

The School of English Media Studies & Art History, Museum Studies  
The Queensland Museum  
Pacific Asia Observatory for Cultural Diversity in Human Development present

## Museums and Intangible Heritage Dr Richard Kurin

Thursday 23 November 2006  
Queensland Museum South Bank Theatre, 5.30pm-7:00pm

Distinguished international guest, Dr Richard Kurin, Director of the Centre for Folklore and Cultural Heritage of the Smithsonian Institution, and Acting Director, Smithsonian National Programs Theatre will be presenting a lecture on how museums are dealing with the notion of intangible heritage.

*"To be human is to have an oral tradition. It is the stories, the tales, the poetry, the songs, the languages that give meaning to experience and provide continuity across the generations. Our work is to encourage that continuity. If we don't do our job, the voices of the past may be silenced and future generations may be deprived of their cultural inheritance." