

**ICOM Germany 1999 to 2004: A Retrospective  
Progress Report  
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Original German

We have come full circle. ICOM Germany is meeting in Berlin again; in the city in which six years ago – almost to the day – you elected me President of ICOM Germany in the “Arsenal Cinema” of the German Historical Museum. On that day, members of the Board and I planned to lend a more distinctive international profile to the German National Committee and to develop attractive proposals for our members, to heighten their international professionalization. At the same time, we intended to expand the influence of ICOM Germany as a part of the world organization in the minds of our members and to work in more intensive partnership with that organization. In this way we hoped that, more strongly than before, German colleagues could come to know institutions and partners from other countries through an exchange of experiences. We also wanted to make the experiences of German museum professionals more readily known throughout the international community.

After two terms in office – and this applies to most Board members – regulations dictate that change is necessary. And that is a good thing. The limited amount of time in each given term assures that the time will be spent optimally. What was achieved between 1999 and today will be evident in the short summary that follows.

### **1. Preconditions**

When I began my tenure as President of ICOM Germany on January 1, 1999, the association had no office, no place of business. My predecessor had accomplished the organization’s tasks with the help of colleagues at his museum in Munich. Today, we thank Hans-Albert Treff for his great personal commitment; his efforts under difficult conditions created the prerequisites for our work of the last six years.

From the beginning, it was clear to the new Board in 1999 that a stronger associational profile would bring about vastly greater demands on the part of the museums, as well as from their employees, demands that could only be met with new office space and staff. After an assessment of ICOM Germany’s budget in 1999, the Federal Administrative Office recommended that new office space be found and staff be hired. With the help of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, we were able to institute a permanent office in Berlin. Since 2000, the office has been located in the same building as the Institute for Museum Studies and the German Museums Association, a great boon to rapid communication and synergy among these three organizations. Heartfelt thanks should be extended to Bernhard Graf for helping in this process.

Shortly after I took up my post, negotiations with government sponsors allowed us to combine existing personnel funds in such a way as to create quickly a permanent position of Office Director. This position has been held – not including a short period at the very beginning, during which Florian Weiss of the Allied Museum in Berlin worked for ICOM – by Johanna Westphal. Certainly, she knows ICOM Germany the best of all of us. At first, finances were only sufficient for a two-day-a-week position (without office

space!), but from month to month it became clear that the situation was untenable, that we were unable to achieve the goals we had set for ourselves in this configuration. At the end of my first term – after nearly three years – the great increase in workload proved that a half-time-position was insufficient. We were pleased to be able to hire Katja Rossocha from June 1, 2001. This would not have been possible if you, ICOM Germany's Members, had not agreed to a moderate increase in membership dues at the 2000 Annual Meeting. Both colleagues have worked as equal Executive Secretaries since then to the complete satisfaction of the Board and, as I have often heard, also to the members. During the one-and-a-half-year period when Katja Rossocha was working in various museums with a fellowship of the Alfried-Krupp von Bohlen and Halbach Foundation, Christoph Lind (previously in Berlin, now working in Mannheim) replaced her as Co-Director.

## **2. The Programmatic Work of ICOM Germany's National Committee**

Further improvements at ICOM Germany were conceived of and implemented on the basis of the fundamental premises mentioned above. It was of utmost importance to strengthen the "I" in ICOM, to re-orient the work of the National Committee to include international questions and cooperative ventures. The themes we worked on were meant to address international museum-specific questions on the one hand and, on the other hand, to take neighboring disciplines into account and to include international cultural policy questions. We introduced a completely new element, namely the idea that the location of our annual meetings should follow the themes with which we engaged. Thus, an experiment began: ICOM Germany held its annual meetings in different countries in order to strengthen also cooperation with other ICOM National Committees. This practice was a novelty within the entire ICOM community. Since then it has been considered exemplary and ICOM's central organization has encouraged other committees to plan such events. The practice was also intended to provide an opportunity for ICOM Germany's Board to meet and make contacts with the ICOM National Boards of the countries visited; participants particularly hoped to advance a sense of mutual and personal knowledge in this way. An entirely new quality to international work emerged through the conception of these meetings, because participants observed with their own eyes the topics, challenges, and people under discussion; ICOM Germany's Members saw the issues at hand in the full context of the institutions they visited. This effect could never have been achieved at meetings of a more traditional kind, where, for example, foreign guest speakers are merely invited to give their impressions.

