

AIMA Special Report N°3 VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM 14 November 2020



Agriculture * Food * Environment * People
agriculturalmuseums.org

Our official opening time on Saturday, the 14th, was 3:00 p.m. CET, but all the speakers and session chairs had a sneak preview of operations from 2:30 on with our technical pilot, **Brian Wragg, (Audio-Visual Specialist) at Ingenium**, so Brian was joined by Adrienne, Claus, Cozette, Debra, Isabel, Kerry-Leigh, Mark, Ollie and Susan, all of whom you meet later during their presentations and the Q&A sessions. All of us were working in our own time zones, which explains why our Australian members and friends could not attend in the middle of the night.

Should some readers not yet have participated in or organized virtual meetings, there are a variety of platforms to choose from and the AIMA went this time with a Zoom account enabling more participants, kindly lent to us by the **CAFM (Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, a member of the Ingenium triad)**, so that the computer screen looks like the next picture. (For full-scale congress and working-day meetings on the platform Discord, see AIMA Special Reports N°1 and N°2.)



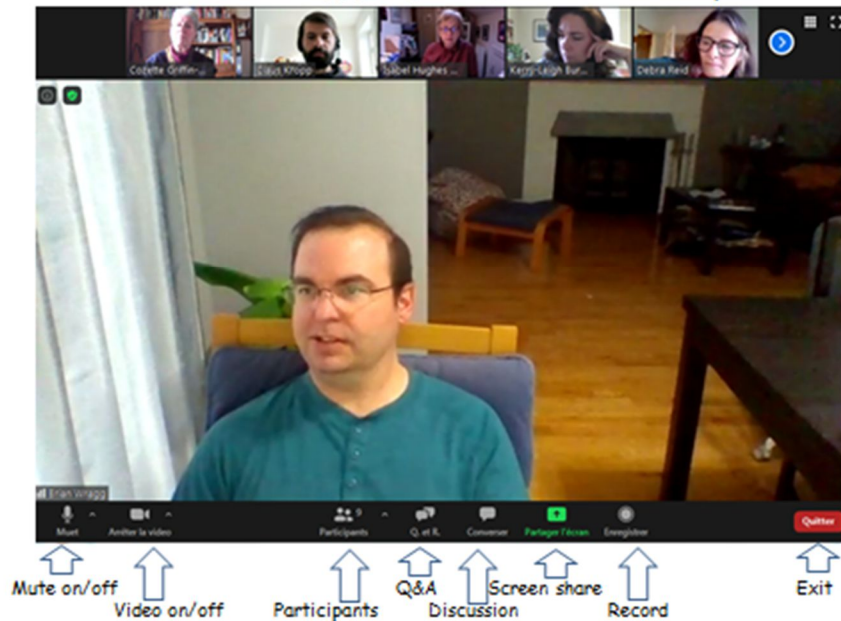
**CANADA AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD MUSEUM**



**Watch the virtual symposium presentation-by-
presentation with the weblinks following each
intervention here or see the full event with introductions
and discussions at <https://youtu.be/CC1pQ7B7meg>
(with browsing function)**

Participants with their home video cameras turned on in the band across the top. Since Internet connections can at times be less than perfect, it is a good idea for everyone not directly participating to turn their audio and video functions off.

Here is Brian Wragg, guiding us through the dashboard, so to speak

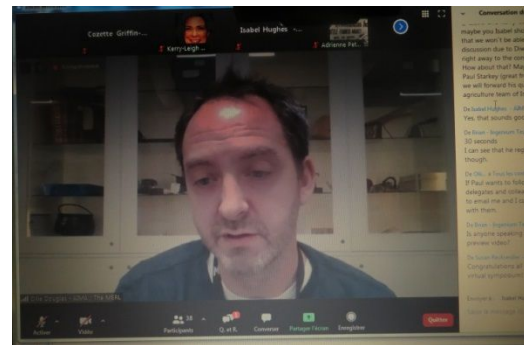


Session 1: Introduction

There were 86 attendees registered by Saturday morning, with apologies from a few who could not get a good Internet connection at home or who had obligations elsewhere. After waiting to let in the last-minute attendees, Brian, started the countdown, we turned off our own microphones and cameras to go online at 2:58, so Brian said “**and we’re live!**”, and at 3:00 CET, the participant count was already 49.

AIMA President Ollie Douglas, (Head of collections at the MERL (Museum of English Rural Life), set us off on our half-day’s work with his welcome to a world of “**community, networks and connectivity**”, emphasizing that museums’ response to crisis had brought forth immense creativity and a desire to deal with the pressing topics of the day – the health and the climate crises, food security, the Black Lives Matter movements and decoloniality, among others. Ollie, as so many other speakers, noted the importance of moving across “borders” to network with other groups, inviting speakers from both inside and outside of the AIMA, including the President of the ALHFAM (Association of Living History, Farming and Agriculture Museums), Susan

Reckseidler to give the keynote address, and thanking Ingenium (the triad of Canadian museums that includes the CAFM) for lending us their Zoom platform and the driver of our digital spaceship, Brian.



Ollie Douglas with questions already coming up in column to right

Questions or greetings were already coming up on the right of the screen as Ollie handed us over to our man-in-digital-events, **Claus Kropp**. Claus went through a few technicals for the

attendees, so that they could contribute their questions and comments to the discussion. These were read attentively by the chairs of each session to pass on to the speakers. Claus also advised attendees of their privacy rights, announced that each session would come up on YouTube ten minutes before it began and that it would be as barrier-free as possible, since it would be posted later online, free-access with sub-titles. As Claus emphasized immediately, a theme taken up repeatedly throughout the afternoon.

“The AIMA stands for networks”

Claus then introduced our **keynote speaker, Susan Reckseidler, President of the ALHFAM**, who was joining us from an early bird time zone, as were all the North American speakers and attendees.

We can proudly say that each of the communications and the presentations in the intervals more than lived up to our hopes, so – to avoid this report being in any way a spoiler to visiting the full online event – these notes will be devoted to making you curious, not giving a full summary!

Keynote Speaker Susan Reckseidler, President of ALHFAM One Step at a Time: Re-imagining Re-Opening during Covid-19



Susan did not attempt to be unwisely optimistic. UNESCO has forewarned that perhaps one tenth of museums worldwide may not survive the Covid-19 crisis, but she said that for the ALHFAM, failure is simply not an option. ALHFAM members

are finding new ways to connect with their publics and even move into the sphere of full-scale actors, donating PPE (personal protective equipment), taking as examples inventing curbside food sales, street theater, and, when possible, especially keeping up limited-numbers children's summer camps with parallel digital home activities such as “camping in a trunk”. The questions poured in – what about 2021? Long-term support? How to involve staff in planning? And Susan noted that visitors, starved of places to simply get outdoors, were re-creating museum grounds as walking and distanced family or friend meeting sites.



What about the ox team and the roaring Calgary Stampede hitch of horses at full gallop before a wagon? More on ALHFAM's Vision and is there a chance to pet, in real life, a draft horse? Just go to the Virtual Symposium online.

Meet Susan and Heritage Park here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDNZFDvNKGc&feature=youtu.be>



Promoting the AIMA

International Association of Agricultural Museums
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The first **interval** was devoted to our **AIMA promotional video** highlighting **our story** from the first meeting in Libidice in then Czechoslovakia

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to our latest **blog posts**, **Newsletters** and **Special Reports**



Blog posts: a typical Slovenian apiary in Arboretum Volčji potok. Photo by Franc Šivic; reinventing the wheel (so to speak) at the MERL; twice-yearly AIMA Newsletters and Special Reports

Meet the AIMA here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj-5oYNCHfl&feature=youtu.be>

Session 2: On-site Responses



AIMA Vice-President **Debra A. Reid** (**Curator of Agriculture and the Environment at The Henry Ford**) took over to chair the second session and introduce without further ado one of our members' most remarkable and courageous turn-arounds. **Pete Watson** (**Director of Howell Living History Farm in New Jersey, USA**) to tell us the story of how

Howell Living History Farm

a facility of the Mercer County Park Commission

has transformed its regular farming activities to full-time food and necessities production, including massive flour-milling, hand-in-hand cooperation to supply food banks in the area, providing the wool from its own sheep for volunteers knitting gloves, mufflers, and anything else people will need to get through the coming winter, thus truly,

SHARING THE HARVEST



Share the harvest: One living history farm's response to C-19

Pete Watson
Howell Living History Farm, USA



Pete spoke to us of the dedicated people throughout the area, working to make sure Howell's production reached those who needed it, from **Vicki Tuomari** at the food pantry, through to the milling operations, the yarn-spinners and transporters. He also spoke to us of the surprises awaiting you when visitors no longer interfere with some of the usually invisible inhabitants of the farm: ground hog, rabbit and Canadian geese control had to be taken over by Lucy, the dog. As of today, the 14th of November 2020, **Howell's help has reached 60,000 people.**



Lucy, awaiting a chance to do some more Canada goose control

Learn more about what they will do in the wintertime, how they are being funded (spoiler: crowds lining up online), how their food supply recipients plan to return the favour, and the slight dents they have put in authenticity to speed up traditional production – see it online!

Meet Pete and Howell Farm here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JktoOHgw_eg&feature=youtu.be

Joining us next, unmasked, is **Kerry-Leigh Burchill, Director of the CAFM (Canada Agriculture and Food Museum)** in Ottawa to speak about

Sustaining living “exhibitions” during crisis: C-19 lessons for updating Risk Management Plans



The CAFM is a living site with major dairy operations, gardens and many animals that require on-going care. Perhaps one of the most impressive points – there are many – is how the museum staff took to **cross-training**, so that someone usually parked in front of a computer then found themselves actively handling animals. There are times, too, when the all-IT does not work out, as when they had a major power outage, so their **emergency plan**, real-life, hands-on binder became a central actor in their everyday duties, all the more so, as they had meticulously updated it, just as they carried on updating signs everywhere on the site. There, Mother Nature again had a lot of fun, letting weeds be happy, and making rat or mouse control into a daily subject of conversation, above all watching the “livestock”. How do you track the development of your beehives or remember to feed your compost worms? And... how do you remember at every moment the **stress** affecting **your staff** and include their mental health in the plan for each day? Kerry-Leigh even revealed their **“Wish We had a Do-It-Over” List** that will help many a museum or site – more animal- and machine-handling videos, more intense social media strategies and, sad but necessary, how to make hard choices over which animals to farm out, even to cull.

Last, but not least, although the risk management topic was paramount, the creativity was just as impressive, so come and see how they do it. **Kerry-Leigh is ready to share** all their experience, management guides, animal-care plans and other best practice examples.



Right: how the museum's director often feels at the beginning (and end) of the day
Deb Reid, chairing this session, summed it all up with

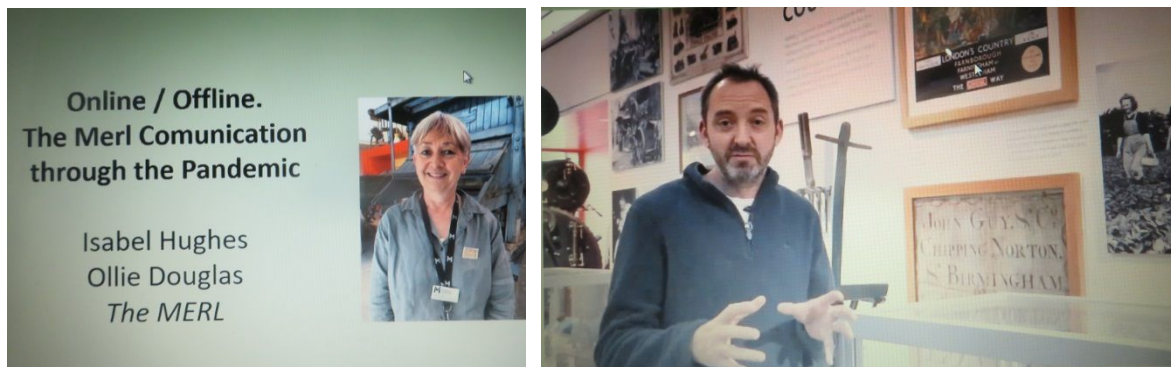
“The AIMA exists to SHARE”

Meet Kerry-Leigh and the CAFM here:

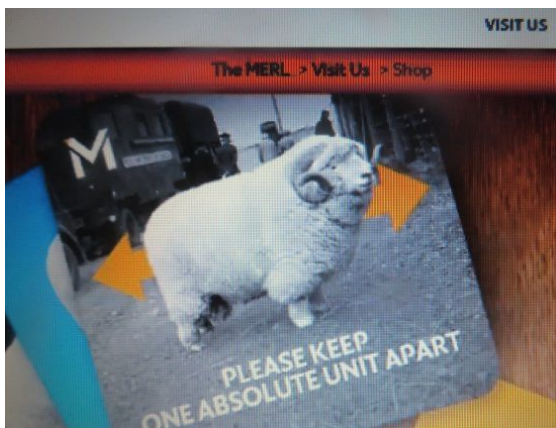
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCMYOsrxSE&feature=youtu.be>

Next up in line were **Isabel Hughes (Associate Director & Head of Curatorial and Public Engagement)** and **Ollie Douglas (Curator of Collections)**, who are our AIMA Congress Co-organisers, based at the **MERL (Museum of English Rural Life)** in Reading, to speak about

Online / Offline: MERL Communication through the Pandemic



Of course, the MERL has carried out the same safety measures as others museums – removing or covering their prized tactile interactives, providing a film on security to reassure visitors before inviting them to the re-opening. BUT they decided that if they had to sanitise the building, **they did not have to sanitise the experience** – they could use replicas of historical face masks and help visitors appreciate the idea that local foxes had more or less taken over their fine garden during lockdown, where they purposely limited mowing to small circles to let nature peek back into the site undisturbed. Of course, they put all **their major temporary exhibits up online**, from the celebration of the Women's Land Army to Victory in Europe Day and helped digital visitors connect to their educational programme on the collection – soldiers' boots – by working along with their own foot apparel at home. Chair Deb Reid commented on **the power of humour** embedded in serious responses to hard times, while Ollie and Isabel discussed the MERL's **unit of measure** – a **“RAM”** – as a way to encourage people to practice the distancing their visits required.



MERL signing and the archive document

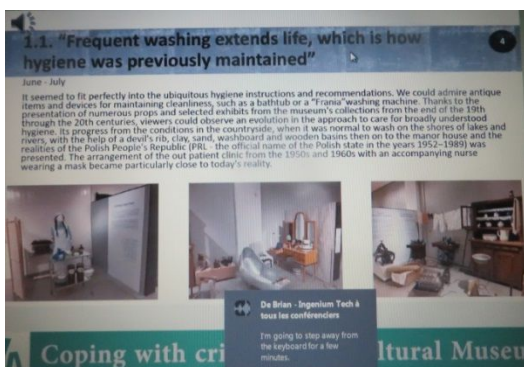
“Intrigued by the photo of the “absolute unit” that’s been doing the rounds on social media? Why was this ram such a unit? Why is livestock so often large and... well, stocky? And why does the Museum of English Rural Life have massive numbers of photos, prints and paintings of enormous farm animals? (by Dr Ollie Douglas, Curator of MERL Collections).” Read the rest at <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/news-and-views/2018/04/history-behind-absolute-unit/> and see the very entertaining animated film on the development of modern livestock breeds (even if it “may not be as hilarious as the latest Peter Rabbit movie”....).

Meet Isabel, Ollie and the MERL here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjZXxFvYQ8Q&feature=youtu.be>



After such an intense session, everyone needed a break, but we left plenty of time for the Virtual Symposium’s attendees to see the slide show from Poland, among the AIMA’s most active and long-time members. **Julia Hanulewicz (Curator, Education and Publications Department) of The National Museum of Agriculture and Food Industries in Szreniawa** took us on a full tour of the current exhibits, from the birth of modern hygiene, to the last beekeepers, and on to the hard years of the 1918-19 Greater Poland Uprising and the WWII occupation, to end with the colours and music of wedding traditions. The Szreniawa museum has taken the **remarkable step of promoting the AIMA by translating articles from their newsletters and special reports into Polish** to share with their public and sister museums, who “are hungry for news from all over the world”. This is but a taste of the presentation, so see the rest online.

