



# Communiqué

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES PALAIS DE CONGRÈS  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONGRESS CENTRES  
INTERNATIONALER VERBAND DER KONGRESSZENTREN

■ President's Message:

## Building Industry Profile with Our Partners

One of the things that affects our operating environment more than anything else is the lack of profile we have as an industry. When our communities and governments (often the owners!) understand and appreciate the role we play in creating economic and community benefits, they are much more likely to support our activities and the kind of investment we need to remain competitive in today's challenging market.

The problem is, we haven't done much as an industry to raise awareness of what we do or to get out our key messages. As a result, we're usually at the bottom of the food chain when it comes to getting the kind of attention we need.

A number of different industry groups have recognized this in recent years, and recognized as well that there is no single organization in a position to take on the job of raising our profile. These organizations have typically been consortia of other organizations that together reflect the whole spectrum of industry interests. AIPC has

been active in working with these groups on our common interests, and now we're playing a pivotal role in two of the most important.

JMIC, or the Joint Meetings Industry Council, is a group made up of the different associations involved in the Meetings Industry, including AIPC, MPI, IAPCO, EFCT, SITE, ICCA, COCAL and AIVFC. JMIC recently launched an industry profile program that provided materials, messages and guidance for members who wanted to develop awareness activities in their own countries or communities, and this has already resulted in a number of industry-related events in several countries around the world. Next up is an industry award to recognize achievements in community and government awareness programs which will hopefully promote even more activity at the local level. All the details are on the recently launched JMIC web site <http://www.themeetingindustry.org>.



Barbara Maple, AIPC President

WCVM, the World Council of Venue Management, is an organization that represents

different types of venues, including congress centres, arenas, stadiums and exhibition centres. Again, it is comprised of like-minded associations and, again, it is seeking to build more profile for the industry. WCVM is now developing an annual Global Statement to characterize the "state of the nation" for the venues industry to demonstrate what's going on in our industry and, again AIPC will be in the forefront.

In fact, we will be leading these initiatives in the sense that AIPC is currently chairing both organizations! From this position, it's my hope that we'll be able to draw together some of these initiatives to get the most synergy possible from our partnerships and start to have some real impact on growing global awareness of the important role we play as congress centres.

There's a long way to go toward enjoying the same kind of profile that other industries have—but we're certainly never going to get very far unless we're prepared to make a beginning. By working together with our industry colleagues, we'll be more likely to create some impact - and spread both the benefits and the responsibilities for what is a pretty big task!

## Congress Centre Sophia Takes 2005 AIPC Apex Award

Congress Centre Sophia of Bulgaria was named the winner of this year's AIPC Apex Award for "World's Best Congress Centre" at the AIPC Annual Conference in Québec City, Canada, from a wide field of finalists who had qualified for the competition.

"We are delighted to be congratulating Congress Centre Sophia on their win of this year's AIPC Apex Award after such a hard-fought competition amongst so many highly qualified participants", said AIPC President Barbara Maple. "This win is a real tribute to their great relations with clients, who are the ultimate decision-makers in the AIPC Apex Award program and the basis on which the winner is selected. Their achievement is a demonstration of the extent to which great service and satisfied clients can advance a centre in today's highly competitive meetings market."

"This year's AIPC Apex Award competition has a special meaning for us and it is hard to express how proud we all are to be announced as the World's Best Congress Centre by the

International Association of Congress Centres", says Christo Drumev, Director General, Congress Centre-Sofia, National Palace of Culture. "Locally, the AIPC Apex Award will give us the opportunity to convince the appropriate authorities in Bulgaria of the importance of the congress and incentive tourism market while internationally, the quality of our service delivery is expected to lead to an ever growing attention from international buyers".



The AIPC Board also recognized the two runners-up to this year's award; last year's winner Cairns Convention Centre in Australia and Congress Innsbruck of Austria who was the award winner in 2001.

"While we salute Congress Centre Sophia for their achievement, the fact is that all participants are winners, since each competitor gets an individual evaluation report on their particular centre's results which enables them to see how they are rated by clients in various aspects of their operations. This allows them to identify areas that may need improvement, which in turn addresses AIPC's overall mission of enhancing excellence in centre management".

