

## **Report by the Secretary-General 2006**

The report that you are asked to accept is the one that appears in the document Reports and Financial Statements and refers to the year from 1st July 2004 to 30th June 2005, a period that ended six months ago. The delay between the end of a reporting year and the vote at the AGM, and the long period of preparation for a congress, means that this is the third AGM where I can take credit for the successful Bilbao congress. In fact all the work was done others: by Perry Smith, David Bomford and staff at the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum.

Although giving this report is my last formal duty as Secretary-General I shall continue as Chairman of the Technical Committee for the Congress in Munich in September. Despite the rumour that the subject “The Object in Context, Crossing Conservation Boundaries” is rather obscure and difficult to grasp, more than 160 abstracts were received. Around 60 authors were asked to prepare full drafts and, of these, 40 or so will be chosen for the programme. Although not strictly falling within the period of this report I can also add that more than 60 poster abstracts have been received.

I should at this stage pay tribute to Tim Padfield, whose web-development skills have enabled the Technical Committee to work in an almost paper-free and absolutely postage-free manner. Avid readers of the IIC web-site will know that Tim has formally resigned as webmaster. However he has continued to help with setting up direct web payment for the congress and enabling web presentation of papers and posters.

Last year’s AGM saw the innovation of a report by the Director of Publications. Unfortunately for me, David Saunders has escaped this year and it falls to me to give you some of the highlights of his report. [These highlights are not included here as the full report is included herein subsequently.]

Although congresses and publications are something that IIC does well, they do not directly increase or even maintain membership numbers. During the past year the Council has been engaged in real-time facilitated discussions and protracted e-mail debates aimed at bringing new focus to the Institute’s activities and raising its public profile. The Council must decide whether to lead or to follow the attitudes of the membership. For instance, the Bulletin could be made instantly zappy and more economic by going totally electronic. Yet members voted overwhelmingly to keep the good old-fashioned paper version of the Bulletin. To lead or to follow?

When I first considered being the Secretary-General I listened to peoples’ views about IIC. One perceived problem was that, for an international body, IIC was too UK-centric. Some measures to reduce the UK bias were introduced last year and you are asked to vote on further changes this year. The Council has increased international attendance at its meetings through teleconferencing. As technology develops, this involvement at a distance will become easier and seem more natural. You are asked to vote on changes to

the articles that clarify the status of Council members attending meetings through electronic mediation.

At every IIC AGM I have attended there have been comments from the floor that although membership of IIC is undeniably good value, it is not affordable in many countries outside of the North America / Western Europe axis. Two approaches to solving this difficulty have been suggested. The Professional Development Fund was established last year and members have been generous in donating funds to allow others from poorer countries to benefit from membership. Another approach that is being investigated is the possibility of different membership rates for different countries.

*Jonathan Ashley-Smith, Secretary-General*