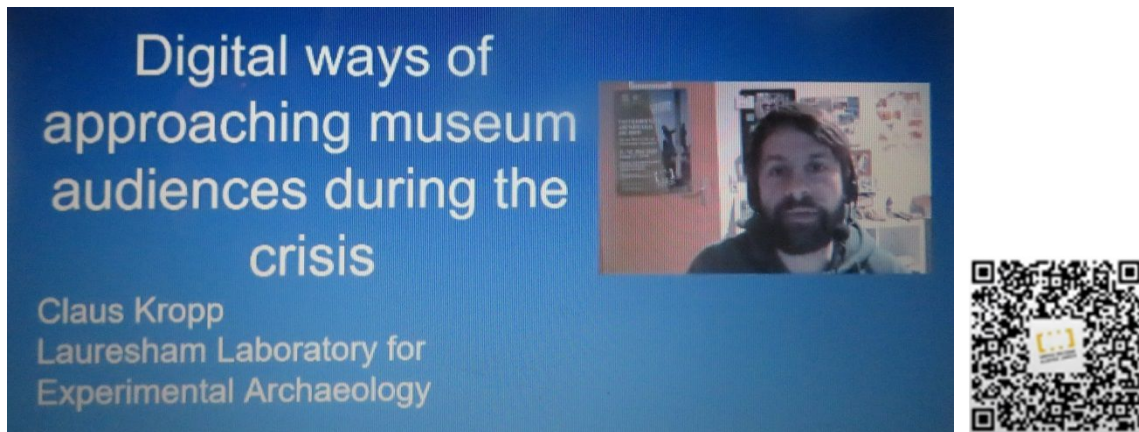


The Szreniawa exhibit on hygiene (with a Zoom note to all of us that even our tech aviator occasionally “steps away from the keyboard for a few minutes”) and a taste of the collection of Polish wedding apparel, that went with the invitation to musicians and dancers to animate the exhibit.

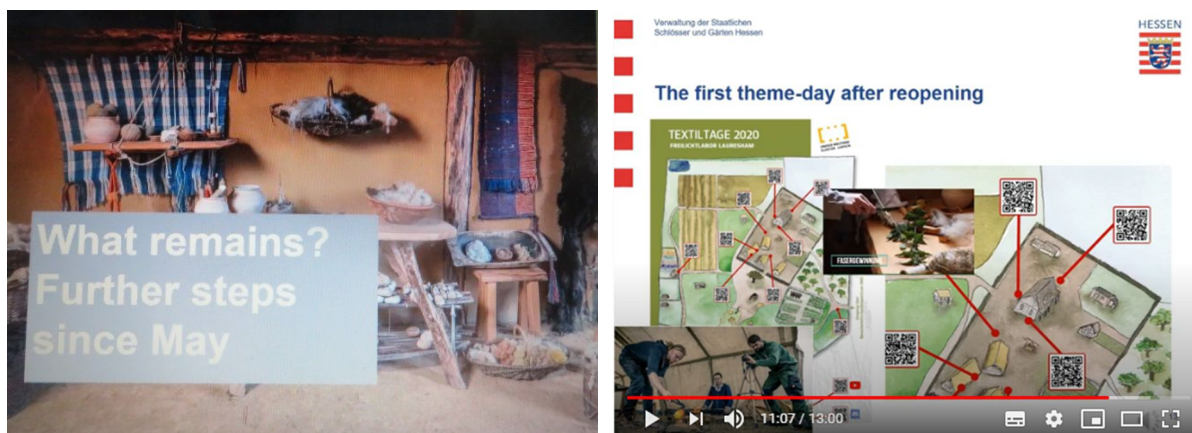
Session 3: Digital Pathways

After a well deserved coffee (or other...) break, chair Kerry-Leigh Burchill called attendees back to listen to **Claus Kropp (Farm Director at the Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory)** nestled in the UNESCO World Heritage site of **Kloster Lorsch** in the *Land* of Hessen, Germany. Claus is our virtual symposium inventor and talked to us about

Digital ways of approaching museum audiences during the crisis



Well before the Covid-19 crisis, Lauresham had expanded its **social media offerings** to a regular series of **2-5 minute clips** on their work on the farm, their research in experimental archaeology and setting up a separate website for their Experimental Archaeology Day in both German and English. **Going digital** for this event brought them subsequent **worldwide attendance from over 900 people**. Since the event *had* to go digital, they went all the way, using the Discord platform so that there were chat groups which could continue together indefinitely from during the congress to today, with a steady rise in YouTube attendance. This **has created permanent projects**, such as on ridge-and-furrow ploughing or on one of the major crowd-pleasers and educational programmes, working with textiles, including card-weaving, followed by over 150 people from more than ten countries. Like the AIMA today, they prepare digital talks live, then go online to follow-up and use innovative techniques such as QR codes linked to the Lauresham site.