Congress Centre Sophia joins previous Apex Award winners Melbourne Exhibition & Convention Centre in Australia, Congress Innsbruck in Austria, the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre in Canada, the Palacio de Congresos y de la Musica de Bilbao in Spain and Cairns Convention Centre in Australia as part of a very exclusive club of centres having this honour.

## Meet the New Board!

Here's your introduction to some of those new faces;



### Edgar Gnanou, Treasurer

Edgar Gnanou is well qualified for the position of AIPC Treasurer given his present position as Executive Director for Corporate Control at the Palais des Congrès de Paris, a position he has held since January 2001. He has a PhD in Economics and has 21 years of experience in management control and financial audit in firms such as Arthur Andersen, Thomson, COFACE and the Chamber of Commerce of Paris. Along with his duties at the Palais des Congrès he is also a professor for Management Control at HEC PARIS in the graduate school of management.



### Geoff Donaghy, Board Member

Geoff Donaghy is a Director of the Board of Management of Ogden IFC, Asia Pacific's largest venue management company and has CEO responsibility for the operation of the Cairns Convention Centre and SunCorp Stadium in Brisbane. Geoff managed the opening in 1996 of the Cairns Centre which was recently acknowledged as the "World's Best Congress Centre" in AIPC's 2004 Apex Awards. He then also oversaw the redevelopment of the 52,000 seat SunCorp Stadium which opened in 2003 and successfully hosted nine Rugby World Cup games that year. It is Australia's premier football stadium and is acknowledged as one of the world's best rugby venues.

Geoff was awarded the Australia Centenary Medal by the Federal Government in 2001 for services to business and tourism. He has been a Board Director of several industry and Government organisations including state tourism and event agencies and a major environmental management authority.



### Marisa Marin, Board Member

Marisa represents the Spanish membership from her base at the Bilbao Exhibition Centre, where she is the Director of Conventions. With language skills in German and English as well as her native Spanish, she began her career in the industry as a translator and tour guide. Moving to the Bilbao Exhibition Centre in 1983, she held positions in Communications and the General Manager's office before assuming her present role as Director of Fairs and Congress Centre. She has a degree in Social Sciences.

Board elections at the Annual Conference produced some new (but familiar) faces along with a realignment of some previous Board members.

With the retirement of veteran Board members Warren Buckley of Suntec Singapore, Pierre Gilliot of CIG Geneva and Juan Garaiurrebaso of the Bilbao Exhibition Centre, the re-election of Barbara Maple of VCEC Canada, Edgar Hirt of Munich, Steve Piper of Brighton and Antti Vihinen of Lahti and newcomers Edgar Gnanou of Palais de Congrès de Paris, Geoff Donaghy of Cairns Convention Centre and Marisa Marin of the Bilbao Exhibition Centre, the Board composition for the next two years is now:

- President: Barbara Maple, Canada
- Vice President: Edgar Hirt, Germany
- Treasurer: Edgar Gnanou, France
- Steve Piper, UK
- Geoff Donaghy, Australia
- Marisa Marin, Spain
- Antti Vihinen, Finland

## AIPC, IAPCO Courses Available to Members

The next in our series of the AIPC Excellence in Customer Service Course will take place December 11-16 at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre.

Further information on course contents and fees will be sent to all members via an e-bulletin in the next few weeks and is also available through the Secretariat Office.

At the same time, AIPC and IAPCO (the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers) have for several years a reciprocal educational agreement that makes each association's courses available at the regular member's rate for each organization. The idea is to encourage mutual awareness of the different functions that go into creating the overall meetings

experience from both a centre's and organizer's perspectives and to encourage association members to broaden their industry awareness and expertise.

With this in mind, it should be noted that the next IAPCO annual "Wolfsberg Seminar" on Professional Congress Organization will take place from the 14th through the 20th of January 2006. This is IAPCO's comprehensive training program that addresses key elements of the congress organization process, and is a highly regarded source of professional development for PCO's world wide. Further information regarding the seminar is available on the IAPCO web site <http://www.iapco.org/> where it to be found under the section seminars - IAPCO Annual Seminar.

