Annual meeting 2005 in Jakobstad/Pietarsaari (Finland)
June 14-17, 2005

20 colleagues from China, Germany, England, Finland, Austria, Russia, Spain, South Korea, Hungary and 10 guests met in the arctic museum “NANOQ” in Finland.

This annual meeting 2005 of ICOM-NATHIST was superb organised by our colleague EIRIK GRANQVIST and we are very grateful to him for taking up the challenge for this first annual meeting after a long break. We continued with the theme “Intangible Natural Heritage”, which we first discussed during the ICOM General Conference in Seoul 2004.
In Jakobstad/Pietarsaari the life of man in the northern regions, their knowledge around and about nature and their integration into this nature was the central topic.

NANOQ is a museum, which does not only present personal belongings and documents of numerous expeditions through Greenland, but is also a center, which dedicates itself to the research of Greenland. Besides this, NANOQ is an open air museum and its houses and huts with their original interior represent the topic "man surviving in arctic areas", particularly Greenland and at the coast of the Bottnian sea. Seal hunting secured a surviving of the coastal population of Finland since over 8,000 years. Today only few persons have the experience and knowledge "how to hunt a seal" and today there is a risk that this knowledge may be lost in the next generation, if it is not passed on in alive tradition. An unique example of "Intangible Natural Heritage".

Guided tour at NANOQ by PENTTI KRONQVIST, which was the loveable host for our annual meeting 2005. He and his kind team gave us such a hearty welcome and friendly support during the whole conference, that all participants will remember this family-like meeting for a long time.

Thus there was no more suitable place to meet for our topic than NANOQ and on the first day guided tours at the museum by PENTTI and ANDERS introduced the conference theme in a very lively way. In the following the colleagues from Finland represented under the emphasis "Man & Nature in the Arctic" the formation of the landscape and particularly the meaning of the seal hunting since the ice age for the coastal population. Also the mammoth as "key animal" of the ice age, its discovery, up-to-date reconstruction and presentation could not be missing. After the lectures the participants could enjoy the inside experience of a Finnish smoke Sauna and the Mayor of Jakobstad/Pietarsaari invited to a rich dinner and an evening with many surprises. This very personal prelude and the hospitality were unsurpassed and for the whole conference typical. During many talks and discussions genuine friendships could be attached/established, an important condition for our small international committee of ICOM-NATHIST, re-activated since Seoul.

On the second day participants from all over the world presented on "Tangible and Intangible Natural Heritage". The importance of "stories" to and over our objects in the museum under the title "The collector's tale" was highlighted by Adrian Norris (UK). Xing-Bao Jin (China) accentuated the importance of habitat protection within large cities for the sustainable development of the society and referred to, what an important role museums have to play for this. These two examples may to be sufficient.
Under "news from/about museums" the new Gyerongsan Natural History museum in South Korea was represented by HanHee Cho and our last years guest partner from Seoul, Byung Hoon Lee, reported on the current situation of the campaign for a National Natural History Museum in South Korea. Background information over new exhibitions in Barcelona "The Diversity of Life" and from Brussels "Fatal Attraction" supplemented these reports.

During our general assembly (business meeting) we discussed the future development of ICOM-NATHIST and the facilities for our next annual meetings. Brigitta Schmid – conference manager for NATHIST during the next General Conference of ICOM in Vienna 2007 - gave us full information about the planning so far and presented nice destinations for possible excursions.

At this meeting a new working group was established, the „Working group on the Art of Taxidermy and its Cultural Heritage Importance“.
This working group was build with good reason, not only because of the frightening low standard of taxidermy in many regions of the world, during the conference in South Korea we had experienced this, but also to the fact, that in the name of modernization of Natural History Museums the traditional, artistical valuable taxidermy often become "disposed" and the cultural importance of these preparations were not considered. Goals of the working group are
(1) to be become active, in order to point the value of animal preparation in museums world-wide,
(2) to develop criteria for their cultural importance for the society and
(3) to represent their international significance for the science.

Traditionally at day 3 and 4 excursions are accomplished, in connection with conference topics. This time we looked for the special situation of the post glacial period in Finland. The retreat of the glaciers let to an elevation of the country (caused by pressure relief). Still today the country lifts with up to 9 mm per year.

On the first excursion we explored the island world of the “Schaerenküste” with the ship. After a lunch with salmon - sponsered by the municipality of Lardeo - we visited "TerraMare". There the historical change of the landscape is presented since the last ice age and a special exhibition shows the "country uplift" in detail. An interpretative trail explains the different vegetation zones and leads to a watch tower with impressive labels - like "You are now 4.40 m above the sea. Into the year 1600 the sea level was here ".