The first annual meeting of the German National Committee in a different country was put into practice in 1999 in Paris with the theme "International Cultural and Museum Work." To our delight almost 100 colleagues from Germany took part. We met at UNESCO-Headquarters and spoke with high-ranking cultural policy-makers about the cultural and educational work of the organization. We had the opportunity to hear the German UNESCO-Ambassador speak, we toured ICOM's central offices where then President Jacques Perot told us about the work of the world organization and where we were able to see and speak with the employees of the ICOM Secretariat in their immediate work environment. All of these activities proved very important for the development of good working relations. We were also invited to the German Historical Institute and found out about its role, as well as the work of the German Forum for Art History in Paris. In addition, we visited the Goethe Institute.

ICOM France made it possible for us to participate in lectures and discussions at the Museum of Natural History, in the Jewish Museum, in the Louvre, in the École du Louvre and in the Parc de la Villette. We are especially grateful to Michel van Praet, the President of ICOM France at the time, for making this successful cooperation possible.

This first “foreign” meeting of our Committee attracted a great deal of attention among both German and French colleagues, and also at ICOM’s central offices in Paris.

A year later, in 2000, the long-established “Three-Country-Conference” was on the agenda, held at Lindau on Lake Constance and organized jointly by the National Committees of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. German-speaking ICOM members have been meeting in Lindau since the 1970s to talk about issues fundamental to museum work. This conference is held in high regard: it is considered *the* conference to attend for German-speakers in our field. At the 2000 Conference, the turn of the millennium was cause for reflection on the place of museums in society. Therefore, the theme in Lindau that year was “The Museum as Global Village.” Speakers introduced us to present conditions and future perspectives for museums and exhibitions; we also discussed whether intercultural dialogue still works in museums, what opportunities new media offer in exhibitions, how and whether architecture helps or hampers the goals of museum work, and what effects contemporary cultural policy has on our efforts. The Conference Program included an array of excursions to all three countries. This international effort was also well-received in the ICOM family, as evidenced by the many inquiries we received and the translation of the entire conference proceedings into Russian.

In Lindau, the three ICOM National Committee Boards held a joint meeting. Following the preliminary discussions of 1997, the Boards decided that each country would take a turn planning and hosting the “Three-Country-Conference” in the coming years. This practice would not only emphasize the international character of the Conference, but would also assure an increase in the number of participants from the host country in each case. At this juncture, I would like to thank the “Partner Committees” in Switzerland and Austria for their effective cooperation at the 2000 Conference, particularly Presidents Lorenz Homberger (Switzerland) and Günther Dembski (Austria). This cooperation made it possible for ICOM General Secretary Manus Brinkman to attend the meeting as a guest speaker.

The positive response of our membership to the international work of ICOM Germany persuaded the Board to convene the 2001 Annual Meeting in Brussels, defining the theme as: “The Status of Culture in the European Union. Expectations and Realities of European Cultural Funding Programs for Museums and Exhibitions.” More and more, international issues and cooperation determine museum work and oftentimes the European Union’s central offices seem (from the outside) like a dense, impenetrable jungle, to which we all look for support. For that reason, we decided to hold the Annual Meeting at the European Parliament, the center for decision-making in European cultural policy and for project resource allocation. The Chairman of the Commission for Culture and Education, the German Ambassador to the EU, and German representatives to the EU-Parliament spoke about cultural policy. Deputies of the German provincial governments in Brussels, a representative of Cultural Contact Point in Bonn, a member of the Berlin Institute for Museum Studies, as well as consultants to the EU spoke to us about expectations and realities of EU-funded programs.