## To keep in touch with AIPC, visit [www.aipc.org](http://www.aipc.org)

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## WELCOME TO NEW AIPC MEMBER CENTRES:

### CCIB, International Convention Centre of Barcelona:

The International Convention Centre of Barcelona, managed by GL events, opened its doors in November 2004. It is a modern, flexible and outstanding convention centre, capable of welcoming any event, and the aim of its team is to offer a high-quality professional service.

The CCIB is formed by two buildings, the Convention Centre and the Forum Auditorium, and is one of the few venues in the world with the capacity to receive 15,000 delegates in a single space. Facing the sea and with natural light, it has almost 100,000 m<sup>2</sup> of dedicated event space, including over 45 column-free



Jesús Álvarez Gallego

meeting rooms of varying sizes allowing all types of configurations, as well as an auditorium with seating for 3,200. The dimensions of the auditorium, the magnificent sea-view banqueting hall and the 11,287 m<sup>2</sup> column-free exhibition area make the CCIB a unique venue amongst European convention centres.

The Centre is located in the new business area of Barcelona, Diagonal Mar, which offers attractive leisure space for delegates to enjoy their free time, including 2,500 hotel rooms within walking distance and 4,000 within 3 km; parks, a sports marina, bathing areas and a shopping mall. Barcelona itself offers a pleasant climate and a modern network of facilities.

### The Victoria Conference Centre:

With the themeline "A place to share ideas and be inspired", the Victoria Conference Centre is located in the heart of downtown Victoria, British Columbia in Canada.

Situated by the spectacular Inner Harbour and adjacent to the British Columbia Parliament Buildings, it is a purpose built conference centre with 3,1716 sq. metres (40,000 sq. ft) of meeting space, including 16 multi-purpose meeting rooms, a 400 seat lecture theatre and a mix of multi-purpose function space ideally suited for groups from 450 to 2,500. The Centre prides itself on its orientation to conference details, ensuring that delegates enjoy a flawless experience from the perspectives of services, technology and comfort.



John Hill



The VCC is located at the center of a wide range of hotel accommodation and other delegate amenities including fine restaurants, waterfront recreation facilities, museums and retail areas. Rated the #1 City in the Americas by Condé Nast Traveler for 2003, Victoria is a compact and "walkable" city that boasts the mildest climate in Canada. It is the focal point of Vancouver Island - again, rated #1 Island in North America by Condé Nast Traveler for 2003. It is a center for eco-tourism activities such as sea kayaking, canoeing, fishing, whale watching, sailing and diving, most of which can be accessed within 10 minutes of the Victoria Conference Centre itself.



### Internationales Kongresszentrum Bundeshaus Bonn

The former German Federal Parliament building has been operated as the Internationales Kongresszentrum Bundeshaus Bonn (IKBB) since 1999 as a

unique setting for events and conferences within the political surroundings of the former parliament. A synthesis of architecture, art and design, it is located on the scenic River Rhine in the heart of Europe with excellent transport links and infrastructure.

The centre has the capacity to handle 1,275 people in the plenary hall alone and is now developing an additional hall

for up to 5,000 people. "As the former capital, Bonn provides excellent infrastructure, hotel, event and security capabilities", says IKBB Director Matthias Schultze. "The Centre itself it is centrally located from key destinations in Europe, including 20 minutes from the Cologne/Bonn airport, 45 minutes from the Frankfurt airport, 2 hours to Brussels and 3 hours to Paris in via train".

Recent major conventions hosted at the IKBB include the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Conference for Renewable Energies, the Conference on Sustainable Food Security and the International Conference on Freshwater.

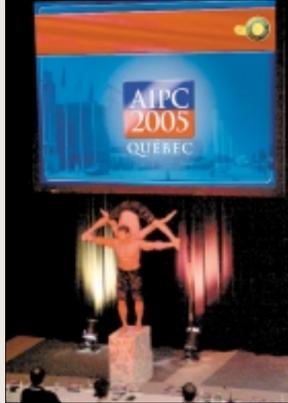


Matthias Schultze



# Annual Conference Explores the Road to “Strategic Excellence”

This year’s AIPC Annual Conference in Quebec City Canada delivered record attendance along with an inspired set of presentations from a select group of both member and guest speakers. Along with keynote presentations from internationally recognized demographer David Baxter and industry observer and trainer John Parke, the conference had the benefit of participation by other leading industry figures such as Didier Scaillet, who is Director of Operations for MPI Europe and Rod Pilbeam, CEO of Ogdan IFC in Australia.



