

July 2007

CHRONOLOGY OF THE DRAFTING, REVIEW, AND REVISION OF THE PROPOSED ICOMOS CHARTER FOR THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES

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Recommended Citation

Silberman, Neil A., "CHRONOLOGY OF THE DRAFTING, REVIEW, AND REVISION OF THE PROPOSED ICOMOS CHARTER FOR THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES" (2007). *Selected Publications of EFS Faculty, Students, and Alumni*. 7.

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International Council on
Monuments and Sites

Conseil International
des Monuments et des Sites

ICOMOS International Scientific Committee
on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites

Comité Scientifique International d'ICOMOS
sur l'Interprétation et la Présentation des Sites Patrimoniaux

CHRONOLOGY OF THE DRAFTING, REVIEW, AND REVISION OF THE PROPOSED ICOMOS CHARTER FOR THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES

The drafting of this proposed Charter has been a long process, extending over more than five years. In order to provide background for consideration of this document and its evolution, the following is a brief description of the stages that resulted in the formulation of the Final Proposed Text:

Spring 2002: The Origin of the Idea for an Interpretation Charter. The staff of the Ename Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Presentation, working in collaboration with Jean-Louis-Luxen, then serving as ICOMOS secretary general, initiated the idea of an international doctrinal text on interpretation and presentation.

The Ename Center, founded in 1998, is a publicly funded, non-profit organisation, sponsored by the Province of East-Flanders, Belgium in cooperation with the Flemish Heritage Institute. The founding goal of the Center was to develop and disseminate expertise relating to the public interpretation and sustainable development of archaeological sites, museums, historical monuments and landscapes both in Flanders and at partner sites and organizations throughout the world. To that end, the Ename Center organized a series of scholarly seminars and meetings and Center staff members participated in conferences and workshops on the theme of Interpretation in Europe and the US.

A central concern in these discussions of public interpretation and presentation was the matter of standards. Although many scholars and heritage professionals were deeply involved in the subject of interpretation, there were no agreed-upon standards for scientific and intellectual integrity, no specific interpretation standards for community involvement and no guidelines or criteria for appropriate mechanisms of funding and management of interpretation and presentation programs.

Because of this situation—and because of the importance of the doctrinal texts of ICOMOS—it became apparent that some form of international consensus would be helpful in the continuing development of this field. Jean-Louis Luxen, who had participated in several Ename seminars, was a valuable advisor and suggested that ICOMOS might be the most appropriate institutional framework for the drafting of a potential international charter dealing with interpretation and presentation.

March 2002: Draft 1. During the spring of 2002, the first draft of such a charter (dated March 25, 2002) was formulated by the staff of the Ename Center, based on close consultation with M. Luxen and other colleagues, following the model of earlier charters. (For text of Draft 1 and all subsequent drafts, see: <http://www.enamecharter.org/downloads/archives>).

September 2002: First Public Discussion of “Interpretation Charter” Draft 1. The first draft of the Charter was circulated widely during the summer of 2002 in anticipation of a conference organized in Ghent Conference on “Heritage, Technology and Local Development.”

A number of speakers at the conference directly addressed issues contained in the Charter and offered valuable input for its further development.

November 2002: Workshop in Washington. As a follow-up to the conference and workshops held in Ghent, a special roundtable discussion on the advisability and feasibility of an international interpretation charter was organized by Dr. Francis P. McManamon, of US-ICOMOS and the National Park Service. In addition to a delegation from the Ename Center, the NPS workshop participants were representatives of NPS programs and departments and of other government agencies, non-profit organizations, and associations. They offered valuable reactions, essentially confirming the usefulness of such a charter and suggesting practical steps forward for its review by relevant heritage organizations throughout the world. One of the most important of these recommendations was from Gustavo Araoz of US-ICOMOS that the proposed Charter Initiative be officially authorized by ICOMOS International and ultimately be formulated according to standard procedure as an ICOMOS doctrinal text.

2003: Initial Discussions of ICOMOS Sponsorship. Meetings were held and contacts were made throughout the year to gauge the support of ICOMOS officers and members for this initiative and to study the procedures and requirements for the formulation and internal review of ICOMOS doctrinal texts. The idea of the Charter was presented to a meeting of ICAHM in Washington, D.C. in June. Throughout the remainder of the year, extensive contacts and communications about the revision of the initial draft were made with ICAHM members, particularly ICOMOS International VP Sheridan Burke, who suggested a thorough restructuring of the initial text.

January 2004: Discussion and Authorization for Further Work by ICOMOS Executive. The Executive Committee of ICOMOS decided that the work of review and revision of the Interpretation Charter would be undertaken under the auspices of an editorial group appointed by ICOMOS, consisting of: international vice-presidents Gustavo Araoz and Sheridan Burke, Secretary-general Dinu Bumbaru, treasurer-general Giora Solar and a team from the Ename Center (Neil Silberman and Jean-Louis Luxen). A meeting was held in Ename in January 2004, with the attendance of Araoz and Burke, to discuss revision of Charter Draft 1.

