What’s in a Name? Making a Convention Centre ‘International’

Convention centres worldwide comprise a wide spectrum of facilities, with few invariable constants, even in terms of fixed definitions (Congress centres? Convention Centres? Conference Centres?). At the same time, there is increasingly a blurring of such distinctions as do exist, with what were formerly more exclusively focussed facilities like exhibition or special event centres add new kinds of function spaces in order to diversify their business potential.

The same is true of the term ‘international’. In an increasingly global industry, there are legitimate questions as to what that designation implies when applied to a convention centre and what assurances it should give clients who are looking for the right kind of “fit” for their event. At a practical level, here are some things worth thinking about:

To begin with, ‘International’ as a function of an organization holding an event is once again a term that is pretty loosely applied in our industry. In my view, it requires three measures: first, that the orientation and/or membership be representative of different countries; secondly, that leadership is similarly distributed and third, that events have a global vs. simply a regional rotation. And while in many parts of the world that definition is less than rigorously applied, it follows that centres that consider themselves to be ‘international’ need to be prepared to respond to those broader needs. That carries some important responsibilities;

First, it means recognizing and addressing the standards and expectations of groups that rotate world-wide and who are looking for some level of consistency in terms of spaces and services, including areas like food and beverage and technology. The easiest way to do that is to identify and observe the most relevant standards for such events and to make the effort to identify and understand what it is that specific groups need based on their previous history.

Secondly, a non-domestic organization will likely have formal requirements that are more complex, or at least different, from those coming from within the same country. Things like legal and accountability requirements, contractual arrangements and technology expectations are all things that will inevitably be a lot more complicated with a range of international clients than purely domestic ones, and again, a centre pursuing this business must have the capability and flexibility to be able to respond.

Third, it needs to be understood that this is not simply a centre-specific exercise. The centre itself is only one part of the overall destination experience so an ‘international’ designated centre also has a role to play in ensuring that other destination partners such as hotels, bureaus, suppliers and satellite venues are also capable of meeting the broader and potentially more diverse range of client expectations arising from this group.

“To be truly ‘International’, and enjoy all the business benefits that designation implies, a centre needs to take on some responsibility for delivering the kind of unique experience and qualities that make their destination distinctive to international visitors.”

But there’s another side to the equation. As important as consistency and standards are, they should not come at the expense of losing the unique qualities that are a desired part of the experience of travelling to different parts of the world. In the end, it’s a balance; to be truly ‘International’, and enjoy all the business benefits that designation implies, a centre needs to be prepared to address the full range of expectations that accompany such events but at the same time take on some responsibility for delivering the kind of unique experience and qualities that make their destination distinctive to international visitors.

Geoff Donaghy, AIPC President

AIPC 2017 Sydney: Transformation!

As they have for some time, competition and adaptation remain our biggest challenges as centres, and we continue to explore how these are re-shaping industry expectations and delivery. But having made some decisions about that, where do we go next? The answer, to some degree or other, is typically the process that is our theme for this year’s AIPC Annual Conference agenda in Sydney: Transformation!
As we’ve already announced, this year’s AIPC Conference location in Sydney, Australia will provide some great opportunities for exploring that theme in a destination that has a lot of experience – including the redevelopment of a key inner-city precinct that included the creation of one of the newest and most contemporary convention centres in the world today.

Our agenda will take full advantage of those opportunities in a variety of ways, from accessing local leaders who have been driving the reinvention process to bringing in global thinkers with direct experience in the key issues facing us today. Here’s the full agenda for your consideration;

LES SONS FROM A CITY IN TRANSIT – THE SYDNEY EXPERIENCE

The role of the Commission is to coordinate and align the planning that will shape the future of Greater Sydney with a collaborative “one government” approach to produce a productive, liveable and sustainable city for all. Centre redevelopment has been a key element in this overall strategy from the beginning, and an important driver of the planning process.

RENEWAL AND REBRANDING: A CASE STUDY

How a recognized destination chose to reconfigure itself based on a new vision for its economic future, based on a range of perspectives that re-imagined the role of the new convention centre in the context of economic sector advancement, talent attraction and acquisition, academic leadership and an image consistent with all these goals.