Together, this combination of presenters created a range of perspectives around key issues facing congress centres in the future and suggested strategies for successfully addressing these issues. The following articles capture some of this content.

## “Embrace Change” Says Keynote

Change is reality, but in spite of increasing global pressures, there is great resistance to this change on many fronts. That was the opening message of an extensive presentation by keynote David Baxter of the Urban Futures Institute on how global demographic and attitudinal changes will impact the meetings industry worldwide.

“The world is changing, and those who recognize and respond to this will be the most successful” said Baxter. “The challenge is to be responsive to change, and to use it to advantage rather than trying to resist it as so many do now”.

Baxter noted that the key issues involving change are common to most parts of the world, and many create contradictions that people find hard to manage. “Countries need economic growth to fund increasing social service expectations, and this in turn requires both trade and immigration. Yet in many parts of the world, there is resistance to both of these,” he said.

Demographic changes are driving a global realignment in the traditional patterns of economic growth, said Baxter. It is his sense that much of the meetings activity of the future will be taking place with countries and organizations that are newly emerging economic powers, as these will be facing the same need to communicate and build relationships in the future as the more established economies have in the past. “Many of these meetings will be along ethnic or language lines as emerging countries link together with others who have similar backgrounds and interests, and this is something that people in the Meetings Industry are going to have to anticipate in their planning”, he said.

The Meetings Industry will feel the impact of these changes in many ways, from shifting market opportunities to new expectations for technology and content, he said. But its overall future is secure because basic human needs to “meet and verify” cannot be taken over by electronic communications and will only increase as more commerce is conducted at arms length.

“In a sense, the Internet is the ultimate telephone - but all the information we exchange needs to be verified with face to face contact. Relationship building is an essential foundation of business, and as commerce increases, the need to meet will increase too” he said.

One of the trends Baxter sees coming is based on his belief that meetings are a “total experience” for delegates where they will recall the high and low points long after they’ve forgotten the specifics of content. In this sense, he described the “perfect meeting experience” as addressing seven key areas;

- **Security smart** – to address growing concerns at all levels regarding event and delegate safety and security
- **Community welcomed** – where delegates feel they are welcomed guests rather than intruders
- **Fresh, new, hip** – to give delegates a sense that they are having a unique experience that justifies participation
- **Widely diverse** – again, to give a sense that they are having a broad experience
- **Sensitive and sustainable** – as there is increasing emphasis on the need for greater attention to “sustainability” world wide
- **Digitally connected** – to meet the needs of a generation of “digitally addicted” delegates
- **Create “great stories”** – so that delegates come away with a sense that they have had a true experience, not just attended a meeting

“The cumulative effect of all this is the need to address the needs of planners and delegates for a great experience, because that’s how the success of meetings will increasingly be judged”, said Baxter. “It’s no longer just about content, since there are so many other ways to get content these days and many, such as via the Internet are much more efficient than attending a meeting. That means that meetings must satisfy other needs in order to succeed”.

## Panel Discussion Explores Future Options

Knowing about coming changes in the market and operating environment is one thing - but having a well thought out strategy of response is another. That was the basis for a follow up panel discussion that responded to the keynote presentation with a series of alternate perceptions of how centres could and should prepare themselves for a future of change.

“We can see the changes coming, and many of them are already upon us”, said panel moderator **Warren Buckley of Suntec Singapore**. “The question is: how should we be planning to address these?” Three panelists gave their different perspectives on the answer;

**Rod Pilbeam, CEO of Ogdan IFC in Australia**, said

that there has been increasing interest in exploring alternate ownership and management models in recent years as governments consider the most appropriate role for them to take. “The tendency has been to move from more traditional government ownership / operation models to other models such as government retaining ownership but contracting out operations to an arms-length manager”, said Pilbeam. “The future may well move even further in this direction, with moves toward P3’s or Private / Public Partnerships where governments make a contribution but expect the operator to assume commercial risk as part of their involvement.”

