the practical implementation of decolonising programmes.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Members were informed that Council was looking at ways of restructuring the Standing Committees and sub-committees to make them more effective. The SAMA President urged SAMA members to become more involved in committee activities. A formal Call for Interest will be circulated and those volunteering their services should contact the SAMA office.

Lemohang Zincume has been co-opted on to Council to manage the COMMUNICATIONS portfolio. She has already made an impact with marketing today's webinar and redesigning the membership form. The aim of the communications portfolio is to ensure consistent communication across all SAMA communication media such as social media, newsletters and the website. The intention is also to bring about consistent branding for SAMA.

Two issues of *Samantics* have appeared in 2020: the first a 2019 conference edition and the second focusing on Covid-19 and the 1918 flu epidemic. Helene Vollgraaff, Medée Rall and Totem Media continue to maintain the high quality of the publication.

Council and members heartily congratulated Helen Joannides on revamping the SAMA WEBSITE. In her report she stated that the aim was to streamline and restructure the website and to make pertinent material readily available on the site. Helen thanked Janey Cramer of WebMuse and Marianne Gertenbach for their assistance in bringing this to fruition. A new feature of the website is an interactive map with pop-ups linked to member museums. The development of museum resources such as handbooks is an area needing attention. Much depends on input from both Council and members to keep the website relevant and alive. Any feedback, information, ideas and images are welcome.

Professor Bernadine Benson tabled the report on SAMAB AND RESEARCH. The current issue is SAMAB 42 with the theme '*21st century challenges: museums as social and political spaces*'. The first call went out in March 2020 but was extended to 1 June because of Covid-19. There were seven submissions but split panels often meant appointing a third reviewer. The editors are on the look-out for reliable, efficient and effective reviewers and keen to attract a broader spectrum of authors. As an accredited journal, SAMAB plays a key role in developing the museum profession.

The year saw the completion of the three-year TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAMME funded by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Pretoria as part of the Dutch Shared Heritage Programme. Double workshops were held in Pretoria from 9 to 12 March, just before lockdown. The workshops dealt with preventive conservation of ceramics, glass and metals and there were nineteen participants. The final workshop of this three-year programme was organised online from 30 November to 2 December.

While the Dutch programme focused on conservation, the training committee is also developing general museum courses which should be rolled out in 2021. Although external trainers will be used, the committee is intent on drafting manuals to standardise the training programmes and to ensure best practice in museums.

Regina van Vuuren chairs the sub-committee tasked with registering SAMA AS A PROFESSIONAL BODY. This requires NPO registration and hence the pressure to revise the SAMA constitution. In the meantime the sub-committee is also addressing the issue of 'designated museum professions' and is currently reviewing the list of museum professions.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The SAMA Treasurer, Chris de Klerk, reported that SAMA received an unqualified audited financial statement. The Treasurer pointed out that SAMA has shown a steady improvement in its finances over the past five years. This enabled Council to start embarking on more projects last year.

The implementation of budget plans for 2020 was unfortunately hampered by the Covid-19 lockdown. While income from membership is less than expected, it has been offset by reduced activities and expenditure. The Treasurer thanked SAMA KZN for generously contributing to the legal costs incurred in the revision of the constitution.

Audit Report	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Total Assets	359 232	322 605	264 044	221 259	180 827
Total Income	214 023	181 773	151 608	157 482	146 618
Total Expenditure	191 096	116 542	114 901	120 009	83 466
Surplus	22 927	65 231	43 606	44 125	63 152

MEMBERSHIP

The impact of Covid-19 is evident in the table of membership figures below. The total of 248 is well below the 300 mark reached two years ago. However, only active life members on our mailing list were counted, reducing the total even further.

2020	LIFE	KZN	SN	W CAPE	NC	E CAPE	FREE STATE	TO DATE
Institutional		22	33	40	5	15	5	120
Individual		24	24	33	3	17	4	105
Life	23							23
Total	23	46	57	73	8	32	9	248

REGIONAL REPORTS

The regional chairpersons tabled their sections of the annual report. Most activities planned for the year were disrupted by the Covid-19 lockdown. When museum staff returned to work from September onwards they had to catch up on backlogs in their own jobs. Social media proved to be a useful tool for networking and opportunities for online activities will be explored in future. All regions showed a drop in numbers but undertook to engage more members in the new year.

SAMA KZN

Ayanda Ngcobo tabled the report as the new chairperson of SAMA KZN. A new committee was elected at the regional AGM on 20 October. SAMA KZN continues to offer bursaries for CAM courses and sent a textile conservator on the Train the Trainer programme. Income was generated with the Magwaza pottery project and from hosting the 2019 SAMA National Conference. In 2017 SAMA KZN contributed to the development of the SAMA website and this year to the legal costs of revising the SAMA constitution.