ICOM Belgium, headed by Françoise Dumont and Nicole Gescheé-Konig, was an invaluable partner for the supporting program in Brussels. We offered joint events in the Musical Instruments Museum, in the Royal Army Museum, in the Museum of Modern Art, in the Natural History Museum, in the Costume Museum and in the Royal Art and History Museum. Visits to other exhibitions rounded out this enjoyable program in Brussels.

The particular role that Poland would soon play as Germany's largest EU neighbor in the East was the motivation for holding the 2002 Annual Meeting in Warsaw, under the banner "Neighbors in Transition: Poland's Museums Facing New Challenges?" This was an especially important meeting, because, on the one hand, we all knew far too little about the effects of political change on museums in this neighboring country, and, on the other hand, many of us had no personal experience with Poland. German museum professionals had the opportunity to meet and discuss issues in their original cultural context, thereby becoming "cultural disseminators" in our country, where discourse about Central European culture and history has become increasingly important. The 140 participants who attended the meeting in Warsaw are proof of this importance, and many of them expressed to us – even during the event itself – how much this experience had done to change their personal view of Poland.

ICOM Germany's Annual Meeting was held primarily in the offices of the Stefan-Batory-Foundation in Warsaw. Our partners at ICOM Poland, under the able direction of Dorota Folga-Januszewska, devoted great amounts of attention to our German delegation by making it possible to have the opening ceremony in the Grand Ballroom of the Warsaw Palace (which was destroyed by German forces during World War II) and by organizing visits to the National, City, Literature, and Army Museums, as well as to the contemporary gallery "Zacheta." Closing events at the Wilanow Palace gave a dignified and beautiful finish to our Annual Meeting.

During the course of the meeting, the Polish Minister of Culture invited both ICOM Presidents to his official residence for a conversation, in which he welcomed the ICOM Annual Meeting to Poland and underlined that Polish-German cultural dialogue is a high priority for the Polish government. The German Embassy accompanied us to this event, as well.

The lectures and discussions at the meeting touched on cultural policy and museum issues in Poland, namely memorial sites and museums of contemporary history, as well as on the possibilities for cooperation between museums and with exhibitions. Speakers featured on the panels represented the most significant cultural institutions of the country.

In May of 2003, ICOM Austria hosted the first "Three-Country-Conference" that did not take place in Germany; it was held in Bregenz. The theme of this conference of the ICOM National Committees of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria was "Museums under Threat: Natural Catastrophes – Theft – Terror" and was conceived of as a reaction to recent developments in Central Europe during the summer floods of 2002. Panelists from each of the three countries spoke about the risk factors of water and fire, about potential damage by humans, about risk control and the protection of cultural patrimony. Conference proceedings have been published and are available through ICOM Austria. ICOM Germany organized a trip to the Bavarian palaces of King Ludwig. The next "Three-Country-Conference" will be hosted by our Swiss ICOM friends in Schaffhausen in 2006.

We can call the experiment to let this Lake Constance Conference “wander” from country to country a success, because the host country was able to draw together distinctly more participants from within its own ranks, while the number of participants from the other two countries stayed the same, or was only marginally lower.

The main event for the German National Committee in 2003 was its Annual Meeting held in Washington, DC. For a long time the Committee had wanted to deal with the urgent question of decreasing amounts of public financial support for museums and to hear how similar situations had been handled in other countries and what experiences existed elsewhere. Considered the premier example for “museum self-help,” America’s museums were in a similar situation twenty years ago to what German museums face today. How had they managed to raise large portions of their budget themselves? And what were the structural changes required to accomplish that task? On the other hand, we wanted to test whether American strategies were even transferable to the German context and where the content boundaries were that separate scholarly rigor from populism. “America’s Museums – Putting Visitors First!” was the theme of this Annual Meeting.

ICOM USA helped us immensely in the planning stages, particularly in securing experts in the field as speakers and in opening doors to designing activities and creating a supporting program in Washington. ICOM Germany is very grateful to Richard West, President of ICOM USA, as well as his staff, for making it possible for the German National Committee was able to hold its Annual Meeting outside of Europe for the first time in its history – and with such success! It was quite amazing that circa 100 representatives of German museums were able to come to Washington. They attended excellent presentations about the current state of museums in the United States, about putting visitors first, about marketing and development, about the education of future museum professionals, about the role of community in museums, and, finally, about the work of volunteers in American museums.

