

Chairperson's Annual Report for the Museums Association of Namibia, 1st April, 2007 - 31st March, 2008.

Introduction

The twelve months covered by this report have seen unprecedented demands from the regions for assistance from the Museums Association of Namibia, both to help develop and expand existing museums and to develop new museum projects. Evidence of this is seen in the continuing growth in MAN's membership, both institutional and individual. By the end of the financial year MAN had 30 museums (and related institutions) as members. I must be honest and admit that the Museums Association of Namibia does not currently have the human, financial or technical resources to assist everybody that approaches us. We operate with only two part-time staff members and plan and budget our activities eighteen months in advance. *If the Museums Association of Namibia is to fulfill its mission and adequately serve and support regional museum development then it will need full-time staff and a dedicated vehicle within the next couple of years.*

It is for these reasons that, often, we can not immediately respond to new requests - or, if we do, it means cutting another area of our budget in order to make resources available for the new activity. The Museums Association of Namibia is an NGO and the majority of our funding comes from a 'grant-in-aid' from the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sports and Culture which is based on an activity-based budget that we submit in advance to the Ministry. One annual challenge that M.A.N faces when planning its activities relates to the necessary financial safeguards attached to the grant. One-third of the grant is released at the start of the financial year, but the remaining two-thirds is only released once our audited accounts for the previous financial year have been accepted by the Ministry. This is a good measure to ensure that there is an adequate financial check that M.A.N is using its Government grant for the intended purpose, but it does mean that there is usually a period when M.A.N has to reduce its activities whilst it waits for the release of the second installment of its Government grant and that regional museum development grants can only be allocated at the end of each financial year. However, in order to try to assist new projects and to try to achieve all the goals set by our members we also approach external donors for specific project-based funding.

This year we received additional funding from a wide variety of sources.

The *National Museum of Namibia* assisted with funding for a workshop for regional museums on preventive conservation and for the printing of posters to mark 'Namibian Museums Week'. We worked in partnership with the *National Heritage Council* and shared the costs of a 'National Heritage Inventory' workshop. *UNESCO* supported M.A.N's continuing work on the Heritage Hunt campaign enabling a series of six draft regional reports to be compiled providing information based on peoples' suggestions of important heritage sites in Caprivi, Kavango, Ohagwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto Regions.

Funding was obtained from Switzerland from the *Carl Schlettwein Foundation*, KFPE (*Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries*) and *University of Basel Fund for Teaching and Research* that enabled M.A.N. to expand and remount its 'Images at War' poster exhibition at the National Art Gallery and also to host a workshop for students and artists that revealed some of the oral histories linked to the posters on display. Funding from *SIDA* via the *Embassy of Sweden* enabled M.A.N. to facilitate the creation of another new exhibition on 'Early Maps of Namibia'.

MAN also managed funding received from the *German Embassy* to assist with the upgrading of the old mission cemetery at Omaruru. The *Chinese Embassy* helped to sponsor the prize-giving ceremony for the Heritage Hunt school essay-writing competition. Support in the form of accommodation, transport and meals was provided by the *Ministry of Environment and Tourism* to enable MAN to take a team to Etosha to catalogue and dismantle the old displays at the Namutoni Museum. The *Museums Association* of the UK also provided us with a guest subscription to its two journals, *Museum Journal* and *Museum Practice*.

The Museums Association of Namibia was one of the organizations that served on a Technical Committee that provided input for the development of a programme to support the development of 'Cultural Tourism' in Namibia. At the time of writing it is not clear whether Namibia's bid has been successful. If so, substantial new investment for a series of new developments in the museum and heritage sector may become available. However, the significant point to make is that MAN's submission provided brief information on 27 new museum projects that we were aware of. If all these projects were to be implemented this would double the number of museums in Namibia! The fact is that M.A.N. does not have the staff time or resources to support each of these projects and the Executive Committee, therefore, introduced a system for evaluating new museum projects to assess their viability before they can become eligible for one of the Regional Museum Development Grants managed by M.A.N.

Finally, I would like to highlight the fact that the Annual Report of the Museums Association of Namibia is a narrative report of the activities carried out by the organisation during the previous financial year ie. from *1st April* last year until *31st March* this year. At present some museums in Namibia provide Annual Reports that cover a calendar year and we would like to urge all museums in Namibia to write a brief annual report covering the financial year and to provide a copy of their annual report to the Museums Association of Namibia before the AGM each year.

Regional Museum Development (RMD) Grants

A fixed portion of the grant received by M.A.N. from the Ministry is reserved for the provision of grants to museums. One of the main priorities of MAN has been the provision of equipment to enable museums to improve their communications through fax and internet access and to create a computerized catalogue of the artifacts in their care.