DESIGN AND APPLICATION AT THE ICC SYDNEY

This session will take advantage of our 2017 location in one of the most recent and advanced convention centre developments in the market today, based on an in-depth facility tour combined with presentations on related design and operational features that address new market developments. The session will be followed by a facility tour with lunch ‘en route’.

CLIENT PERSPECTIVES: CHANGING NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS IN AN EVOLVING MARKET

As part of an ongoing exploration of changing conditions and their implications for centres, this session will take a look at the corporate events and PCO perspectives on change and evolution in the industry.

OPENING DOORS TO ASIA: WHAT’S CHANGING AND WHERE ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES?

It is generally recognized that Asia is the region where some of the highest levels of industry growth will be experienced, and that this represents both new competition and opportunities for those that can capitalize on growing demands for services and expertise. A panel of experts will address the key factors at work and their implications for the industry as a whole.

2017 AIPC ANNUAL SURVEY: CENTRE PERFORMANCE, PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEXT

The 11th in the series of comprehensive industry performance / outlook surveys of AIPC members will both deliver another step in the trend analysis and add more quantitative measures to compare with other industry sectors.

AIPC INNOVATION AWARD 2017: Pecha Kucha and Poster Session

An array of creative new ideas and developments in a wide range of centre management and operational areas with a “Pecha Kucha” overview followed by a poster session to help guide your vote for the Delegate’s Choice Award.

CYBER SECURITY IN CONVENTION CENTRES: WHAT’S AT STAKE? WHAT TO DO?

Centres are at increasing risk from cyber hacking and other security issues, not just for their own materials but as custodians of other client materials. What is at stake and what measures should be taken?

NEW INDUSTRY METRICS: MEASUREMENTS THAT MATTER

Led by the lead researchers from the University of Technology Sydney, School of Business, this session will be an exploration of broader value measurement and reporting from the key academics who initiated much of this work and who are now leading the global Case Study Program on behalf of the Joint Meetings Industry Council.

STEPS TO A MORE PRODUCTIVE CITY – CENTRE INTERFACE

A research-based session reprising his “best-rated” presentation in 2015, this session will be based on a series of specific case studies drawn from a range of city types and addressing the issues facing a group of 6-8 AIPC members with whom he has developed alternate scenarios.

THE CITY – CENTRE INTERFACE: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

Following up on the previous session, this workshop-format discussion will apply lessons from the case studies to the challenges facing other AIPC members in their respective cities.

AIPC GLOBAL BENCHMARKING INITIATIVE: THE FIRST FULL ANALYSIS

With huge initial participation, this new AIPC program initiative will be delivering the first round of in-depth centre operating data with an overview of study conclusions and an explanation of what study participants can expect to get in the way of ongoing insights and analysis.

THE AIPC CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY: A NEW WAY TO TRACK PERFORMANCE

This session will outline the latest AIPC management tool which will not only provide members with a free survey template from our global market research partners Ipsos with a further opportunity for in-depth analysis but at the same time offer a new and highly efficient route to participation in the AIPC Apex Award.

GLOBALIZATION – RESETTING THE CLOCK?

An exploration of the disruptive changes surrounding the recent rise of populism, protectionism and potential isolationism. From Trump to Brexit, what will be the implications for global development, international relations and the future of trade agreements?

GLOBAL DISRUPTION AND INDUSTRY IMPLICATIONS: A WORKSHOP

From global to local, what are the impacts and implications members are already seeing in a changing world order and what can best be done to prepare centres for the changes yet to come?

… AND DON’T FORGET THE AIPC 59TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY which will feature a full program update as well as all the important elements of your Association’s Management including an important Board election for key positions.

www.aipc.org
Sydney 2017: Meet Three of Our Keynotes

Our program objectives will be supported by some high-level perspectives that will help set the tone for more centre-specific discussions. From tectonic shifts in global alignments to what it takes to integrate more closely with civic developments in our respective communities, our list includes some faces that will be providing new perspectives to their “best rated” sessions from past conferences. They are;

Lucy Turnbull was the first female Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney, chaired the Committee for Sydney from 2012 to 2015 and in 2015 was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Greater Sydney Commission, tasked by the NSW state government to deliver a “one government” approach to strong and effective strategic planning for the whole of metropolitan Sydney.