SAMA NORTH

Talita Fourie is supported by a large committee spread over the whole region of SAMA North. She informed the AGM that the SAMA National Conference had been postponed because of Covid-19 but would be hosted by SAMA North in 2021. SAMA North has a growing Facebook and Twitter presence that has enabled the committee to network with members during lockdown.

SAMA EASTERN CAPE

Victor Clarke reported on behalf of SAMA Eastern Cape that no meeting had been held this year because of Covid-19. Because of this experience the committee is looking at new ways of doing things such as hosting meetings and activities online. The committee is also awaiting the outcome of the revision of the constitution and the regional restructuring that it entails.

SAMA WESTERN CAPE

Francois Fouché took over as chairperson of SAMA Western Cape this year. Although their schedule of activities has been disrupted, the region managed to hold an AGM on the 20 October. Two courses are being planned for next year and the committee is already preparing to host the SAMA National Conference in the Western Cape in 2022.

SAMA FREESTATE

Lebohang Nyenye reported that all the Free State's activities, including the AGM, were postponed because of Covid-19 but hopefully would resume in the new year. Since the opening of the region's bank account SAMA National has paid over the seed money to SAMA Free State.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION REVISION

A resolution to amend the SAMA constitution was voted on at the AGM on 28 October. Unfortunately, though members present voted overwhelming to approve the amendments, the required quorum of two-thirds of members in good standing was not obtained.

A special AGM on the amendments to the constitution will be held on 10 February 2021. We encourage all members to vote either by attending the meeting in person or by proxy.

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS IS TO ALIGN THE CONSTITUTION WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NPO ACT, THEREBY ENABLING SAMA TO REGISTER AS A NPO

In addition, though much of the groundwork was done by the SAMA Office, SAMA appointed a lawyer to ensure that the constitution is NPO compliant and met legal standards.

In the final revision the legal consultant focused on aligning the constitution to NPO requirements and obtaining tax exempt status. Certain aspects such as the powers of the association and the termination of membership were also clarified. He stipulated that regions could no longer be regarded as separate entities with their own constitutions, bank accounts and assets. The President confirmed that the regional chairpersons had been consulted and all supported these changes.

The revised constitution also makes provision for bylaws which would contain more detailed information such as procedures, membership criteria and terms of references of committees.

The bylaws still require extensive work and can only be approved once completed. This includes providing more details regarding the functioning of the regional committees, standing committees and sub-committees to Council, including:

- Their respective mandates or purpose of the committee
- Procedures for the election or appointment of members
- Procedures for the election or appointment of chairpersons
- Duration of term
- Recordkeeping of meetings and decisions
- Reporting to Council

In addition, though it is accepted that SAMA will in future have one financial system and one set of bank accounts, protocols and budgeting processes to ensure the regional committees have access to funds generated by or for them have to be stipulated in the constitution.

DECOLONISING AS A VERB

Reinterpreting collections and collecting

Online webinar 25 to 26 November 2020

Joint project with ICOM COMCOL and ICOM-SA

In recent years museums across the globe have been tackling the challenges of decolonising in their institutions. They do this in response to a growing demand from society that museums should face their historical selves and their inherited practices. Museums are challenged to acknowledge their past, understand how the past shaped the present and to act on it today for a different future. Looking at the different approaches to decolonisation worldwide, the term appears to be subject to different interpretations. Some define decolonisation as a process that institutions undergo to expand the perspectives they portray beyond those of the dominant cultural group, particularly white colonisers, whereas others define it as 'at a minimum creating procedures for sharing authority on documentation and interpretation'.

The legacies of the colonial are ingrained in the social fabric of today's society; they are stored in our bodily archives. Therefore, decolonisation is not simply a matter of representation or repatriation. It concerns the language we speak, the archives we use, the way we categorise, what we collect, how the building is designed, the way topics and objects are researched and how knowledge is defined and shared.

SAMA, in partnership with ICOM COMCOL and ICOM-SA, held a very successful webinar around the theme of decolonisation, focusing on museum praxis. We had speakers from across the world sharing their experiences.

On the first day we had a great and thought-provoking conversation between Alexandra Bounia and Professor Achille Mbembe. Mbembe argued for an epistemology that acknowledges the value of all lives, that draws on the richness of diverse knowledge systems and heals the world – the Anthropocene where museums no longer aspire simply to be at the service of humans, but at the service of life.

The session on knowledge archives was moderated by Professor Ciraj Rassool and the speakers were:

- Jesmael Mataga from the Sol Plaatje University, Kimberley, South Africa
- Bruno Brulon Soares, UNIRIO, Brazil
- Bongani Mkhonza, UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa.

It was followed by an engaged and inspirational panel session on the production and distribution of knowledge. Which archives and repertoires of knowledge are used? And which of these archives are neglected or excluded.