Core events were held at the German Historical Institute in Washington; we attended other lectures and visited the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the City Museum, the National Museum of American History, the National Gallery, and the Anacostia Museum. We heard about the National Museum of the American Indian, at that point still under construction, and we took part in a tour of presidential and war memorials on the Mall. The German Embassy invited all of the German participants of the meeting, the Board of ICOM USA and the entire Board of the American Association of Museums (AAM) to a reception, which resulted in an extremely effective German-American dialogue on that particular evening.

This year, 2004, we did not plan another meeting in a foreign country, due in part to the extremely high travel costs that were necessary to attend ICOM’s General Conference in Seoul. Instead, we have assembled ICOM Germany in Berlin, where we are the guests of the Foreign Office and have heard about the cultural and educational work of the Federal Republic abroad and about the efforts of other international cultural organizations. Thanks to Mr. Grolig, the Head of the Ministry, thanks also to the Head of the Culture and Education Department, and many thanks to our speakers.

This meeting in Berlin marks the end of a six-year cycle of events – the core of the Board’s work from 1999 to 2004. To an extremely high degree, this work has expanded understanding for the international aspects of museum work, has helped to win new

friends in the world, and has improved the international network of German museums and museum professionals.

### **3. ICOM Germany in the European Regional Organizations of ICOM**

ICOM Germany actively works with European regional committees through its own National Committee work, shown above, and in various other ways.

We have already mentioned the “Three-Country-Conferences” of the German-speaking ICOM committees. This form of exchange is very important to us, not only to cultivate neighborliness, but also because (as few people actually realize) German-speaking members make up a considerable part of the world membership of ICOM: every fourth to fifth member of the organization speaks German as his or her native language.

Central European ICOM, CEICOM for short, is the regional committee comprised of those states formerly along the Iron curtain. Since its founding in 1993 – and here I thank my predecessor Hans-Albert Treff again for his initiative in the establishment of this group – CEICOM has met each year once in one of its member countries. The chairs or representatives of respective Boards from Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia come together to talk about their work. In addition, there has also been a group that meets to examine the use of modern documentary media. We have come a long way toward achieving the goal we set in the early 1990s, namely to help overcome the separation of our continent at its formerly painful seam. Equal partnerships and forms of cooperation have replaced the older version of specialist-transfer practiced in this region.

In 2002, ICOM Germany invited the CEICOM group to an annual meeting in Leipzig. We were the guests of the Forum for Contemporary History and discussed the “Representation of History in Museums after the Fall of the Wall,” and held another session at the Technical, Economic, and Cultural University about the “Use of New Media in Museums and Education.” Many thanks to Regine Scheffel and Rainer Eckert for their hospitality and Karin Kühling from the City History Museum for organizing our activities.

Besides the annual meetings with their changing themes each year, ICOM Germany has invited the chairs of its partner committees to its own meetings abroad since 1999. This was done in order to show what we deal with, but also to improve the professional and personal contacts with German members. In addition, the Board of ICOM Germany met with these guests separately to illicit information from them about their perspectives on the themes of each meeting. These conversations have contributed very significantly to a better understanding among one another and to a sense of reciprocal integration.

ICOM Germany is also an active partner in the regional committee of ICOM Europe, which was revitalized two years ago. ICOM’s regional committees, including ICOM Arab, ICOM Asia Pacific, ICOM Latin America and the Caribbean and others, are charged with stimulating and implementing interregional activities that cross borders between regions, and seek out international dialogue. The newly elected board of ICOM Europe, which I have had the pleasure to lead for the past two years, has focused mainly on Eastern Europe, on European-Arab dialogue and, along with the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO), on the Europe of the European Union.