Her opening session ‘Lessons from a City in Transition – the Sydney Experience’ will include how the ICC Sydney redevelopment played a key role as anchor for the Darling Harbour redevelopment, which will offer an array of important lessons and ideas for the interactions between a convention centre and its destination as partners in shaping the future. An urbanist, businesswoman and philanthropist, she became an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the community, local government and business.

Prof Greg Clark
CBE, The Business of Cities

Greg Clarke is the most prominent expert and government / business advisor on city development and transition in the world today. In a pair of highly interactive sessions Steps to a More Productive Interface and A Practical Approach to Implementation, he will reprise his “best-rated” presentation of 2015 with an entirely new series of specific case studies drawn from a range of city types and circumstances around the world in AIPC member destinations and address both the issues and opportunities facing that group member centres with whom he has developed alternate scenarios. Organized around a presentation and in-depth workshop, the results will create specific and practical strategies with application to centres around the world.

Parag Khanna
International Globalization and the World Order; Author of Connectography and Managing Partner of Hybrid Reality Pte Ltd


He will be speaking to the unfolding consequences of the emerging political backlash driving isolationism and anti-trade policies over the past year and exploring the potential consequences for our industry and markets should these forces continue to impact global policy.
Our Social Program: the Best of Sydney – and Beyond!

As might be expected in a “Bucket List” destination like Sydney, there will be a lot to see and do to make that trip all it can and should be. The good part is that many of the most attractive features of the destination will be built right into the AIPC Social Program – and here are some of the highlights:

SATURDAY JULY 1 | INFORMAL WELCOME RECEPTION

With views over Sydney’s city skyline and the ability to step outside and enjoy the temperate Australian climate, our Welcome Reception will be held on the level 5 terrace of ICC Sydney’s Exhibition Centre – in the heart of its own dynamic precinct of Darling Harbour, sitting adjacent to the city’s CBD. Designed to reflect the woodland that the precinct replaced over a hundred years ago, the Exhibition Centre features wooden meeting rooms that break down an otherwise long flat façade and uses green fittings to connect to the park that it overlooks. From this vantage delegates will experience the laneways and public access paths that enhance surrounding pedestrian flows and ensure integration with the city around it. The diversity of spaces and market segments ensures an always active, vibrant precinct to visit.

SUNDAY JULY 2 | OUR OFFICIAL WELCOME RECEPTION – A TRUE SYDNEY WELCOME FEATURING SYDNEY ICONS

First, see the City the way it’s meant to be seen – via a Sydney Harbour Cruise that will take you through the Darling Harbour area with its extensive world-class redevelopment, under the famed Sydney Harbour Bridge and past The Rocks – Sydney’s earliest historic beginnings – and the Sydney Opera House.

You’ll arrive for dinner at the iconic Taronga Zoo, where with 180 degree, uninterrupted views of Sydney Harbour you’ll have a unique setting and picturesque backdrop to catch up with colleagues and enjoy some of Australia’s remarkable food and beverage offerings. On arrival, delegates will take the Sky Safari cable cars to the Harbourside Ballroom where there will be an opportunity to experience some of Australia’s very unique flora and fauna, including that which will be brought to the function space during the function for some close-up interactions!

TUESDAY JULY 3 | INNOVATION AWARDS PRESENTATION AND DINNER

Following the presentation of this year’s Innovation Awards in the spectacular Pyrmont Theatre there will follow a buffet dinner in the Pyrmont Foyer, where guests will experience Executive Chef Tony Panetta’s Feeding Your Performance inspired menus, designed to fuel both the body and the mind. Quintessentially Sydney dishes have been created with the help of nutritionists and local farmers featuring seasonal dishes and will be served against a backdrop of spectacular works of art by renowned Australian artists from the venue’s $20 million collection.

