The International Congress of Maritime Museums has held its conferences in a wide variety of locations in Australasia, North America and Europe; but never in Asia. The decision at the last meeting in Cascais to bring ‘east’ and ‘west’ together and hold the seventeenth congress in Hong Kong and Macau in 2015 was long overdue and could become a defining moment in the history of ICMM. It will bring great opportunities to broaden and strengthen the traditional base of the Congress, welcome new members and institutions from the Asia-Pacific region, and provide a rewarding and exciting venue for existing members. Our colleagues at the Hong Kong and Macau maritime museums are working together to create an unforgettable, and even more importantly, an affordable visit.

Your programme committee has also not been idle, and Council agreed at its meeting at Greenwich in March that the title of the 2015 congress will be Connections – a subject that captures the fundamental purpose of ICMM, and is particularly relevant to this historic meeting. A formal call for papers will be issued later this year, in November, but we felt that members would appreciate early notice of the congress to give them more time to think about proposals for papers. The committee is currently seeing Connections being explored through six main themes:

- Maritime connections between East and West
- Connections between museums on local, national and international levels
- Between museums and their various communities and stakeholders
- Between past and present, historical and contemporary
- Between virtual and real
- Between museums, objects, narratives and audiences

Each allows us to explore different perspectives from across and outside our membership, bringing together participants and key elements in the work of maritime museums worldwide that may not previously have been particularly well ‘connected’.
While we hope these themes will ensure a coherent and stimulating congress for all, they are neither exhaustive nor exclusive at this early stage and we would welcome any suggestions, comments or questions. Please email me, Nigel Rigby (Royal Museums Greenwich) at nrigby@rmg.co.uk, and I will circulate your thoughts to the other members of the programme committee:

Marika Hedin (Gustavianum Museum), Tianlong Jiao (Hong Kong Maritime Museum), Peter Neill (World Ocean Laboratory), Maja Wolny (Navigo Museum), Chu Pang Wu (Macau Maritime Museum)