

**International Mineralogical Association
Commission on Museums Activity Report
2015-16**

Introduction

The main issue the Commission had to deal with last year was the problems surrounding the selection of Changsha, China as the venue for the Mineralogy and Museums Conference (M&M8). It quickly became clear that the Commission had not put in place, sufficiently clear guidelines to cover this eventuality. It will be one of our goals this coming year to put in place robust rules and protocols for the selection of future venues for this conference.

In complete distinction to the problems of M&M8, the selection of a venue for M&M9 in 2020 was very straightforward and Sofia in Bulgaria has been selected.

Sadly the Commission has lost the services of its Vice-chairman, Alan Hart. Earlier this year Alan left his post at the Natural History Museum to become CEO at the Gemmological Association of Great Britain. We wish him well in his new venture.

Each of the subjects will be dealt with in detail below.

Mineralogy and Museum Conferences (M&M)

The sequence of events surrounding the decision to cancel M&M8 are roughly as follows:

- In Summer 2012, a delegation from Itoigawa, Japan presented a proposal to host M&M8 at M&M7 in Dresden. Normally, the decision to select the host for the next conference is taken at the previous conference. However, during the conference, the Commission was approached a delegation from China to ask if they could present a proposal. A decision to delay the award was taken to allow the Chinese bid team to prepare a proposal. After a long delay, the Chinese team eventually presented their proposals at the Commission Meeting in Johannesburg at IMA 2014 and at the IMA-CM meeting in Munich in the same year. With two firm bids it was then agreed, with the permission of the IMA, to hold an electronic ballot of members to decide between the two proposals.
- The election was held in September and October 2014. The ballot papers were sent out to all the National Representatives (NR) on the Commission and a deadline of 17th October set for returns. Out of 29 possible votes, 20 papers were returned representing a turnout of 68.9%. The result was 11/9 in favour of China. The winning team was informed and responsibility for organising and hosting the conference was transferred to the Changsha committee.

- It became clear from very early on that there were going to be problems with the Chinese bid. Between 2012 when the initial approaches by the Chinese were made, the main promoters of the bid changed from the National Museums in Beijing to the Changsha Mineral Show (CMGS). This had a number of unfortunate effects including 1) changing the priorities of the organising committee from the conference to the mineral show and 2) moving the date of the conference to May to tie in with the show. Unfortunately, and despite the fact that the presented proposal was had a number of good field work projects and opportunities, it became clear that the Chinese group responsible for the proposal simply not up to the job, displaying a lack of professionalism and poor organisational qualities. Matters came to a head at the Munich meeting in October 2015, after an aborted attempt to produce a first circular, when information came to light that the organisers of the Changsha Conference were unable to confirm that they had permission from the Chinese government to host the show.
- After a long, and sometimes angry, exchange of e-mail between the Chairman and the Secretary of the Commission and the Chinese group, the Commission were forced to set a deadline of 21st November for the organisers of the conference to provide cast iron guarantees that the conference would go ahead as proposed in 2016.
- On the very last possible day, the Commission received a letter from the Mayor of Chenzhou city that they were going to host the conference instead of Changsha.
- After much discussion, the IMA-CM considered this completely unacceptable. The original proposal had been completely changed and the organising committee had been replaced by new appointments. It was clear that these decisions were entirely driven by local politics and that in an attempt to raise the status of the mineral show, the conference was now an extra add-on to the mineral show and not a separate academic conference organised by museums for museums. On this basis, the Chinese bid was disqualified and the bid team was informed officially by letter on 1st December 2015.
- Immediately after this decision the Japanese group which proposed to host M&M8 in Itoigawa was contacted asking if there was a possibility of organizing the conference there in the period end of August-beginning of September 2016. Unfortunately in December 2015 the Japanese group answered negatively with the reason that there was not enough time available. They also refused to consider the possibility of organizing the conference with the delay of one year.
- After these dramatic two or three months, the Commission took some time to consider its position. At the SMMP Meeting in Tucson 2016, the Chairman of

the IMA-CM made a report concerning the situation of the M&M8 organizing troubles at the annual SMMP meeting. He also raised the possibility of re-organising the conference at a new location during 2017 and a few positive offers were received. It was felt that to ask a new organising team to set up a conference in 2016 was impossible.