In the matter of Eastern Europe, ICOM Europe has acted as patron for a workshop series speedily organized and implemented by the ICOM National Committees of Germany, Belarus, and Russia. The series was titled "Museum Work in Post-Communist Times" and the workshop stations were held in Moscow and Tver in April 2003, in Minsk in Belarus in September 2003, and in Berlin in April 2004. Whereas we discussed the status of regional and local museums in Russia, new state identity formation stood at the center of our conversations in Belarus, and in Berlin we talked about concepts for museums of contemporary history and memorials in the territory of the former GDR. In Berlin we were the guests of the German-Russian Museum Karlshorst – we are very grateful to Peter Jahn, the Director, for his efforts on our behalf. The workshop series made very clear how difficult is it to interpret contemporary history in societies that are changing rapidly, how expectations and experiences diverge, how museums work in times of complicated political developments, but also how helpful it is to turn one's attention to the outside world to be sure of oneself. I am very grateful to the German panelists at each of the three workshops, and to the Presidents of the two other National Committees for this successful dialogue.

ICOM Germany is also involved in a German-Russian project to promote future museum professionals. From 2003 to 2006, the German Management Academy in Celle, Germany, is providing informational and career training courses to Russian museum professionals. ICOM Germany and other German museum organizations have been a part of the planning and implementation of this program. Many thanks to our ICOM-colleague Karl-Heinz Ziessow, who is very much involved in this project.

From 1999 to 2004, as its President, I represented the German National Committee on the Advisory Committee of the world organization. This work is of fundamental importance, because the chairs of all national committees, the international committees, the regional organizations, and the affiliated organizations are all present. Basic questions of international museum practice are introduced, discussed, and passed on to the Executive Council, which acts as the governing body of our organization. These questions include strategic planning for the organization, ongoing discussions about the definition of "museum," decisions about a "code of ethics," decisions about themes for international museum days, receipt of regional organization reports, and many other items. In the last few years Alissandra Cummins led the Advisory Committee in an extremely professional manner. Recently, Günther Dembski has become Chair. As President of ICOM Austria, he has already secured Vienna as the next location for our General Conference (Theme: "Museums as Fundaments of Understanding").

#### **4. The Work of German ICOM Members in International Committees**

The work of the German National Committee is one part of our work, as shown above. The second part is the work of individual members in ICOM's International Committees.

There are, in my mind, many good things to report in this regard. German members take part more and more actively in the work of international committees, and they are increasingly part of the boards of subsidiary organizations.

When I first attended a session of the Advisory Committee in Paris in 1999, I was almost the only German. This has changed drastically. In the last three years, Germans have led six of the then 28 total International Committees; this number was reaffirmed in this year's elections. We must also count the German colleagues who are vice chairs, secretaries or full board members. Incidentally, it was German National Committee that

first supported the establishment of the International Committee of Memorial Museums in Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes (IC MEMO). This Committee was founded in 2001 in Barcelona and has garnered much praise under the leadership of Wulff Brebeck, due to a large extent to its impressive initial conference on "Genocide and Museums," held here in Berlin.

Many thanks to all of you who so actively help to shape the work of our world organization. Your work proves that we are coming closer to achieving a long-term political goal, expressed many years ago by the German government, namely that Germans should become more intensively involved in international cultural decision-making. Therefore, I believe that the federal government, which provided the funds expressly for this purpose, will see that it has invested wisely. We are very pleased that German museum professionalism is becoming known throughout the world in this way.

A sign of this active development is also the participation rate of Germans at ICOM General Conferences, most recently in Barcelona (2001) and Seoul (2004), where the German delegation has been one of the strongest participants in terms of numbers. General Conferences encourage participants to acquire knowledge about key topics – for example, most recently about the concept of "intangible heritage." In addition, they offer precisely the opportunities for worldwide networking that no other events do. I am always hearing from members that the contacts they made at international meetings often lead to cooperative ventures and many become fully-realized international projects in the end.

For those members unable to participate or attend these activities, their colleagues provide extensive written reports, which ICOM Germany publishes on its internet homepage as well as in its newsletter, ICOM Germany's "Mitteilungen."

## **5. Effects of Program Work**

The new image of the National Committee and its positive reception by members as well as the attractive membership-card has had pleasant effects. In the past six years we have been able to gain far more than 1000 new members for ICOM Germany (this is in real numbers, subtracting those who left the organization). This is a truly sensational figure, and with over 2700 members, ICOM Germany is the national committee with the most members in the world organization. We attained this result by effective advertising strategies and informational sessions, especially for younger colleagues and among trainees in the museums.

