

Dear John Versluis, President of the AAMG

Dear colleagues and friends

I do not know precisely when the idea of a joint AAMG UMAC conference came about but when I became UMAC President in 2015 it already existed and it was passed on to me from the previous UMAC President, Hugues Dreyssé.

I thought the idea was brilliant.

UMAC has met twice in the US – in 2003 at the University of Oklahoma and in 2009 at the University of California in Berkeley – but the times were very different then. University museums in the US were under threat or closing, particularly natural history museums in public universities. There were declarations and petitions circulating, a sense of crisis and emergency was in the air.

So, for me, the idea to come to the US now and have a joint meeting with the AAMG – the largest national network of academic museums and galleries in the world – seemed like consolidation, maturity and ‘coming of age’ for UMAC. It was **the** thing to do. And it came naturally. UMAC and the AAMG have collaboration projects going on at the moment – about university museum professionals, a project funded by ICOM – and we hope to have more partnerships for research projects, professional development, perhaps even staff exchange. The crisis may be gone – for the moment – but there is so much to do and American university museums and collections have so much wonderful experiences to share with colleagues in Latin America, in Africa, in Europe, Asia and the whole world. I am deeply grateful to the AAMG and to John Versluis, the ICOM-US, to Jill Hartz, Barbara Rothermel, Jill Deupi and all the members of the Programme Committee and Local Organising Committee, as well as to the UMAC Board.

Just two brief notes, one more institutional, and another more personal.

UMAC was created in 2001 in Barcelona. We’re still young and small. We have only 500 members in 60 countries – not that many in the US. I know there are too many associations out there, but I truly believe that you have a significant contribution to make to the UMAC global community and, on the other hand, UMAC offers your museum and your work the visibility of an international platform to learn and network.

On a personal level, everyone who knows me knows that I am passionate about university museums, collections and heritage.

I am passionate about them because I am passionate about universities, their long history, and their unique legacy to the advancement of societies for more than 1000 years if you think of the Universities of Cordoba and Baghdad in the 9th century – and even more (2000 years!) if you think of the Museion in Alexandria, which was a university really – not a museum.

This legacy is one of freedom, imagination, creativity, curiosity, tolerance and open circulation of people and ideas with one sole purpose in mind: understanding nature, the universe and ourselves as humans. Each student, professor, researcher, staff, from every university in the world -- past or present, for the past 2000 years, including everyone sitting

in this Ballroom obviously – shares this legacy. It's at the very heart of what brings us together.

Each museum and collection, large or small, in all disciplines in the arts, sciences, and humanities, but also libraries, archives and buildings of cultural significance in every university encapsulate and materialise these values too.

With an advantage – museums and collections stay and we go.

And that is precisely why they are a splendid tool – the best tool that the university has – to engage contemporary societies with the universal and millenary values of the university.

This is I believe is our job, and I think it's more important today than it has ever been.

Thank you, and I hope to see you all in Kyoto, September 2019.

Marta C. Lourenço, Miami

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