Watch tower the end of the interpretative trail
“You are now 18.39 m above the sea. In the year 190 the sea-level was here.”
The 2nd excursions started with a walk through Nykarleby, followed by a presentation of Kari Hallantie (park director of the "Western Finland Natural Heritage service") on the initiative, to establish the landscape of the Kvarken archipelago as the first "World Nature Heritage" in Finland. "The land uplift brakish water archipelago of the Kvarken is a candidate for the inscription on the World Heritage List *) on the basis of criterion: to be an outstanding example representing major stages of the earth’s history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiogeographic features.” During lunch time we discussed in detail, which support Natural History Museums can offer and what could be the role of the museums for the lasting development of such a locality.

In the afternoon we visited a secondary boreal coniferous forest with an “apa mira” lake and we discussed the sustainable “harvesting” of this area by moose hunt, traditionally by a very tasty Moose Stew, sponsored by the Hunting society of Nykarleby.

*) UNESCO Press Release, 12 July 2006 - New site added as an extension to existing site: “The Kvarken Archipelago, in the Gulf of Bothnia off the coast of Finland, was added as an extension to the World Heritage site of the High Coast of Sweden (inscribed in 2000) more than doubling its size.” Congratulations from ICOM-NATHIST http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=33834&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
ABSTRACTS

Man & Nature in the Arctic

Anders Häggblom - Sweden
“Seal hunting and the economical importance for the coastal culture, from the postglacial time to 1900”

Pentti Kronqvist - Finland
“Sealhunters today – Thuleesquimos – at northern Greenland”

Eirik Granqvist - Finland
“Mammouth - from their discovery and how to bring them the life”

Different areas of the world has at different times had many ice-ages and we can say that an ice-age is the normal stage for the earth since an ice-age is always longer than a warming up period. So, we are well living a short unnormal period now with a warm climate and soon the ice-age will be back!
The greatest symbol of the ice-age megafauna is surely the mammoth. In Siberia there was the belief that these great elephants where living like moles underground and died when coming up in the sun! This since cadavers where found frozen in eroding river-banks at summertime. The name mammoth is coming from the estonian name for mole: "Maamut".

It was not before Catharina the Great of Russia sent frozen mammoth parts to Paris that it was established that real elephants had been living in Siberia. This must been before the great deluge!
The first mammoth skeleton to be mounted was that of "Adams mammoth" found at the shores of Lena in the late seventeen hundred. It got the left tusk to the right side and the right to the left! Looking very funny and giving model for plenty of very wrongly drawed and reconstructed mammoths. Adams mammoth was shown like this in the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg until just after the second world war when the tusks where moved to their correct sides!
Discoveries of deep frozen hair in blue clay, preserved from all influence of oxygen, in Alaska showed also that the mammoth had the same darkbrown colour as the actual muskox and was not reddish brown as believed before. This color was only caused by the destruction of the pigments with time.
In plenty of books we can read about fat bosses on the shoulder and the head but the deepfrozen cadavers did never have any bosses! What caused these silhouettes on the cave drawings done by the people that had seen these elephants live, was just the same mechanism of standing hair like in the neck of the muskox for keeping the brain and the shoulders better warm!

In 2003 there was found the frozen legs and the skull of a not very big mammoth in Yakutia. Most of the head had been eaten by wolves or bears but one eye and one ear where well preserved. The most interesting was anyhow that this was the first skull discovered that never had the tusks removed. All skulls found before had had the tusks fallen out cause of rotting or had the tusks been removed by "ivory hunters". The tusks of this mammoth where, quite stupidly looking, crossing each other! The mammoth should not have the tusks like an other elephant! Well, they lived on the grasslands and did not need their tusks for working with threes and branches. Just for sweeping away the snow for finding their food and to push the rival during the symbolic rut-fights!

Now we really start to now how the giant of the Ice Age was looking and was living...

Lizzy Cox (short) - United Kingdom
"NHM London International Polar Year Initiative"

Tangible and Intangible Natural Heritage

Olga Gvozdeva – Russian Federation
"Ancient traditions in modern interpretation in a museum of natural history"

Adrian Norris – United Kingdom
"The Collector's Tale - The importance of secondary documentation in telling a good story"