ICOM Germany has been able to draw new institutional members even in these difficult times, when many institutions have withdrawn their memberships from other associations due to budgetary restrictions. ICOM's world organization has initiated a pilot program with ICOM Germany to test whether new institutional memberships can be won by giving out a certain number of membership cards according to the size of the museum. Germany has proved that this project will work, since in 2003 and 2004, 20 new museums became members.

I believe that this development is an expression of the fact that the meaning of the international component of museum work becomes more and more influential and that ICOM is seen by many to be an important mediator in this process.

A detailed look at membership rates, to January 1 of each year, respectively:

1650 (1999)	1751 (2000)	1953 (2001)	2122 (2002)	2353 (2003)	2533 (2004)	2748 (1.12.2004)
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The international work of the German National Committee and the active participation of Germans in International Committees have brought recognition to our group. This is surely one of the reasons why members of Europe's ICOM National Committees elected me President of ICOM Europe in 2002. Therefore, we feel we have a mandate to initiate international activities that cross boundaries, to intensify the idea of exchange and to make a contribution to the unification of Europe in the cultural sector.

(the following paragraphs – italics - just for the written version, not for the oral one)  
*On the basis of its previous work in Eastern Europe, ICOM Europe will strengthen its activities in this region. The regional committee decided, in light of EU-Enlargement in 2004, to work, exchange and cooperate more closely with the national committees particularly from those countries that lie outside of the borders of the enlarged European Union. Outstanding museum work is being done in these countries, often under political circumstances that are not easy. Nevertheless, there is a (quite justifiable) impression that the rest of Europe is not interested in these regions, that it even knows nothing about them. For this reason, we have been preparing a project to be launched in 2005 that adopts the theme "Shifting Borders, Changing Identities" and comprises a core issue in the cultural work of these regions, which have seen frequent changes in sovereignty during a relatively short time period. The workshop will be a "Conference on Wheels," because events will occur in three different cities predestined for this kind of topic: Lviv in Ukraine, Brest in Belarus, and Vilnius in Lithuania.*

*The second regional focus, an intercultural project, is currently being developed with ICOM Arab. What do young museum visitors learn in museums about the culture of others? That is the central question of a workshop program that will begin in Egypt in 2005 and will continue in Germany using a joint Arab-German exhibition about Saladin and the Crusaders as an example. Stereotypes, ignorance, and clichés still determine the image of the other culture – there is a clear need for education. This series hopes to contribute to professionalization in this field.*

*ICOM Europe also acts as patron for international projects, aiming to help organizers realize their endeavors.*

*Our office supports this work with great efficiency and helps to bring in German members as speakers and commentators. In a certain time, another country will assume the direction of ICOM Europe and their office will have to oversee the webpage. Until then, however, as Germans we are happy to have the opportunity to work as actively as we have on this European transformation.*

I see it as a sign of recognition for the joint work of ICOM Europe and ICOM Germany that I was elected to the Board of the world organization at the General Conference in Seoul in October 2004. This is an expression of worldwide approval of our work, and I thank all of my colleagues who gave me their votes of confidence and thus made it possible for me to work on the Executive Council.

## 6. ICOM Germany's "Inreach"

Up to now, we have discussed ICOM Germany's outreach activities; however, the organization also has been internally effective in various ways due to its very particular responsibilities in this area.

First, German ICOM members have proved themselves to be outstanding hosts for various annual meetings of International Committees in the past years. Every year, some of the 29 International Committees hold their events in Germany, which gives our museums the chance to present themselves and to make the work of German museums more accessible to members from other countries and parts of the world. The Board is very grateful to all colleagues for the hospitality they have shown the world. With these activities, you have contributed a great deal to a more informed image of Germany in the international museum world.

The German National Committee partnered with other groups on different ventures and events related to our field: for example the "MuseDoma Awareness Conference" of the Top Level Domain "dot museum" and a forum about "Illegal Archaeology" organized by Professor Heilmeyer of the Berlin State Museums. Both events occurred in 2003.