February 2004: Draft 2 The deliberations of the newly established editorial committee resulted in a new structure for the charter, replacing the former division into professional themes (Scientific and Professional Guidelines; Planning, Funding, and Management; Tourism Aspects; and Heritage Education) into more general interpretive concerns (Access; Information Sources; Context and Setting; Authenticity; Sustainability; Inclusiveness; and Research, Education, and Training). Draft 2 of the Charter, dated February 20, 2004) contained this new structure.

May-June 2004: Reactions and Revisions to Draft 2 The need for even broader consultation on the structure and contents of the evolving Charter text was addressed in a two day workshop that was held 9-10 June to review systematically the contents of Draft 2 and to make recommendations for necessary and desirable revisions. The reviewers included Henry Cleere (ICOMOS-UK), Willem Willems (ICOMOS Netherlands), Werner Desimpelaere (ICOMOS Belgium), and Pierre-Marie Tricaud (ICOMOS France).

June - August 2004: Official Review Cycle 1 and Formulation of Draft 3: The result of this consultation was the decision to circulate a slightly revised version of Draft 2 to all ICOMOS National Committees and ISCs. It was duly distributed in English, French, and Spanish versions by the ICOMOS secretariat in Paris. As a result of comments and reactions received though the summer from 10 National Committees (Armenia, Australia, Austria, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guinée, Malta, the Netherlands, Peru, and the UK); from 22 individual members (from National Committees of Belgium, Bolivia, Canada, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, the UK, and the US), and from 4 ISCs (ICAHM,

Cultural Tourism, ICLAFI, and CIF - Training), Draft 3, dated August 23, 2005, was prepared for the ICOMOS Executive Board at their meeting in Bergen, Norway in September.

September 2004: Action of Executive Board. In the subsequent ICOMOS Advisory Board and Executive Committee Meeting in Bergen, serious discussions were held about the need for an Interpretation Charter and the procedural history of this particular text. It was strongly recommended that a clearer distinction between (and definition of) the concepts of Interpretation and Presentation be included. The Executive Committee recommended that Charter Draft 3 be circulated once again to the NCs and ISCs, to give more amplitude to some committees who felt that they had not been given sufficient time to convene their membership to evaluate the text.

Winter - Spring 2005: Official Review Cycle 2 and the formulation of Draft 4: Draft 3 was once again circulated to ICOMOS NCs and ISCs with a request for additional comments. In May, in Charleston South Carolina, USA — during the 8th International Symposium of US/ICOMOS, dedicated to the theme “Heritage Interpretation,” the proposed ICOMOS Interpretation Charter was extensively discussed by the 200 participants. The participants at this Symposium formulated the “Charleston Declaration,” supporting the need for such a charter and highlighting issues that might be further developed in future drafts. In response to these suggestions and additional specific recommendations received from the National Committees of Belgium, South Africa, Switzerland, and the US, Charter Draft 4 (dated 5 July 2005) was produced.

October 2005: Establishment of ISC on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP): The interest aroused in the subject of Interpretation and presentation and need for more formalised ICOMOS institutional structure for discussion and further research on the general subject of Interpretation and Presentation, led to the formation of an International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP), which was officially approved by the ICOMOS Executive Committee during the 15th General Assembly in Xi’an, China in October 2005.

March – June 2006: The Charter as an Official Activity of ICIP: At the first organizational meeting of ICIP, held on March 24, 2007, a decision was taken that the ongoing work on the Interpretation Charter would be an important activity of the Committee, along with its other working groups. The committee officers, in consultation with the members of the earlier editorial board began a systematic review of the latest pre-ICIP text (Draft 4).

August- December 2006: Formulation of ICIP Text (Draft 5): At the end of this review, a slightly revised version of Draft 4 (dated 31-07-06) was circulated to all ICIP members for their comments and suggestions. The result of this process, together with additional input from members of the ICOMOS Advisory Council meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland in September 2006, Draft 5 (dated 12 December 2006) was finalised.

January – March 2007: Official Review Cycle 3 and Draft 6: During the winter and spring of 2007, Draft 5 was distributed once more to all ICOMOS NCs and ISCs for another round of review and recommendations. The comments received led to the formulation of Draft 6 (dated March 16, 2007). It was clear that the scope of the comments was becoming more limited and the text was reaching its final form.

March – April 2007: Formulation of Final Proposed Draft. For the second annual meeting of ICIP, committee members were asked for final comments on the text. When these were compiled, a Proposed Final Version (Draft 7) was produced with the understanding that its submission to the Executive Committee meeting in Pretoria in October 2007 would be submitted to an official vote of the Committee to conclude no later than June.

June 2007: Approval of the Proposed Final Draft by the Committee. The results of the Committee vote to approve submission of the Proposed Final Draft of the Charter to the Executive Committee was as follows: **To Approve: 42; Not to Approve: 1**

Yes votes were submitted by committee members from the following ICOMOS National Committees: Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and Zimbabwe.

A single **No** vote was recorded from a committee member from ICOMOS-Spain.

July 2007: Submission to ICOMOS. The Final Proposed Draft, dated 10 April 2007, was officially submitted to the ICOMOS Executive Committee for consideration and decision regarding its presentation for ratification at the 16th ICOMOS General Assembly in Quebec.