

Dear Chancellor Thomas Wilhelmsson

Dear MP Mr. Pekka Haavisto

Dear Representatives of the University of Jyväskylä

Dear Panu Nykänen, Chair of the 17th UMAC Conference, and other members of the LOC

Dear Sébastien Soubiran, President of Universeum

Dear Neil Curtis, Chair of UMIS

Dear Yuji Kurihara, Chair of the Steering Committee of ICOM KYOTO 2019.

Dear Hugues Dreyssé and Cornelia Weber, both President Emeritus of UMAC

Dear Jill Hartz, President Emeritus of the AAMG

Dear Leena Tokila, representing the Board of ICTOP

Dear UMAC Board members, UMAC members, colleagues and friends.

Welcome.

It is my great pleasure to open the 17th International Conference of UMAC here in Europe, Helsinki – and later in the week in Jyväskylä.

UMAC is the global network of university museums and collections, inside the largest organisation of museums in the world, ICOM. Every year we come together and try – with our knowledge and experience – to shape the future of university museums and collections.

This year, we are so glad to be in Finland. UMAC has several members here, and we want to have more. We also want to give international visibility to Finnish university museums, collections and heritage. You will be amazed by their quality and diversity. We already had a first glimpse yesterday at the splendid Astronomical Observatory.

Coincidentally, Finland is now celebrating 100 years of independence. The theme of the commemorations is TOGETHER, very appropriate to Finland, which has been at the heart of exchanges between east and west, but also appropriate, in a different way, to the social and political challenges of present day Europe, and finally TOGETHER is also appropriate to our very own UMAC conference, reuniting professionals from almost 30 countries under the theme **Global issues in university museums and collections: Global objects, Global ideas and ideologies, and Global people.**

There were 3 things I immediately loved about our conference theme this year.

The first is that if you replace university museums by universities in the theme, it would be fine. In other words, global issues apply to the contemporary university as much as they apply to contemporary university museums and collections. And although I recognise this is kind of trivial – global issues apply to absolutely everything from politics to fashion and the milk trade – my point is that being in tune with the university is a good thing.

In the early days of UMAC, the university angle, let's call it that, was paramount in our agenda, and for very strong reasons. Gradually, our conferences, research, papers, became more about museums and less about the university.

To borrow Lyndel King's fortunate expression, we became more museums in universities and less university museums.

Undoubtedly, there is a certain sense of comfort, normality and stability that comes with being a museum. In a university. However, it's the university that makes us different and special. And there is still much to reflect about what it means to be a university museum today.

I think it's about time we brought back the university angle and re-synchronised ourselves.

Together, let us place the university back into the heart of our museums, and reversely, let us place our museums back into the heart of the university. Enough of comfort and stability. We want movement and restlessness – of the good kind, of course.

The second reason why I loved the theme is that there is no organisation more global than the university, and long before the term became in use, let alone fashionable. Collaborations and exchanges were written in the DNA of the first universities even before mundane things such as nations and borders were invented and mapped. Incidentally, the University where we are now pre-dates the foundation of Finland as an independent country by almost 300 years and the same happens with so many other universities. In the deep time of history, borders and nations are often contingent. Knowledge, ideas, and people are not – they were and always will be, global.

And the third reason I love our theme is that, sure, the university is global, and has been for centuries. But where is the material proof of this 'globalness', of the millennial exchanges of creativity, knowledge and innovation? Where can it be found? More importantly, how can it be explained to large audiences?

Well, the material proof is in scientific equipment used and re-used countless times for PhDs, Science and Nature papers, it is in hundreds of rocks gathered for a research project, it is in these immense archives of biodiversity that are natural history collections and image banks, in models used for anatomy teaching, in art collections resulting from students' training, in laboratory and field notebooks of scientists and technicians, in the way botanical gardens are organised, in countless collections of books and manuscripts. It is in observatories, laboratories and amphitheatres. In short, it's in university museums, collections, libraries, archives and heritage. They are the single and most important material and concrete resource the university has to project its values beyond itself, into society, and continue to capture the splendid world of human imagination for generations to come.

Ladies and gentleman,

I am deeply grateful to the University of Helsinki and the University of Jyväskylä for hosting us this week.

I am grateful to Panu Nykänen, Sten Björkman, Ari Muhonen, Katariina Pehkonen, and the whole LOC team, as well as all the museums and collections involved. I am grateful to our sponsors: the Kone Foundation, Federation of Learned Societies, City of Helsinki, Helsinki Region Transport, Marimekko and Fiskars.

I am grateful to the Programme Committee for their work in selecting and revising the abstracts. And to all researchers and authors, keynote speakers, session moderators and finally all participants, many of them I know came with considerable financial sacrifice.

I'm so glad you're here, especially those who are attending a UMAC conference for the first time, and I look forward to meeting you, learning with you and sharing our common experiences.

Thank you.

Marta C. Lourenço, University of Lisbon
UMAC Chair
Helsinki, 5 September 2017