ICOM Germany also collaborates with the German UNESCO Commission. Our Board member Hartwig Lüdtke was recently voted Chair of the Commission for Culture within the German UNESCO Commission.

In addition, ICOM Germany has been active in the German Cultural Council, both as part of the Art Council and as a direct collaborator, for example a short time ago as part of the working group of the German Cultural Council entitled "Culture as Insurance for Existence." This group published its first programmatic paper on the topic in September 2004.

ICOM Germany has also been present at conferences and meetings of German museum groups, such as the Society for Trainees or Society of Museum Educators. Furthermore, individual Board members have appeared as lecturers, have written articles, and had official discussions in a wide variety of contexts.

A very important part of our work within Germany has been cooperation with the German Museums Association and with its regional associations and offices. Although each association speaks in essence for its membership – and approximately 15% of German ICOM members are also members of the German Museums Association – there are some points of intersection that require effective cooperation.

For instance, when ICOM Committees from Germany, Switzerland and Austria instigated the German translation of ICOM's Code of Ethics, the foundational document of worldwide museum ethics, the German Museums Association and the regional associations were included in the process. The Code was then distributed to all German museums, associations, interest groups, cultural ministries and to the Conference of Culture Ministers. The Code of Ethics plays an extremely important role as a generally accepted guideline both in everyday work within museums as well as in dispute situations. Most importantly, it helps to define the relationship with those who maintain museums and state authorities. In this way, ICOM and others have a great effect on society – important initiatives of the German Museums Association have been based on ICOM's Code of Ethics, for example a letter providing "Recommendations for Collections Deaccessioning."

The planning and execution of International Museum Day, held each year in mid-May, is also a result of the valuable cooperation of our associations with one another. The themes of these Days are determined by the Advisory Committee in Paris and adopted worldwide by committees in each country. We discuss the planning, posters, press conferences and sponsorship opportunities with one another, though in this case, the German Museums Association has ultimate control over the event.

In the last few years, the Presidents of both boards have appeared at press conferences on International Museum Day, joined by the patrons of the events – most recently the President of the Bundesrat (the Upper House of the Federal Parliament) – or with relevant ministers.

The close connection between both associations can be expressed not by the shared physical location of their offices and the arrangements and agreements that take place there, but also the composition of the Boards of both organizations. The Presidents of both organizations met for consultations and to coordinate activities, but the Boards also met for joint meetings. The organizations have made public appearances together, say at the museum convention MUTEK in Munich or in statements and recommendations. At this juncture, I would like expressly to highlight the cooperative style of the current President of the German Museums Association and thank Michael Eissenhauer most heartily. We have all come closer to one another.

## **7. Thanks**

When passing the baton after six years, it is imperative to thank the people without whose diligence and willing hands this work could never have been accomplished.

Above all I would like to thank you, the members, who took part in and shaped the events of the German National Committee and those of the International Committees with such enthusiasm and commitment. You have been crucial to the fact that ICOM Germany has been able to accomplish an important cultural policy function; you are the ones who have made our organization more international and have connected us with the world.

I would like to thank my employers at the German Historical Museum and my colleagues who have supported our activities over the years. I remember very clearly six years ago, after I had been elected, how happy former General Director Christoph Stölzl was that the young museum of national history could fulfill its mission of communication about national and international history and culture on yet another plane, that it could encourage internationally oriented museum work in this way. And Hans Ottomeyer, the current General Director and himself a great internationalist and Vice President of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Decorative Arts and Design, has always been very supportive of ICOM Germany's activities. The German Historical Museum is decidedly ICOM friendly and has been host to several annual meetings of International Committees, those of the archaeology and history museums, of museum security, of decorative arts museums and soon of the costume committee, to name a few.

I am grateful to all ICOM Germany Board Members during both terms. We met three to five times a year, mostly in Berlin, but also separately at our events in various cities. I always felt our work was very constructive, that our plans and ideas came to fruition there together, so that we have been able to bring our organization a good step further.