- In May 2016, the Chairman, was invited by the organizing committee of the Chenzhou Mineral and Gem Show to participate in a Mineralogy Museum Forum. The Chairman used this opportunity to meet with a group of Chinese politicians, the Chinese IMA-CM member, and mineralogy curators of important Chinese Museums, to give them an explanation for the decision of IMA-CM to cancel the conference and to give advice for possible future candidature for hosting a M&M conference in China.
- In June 2016, a first SMMP meeting was held during the Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines Mineral Show. The Chairman announced a new proposition to hold a revamped M&M8 in Lugano, Switzerland, with a joint organizing committee including Swiss, French and Italian members. The SMMP President and some other SMMP members suggested organising the conference meeting in conjunction with the Sainte Marie SMMP meeting and Mineral and Gem Show 2017.
- At end of July 2016, Marco Antognini, Mineralogy Curator of the Cantonal Museum of Natural Sciences in Lugano answered positively about the possibility of working for bringing M&M8 to this location or nearby areas.
- At the IMA-CM - SMMP European joint meeting, organized for end of October 2016 at Munich, during the Mineral and Gem Show, it is expected to have the proposed program for M&M8 in Lugano (Switzerland), in order to propose to officialise this new location.

M&M9 Conference

- To be organized in 2020, a proposal has been already submitted for organizing the conference in Bulgaria. This will be discussed at the Munich Meeting in October 2016. It is envisaged that the M&M9 will be awarded to the Bulgarian team.

Other Commission Activities

1. Joint IMA-CM – SMMP meeting in Munich October 2015
2. IMA-CM communication at the SMMP meeting in Tucson February 2016
3. IMA-CM communication at the SMMP meeting in Sainte Marie Aux Mines June 2016
4. Informal IMA-CM working meeting at EMC2 in Rimini September 2016.

5. After discussions with the President of SMMP, a proposal to include a representative of SMMP in future IMA-CM decision making processes is now under discussion.
6. After the problems with the organisation of the Mineralogy and Museums Conference 8 (M&M8) it was agreed that a set of rules and protocols should be drawn up to set out clearly the correct procedure for applying to host a Mineralogy and Museums Conference in the future.
7. The IMA-CM is sad to announce that the Vice-Chairman Alan Hart has vacated his position after he left his position of Mineralogy Curator at the Natural History Museum in London. The Commission will be seeking nominations for this position in due course.
8. The list of Commission Council members is continually being updated. There have been a number of changes over the last couple of years and these have been noted. In gathering this information, the secretary has noted that in some cases it has been almost impossible to contact certain members in order to establish exactly who is the National Representatives for each of the countries eligible to select members.
9. As noted previously, a Facebook site has been opened under the name of the Society of Mineral Museum Professionals. This will be supplemented by an online discussion forum hosted by the MinDat site. Activity at the Facebook site was initially disappointing but has picked up a bit since then as people have become aware of it. The secretary has also now taken over responsibility for the IMA-CM website from Tony Kampf. I would like to record the Commission's thanks for all the years of effort you put in. The IMA-CM page has been hosted by the AGI Server (same as SMMP) in the US for many years and it was felt that a new host server should be found.
10. Under discussion is what we consider the most important projects of the IMA-CM which concerns the development of a more complete database of type-minerals specimens, developed with connection with the IMA Commission on New Minerals.

Comments

Over the last two years the troubles connected with the organization of M&M8 have absorbed a lot of time and energy, delaying other projects of the Commission. However, these same problems have raised a lot of interesting questions and many lessons have been learned. The Commission hopes that now that these difficulties have been put behind us, we can concentrate on other projects.

We would like to thank all the members of the Commission with their input and we add our special thanks to the Secretary of the IMA, Hans-Peter Schertl, for his help and advice.

Federico Pezzotta, Chairman IMA-CM

Peter Davidson, Secretary IMA-CM

Tuesday, 25 October 2016