



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL MUSEUMS

'Moral Report' of the President (Sept 2017 to June 2021)

Prepared by AIMA President, Ollie Douglas, June 25 2021

Since 2017 and our most recent Congress in Estonia, it has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as President of AIMA. This has been an extremely complex time for many of us, not least because of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of which will be felt for many years to come. Setting this world event to one side for a moment, it has also been a time of extraordinary change in museums across the globe. It is a period that would prove hard to characterize, with the emergence of complex discussions concerning environmental responsibility, food security, migration and movement, colonial legacies, global trade, corporate responsibilities, far-reaching campaigns such as 'Hashtag Me Too' and 'Black Lives Matter', and debates concerning social justice and traditional museology. There has also been extensive discussion within our affiliate organization ICOM about the very role and definition of museums.

It would be hard for me to summarize in a few short paragraphs the diverse ways that these many challenges and conversations have been experienced by individual members or the ways in which they have influenced or impacted on the planning and activity of institutional members. It is not the place of AIMA to determine how you or your organization should respond to these debates. However, as we finally gather (albeit virtually) for our nineteenth international Congress, 'AIMA 2021', to consider questions pertinent to the theme of 'Past and Future Agricultures', it seems a useful moment to reflect on the fact that many of these issues may play a part in our ongoing work. They have helped shape conversations over the last four years and will no doubt continue to shape our work as we move forward.

Against this complex backdrop, your Executive Committee have shown great commitment to moving forward with the core aims of AIMA. They have sought to modernize and streamline our work, to grow our capacity to respond to change, and to develop and enhance our plans. As our Secretary General and esteemed colleague Kerry-Leigh Burchill neatly summarizes in her activity report, this work has included focused improvements to communications, digital presence, programmes, and content. The work has been guided, supported, and delivered for the membership, whose preferences were gathered and analyzed through a survey conducted by our First Vice-President (and my colleague and manager) Isabel Hughes. Through the dedicated efforts of our Second Vice-President Debra Reid, and others, we have drawn together new Scientific and Advisory Committees that will cement opportunities and maintain the well-respected history of our Association. Isabel, Kerry-Leigh, and Debra are worthy of particular mention. Without their extensive experience and considerable support I would not have been able to serve as President. They have all balanced AIMA roles alongside complex responsibilities as senior museum professionals, and in doing so have shown great commitment to our organization.

The wider Executive Committee are also worthy of thanks. Treasurer Pierre Del Porto has kept the plough lines of our finances straight and steady. Cozette Griffin-Kremer has maintained the tramlines of our field, crafting and maintaining links with networks and stakeholders worldwide. Alongside other Committee members, Cozette has worked tirelessly to grow our community. Claus Kropp and others have invested enormous effort in developing a stronger online presence, improving our website, adding wonderful new blog posts, and delivering web-based video for the first time. Debra Reid has also worked hard in this area and invested a great deal of time in adding content and helping to shape and improve the website. Surajit Sarkar and Barbara Sosič have hosted in-person Executive Committee meetings in their respective countries. These were amazing experiences and we thank them for their hospitality and generosity. Pete Watson has worked fastidiously behind the scenes, bringing his wealth of experience, enthusiasm, and inspiring ideas to the table. Other Executive Committee members and museum representatives are worthy of consideration too, including Merli Sild, Hanna Ignatowicz, Julia Hanuliewicz, and Hisashi Horio, who have participated when their busy schedules have allowed or have given time and thought to AIMA matters.

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of our longstanding colleague and Executive Committee member Hisashi and our thoughts go out to his family and

friends. His was a lifetime committed to the study of Japanese agricultural heritage and we thank him for the amazing wealth of scholarship and knowledge that he shared with our organization over his years of service and involvement. More recently we also heard of the unexpected death of our friend and colleague Mouette Barboff, the esteemed French anthropologist. Many will recall her extensive and expert contributions to our Bread Working Group; we will miss opportunities to break bread with her in future. I am certain that this last year will have been difficult for many of our members and, as Covid-19 continues to impact on so many of our lives, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you, your organizations, your families, and your friends the very best.

As we make our final preparations for the forthcoming virtual Congress at the University of Reading's Museum of English Rural Life, we are extremely disappointed not to be able to welcome you in person. We also find ourselves unable to showcase our fellow agricultural heritage museums across the United Kingdom and I would urge you to look at the work and membership of the [Rural Museums Network](#). We very much hope that our digital efforts will still prove worthy of your attention. AIMA last visited the University of Reading in 1976, a year characterized by devastating drought and terrible harvest, but also by amazingly fruitful AIMA discussions by a dedicated cohort of agricultural heritage peers. As we gather under the auspices of that same institution 45 years on, online rather than in person, we do so in the wake of disastrous periods of drought and flooding, which played havoc with UK farming throughout 2020. Let us hope that we follow this comparable period of agricultural challenge with a similar flourishing of debate within our brilliant community. Let us also hope that we find ways in the near future to meet in person, and to continue to share ideas, knowledge, skills, food, and the amazing experience of international partnership and friendship that AIMA represents.

Thank you all for your continued membership, participation, interest, and involvement.