Fully private operations, such as Suntec Singapore, were seen as another option for the future but would require innovative funding mechanisms. In fact, financial consideration were essential elements of the discussion of any options that might be considered, he said.

“P3’s and other privately funded models have some very real problems, mostly based on the economics of the industry”, said Pilbeam. “First, they offer no return on investment; second, they have a discounted yield; third, they attract heavy consulting and risk fees and fourth, they result in a loss of flexibility to governments who often see centres as a way of generating broader economic and social benefits. These issues will have to be addressed if there is to be any real progress in this direction”.

Pilbeam also identified changing client expectations as a key issues for centres to address. Amongst the key areas he noted as becoming essential were:

- Value for money – do demonstrate fiscal prudence
- The WOW factor – to add something special to the delegate experience
- Quality facilities and ancillary services – rising expectations
- Convenient, comfortable access – a good travel experience
- Reliability and trust in delivery – a need for confidence of quality results
- “Five Star Hotels” without beds – quality of finish and facilities

- First class F&B – nothing less will meet delegate expectations

On the basis that “the future is no longer what it used to be” guest panelist **Didier Scaillet, head of MPI Europe**, set out a number of factors that represented future industry trends and requirements from a meeting planner perspective. Noting that recent surveys were showing that both event numbers and budgets are on the rise, he pointed to the need for planners and suppliers, including centres, to recognize how they could work together more productively.

“What planners would like from suppliers is that they work as partners rather than as vendors, develop



increased flexibility in attrition/cancellation requirements and develop quicker turnarounds on requests”, said Scaillet. “What suppliers want from planners is more honest disclosure of budgets, more comprehensive communication and more detailed RFPs. By understanding each other’s needs and expectations, we can work better together in delivering the best possible product for our customers”.

Scaillet says that all their research points to a positive events industry outlook, with a new role for events in the sales cycle based on a move to a more integrated event marketing approach. “More than 90% of recently surveyed marketing executives indicate the importance of event marketing is growing or stable. At the same time, they see a need for localized strategies, with regional priorities and approaches and the recognition that emerging markets have different requirements.”

Where everyone will have to work harder is in the area of measuring results, says Scaillet. “There is a new focus on demonstrating ROI for elements in the marketing mix, and events must meet this test. This is another area where planners and suppliers will have to work more closely, even though that has not always been the case in the past”.

Panelist **John Christison of the Washington State Convention & Trade Centre** in the US provided an overview of key issues that were driving the industry in North America and some observations as to where these may be leading.

## New Conditions Require New Strategies, Says Parke

The second keynote speaker John Parke cited a wide range of sources for his comprehensive review of industry conditions and divided his conclusions into four sections: sales, security, branding and technology. Amongst the primary issues he noted as requiring strategic responses were: the importance of measuring Return On Investment (ROI); the ongoing role of relationships; the need for an industry voice and a role in advocacy; “time poverty” as a major factor influencing how work is getting done; changes in rates/pricing as a factor in the market; the growing importance of managing the recruitment and retention of staff and issues surrounding contracting.

In Parke’s view, the key to managing change is to make sure it is closely linked to organizational strategy and goals. “Change affects the entire organization, and the ability to change is both a strategic and evolutionary process”, said Parke. “Resistance to change is predictable, and the ways in which different people react takes different forms”. He defined four categories as illustrating the variety of responses

that different personalities adopt: Leaders, who take initiative; Managers, who focus on practicality; Bureaucrats, whose reaction is “stick to what got us here” and Caretakers, who are fear-driven, and want to avoid disruption.

Parke’s presentation revolved around the different strategies that change required and he supplied details on a number of them. In particular, he noted how the change in the market environment required a corresponding change in the sales, marketing and branding processes and a more “strategic” approach to managing and measuring sales activities.