Among the many points Claus made, in response to an attendee’s question about whether they were **able to drive research** was, yes, very much so, because the museum had unique

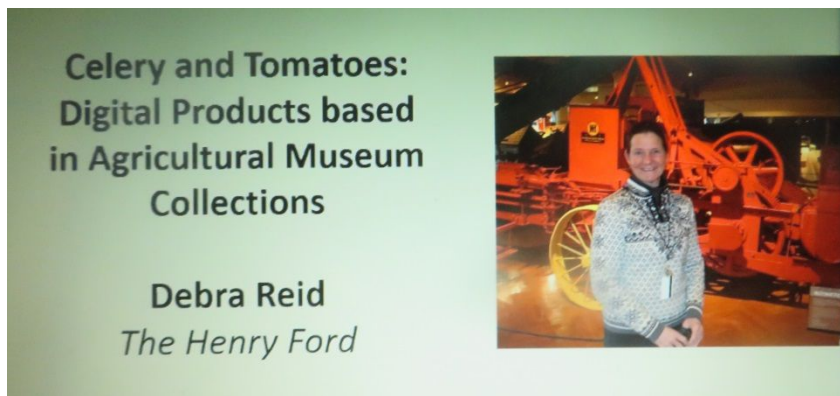
opportunities for long-term research that is usually not possible in a university context. They can truly serve as a “playground for science”.

Meet Claus and Lauresham here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVD7by-l0io&feature=youtu.be>

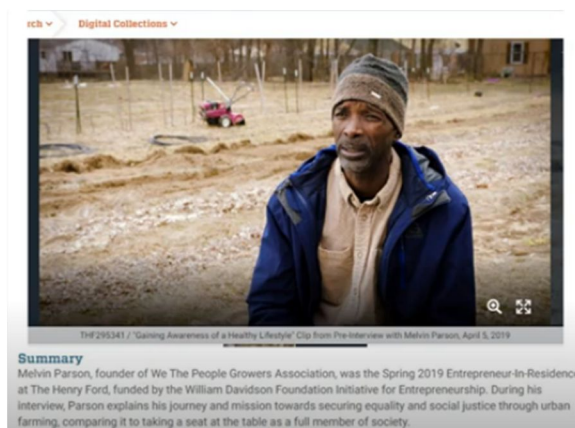
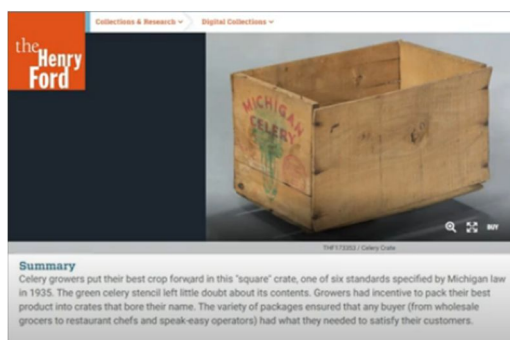
Celery and Tomatoes: Digital Products based in Agricultural Museum Collections at The Henry Ford

As **Debra Reid (Curator of Agriculture and the Environment)** told us, with its vast resources, collections and sites, including Greenville Village in Dearborn, Michigan, USA, **The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation** has kept its curators busy, often at home, activating the archives, selecting which items to photograph, digitize, insert in the database and put on free access, as well as animate the conversation about food production in the past through blogs. For example, **celery production** in western Michigan was once a farm product staple and simply showing the public a celery packing box is a challenge, because each notice can be only 400 characters long, preferably less, which gives rise to “narratives” that must be just as appealing as they are packed with information.



This work is not limited to a tomato vine or a celery crate – The Henry Ford has the inventor Henry Heinz’ home, where he began production of celery sauce – and the museum today reaches out to the public’s interest and commitment to **homegrown food** by

interviewing major actors, such as Melvin Parson, founder of We the People Growers Association. As session chair Kerry-Leigh comments, all agricultural museums have contributions to make and match with the **FAO’s declaration that 2021 is to be the Year of Fruit and Vegetables**.



But Deb does not just talk about food, however succulent that may be. How did they decide on which object should be the **icon of their 100,000th data entry**? – what is your guess? (She reveals that online.) Yet, all of this must be articulated in their collection plan and become part of the story it is THF’s mission to tell, from celery crates to fossil-fueled tractors in the Anthropocene.

