

UMAC ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING (draft from 2005 SURVEY revised in 2007)

ASSESSMENTS

Internal Strengths (capital and potential)

ICOM Committee: UMAC has become an established ICOM Committee with a program of successful services including: 1) Newsletter, 2) Website, 3) Annual Conference, 4) Publication of Conference Proceedings, 5) working Groups, and 6) Database. UMAC has created a Strategic Plan that is supportive of and in concert with ICOM's plan "Our Global Vision". UMAC is a young and flexible Committee that is open to new ideas and change. It has a top-quality and engaged leadership.

Leadership Role: UMAC represents institutions that are highly qualified for a leadership role. They are ideally suited to provide comprehensive interpretations of our world and participate in development of solutions to world problems. University Museums and collections can create a sound synthesis and systematization of knowledge

Extraordinary Global Collections: UMAC represents museums and collections that have the greatest number of items that have ever been collected - tens of millions of items that document the diversity and history of life on earth. The collections are a shared legacy of inspiration and memory and a constantly working and growing database. University collections also play a role in the "global collection" of all items used for investigation of any specific topic.

Centers of Learning: UMAC represents museums and collections that have a preeminent educational mission. They are vital centers of learning and are collaboratively involved in research, collecting, teaching, dissemination of information, and public service. Based on their educational missions, international by design, university museums also are institutions that can explore themes in all social, cultural, and political arenas. This is one of the most distinguishing and peerless features of university museums and collections.

Specialized Resources and Services: UMAC represents museums and collections that are highly qualified to meet global challenges and add quality to peoples' lives. The museums, collections, and their parent universities have specialized resources such as libraries, laboratories, technology centers, and computers. They also have highly trained and educated personnel such as faculty, architects, legal counselors, accountants, technicians and craftsmen and to university equipment and facilities.

International Contacts – UMAC represents museums and collections that attract students, faculty, scholars, and visitors from all countries. These contacts are important in establishing working relationships and ties between countries. They also can show the value of the museum. In addition, university museums also provide outreach and loans of collection items.

Special Partners – UMAC represents museums and collections that have many options to gain special partners in a wide range of areas such as social ills, environmental issues, health, medicine, agribusiness, and sports.

Museum Studies Programs and Independent Study – UMAC represents many university museums that are linked with formal museum studies programs.

Community Engagement – UMAC represents museums that are ideally situated to connect with their communities. They can provide the interface between scientists and society. They can link

teaching and research to informal education, not only to show the beauty, rarity, or cultural meaning of an object, but also to illustrate the process of discovery.

Internal Weaknesses

Focus - The focus of UMAC may need to be sharpened. It appears to be aimed at specific management problems of university museums and collections management and not to be as relevant to subject specialists – is this incorrect or unjustified?

Advocacy - UMAC's Board and Members have expressed the need for a strong program of advocacy. There is a priority need to fight 1) the "Academic Battle" – to provide university museums and collections with the tools to autonomously advocate for their case within their own institutions; 2) in addition, there is a priority need to gain a more favorable position and power within the group of educational organizations that focus or influence museums; and 3) the overall priority to improve awareness and value of museums and collections, in concert with their parents, as are ideally suited to provide comprehensive interpretations of our world and participate in development of solutions to world problems. However, there may be insufficient direction, coordination, funds and status to mount an effective advocacy or assistance program.

UMAC Leadership - Succession planning needs to be strengthened. The current leadership is high quality, dedicated, and effective, but emerging leaders need to be identified and encouraged to participate.

Services - There are questions about the ability of UMAC to maintain its services. New funding sources need to be found.

Membership - Membership is growing only slowly, mostly through contact with the conferences.

Critical Mass – It has been challenging to reach out, capture, and motivate the critical mass of people working in or with university museums and collections.

Partnerships - UMAC has not been able to create significant partnerships or collaborations with other organizations that focus on museums, research and education.

Standards and Practices – UMAC is challenged by the need of its Members and other university museums and collections to improve their standards and practices.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Value of UMAC – The value of UMAC is not always apparent to potential members or to others in the profession. There is the question "What can UMAC do for us?"

The Value of University Museums and Collections – There is a lack of understanding of the long-term value of university collections by senior management of universities, governments and politicians.

Threats and Closures – Museums and collections have been closed and collections are de-accessioned, discarded, or placed in storage; many others are threatened.

Leadership, Planning and Management by Museums and Collections - Poor leadership, planning, and management has contributed to problems of university museums and collections. Many of them are unwilling to change (or can't). There also is a need to share and improve standards and practices.

Changing Programs at Universities – Many cultural and scientific programs at universities are no longer collection-based. There is difficulty accepting museum research as scientific research by university colleagues. There also are challenges of engaging teaching colleagues with the collections.

Funding Priorities – Museums are not one of the top priorities for funding in Higher Education.

Participation - Most museum professionals are stretched by the duties in their job, sometimes unwilling or unable to find time to give to UMAC and most university museum curators and students lack the financial means to participate in UMAC conferences.

Other Organizations – There are many other organizations that focus on museums or some aspect of museums including ICOM and its committees, international committees, country committees, special interest groups (e.g., *Universeum*), university organizations and other educational and civic organizations that may influence UMAC.

UMAC NEEDS MORE INFORMATION:

About our collections and specifically collections with “treasures”.

About the best practices for university museums and collections.

About our most threatened museums and collections.

About the potential partnerships and impacts of university museums and collections with universities, governments, organizations, and other civic, educational, and non-governmental groups.

About the potential partnerships with ICOM and other museum focused organizations.