But this is only the formal part of the range of opportunities delegates will have to experience Sydney Icons. With a host facility and HQ hotel in the heart of Sydney’s very compact downtown core, a short walk in almost any direction will deliver a range of both familiar and not-so-familiar experiences including the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Maritime Museum, The Rocks Market, the spectacular Queen Victoria building, the Sydney Opera house and the Royal Botanical Gardens. Further afield – and available for pre/post trips – are adjacent areas the Hunter Valley Wine region and the Blue Mountains.

These attractions can be accessed either as a personal itinerary of as part of organized tours. Have a look at the Pre- and Post Conference Tours section of the AIPC Conference Website http://aipc2017.onetec.eu/ for a full view of just some of the many options available!
The AIPC Academy for 2017 signalled the start of a whole new era for this flagship program as the engagement of a host of “Patrons of Professional Development” drove attendance to its highest level ever and facilitated a rich program delivered by some 18 faculty and guest presenters and covering the full spectrum of centre priorities and issues.

The Patron’s program was launched at the 2016 General Assembly in Nantes with President Geoff Donaghy calling on members to make an ongoing commitment to AIPC’s most important professional Development initiative by making a three year commitment to send at least one staff member per year. 11 centres took up the challenge with the result that 35 participants attended the full 6 day program and in turn enabled the assembly of one of the most extensive set of teaching resources ever!

“This year’s Academy program was a good example of just how powerful this kind of professional development initiative can be – with a record attendance and faculty, the most intense and diverse content ever and an issue-solving approach shared by a range of very senior industry colleagues and key clients that many of us would never otherwise get to experience face to face”, said Donaghy.

“A big part of this was due to the success of the Patron’s Program and for that we want to recognize the importance of what they’ve done. At the same time, I’d advise all members to quickly register their interest for 2018 and book a slot for their centre while there is still an opportunity to do so. We had to turn away late applicants last year and that will continue in the future so let me suggest you reserve a spot now for 2018 and decide closer to the actual event who you want to fill it. That way, you have the luxury of more time without risking that you’ll be missing out on this great opportunity for your organization”.

Reserve a spot now for 2018 and decide closer to the actual event who you want to fill it.
The Iceberg
our recently launched industry story-teller!

convention centres. Here are two of those that have emerged – and only the beginning of what promises to be a dazzling array of
to global professional, economic and social advancement, some of the most unique stories to emerge are from AIPC member
contributes to global professional, economic and social advancement, some of the most unique stories to emerge are from AIPC member

Two AIPC Member Centres lead the way!

CASE STUDIES:

As the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) Case Study program winds up and illustrations of the many and varied ways our industry
issues of the many and varied ways our industry

Borneo Convention Centre Kuching Training Creating a Whole New Set of Transferrable Skills

In an emerging economy, sometimes the most valuable role a convention centre can play is one that, while essential to its own success, is also a generator of transferrable skills that will support development in many adjacent areas of the local economy. Such is the case with the Borneo Convention Centre in Kuching, Sarawak, where an innovative and aggressive skills training program has not only raised the quality of centre services to international standards but is also creating a whole new generation of workers that will feed development of the overall hospitality industry in the region.

"We realized that staff training and development is crucial at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching in order to have skilled employees performing their tasks with confidence and consistency" says Centre CEO Eric Van Piggelen. "However, as an emerging destination, this area simply did not have a pool of appropriately trained individuals to meet this need. As a result, we became focused on internal and external training and development programs in the area of skills development and building talents – and over time, these skills will end up supporting the broader needs of a rapidly developing visitor and hospitality sector”.

The program was created in collaboration with the local Department of Skill Development, which has a responsibility to nurture and strengthen the capabilities of working adults in the region. With this agency providing an overall framework including examinations, BCCK was able to focus on identifying key skills and knowledge elements and providing both trainers and facilities for the actual program. Upon completion of that program, graduates are awarded a Certificate or Diploma that will be broadly recognized as a transferrable credential.

The training covers a range of areas specific to various operational needs, but along with those specific methodology and knowledge components are also broader areas such as technical capabilities as well as social and human values. The programs cover areas as diverse as Operation Food and Beverage Service, Housekeeping Operations, Food Production and Preparation and Pastry Production, and all graduates to date have passed the examination, received their certificates and are employed with BCCK.