As explained in the introduction to this report the grants can only be allocated towards the end of the year, as the first installment of our annual Government funding is used largely to cover the costs of our AGM and activities over the first six months of the financial year. M.A.N. has introduced a system of formal written agreements that must be signed by both parties before a grant can be issued and this, combined with the fact that quotations must often be obtained for equipment and that the cost of such equipment is not paid until after it has been installed, means that grants funds provided for one financial year may, often, only be given out at the start of the following financial year. On this basis it can be reported that six regional museum development grants were paid out during the financial year that had been allocated during the 2006-2007 financial year and a further eleven regional museum development grants were awarded for the 2007-2008 financial year and are currently being processed.

A total of eight grants were conditionally awarded during the 2006-2007 financial year, but two applicants failed to provide the reassurances required by MAN for the award of a grant. The six grants awarded were as follows:

- 1) *City of Windhoek* - A grant to enable the purchase of secure display cabinets for the storage of objects collected for the proposed 'City of Windhoek Museum'.
- 2) *TransNamib Museum* - A grant to provide for the purchase of a computer, scanner and printer to facilitate the computerized cataloguing of the museum's collection. It was recommended that MAN should also provide an intern to assist with the cataloguing.
- 3) *Tsumeb Museum* - A grant was provided for the purchase of a scanner to enable the museum to create a digital archive of its valuable photograph collection and to start the computerized cataloguing of their collection. It was recommended that training in computerized cataloguing should also be provided to the curator.
- 4) *Tsumeb Cultural Village* - A grant was provided for the purchase of a computer and printer/fax machine to facilitate computerized cataloguing of the objects on display at the Cultural Village and communications with MAN and other stakeholders.
- 5) *Marine Archaeology Museum* - A grant was provided to cover the purchase of shelving for the secure storage of artifacts at the museum in Olympia and for the renovation of the post office building at Conception Bay.
- 6) *Lüderitz Heritage Committee* - A grant to cover the costs of a workshop to facilitate the development of a Conservation Area, the Kolmanskop Ghost Town, Shark Island and a new Heritage Centre.

The Executive Committee Planning Workshop recommended that at least half of the RMD grants awarded from the 2007-2008 Government grant should go towards the support of new museum projects and six of the eleven grants awarded fall into this

category. The eleventh grant has not yet been confirmed, pending a site evaluation visit. The eleven grants that have been awarded (but which had not been issued by the end of the financial year) were as follows:

- 1) *Tsandi (Uukwaluudhi Traditional Palace)* - A grant to obtain a computer, printer and fax machine as this will enable them to catalogue the items that they have on display and will also improve communications with the MAN office and other institutions.
- 2) *Nakambale Museum* - A grant to enable the purchase of a fax machine for the museum to improve their communications with the MAN office and other institutions.
- 3) *Desert Research Foundation of Namibia* - A grant to support the development of a new display at the Gobabeb Training and Research Centre.
- 4) *Outjo Museum* - A grant to cover the cost of the purchase of a digital camera to assist with the cataloguing of the collection (it was recommended that MAN should also provide an intern and training to local staff).
- 5) *Swakopmund Museum* - A grant to provide a computer and printer to assist with the computerised cataloguing of the museum's extensive collection. As the museum also has a substantial collection of photographs the grant will also cover the purchase of an A3 scanner.
- 6) *New Gobabis Museum* - A grant is being provided to cover the cost of a computer, printer and digital camera to enable the collection at the old Gobabis Museum to be catalogued for the first time and to facilitate the development of exhibitions for the proposed new museum.
- 7) *National Archives of Namibia* - A grant to provide for the purchase of a wide shelving unit to enable the NAN, in partnership with MAN, to store mobile exhibitions in an 'exhibition bank' which will be available on loan to regional museums.
- 8) *Muyondo gwaKapande Cultural Village* - A grant to enable members of the Committee to travel to Windhoek and make presentations to stakeholders and potential donors.
- 9) *Shambyu Mission Museum* - A grant to cover the costs of the creation of a catalogue listing the artifacts in the existing collection.
- 10) *Lüderitz Heritage Committee* - A grant to help cover the costs of the development of a mobile exhibition about Shark Island (with graphics which might be used later in a permanent museum display).

Training Workshops and Conferences

The Museums Association facilitated seven planning and training workshops during the last financial year. We worked in partnership with the National Museum of Namibia and colleagues from the *Evtek Institute of Art and Design* (Helsinki, Finland) to organise a two day national training workshop on 'Preventive Conservation' for 22 participants from museums all over Namibia. MAN is currently working with Ms. Stina Björklund to produce a small pamphlet on preventive conservation for Namibian museums.