Again, many thanks to: Michael Eissenhauer, Bernhard Graf, Lydia Icke-Schwalbe, Liselotte Kugler, York Langenstein, Udo Liebelt, Hartwig Lüdtké and Angelika Schmidt-Herwig.

My biggest thanks are reserved for the staff of our offices. These individuals are the motor of the entire enterprise. Without the tremendous contributions, the high motivation and the willingness to help that these people have had, we would never have achieved the successes I have documented above. It is a Herculean feat to organize our annual meetings abroad in such a way that everything comes off smoothly in the end. And it is a huge task to look after a membership group that has almost doubled in size and to distribute information via the homepage and through the "ICOM Newsletter." Thank you Johanna Westphal, thank you Katja Roßocha, thank you Christoph Lind and all of those who have assisted and will assist them, above all Beate von Törne, Ingrid Hiepkó, Susanne Matthey, Alexandra Zipperer and in the beginning Florian Weiß.

On this occasion, however, it must be noted that the capacities of our staff are stretched to the breaking point. Two part-time positions are not sufficient to handle the increased numbers of members and their care, to plan and organize the multiple activities of ICOM Germany within the world organization. Other enterprises of similar size have entire teams to cope with the intricacies of these types of programs. It is, therefore, of very great importance to me personally, that all of us – the members – help again, as we did in the year 2000 in Lindau, by supplementing our dues moderately to increase the hours in one of these two positions. This is a very important prerequisite for the continuing growth of our organization and I hope very much that the new Board and my successor will be given good conditions to start their efforts, so that they will be able to work as effectively in the future as we have in the past.

I would also like to thank the colleagues from the leadership and offices of the German Museums Association and the regional groups for the fact that we cooperated more and more effectively and that we found productive ways to complement one another's work.

I thank our contributors, formerly the Ministry of the Interior, and currently the Federal Chancellery and the Cultural Foundations of the German Provinces for their kind assistance in the realization of many of our projects. They have been very open to our interests and we have felt much supported in many ways. Their financial contributions have proved to be forward-looking investments and we can only feel great satisfaction at the results.

We thank not only the colleagues from our neighboring countries and our partner committees for their constructive cooperation; we particularly thank the central Secretariat of ICOM in Paris. The 1999 Annual Meeting in Paris and trips of the ICOM President and General Secretary to Germany have created a solid base for mutual understanding and assistance. In this regard I would like to thank wholeheartedly Manus Brinkman, ICOM General Secretary from 1998 to 2004, as well as all members of the staff of the secretariat. Manus and the staff was always there for our organization, has given us moral and practical support and has assisted the work of the German National Committee in an outstanding fashion. We enjoyed a true friendship and partnership and we are very sorry to hear that Manus left ICOM a few weeks ago to concentrate his energies elsewhere. However, we are convinced that we will work together with ICOM's new Board and its new General Secretary John Zvereff as well as we have in the past. And of course I assume that ICOM Germany will also work very

well with the new Executive Council under the direction of Alissandra Cummins, ICOM's newly appointed and congenial President.

If, at the close of my talk, I might direct a few wishes to the soon-to-be-elected Board, I would ask that, in their future work for our organization – be it meetings, cooperative ventures or other initiatives – they continue to be guided by the idea that ICOM Germany is a part of the International Council. ICOM Germany represents the world association in this country, but can also help to shape it. By emphasizing the “I” in ICOM, we strengthen our own image, but we also complement the work and plans of other museum associations.

I thank you all again for the last six years; from my perspective it was a very fulfilling time. Nowadays we all complain a great deal about societal problems in our country, primarily about financial ones, about the mildew that seems to creep into everything and paralyzes progress. Much might be justified in those thoughts. But each individual must strive to overcome this situation. We should be conscious of the fact that museum work is a great challenge and opportunity in service to society, especially in times of change. The mandate of cultural policy to support cultural and historical education, to preserve material and immaterial traditions of the past is meant to help people to find out about themselves, to discuss and become more self-aware about the multiple identities they possess. This mandate and our work should also give us pleasure. This is what I wish for all of us in our day-to-day work and in the efforts of ICOM Germany for the future.