## Panels, Workshops Cover the Practical Details

A range of panels and workshops that rounded out the conference program got into the details and operational implications of today’s issues and provided delegates with the chance to interact in a more detailed way with conference topics. Among those topics covered were:

- **Launching a New product:** Paul D’Arcy of Perth gave a detailed overview of the challenges and opportunities associated with launching a new product into today’s highly competitive market.
- **New Business Opportunities for Congress Centres:** Michael Closier of Glasgow looked at a range of possibilities both large and small for enhancing revenues from both fine tuning existing sources and developing entirely new ones.
- **Managing and Evaluating Performance:** Edgar Gnanou of Paris reviewed the options available for that all-important performance measurement component of the business process.



- **Planning for the Coming HR Crisis:** Marcia Lyons of Calgary and Geoff Fenlon of Edinburgh looked at the growing challenges of recruiting, training and retaining staff and how centres needed to plan for this in the future.
- **E-Marketing:** David Cotton of Vancouver “made the connection” from Dubai with a teleconferenced session that looked at how new techniques in web based marketing were changing the ways in which business was done.
- **Helping Shape the Delegate Experience:** Jean-Paul de Lavison of Montreal reviewed the ways in which centres and PCO’s could work together on the increasingly important area of enhancing the conference experience for delegates.
- **Seven Centers: Germany’s Marketing Success Story:** Edgar Hirt of Munich outlined how this leading edge marketing consortium came together and the results it has produced for members.
- **Marketing Multiple Facilities:** Laurent Chiron of Paris addressed the challenges and unique opportunities associated with marketing multiple facilities in today’s complex and demanding market.
- **Reaching Our Markets:** José Miguel Ayerza made the point that “in an economy of abundance, the key to success is to attract the client emotionally, not convince him rationally” and described the tactics to do this. These sessions added real depth and specificity to the discussions; and are available for review in the Annual Conference section of the AIPC web site.

## Panelists Present Three Approaches to Managing Community Expectations and Interactions

The needs and expectations for community and local government relations have many things in common all over the world. But at the same time, the process and even the content needs to respond to different conditions and challenges if it is to be successful Three panelists from three very different destinations described some of their experiences and successes in “making the connection” with local audiences.

**Tim Husbands** of Belfast, **Fred Sainz** of San Diego and **Clare Amsel** of Athens showed how strategies had to be adapted to very different kinds of circumstances to achieve their respective objectives. In Belfast’s case, there were not only the usual community relations needs to be addressed but the huge sensitivities associated with

competing political and neighborhood interests. In the case of San Diego, the most important aspects were related to bringing about structural change in how various aspects of the destination sell was managed and held accountable. In Athens, the question was how to ensure that the activities associated with preparing for and carrying out the Olympics could be made to generate long term benefits and a sense of accomplishment amongst local residents.

Different cities; different processes. But what all had in common was a keen sense of the importance that good community and local government relations played in supporting the convention centre program in their respective communities.

## Quebec City: Canada’s Historic Jewel Creates the Perfect Conference Backdrop!

One of the biggest stars of the show for the 2005 Annual Conference was the conference site itself - a beautiful and exciting city that at the same time is an historic UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site. Congress hosts Le Centre des Congrès de Québec pulled out all the stops to ensure delegates had the full benefit of the city and its surroundings as well as drawing some extraordinary local talent into the actual proceedings at the Centre.

The pre-conference program offered the choice of golf at the spectacular Royal Québec Golf Club or a “soft” river expedition in the Jacques-Cartier Valley, rich with wildlife and history. Participants in the latter had the opportunity to recreate their own version of the kind of canoe travel that opened up the Canadian wilderness many years ago. Closer to home, a city and regional tour for all delegates ranged over the historic old town.

A special night-out experience included a tour to Grosse-Île and Île d’Orléans, two islands in the Saint Lawrence River which offered a wide range of experiences including the chance to create your own model boat! Capping off the evening was a fresh lobster feast in local surroundings followed by an evening cruise back to a spectacular harbour lit by the lights from the citadel above.

Other program components included a lunch in Le Parlementaire, the dining room of the Parliament Building adjacent to the Centre, a reception overlooking Battlefield Park and a very special musical evening in the Grand Hall of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec where opera combined with audience participation in some very unique ways!

Overall, the host committee from Le Centre des Congrès de Québec did their lovely city very proud - and created a great ambiance for one of our most successful conferences ever!