In the first session of the second day three artists, Barby Asante of the United Kingdom, Clementine DeLiss and Patricia Kaersenhout of the Netherlands shared their experiences on how they use their art to shape space and to create new art languages as an act of decolonisation. This session was moderated by Bernard Akoi-Jackson from Ghana.

After a short session where participants discussed building networks, the future of collections and the future of colonial statues, the fifth and last session focused on decolonised museum practice. Moderated by Bongani Ndhlovu, Brandie MacDonald from the Museum of US, San Diego, USA; Laura van Broekhoven, Pitt Rivers Museum, United Kingdom; Flower Manase of the National Museum of Tanzania and Jérémie Michael McGowan of Norway talked about decolonised museum practice. This included co-curating practices, critically engaged with colonial pathways of collecting and acknowledging local communities' expertise in taking care of objects.

SAMA would like to thank our partners ICOM-SA and COMCOL for making this webinar a reality. SAMA would also like to thank the ICOM Fund for Special Projects (SAREC) for funding this project. Additional funding was provided by SAMA, ICOM-SA and COMCOL.

Recordings of the webinar will be made available on the COMCOL website. We will also place a link on the SAMA website. A special edition of SAMAB with contributions from the webinar is planned for 2021.

SAMA PANEL DISCUSSION

Bongani Ndhlovu, SAMA Vice-President

In a year that was characterised by uncertainties SAMA wrapped up the month of November 2020 with a series of online activities. One such online activity was a SAMA panel discussion on the *Museum Definition Crisis* which was held on 27 November. The discussion on this hotly contested issue was attended by participants from both the global north and the global south.

The discussion was facilitated by South Africa's experienced Deputy-Director General for Heritage Promotion and Preservation, Vusithemba Ndima. Ndima has extensive experience in museums, heritage promotion, policy formulation and governance. He opened the discussion by arguing that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the old definition and put forward the proposition that the new definition was very elitist. Ndima's assertion set the cat amongst the pigeons.

museum?

/mju: 'ziəm/

George Henry Okello Abungu expressed his disagreement with the view that the definition was elitist. Abungu (PhD) was part of the team that attempted to revise the definition and has extensive experience in the heritage sector. He is the Founding Director of Okello Abungu Heritage Consultants, a Cambridge-trained archaeologist and Emeritus Director-General of the National Museums of Kenya. He served ICOM as a Vice-President and is the immediate former and founding Professor of Heritage Studies at the University of Mauritius. He strongly argued that museums were not apolitical spaces and their definition should take this into account. Abungu maintained that the new definition was a game changer. A museum should be people-centred. He strongly argued that museums were for the people and by the people. As such, museums should also fight for cultural rights. Museums should be in the service of the people.

In his response Ciraj Rassool (PhD) strongly argued that museums are already discursive spaces. He maintained that attempts to review the definition should take this into consideration. Rassool brought to this discussion his experience as Senior Professor of History at the University of the Western Cape. He directs the Remaking Societies, Remaking Persons Supranational Forum. He also directed

the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies at UWC for fifteen years and has previously chaired the Scientific Committee of AFRICOM. He maintained that ICOM was, as early as 2012, opposed to adapting to a new way of defining museums. Rassool maintained that ICOM should embrace dynamic practices in museums as practiced in a number of developing countries. He concluded by calling for a definition that acknowledges the role of museums in global south – this included museology as practised in favelas as an example.

Silvia Forni (PhD) brought in an 'outsider's perspective' in a sense that she was not a member of a committee that engaged in the official processes to craft a new definition. Silvia is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto and Senior Curator of Arts of Global Africa and Deputy Head of Department of Arts and Culture at Royal Ontario Museum. She served as President of ACASA. She is a Fellow of the Center for Curatorial Leadership. She argued that museums needed to transform and reflect the new ways of doing museums. This, she maintained, needed to be reflected in the new definition. As an example, she pointed out that museums were already addressing issues of social justice. However, she pointed out the dilemma faced by cultural institutions that were privately funded.

Shahid Vawda (PhD) observed that the debate was mainly characterised by those who adopted a state-centric approach to ideas against those with a futurist view of museums as democratic spaces. Museums needed to take into account the question of human rights. However, he observed that strong states were not keen to adopt a definition where people can openly articulate their views. As an example he observed that both Iran and Israel objected to the new definition. Vawda is Professor of Anthropology, Archie Mafeje Chair and Director of School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Cape Town. He is also a former executive member of ICOM-South Africa and ICMAH respectively and has contributed towards the redefinition debates of museums within ICOM.

The positive response to this exciting panel discussion was made possible by dedication and support from SAMA members. A special word of appreciations to: Amy Sephton, Marianne Gertenbach, Helen Joannides, Lemohang Zincume, Catherine Snel and Iziko Museums. Their support and work behind-the-scenes is highly appreciated.

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