

South African Museums Association – KwaZulu-Natal

Regional Conference 2022, Ulundi

Theme: How do we sustain our museums in the post-lockdown era?

Organising Committee: Ayanda Simelane, Hlengiwe Langa, Lindelani Zuma, Palesa Dlamini and Nhlanhla Mzobe from Durban Local History Museums, Dimakatso Tlhoaelo from KwaZulu-Natal Museum, Neo Mbatha and Jabulile Mazibuko from KwaZulu-Natal Amafa & Research Institute

Pre-conference dinner

The conference started with a pre-conference dinner on 23 August 2022 at the uMngungundlovu Multi-media Centre in Ulundi. The dinner was sponsored by KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute. The aim of the dinner was to offer a meet and greet session for delegates; for them to network and familiarise themselves with the conference venue. In addition to the museum professionals from various institutions in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), it was also attended by representatives from the Zululand District Municipality and South African Museums Association (SAMA) president, Dr Bongani Ndhlovu.

Day 1: 24 August 2022

The conference was officially opened on 24 August with the regional chair giving opening remarks and introduced the guest speakers. The official welcome was by Mrs Nene, from the Community Cluster of the Zululand District Municipality. She extended the welcome to everyone present and expressed how honoured they are as a municipality to have individuals from different parts of the province. Dr Mxolisi Dlamuka, Head of Amafa, welcomed attendees on behalf of Amafa and highlighted the importance of identifying ways to sustain the heritage sector. The keynote address was delivered by Dr Ndhlovu and highlighted the importance of collaborations, the use of initiatives to link and package heritage and participating in formed committees. It was attended by about 45 individuals.

Session One: Programming that Invites Partnerships

The session was chaired by Mr Siyabonga Zamisa from KZN Museum. The representers were Mrs Mohau Qalaza (Durban Local History Museums - DLHM), Mr Wonder Xulu (KZN Museum Service) and Dr Mxolisi Dlamuka (Amafa). Qalaza's presentation was focused on how collaborations can play a pivotal role in expanding the work of museums through its educational programmes. She gave a background of museum challenges in terms of limitations in support and gave examples of programmes that help grow museums and positive outcomes of collaborating with other institutions and sectors to fill in the gaps. Xulu focused on community projects as the effects of Covid-19 had impacted communities in various ways. Xulu highlighted the importance of tapping to new markets and how going the sole mandate of museums. In his examples, communities in remote areas were not left out. Dlamuka deliberated on the future of museums, possible death of museums and how that can be prevented. He highlighted that the future of museums is partnerships and authenticity and economic activities around communities. He stressed the need to transcend and go back to authenticity. The session stimulating discussions and delegates were eager to contribute and ask questions.

Session Two: Power of Promotion / Public Curatorship

The session was chaired by Miss Dimkatso Tlhoale from KZN Museum and vice-chair of the regional committee. The presenters were Miss Mandisa Ndlovu (KZN Museum), Miss Nelisiwe Manukuza (KZN Museum) and Ms Jenny Stretton (Durban Art Gallery). Ndlovu focused on programmes that promote that museum work that KZN Museum offers such as Night of the Museum and behind the scenes tours. Such initiatives bring museums to the people and promote the work done by the Natural Science department of the museum. Manukuza additionally emphasised the importance of public engagements and platforms that promote it such as museum talks, the use of social media, interactive games and having stalls at local shopping centres. Stretton focused on the use of art museums as spaces of social relevance and presented on the exhibition '#OverMyDeadBody'. The exhibition represented stories of gender-based violence survivors. The artist behind the exhibition, Andrea Walters, is also a survivor of gender-based violence. Stretton highlighted the opportunity to use art museums and its collections for activism and empower people to voice out on crucial societal issues. The presentation ended with a video about the artist and the exhibition which was at the Durban Art

Gallery. The audience was moved by the impact of the exhibition, the naming of victims and the whole thought behind it. The session overall encouraged all to think about ways of extending the functions of museums and making use of its collections in varied ways.

Session Three: The Impact of Digitisation and Online Access

The third session was chaired by Mrs Mohau Qalaza. The presenters were Miss Hlengiwe Langa (DLHM and regional committee treasurer), Mr Siyabonga Zamisa and Dr Igor Muratov, both from KZN Museum. Langa focused on digitalisation, digital archiving, and virtual tours. She highlighted the importance of incorporating digital platforms in museums while not neglecting physical contact to promote museums and its collections. The presentation ended with a short film on the life of Mrs Nokutela MaMdima Dube who was instrumental in the founding of Ohlange Institute, the first industrial school by black people in the county. Zamisa focused on the importance of digitisation to safe keep inventories and enable access and sharing of information. He gave an example of a digital system, Specify, that enables easy access to digitised collections and inventories; how it is easy to use and improves the museums' reach. Muratov focused on databases that are found in museums and the uses of databases. His presentation encouraged us to look at ways of compiling database to ensure they are more reliable and can be easily used as he highlighted how they can be understood by certain individuals. The session overall was well received, presented some shortcomings and challenges faced by museums in present day. And highlighted how museums can take advantage of digital tools to advance museum work. The session also encouraged us to consider simple technology to promote museums.