Says Van Piggelen "We understand the importance of training and up skilling in order for BCCK to compete on a global platform, and our efforts have paid off with our peers in the industry stating they could not believe the high service levels we maintain in BCCK. Sarawak as a state did not have the necessary skill levels specific to the business events industry, and while the BCCK wants to ensure all its personnel are highly trained to meet the highest industry's expectations, when these people eventually move on to other jobs they will obviously take the skills with them. As a result we have become the unofficial training centre for Sarawak in the hospitality arena, which is a role we are proud to have.”

This role clearly addresses a key objective for the original establishment of the centre which was in part in order to provide jobs for the local community. However, to do this, there was an obvious need to be able to attract meetings business to Sarawak in the first place. By creating the kind of training programs in place today, BCCK has been able to respond to both, with the resulting levels of skills ensuring overall performance that brings in Association business and ensures recognition as a facility that can function as a global player.

But the broader implications have not gone unrecognized. “Most of the local hotels are inclined to hire staff from BCCK because they recognise that we train our personnel well in areas that have direct application to their own needs. This is great from our perspective because it means we are demonstrably contributing to the bigger picture – in fact, BCCK is now one of the main catalysts to help uplift skill levels in the hospitality arena in Sarawak”.

Van Piggelen sees the program as ongoing and diversifying as client expectations rise and the industry continues to evolve. “In order to facilitate growth we have to ensure our focus is maintained on always wanting to do better. We need to understand the need that the world is forever changing and we need to be ready for that. Needless to say, someone is always training somewhere in BCCK.

The bottom line: by creating a range of directly applicable local skills where none existed before, the BCCK is not only advancing its own business and the contributions that makes to the local and regional economies but creating a foundation for overall, long-term hospitality industry growth. At the same time, a growing reputation for delivering international-quality service is already attracting the kinds of events that will even further enhance and diversify local economic and professional development – an impact that will continue to grow in the future!
Antwerp: A “Room with a Zoo” Pays Off for Both Sides

For more than 50 years, the Antwerp Zoo Society has used the proceeds of its event spaces to support a very unique CSR undertaking – the operation of one of the oldest and most important zoological facilities in the world. Now, with the opening of the new Flanders Meeting and Convention Center (FMCCA) this commitment will be taken to a whole new level, with the sparkling blend of historical ambiance and the latest thinking in modern meeting spaces attracting up to an incremental 5 million euro in revenues a year – all of which will be devoted to their mission of animal husbandry, research and education.

The new centre is a gem, set in the core of Antwerp and featuring a wide range of event spaces, services and technology in a stunning blend of new and historic components developed with respect for both historic legacy and modern amenities. It will comprise 25,000 m2 of event space capable of hosting events up to 2400 participants in 30 breakout rooms, a concert hall / auditorium and the integration of an historic wing a newly built atrium, auditorium and centre, all incorporating natural lighting wherever possible.

But the real story will be where the profits go. Immediately adjacent and opening onto the new centre is the site of the third oldest scientific zoo in the world (second only to those in London and Amsterdam) with the best kept 19th century heritage. The zoo maintains a full program including award-winning scientific research in its on-site labs, DNA research, breeding programmes and world leadership in the exchange of animals for optimal DNA population for next 100 yrs, based upon big data exchange of zoos across the globe. It also supports in situ conservation programmes such as BIOBRAZIL, a scientific research station in rain forest of Brazil with its own staff focused on the golden headed lion tamarins and others in Cameroun and the Congo.

The results benefit both the zoo and its programs and clients, who will be participating in a very unusual and satisfying program simply by using the FMCCA facilities. “Nature nurtures”, says Anja Stas, Chief Commercial Officer, “so the close proximity of this historic zoo and the knowledge of the great work it is doing will add a new dimension to the experience our guests have at the FMCCA. “Along with the emotional value associated research station in rain forest of Brazil with its own staff focused on the golden headed lion tamarins and others in Cameroun and the Congo.

As if that weren’t enough, delegates and other event participants will have the additional opportunity to adopt an animal through a program maintained by the centre. “Our Adopt an Animal” program has been in place for many years for both for individuals and corporations, but this is the first time it will be available for congresses. In a sense, it offers an organizer looking for a legacy to access a powerful CSR/sustainability dimension through conservation – and see first-hand the results!”