Meet Deb and The Henry Ford here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HdK89goaSE&feature=youtu.be>

It was high time for another **break**, animated by a **slide show of photos from Canada, France, Germany and Slovenia**, where the Slovene Ethnographic Museum hosted our 2019 Executive Committee meeting (see our Special Report on the Slovenia meeting at <https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/FullReport-ExecCom-2019-SloveneEthnographicMuseum.pdf>)



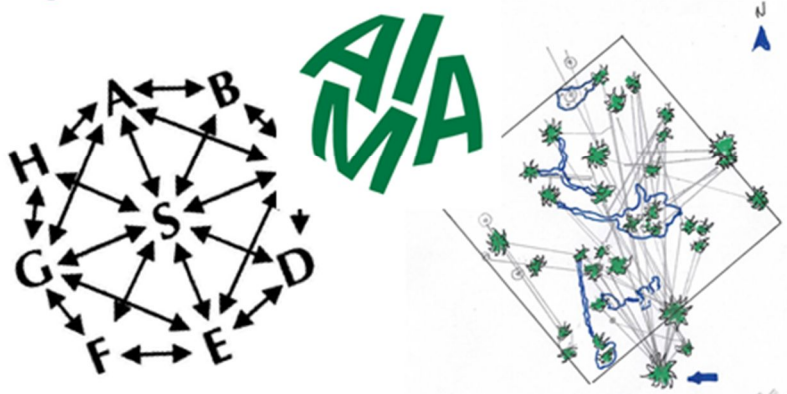
Past and Present: from the Slovene Ethnographic Museum archives and the Ecomusée d'Alsace, 2009, Jean-Leo Dugast)

See <https://www.etno-muzej.si/sl/digitalne-zbirke/kljucne-besede/oprema-zivine> for online presentation of the SEM collection of ox and horse harnesses.

Session 4: Widening the Scope

Chair for the last session, **Isabel Hughes** introduced a theme that echoed through all of the communications – networking, when **Cozette Griffin-Kremer** spoke of the AIMA's many friends and partners who join members to widen our contacts.

Deep networking for the AIMA



Cozette Griffin-Kremer, Associate Researcher, CRBC Brest



Photo José Fernandez Mateo

There are indeed structures that may apply to networking practices, closer-knit or looser, that may densify over time, and be steerable or not, obviously, as they depend on the activeness of partners and their motivation. Certainly, crisis times are motivating and the desire to reach out goes deeper, but a fine project, such as getting the prestigious and highly useful **international**

journal *Tools & Tillage* online thanks to the good graces of **Heidelberg University** and the help of **EXARC**, one of our major allies, has been a special experience. (The Experimental archaeology open-air museums association at <https://exarc.net/> and several of the articles here <https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/news-2/aima-newsletters/>). This was partnered by **tDAR** (the Digital Archaeological Record), **ALHFAM** – renowned among associations for its own archival strength – and the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kloster Lorsch**, through the Lauresham Open-Air Laboratory.



The goals of *Tools & Tillage* are emblematic of what inspires the AIMA, in great part: **bringing museums, collections, scholars and skillholders together from every continent** to understand how people interact with their environment through agricultural processes, producing the food and a great part of the material culture that sustain us. It was also an opportunity to recall the struggles and at times adventurous experiences of the AIMA and its members, since its founding in 1966 in then Czechoslovakia, to bridge the “Europes” of the time and, today, reach out around the world to find what unites us in all our diversity.

Meet Cozette and AIMA networking here:

<https://youtu.be/J9UGv6Bz7gU>

Next in line was a highly effective tandem, new friends to the AIMA, from the United States, **Adrienne Petty, College of William & Mary** (Williamsburg, Virginia) and **Mark Schultz, Lewis University** (Romeoville, Illinois) who stepped in to tell us about

Harvesting memories on the Farm Oral Histories of African American Farm Owners



The interviews in the **Breaking New Ground Collection** are available at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill’s Southern Oral History Collection, but Adrienne and Mark spoke to us above all of how the archives are made, the people that count, their students who enliven the search to bear witness through real dialogue that does not leave out ordinary lives, as does

perform even the finest historical research on documents alone. They search for people who can tell them about families' strategies to survive and thrive, labor and work-sharing, the links to church life and sociability, kinship networks, to make the **most democratic of archives**. This is what Kerry-Leigh called a “**remembered archive**”, perfect to partner with museums. How can you find these living links to once near invisible histories? You might try going off to enjoy a farmers' market next weekend, but take your recording equipment with you, and above all, you need to **partner with other institutions**, then don't back off, if the going gets rough and people speak of hard times, as well as good. But there is much, much more to this – the subtleties of engagement and the advantages of a sprinkling of naivety – so join us online for the full session (and check out <https://library.unc.edu/wilson/shc/sohp/>)