The day ended with a presentation by guest speaker, Mr Kabelo Motumi, from the Tourism Development department of the KZN Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs. He highlighted the importance of reviving the tourism sector, tourism offerings and the inclusion of museums in packaging tourism destinations in KZN. The presentation was well received and will potentially lead to collaborative efforts for museums to work with the department.

Day 2: 25 August

The day began with a presentation from guest speaker, Dr Mary Lange, of Arrow- SA management and an honorary lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Centre for Communication, Media, and Society. Her talk focused on museums and stories of trauma and collaborations that Arrow-SA is involved in within the heritage sector. Her discussion also had a strong focus on the book, she co-authored with Prof Teer-Tomaselli', entitled "Telling stories of pain and hope: Museums in South Africa and Ireland" forthcoming from University of South Africa Press. The conference delegates were moved by how her projects considered the trauma that may be experienced by tour guides in repeatedly narrating stories of trauma and how they need psychological support. And several collaborative projects within the heritage sector. The presentation led to lengthy and fruitful debates where the delegates were eager to engage.

Session 4: Novice Speakers

This session was chaired by Miss Hlengiwe Langa. The presenters were Mr Nhlanhla Mzobe, Mr Lindelani Zuma and Palesa Dlamini from DLHM and members of the regional committee and Mr Phumlani Madonda from KZN Museum. Mzobe highlighted the benefits of digitisation in museums using technologies such as 3D rendering and virtual tours. The presentation ended with a video of a patron sharing her experience visiting a museum. It is an impactful way of promoting museums and its collections. Zuma focused on the importance of marketing museums. Zuma gave a brief background of heritage and its purposes and then highlighted ways in which heritage tourism is and can be effectively marketed. Dlamini focused on the use of virtual reality and digital platforms in museums. Dlamini highlighted the role of modern technology in sustaining museums through attracting new audiences and enhancing visitor experiences. Madonda focused on the role of museums in altering the public on social ills. Madonda gave a brief background on colonial scholarship but highlighted the emergence of post-colonial scholarship and how museums are beginning to decolonise. In addition, he highlighted the contribution of artefacts to nation building. The session overall encouraged museum professionals to image innovative ways of reviving the museums and the heritage sector at large, considering opportunities that are available.

Workshop: How to turn conference paper into a journal article?

The session was followed by a workshop by Dr Mabuyi Gumede, UKZN – Heritage Tourism Programme. The workshop highlighted the importance of reworking the conference paper, adding references and making use of the Credibility Accuracy Reasonableness Support checklist. In addition, Gumede highlighted the importance of understanding the requirements of the journal that one intends on submitting to. The workshop was insightful and sparked interest for the conference delegates. They were also encouraged to write articles for the South African Museums Association Bulletin which is accredited.

The workshop was followed by a talk by Miss Siphелеle Luthuli, Manager: Sales & Marketing: Commercial Services, of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. Luthuli highlighted the facilities that Ezemvelo has in different parts of the province; in Hluhluwe, Drakensberg and St. Lucia to mention a few. Delegates were encouraged to take advantage of them. The talk ended with a lucky draw and 3 delegates won exciting prizes. This was one of the highlights of the conference and marked the end of the conference.

The regional Annual General Meeting followed; the resignation of 1 committee member was announced and 4 members were co-opted. The region now has 6 committee members from KZN Museum and DLHM. The regional terms of reference were adopted.

Post conference tours

On 26 of August, the conference delegates toured significant sites of Ulundi. They were led by Mr Neo Mbatha and Mrs Jabulile Mazibuko from Amafa. The history of the Zulu kingdom was narrated from the 19th century. The homestead of King Dingane ka Senzangakhona and the grave site of King Senzangakhona ka Jama were visited.

The regional committee is grateful for the sponsorship and support received from Amafa, KZN Museum, KZN Museum Services, UKZN, Tourism Development Department, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and all the institutions that were represented. Other institutions that are not reflected on the programme but represented were Margate Art Museum, Port Shepstone Museum,

Carnegie Art Gallery, Fort Amiel Museum, uMsunduzi Museum, Neiwe Republik Museum and Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi Museum.