

**COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS DISTANCE COURSE
FIRST CONSULTATION**

**CAM Guyana Conference Meeting
Umana Yana, Georgetown, Guyana
Monday, April 21, 2008**

Present:

Martin Segger, Canada, Chair
Barbara Winters, Canada, Recording
Catherine Cole, Canada
Mark Graham, Canada
Richard Benjamin, United Kingdom
Tamika Boatswain, Guyana
Gerard Pereira, Guyana
Mohamed Khan, Guyana
Krishnanandan Raghunandan, Guyana
Nirvana Persaud, Guyana
Marco Olcha, Cuba
Yakhub Tihamiyu, Nigeria
Terry Nyambe, Zambia
Lucina Shayo, Tanzania
Christine Ngereza, Tanzania
Luvuyo Dondolo, South Africa
Freda Nkirote, Kenya
Hazel Brookes, St. Kitts and Nevis
Michael Jessamy, Grenada
Michael Gwonde, Malawi

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MEETING

Chair: Martin Segger, President of CAM

Martin Segger (Canada): Changes made to the CAM Distance Course will be ready for the next CAM triennial meeting. The purpose of the discussion at this CAM conference is to gather input to help redesign the course. A collaborative group assembled by CAM will consider the comments from this meeting and will seek further input as the course content is developed. Those of you who have taken the course, what are your memories of the course and what it contains?

Tamika Boatswain (Guyana): There are six modules in the course, including sections on the history of museums; museum administration; light, humidity and environmental conditions; developing a project related to a museum. To do the last component, you need to be employed by a museum or have the opportunity to work in a museum. The course is

to be completed in one calendar year. A specialist, a qualified museum professional, had to be found who could be an advisor and who would administer the exam. To take the course, one needs more than a secondary education, although it is designed for people without any training. It is necessary to have a background in science for the module on lighting and the technical components of museum work. The course needs to take into account the interests of the individual taking the course; for example, someone may be more interested in programming for children than in the history of museums. It does not allow for specialization.

Martin Segger (Canada): What would be a priority in a course in basic museum knowledge?

Michael Gondwe (Malawi): Conservation and transmission of knowledge. Michael was one of the first who did the course in 1992. His tutor was Diana Thompson, who helped develop it. The course, in eight parts, arrived by mail after paying a fee of \$100. Modules were studied one at a time, and then were tested. The marking was too generous and there should have been more constructive criticism. The tutors need to be serious about ensuring that learning is mastered.

Yakhub Tihamiyu (Nigeria): Presenting information to the public should be included in the course. Tutors must be people who are available to be consulted. Perhaps the tutors should be paid. There should be more publicity about the course.

Freda Nkirote (Nigeria): The modules are all about what happens inside museums. Content should include taking the museum to people who are not involved in museums. There should be more on what the museum does and how it can be redefined in wider society.

Hazel Brookes (St. Kitts & Nevis): Outreach was one of the modules.

Tamika Boatswain (Guyana): The course could cater to centres not currently considered museums like Iwokrama, for example, outdoor and nature centres, and cultural centres.

Lucina Shayo (Tanzania): Lucina took the course. The time for the tests to be corrected was too long.

Terry Nyambe (Zambia): It is important to have input from those who took the course. Museums need to identify themselves with communities. That should be added as part of the course: Museums and Communities – how museums can work with communities, and public outreach programs. Fundraising should be a topic, as it is a key problem today. Documentation should be a unit, as it is an important issue.

Martin Segger (Canada): Yes, including documentation in this technological age. We will survey graduates.

Richard Benjamin (United Kingdom): How practical is this course? Not all the specialists who work in museums are museum people, for example, fundraisers. Museum personnel need multiple abilities and training in decision-making, multi-tasking, and museum outreach.

Martin Segger (Canada): The course is still used in the U.K. and Canada. Fundraisers do work in museums and the course is used to train them, so that they can learn what museums are all about.

Mark Graham (Canada): Do those taking the course want a general overview? Depending on their interests, some will take more importance from some of the parts. The content should include: what is a museum, what is its evolution and future; management and governance, including good and bad models; curatorship; databases, collection documentation; collection development; conservation – issues and challenges; research and all its possibilities in a museum; outreach – all the factors and potential.

Michael Gondwe (Malawi): Fundraising should be added to this list. It should be made clear why all these issues are important.

Martin Segger (Canada): The course should include the flexibility to specialize within the modules.

Luvuyo Dondolo (South Africa): There are two more areas to emphasize. Museums and tourism: often museums are more focused on tourism. It is essential to consider how to preserve the past while satisfying the interests of visitors. Museums and development: especially for open area museums. Issues to consider include zoning and heritage and conservation.

Michael Jessamy (Granada): The course should be designed for the multiple needs of small museums. Content could also include: tour guiding/docents; open area parks management and landscaping; financial management and cost recovery; temporary and public exhibits for a constant flow of visits and to capture the tourism dollar; art history, for example, architectural styles. The program should be expanded for a broad perspective and does not necessarily need to be in modules or small sections.

Martin Segger (Canada): The small sections are to allow for many directions in the course.

Catherine Cole (Canada): Catherine took the course in the 1970s. She is now designing a course for Nunavut. Interpretation and outreach to the community is considered important in this region of Canada. The course needs to be geographically located. The CAM course could use different examples of museums from around the world. In recent years the notions of museums has really changed, for example, Iwokrama. Training seasonal staff is important in museums and how to do this could be included in the course. The language level in the course should be considered, which is possible because

we share a common language in the Commonwealth. Resources for further study should be provided.

Hazel Brookes (St. Kitts & Nevis): How to create and troubleshoot a budget should be included in the course. The issue of tutors must be addressed. Students need more immediate responses in marking and feedback.

Luvuyo Dondolo (South Africa): Include project management and how to conceptualize a project and to anticipate problems.

Mohamed Khan (Guyana): Incorporate aspects of IT.

Martin Segger (Canada): Delegates are invited to continue to contribute to the discussion by email. CAM may ask delegates and members to contribute articles and case studies from their areas. The course will be moved to the Internet, but a print component is still needed for those who cannot easily access the internet.

Freda Nkirote (Kenya): Freda would like an outline of the course as it is.

Martin Segger (Canada): The current outline is posted on the CAM website at http://www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam/programs/distance_learning.html

However this outline could be expanded with more detail. This could be circulated and a short discussion document sent to all CAM members.

The next step will be for the Board to strike a working group to plan and develop the new course. This discussion will give direction to board and the working group. Thank you all very much for participating.

The meeting was adjourned.