Meet Adrienne and Mark with their projects here:

https://youtu.be/Nm-eIV_rvPU

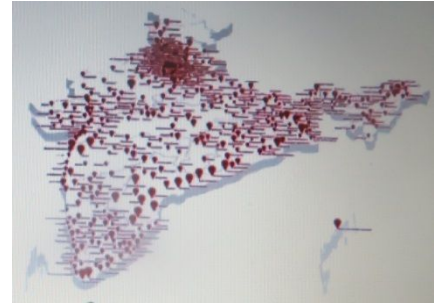
To close out our presentations for the day, we again went around the planet to listen to a three-voice presentation as Isabel introduced us to (counterclockwise) **Vijay Pratap Singh Aditya (co-found and CEO of ékgaon)**, AIMA Executive Committee member **Surajit Sarkar (Centre for Community Knowledge at Ambedkar University)** and **Nerupama Y. Modwel (Principal Director of ICH at INTACH)***

Knowledge Systems and Resilience: Coping with Crisis in Indian Agriculture



They led us on a lively, diverse tour of many solutions from seed storage to sowing and harvest, on to livestock breeding and celebration in the multitude of traditional agricultures still to be found and promoted in India today. And they reminded us that **60% of India – 700 million people – depend for their livelihood on farming**, while current high-input agriculture has multiplied the cost of production by 200 in 70 years, but selling prices have risen by only 20 times. Good definition of unsustainable... not to mention the damage of mono-cropping or the low productivity of, for example, wheat-growing, so they seek proven ways for new times and intelligent hedging to protect farming families, as well as connect them with modern buyers concerned both with ease of purchase and quality, that is – letting “**technology meet tradition**”. From tried and tested weather wisdom on a micro-level to utilizing wild plants for food and medicines, on to seed security and storage, and other “**rooted knowledge**”, accessible in a database, Nerupama, Surajit and Vijay provided a glimpse of the immense variety of agri-climatic zones and practices in India

* See Centre for Community Knowledge at <http://www.ckconline.in/>, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage at <http://www.intach.org/> and ékgaon at <https://www.ekgaon.com/in/>



Meet Vijay, Surajit and Nerupama here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=LLWmPbIMHas&feature=youtu.be>

AIMA Secretary General **Kerry-Leigh Burchill** took up the challenge of summing up for us and, in a nutshell, spoke of **resilience** in hard times, and the inspiration of now being surrounded, at times bombarded, with creativity and deep thinking. She was joined by **President Ollie Douglas** to welcome attendees and their friends to the AIMA Congress in 2021 at the MERL (Museum of English Rural Life), whether in person, mixed personal and digital or all digital – we'll be there to meet you!



2021

Special thanks to the following groups and people who kindly announced our AIMA virtual symposium

AAF (Académie d'Agriculture de France)

AFMA (Fédération des musées d'agriculture)

AHS (Agricultural History Society)

AHSR (Association de l'histoire des sociétés rurales)

ALHFAM (Association of Living History, Farm and Agriculture Museums)

ERHFA (European Rural History Film Archive)

EURHO (European Rural History Organisation)

EXARC (Experimental Archaeology Open-Air Museums)

FEMS (Fédération des écomusées)

HaB (Humanities across Borders)

Le Potager du Roi, Versailles

RMN (Rural Museums Network)

And friends like Beth Thomas, former Director of the Museum of Welsh Life, who simply sent our announcement out to her Twitter followers

Now, for the first stats in from Claus Kropp, who will keep us informed of the Virtual Symposium's progress on YouTube. There was a total of 86 registrations. We had a high of 61 active attendees during Session 2 and an overall average of 50 attendees. The list of institutions that registered numbered 49!



Cozette Griffin-Kremer, 17-11-2020



Last, but not least, with special thanks to Claus Kropp, who put us all up to this!
Photo courtesy Kloster Lorsch



The AIMA exists to share

JOIN US

<https://www.agriculturalmuseums.org/membership/membership-forms/>

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Coming soon.....



Claudia Kinmonth, Li Guoqiang, Pete Watson