The Museums Association of Namibia also conducted a regional museum planning workshop in the Kavango Region. The aim of this workshop, like those previously conducted in the Ohangwena and Kunene Regions, is to brief Regional Councillors about current and potential museum development projects in their region and encourage the establishment of new museums. The workshops have been successful in raising awareness, but the Executive Committee have decided that MAN should now seek to follow-up on projects identified in the three regions covered to date before doing further workshops in new regions.

The emphasis of MAN for the last financial year has been to give support to the development of new museum projects. Four workshops were conducted that aimed at drawing up Action Plans to assist in the establishment of new museums. A workshop was held with Walvis Bay municipality in Erongo Region to draw up a plan for the establishment of the new 'Walvis Bay Apartheid and Contract Labour Museum' and with Gobabis Municipality in Omaheke Region to plan the establishment of a new 'Gobabis Museum' in the town in co-operation with the existing private museum. Two workshops were held with groups that wished to establish community-based museums in rural areas. One discussed the possibility of establishing the 'King Kauluma Museum' a few kilometers north of Oshivelo in the Oshikoto Region, whilst the second discussed a proposal for the establishment of the 'Muyondo gwaKapande Cultural Village' in the Kavango Region. One planned workshop with the 'Military Museum' at Okahandja could not take place as the staff for the new museum had not yet been appointed.

The Museums Association of Namibia has a policy that it must always follow a thorough evaluation procedure before supporting new museum projects as it is currently being approached by so many municipalities, businesses and community groups with proposals for new museums. A site visit and evaluation report was produced and submitted to the National Heritage Council on a proposal by the owner of Okawaka, a farm near the Waterberg Plateau Park, to establish a new rock art museum. We also sent a team to Etosha National Park to assist with the dismantling of the displays at the old Namutoni museum. The team produced condition reports on all of the artifacts and created a draft catalogue of the collection. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism is currently developing a new display centre at Namutoni which will cover the history of the Etosha National Park.

Despite its emphasis on the encouragement of new museum projects, MAN also continued to give support to existing museums. A visit was made to Tsumeb Museum to provide training to the curator in computerized cataloguing. Planned visits to Keetmanshoop and Outjo Municipalities were not able to take place as changes in management were taking place.

The Vice-Chairperson of the Museums Association of Namibia, Mr Kaembo Kasiringua, represented MAN at the 71st Conference and AGM of the South African Museums Association that took place at one of South Africa's World Heritage Sites - Maropeng, 'Cradle of Mankind' on . The National Heritage Inventory Workshop which was organized in partnership with the National Heritage Council gave us the opportunity to learn from the experience of Mr Richard Mbwewe from the National Heritage Conservation Commission of Zambia and Ms Ceceline Muller and Mr Thabo Mgomommu from the South African Heritage Resources Agency as well as Mr Floris Guntenaar from MuseumDepot.com in Holland.

Exhibitions

A partnership with the National Archives of Namibia means that a storage space in a controlled environment and with suitable storage facilities has been made available for mobile exhibitions created or obtained by MAN. As soon as catalogues and checklists have been created and loan terms established for each exhibition it will be possible for museums in the regions to borrow these various exhibitions. More detailed information about each exhibition will be displayed on the new web site of the Museums Association of Namibia.

The Museums Association of Namibia was involved with two major exhibitions during the financial year. The Museums Association of Namibia with Swiss support were able to mount 'Images at War' - an extensive exhibition of posters from the liberation struggle at the National Art Gallery of Namibia (6th - 17th November, 2007). It was possible to add some new posters to the exhibition and to compliment it with a small photograph exhibition showing 'posters in action' and this title was used for a two day workshop that took place at the end of the exhibition's run. The workshop included presentations from historians, artists and political activists who discussed the ways in which posters had been made, distributed and displayed.

The workshop allowed a broader perspective to be taken on the history of poster production in Namibia with presentations including discussions of advertising posters and the marketing of Namibia as a tourist destination. The aim of the workshop was to research and share some of the intangible aspects of the posters on display which many of the workshop participants associated with strong personal memories from before independence. It is hoped that a publication will be produced next year that will enable more of these stories to be included in future presentations of the 'Images at War' exhibition.

The Museums Association of Namibia also facilitated an exhibition entitled 'Early Maps of Namibia' at the National Art Gallery of Namibia. The exhibition centred on two 'new' maps dating from 1852 which show significant areas of modern-day Namibia and Botswana and Mosi-oa-Tunya ('The Smoke that Thunders' - later renamed 'Victoria Falls'). The maps were discovered in the Royal Swedish Society of Science in Stockholm and the opportunity was taken to develop an exhibition which discussed the history of mid-nineteenth century and, particularly, the life of Charles Andersson, the Swedish trader who created the maps.

