

Report by the Secretary-General 2005

The review of finances, developments, activities and achievements has been circulated. The report formally covers the period up until June 30th 2004. But just as the written report tends to include events up to the time of writing in the autumn, so the verbal report at the AGM tends to be about the just-finished calendar year rather than the more distant financial year.

The most obvious products of IIC are its publications, and this year we have a new feature at the AGM which is a verbal report by the Director of Publications.

The other well known activity is the biennial congress. The outside world sees a succession of discrete events but in the office and in Council the selection of the next venue is being made before the final preparations for the current congress have started. The call for papers for the 2006 congress will appear in the next bulletin, early next month. As announced in Bilbao at the 20th International Congress the 21st will be held in Munich, Germany. The title will be "The Object in Context: Crossing Conservation Boundaries". The aim is to explore the way that the context in which an object is made, used and preserved can affect decisions about its conservation treatment. The information about historic contexts is likely to come from work in a number of disciplines, which explains the reference to crossing boundaries.

One of the most difficult tasks of the last year has been caused by the retirement of Perry Smith as Executive Secretary. An office that is run in one style for several decades cannot reflect all the changes that have taken place in the world as a whole, or all the needs of an institution that is trying to survive in a changing world. The job description for Perry's successor contained several changes including an emphasis on the active promotion of the Institute and its activities. Graham Voce was selected in May and started in the office in October. He has already prepared a report on administrative changes that he thinks are desirable.

The Council has considered ways to appear less UK-centric and more genuinely international. The changes to the Articles that are to be discussed at this meeting are one example of this. Experiments with teleconferencing that allow real-time contributions to Council meetings from members as far apart as the United States and Australia have been a great success.

While it is recognised that membership of IIC is very good value, it must also be recognised that not everyone can afford it. There are many countries where it is not realistic for an individual to find that amount of money. A new scheme has been set up whereby members from more affluent countries can contribute to a fund that will be used to help those less lucky to get the benefits of membership. Members have already given generously to this fund. Details of the scheme for its distribution will appear in the April Bulletin.

Council has responded to calls for support or intervention when training courses or research institutions have been threatened. In general the effects of IIC's interventions have been positive. In November, IIC joined with ICOM-CC and ICCROM in pointing out to the Directorate-General for Research of the European Commission the enormous social and economic potential of research for the protection of cultural heritage, hoping that this will be taken account of in the 7th Framework Programme for Research. The outcome of this remains to be seen.

Jonathan Ashley-Smith, Secretary-General