Facility Operations Summit Creating Platform for Sharing Practices

In a move that is largely based on the successes of past AIPC Facility Operations Summits, this year’s event, again held in conjunction with ibtm World in Barcelona this 26 and 27 November will incorporate a new feature: a forum designed to facilitate the exchange of practices, procedures and innovations in key areas of building operations, event management and centre integration. Essentially it will be encouraging delegates to arrive prepared to share approaches to common challenges and utilize data developing from the new AIPC Benchmarking Study to identify areas of potential cooperation and even collaboration for the future.

“We have maintained over time that the Facility Operations Summit is one of the very few opportunities centre staff in these areas have to come together and have a collective look at issues of common concern”, says AIPC President Geoff Donaghy. “Now, we intend to formalize this important function further by developing programming that will take best advantage of this kind of sharing and enhance it with powerful new data we are already starting to get from other programs that have implications for the operations side. This has the potential to extend the value of this event even further into areas like models for operating standards that could be extremely useful for members looking to ensure they are taking the best possible approach to key areas in their respective operations”.

A number of today’s most relevant management areas, from security and risk management to integrated client servicing and from outsourcing to function space adaptation all benefit from the wide range of perspectives and approaches that the Summit brings to the table. By comparing the effectiveness of a range of approaches it is expected that useful tools will emerge based on practices already in place in some centres that have potentially broader application.

“This should be the start of even greater advances in the productive output of what is already a very successful event, so I’d urge managers to make sure their centre is represented in this year’s Summit”; said Donaghy. “As usual, registration is limited so you should book your centre’s participation early via the AIPC Secretariat office”.
What does Brähler stand for and what are its fields of activity?

Brähler ICS, founded in 1958, is considered to be one of the inventors of conference technology. We sell and rent conference technology that we have developed ourselves all over the world in cooperation with our partners; the product range of Brähler covers audience interaction equipment for smaller conferences with few participants, the professionalization of video conferences, equipment for simultaneous interpretation in multilingual conferences, and equipment for large convention centres, parliaments and courts. Clients are less interested in off-the-shelf products but instead increasingly ask for solutions that suit their specific and individual requirements. We are “specialists for custom-made conference technology”, offering high quality, tailor-made overall solutions, particularly for permanent installations, designed and executed individually for each of our customers.

What’s one of your latest innovations?

Besides the classical conference technology, i.e. the transmission of spoken words, at the Integrated Systems in Amsterdam, we have just introduced our concept of an intelligent integration of non-verbal communication technology, e.g. our delegate app. Here, too, the focus is on highly flexible and tailored solutions that give the customers exactly what they want. We achieve this by decentralising certain hardware and software components which are at the same time perfectly coordinated with each other.

How does Brähler implement such individual solutions, in particular when it comes to hardware?

A key product of Brähler in the area of permanent installations is the modularly constructed conference system DIGIMIC lean+, which offers a highly flexible and customised hardware. Each functional unit can be arranged individually and connected to each other according to customer specifications. The customer can freely choose from a range of functions the conference technology offers and expand every communication station with additional data, media and power supply. Furthermore, the installation or assembly frames can also be chosen freely. It gives the operator a wide choice for the required configuration in function and design.

What role does the software play?

The tremendous development in the field of information and communication technology has brought about also changes in the world of conference, congress and event technology. Conference technology is no more an autonomous and isolated communication instrument but rather an interface between information technology, different terminals and networks.

Our smart Conferencing expands the DIGIMIC family with a novel and future-proof conference software for administration, preparation, supervision and follow-up of one or more conferences. Each event can be set-up globally and controlled locally, within a conference room, or in many parallel conference rooms, or also by merging different rooms flexibly during one conference. A modern client server architecture on the basis of our new operating system brählerOS allows to combine individual conference modules and use them as required. They are then freely available within the network and can be used wherever and whenever needed.

With the help of our associated conference app, all participants can access all information related to a conference individually and thus will be better integrated. The app is platform-independent, scalable and enables our customers to develop additional business models with the help of our software.