In the field of natural history the object is very often only a prop which helps to tell a story, one which depends on the curator, the type of display and the philosophy of the museum itself or the mythology which surrounds the objects themselves. There is a myth in many museums that the object is king, when in fact in most museums the myth itself is more likely to be revered. The iconic status of specific objects can, in some cases, have more to do with wishful thinking than fact and should, therefore, not be confused by facts. Most museums contain at least one object, and sometimes many, in which the story surrounding the object, true or false, is far more important than the object itself. This may vary from the Goliath Beetle, whose only claim to be included within the museum’s collection is that it flew into a cricketer whilst at the wicket, killing itself and knocking the batsman out, to a collection of miscellaneous objects collected by a famous, or infamous, personality. Much of this interpretation is based on intangible secondary documentation, which would not stand up to the rigours of scientific investigation. However, the mythology surrounding an object can be just as important, if not more so, from the public point of view, as the scientifically provable. The tendency by some curators to ignore the myth and concentrate only on the factual has helped to alienate the public, resulting in dwindling visitor numbers to many natural history displays within our museums. Most of our visitors have a romantic streak to their nature and a good story can be far better as a means of communication than all the facts in the world.

Anders Häggblom - Sweden
“The land uplift, flora, fauna and mankind in a changing landscape”
We are living in a country with high speed of development, in a city with booming economy. The fast growing economy is promoting society advancement in many ways, but also has brought some problems. The most urgent ones are over-consuming on natural resources and the isolation of citizen from nature.

It is believable that the future of a harmonious society and sustainable development depends on a comprehensive and empathetic understanding the way nature works and a sense of responsibility to all life. It is the core value of a natural history museum to engage people’s curiosity and encourage their enjoyment of the nature. The urban dwellers’ life quality could be improved physically and spiritually as well. Making a museum influential to people and the local community and becoming one indispensable part of a society is our main aim. This is the key point that we museum professionals should think about. An influential museum is a spiritual oasis for a gray city.

The intention to rebuild the natural history museum in Shanghai is not only another symbol of the city’s strength in economy, but the awakening awareness of being harmonious with nature. We have to think about many questions on a visitor-oriented way. What should be a museum look like, Oriental or western style, or an experimental piece of a foreign designer? Can we involve local community to care our museum at the very beginning? What is a suitable size for a museum in terms of public function? An environment friendly building itself is a good exhibit, but can we afford? Is it possible to plan outdoor areas as a nature restoration corner for city children to explore and play?

Ideas as interactivity, learning by doing, edutainment are effective approaches for learning actively, but not passively stimulating sensory organs only. Traditional Chinese culture has many philosophical thinking to understand the nature, which should be encouraged to be represented in the exhibition to help people in considering issues and ethical questions related to science and technology.

Collections are essential to a natural history museum, but only when the information from the collections is available to the public. It is not the number of collection itself that make a competitive museum, but qualified scientists and museum professionals, who are the real pillars of a museum.

The Timiryazev State Museum of Biology is diversified museum of natural history created in 1922 under the direction of academician B.M.Zavadovskii. The main exhibition of museum occupies a floor space of 900 square m. and dedicated to such division of modern biology and ecology as evolution of life on Earth; anthropogenesis; diversity of present-day animal and plant kingdom; plant, animal and human anatomy and physiology; genetics; the foundations of ecology and environmental protection. There is no in Russia another museum such as this in a variety of subjects. There are more than 60 excursion topics supported by the main exhibition.
In 2004 exhibition “Red Book pages” has been designed. It contains herbarium and models of endangered plant specie of Moscow. The exhibition updated several times a year.

Moreover, all endangered animal, plant and fungi specie of Moscow Red Book are highlighted with distinguished red tags in museum exhibitions. There is a Red Book page number in the on the tag besides Russian and Latin species name where the information about this species can be found.

Additionally, specie area information in Moscow is presented in each case. Detailed information for each species in the exhibition has been summarized in brochure.

An outdoor plant exhibition of live plants has been open for the public near museum. It presents complex natural plant societies of Moscow- about 100 plant specie of Moscow Red Book. This exhibition is still being formed as well as excursions based on it.

Byung-Hoon Lee - South Korea
“Nature Museums in Korea and east Asian Countries”

Korea is in keen need of conserving her nature and environment threatened by rapid urbanization and industrialization. The Korean biota has been poorly documented, mainly, due to extreme shortage of natural history infrastructures.

In order to improve the situation a national campaign asking the government to set up the National Museum of Natural History has been made during the last more than a decade. That endeavor would be made meaningful only when the museum is established as national center and engaged in teaching environmental humility and reverence for life. It becomes of vital importance to study nature and educate people, in particular, in this period of humanity at stake under the threat of nature degradation and manipulation of life by genetic engineering.