One of the most interesting points of the exhibition was to show the way in which European cartographers (map-makers) like Andersson drew on indigenous knowledge to show that Africans were active agents in the mapping of the region. In line with MAN's commitment to supporting events to increase the educational impact of museum exhibitions a special presentation was also made by Christer Blomstrand and Gunter von Schumann for a group of students from the History Departments of the University of Namibia and the University of Zambia.

Museum Internships

The Museums Association of Namibia provided seven internships during the financial year for students and school leavers: Ms. Alma Nankela, a student from the University of Namibia, worked as the organizer of the SCAM-X school competition that took place in Rehoboth; Ms. Naitzi Iizyenda facilitated the 'Images at War' exhibition and workshop at the National Art Gallery of Namibia and created a catalogue of the exhibition, Trevor Norich and Iileni. Haungeya, students from the Polytechnic of Namibia were taught how to use the MuseumD cataloguing software and worked at the TransNamib Museum cataloguing the collection, Selma Salmon, a former SCAM-X participant worked at the Swakopmund Museum and Revekka Haufiku and Violet Marita were trained to conduct condition reports and assisted with the dismantling of the displays at the old Namutoni Museum. We would like to congratulate our former intern, Naitzi Iizyenda, who subsequently succeeded in obtaining a bursary to study for the Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies in Cape Town.

Office, Equipment and Communications

The biggest development of the last financial year has been the gradual development of a web site for the Museums Association of Namibia. The web site will contain copies of all the reports produced by the Museums Association of Namibia as well as information and materials that will be useful to museums or school clubs or teachers wishing to make use of their local museum as an educational resource or to create their own exhibition. I would like to encourage all our museums to provide information for the site which has the capacity to eventually display the catalogues of every Namibian museum! The site is currently also being used to display some of the information that has been gathered during the Heritage Hunt project and which, it is hoped, will encourage the development of new museums. The web site is intended to be a dynamic tool for museums in Namibia

and will also feature a section that shows mobile exhibitions that are available on loan. We welcome comments and suggestions on ways to improve your web site!

One of the items on MAN's budget that constantly leads to excessive costs is communication with members. The high price of postage and the slow pace of delivery has proved a regular obstacle to the efficient dissemination of information to our members. MAN is seeking to make increasing use of email to send information to its members and one of the features of the new web site will be that it will provide every museum in Namibia with a free email address. The Museums Association of Namibia continued to rent a building from the Namibia Scientific Society to serve as its Office and Resource Centre.

Annual General Meeting

The 2007 AGM took place in Lüderitz (24th-26th May, 2007) with a full report (including summaries of some of the presentations made) being contained in *Museum Matters* 13. The growing size of the membership of the Museums Association of Namibia means that it is increasingly difficult for MAN to subsidize the cost of the important annual AGM. Priority in funding is given to ensuring the maximum possible representation of the different museums in the regions. However, MAN still encourages individuals who wish to support museum development to join the organisation, but will require individuals to make an increasing contribution towards the cost of their attendance at the AGM. The Museums Association of Namibia will continue to try as far as possible to secure sponsorship to facilitate the greatest participation possible from its members in the AGM.

Staff and Executive Committee Members

The Museums Association of Namibia continues to operate with a small part-time staff. Dr Jeremy Silvester serves as the Project Planning and Training Officer, Mr Alfons Thaniseb is the Office Administrator and Mr Gunter von Schumann serves as the Finance Officer. The Executive Committee consists of nine elected members and four co-opted members. The Secretariat also attend meetings, but do not have voting rights. During the course of the year Mr Kaembo Kasiringua and Ms Anneke Blizzard became unavailable to serve on the Executive Committee and were replaced by Ms Stella Imelwa and Mr Gert Kruger respectively. Ms Fousy Kombombo was nominated by the National Museum of Namibia to be its representative on the Committee. The Executive Committee met at Lake Oanab for the annual Planning Workshop which resulted in the drafting of an updated eighteen month Action Plan for MAN.

SCAMX Competition

The School Clubs and Museums competition continues to grow (see the report on the 2007 competition in *Museum Matters* 13) and has been very successful in encouraging young people to take an active interest in museums and to even become interested in developing a career in the museum sector. The number of participating schools doubled

from seven in 2006 to fourteen in 2007 and the number of schools receiving grants to participate in 2008 has increased again to nineteen.