The poor situation of natural history infrastructure in Korea as well as in the East Asian countries is reviewed in the world context, putting emphasis of building up cultural and natural identities of the states in the region.
Gyeryongsan Natural History Museum located at scenic Gyeryongsan National Park is the first private and largest natural history museum in Korea. Exhibition area is around 7,800 m$^3$ and auxiliary facilities spread out in 5,400 m$^3$. The museum houses over 300,000 collections including rocks, fossils, stuffed animals and plants. Among them, 5,000 items are currently exhibited, especially, 25 meter long herbivorous dinosaur ‘Cheongwooni’, spectacular mammoth and cave lion and bear, the largest whale skeleton, and naturally preserved Korean mummies are the most attractive collections. In addition, Brachiosaurus and Tyrannosaurus exhibited along the entrance road give more excitement and fun to visitors.

This newly opened museum becomes to play an important role for developing natural science and culture, and continues to be the good place where everybody can learn and enjoy with a variety of education programs and special exhibitions. The museum opened at the 21st of September in 2004 with the following missions:
1) Providing an education and entertainment space for the peoples (Edutainment: Fun comes first and Learn comes naturally).
2) Contributing to the development and popularization of natural science (Center of diffusion for natural science culture).
3) Enhance the quality of life.

In order to achieve these missions, the museum has a tremendous number of natural history specimens in display and offers natural science-related education programs to the youth and adult.

The museum houses about 300,000 collections including rocks, fossils, stuffed animals, and plants. Especially, the exhibitions include an herbivorous Jurassic dinosaur, ‘Chungwooni’, a blue whale skeleton, and two 600-year-old naturally preserved Korean mummies. In order to be a museum that works its role in scientific and cultural activities, it is certain that all the living organizations including ICOM-NATHIST and UNESCO should provide necessary support and care to the museum all over the world.
Anna Omedes – Spain

"The Diversity of LIFE" - about a new type of exhibition"

Travelling exhibition produced by the Natural History Museum of Barcelona and co-produced by the Universal Forum of Cultures Barcelona 2004 and the Science Park of Granada.

Conserving biodiversity is critical for human survival. This exhibition aims to create a fascination for biological diversity, to explain the complexity of life and to promote love and respect for it. But how can we create or transmit the beauty of life in an artificial environment? By highlighting the museum’s collection, displaying it in the midst of illustrations, holographs, natural backgrounds, documents, texts, visual poetry, etc. The main part of the exhibition is a SCENIC AREA, oval-shaped, set up around an oval-shaped metallic framework with walls and ceiling of fine mesh screening. Permits 30 visitors at a time for scheduled showings that are set at 20-minute intervals. This area contains materials, elements and collection items. They are revealed to the public as if by magic by means of technological systems. New theatrical and audiovisual technology is incorporated. A computer network connected to multiple retro projectors immerses the public in a 360º audiovisual display. The scenes are presented on different areas so the public circulate inside the theatre, while the explanatory script surprises and envelops them.

The showing starts from the perception that humans have on the diversity of life through our senses, presents the historical determinants of the continental drift, explains how we classify and order the biodiversity into five kingdoms, describes the five major extinctions on the Earth, explains the five causes for the Sixth Extinction resulting from human intervention and explains the five values that define the great capital of biodiversity. In the CINEMA AREA the film “Making peace with the earth” shows five examples of local action with a global response: RIEVELL, Ecological agriculture in the Ebro Delta (Spain); GALAPAGOS, Defence against invasive species in the Galapagos Islands (Equator); COSTA RICA, a choice: tourist biodiversity; SIERRA DE SEGURA, Sustainable production of wood (Spain); DEHRADUN, against seed privatisation, Uttaranchal (India).

In the interactive REFLECTION AREA people are invited to do simple things that will benefit the environment and the conservation of biodiversity such as “Calculate your ecological footprint”, “Curb illegal trafficking of species”, “Plant a tree by clicking in Internet”, “Recycle the plastic cartridge of your PC” or “Buy Fair Trade products”.

Olivier Retout – Belgium

“CASTEX and the travelling exhibition ‘Fatal Attraction’”

Tilman Haug – Germany

“New approaches in pest control of demoplastic models using low temperatures

The conference papers (abstracts and full texts, as far as received) are available on the homepage of ICOM-NATHIST "nathist.icom.museum".

This newsletter (no 14) is available at the ICOM-NATHIST website under:
http://nathist.icom.museum/nl_14.htm
or as pdf.file http://nathist.icom.museum/nl_14.pdf

ICOM–NATHIST Gerhard Winter (chairperson) Finished & printed July 2006
To have an annual meeting in a smaller museum in a smaller town is the best precondition not only to start personal exchange of ideas with colleagues and to get together, but also to be widely visible at the print media and on the radio.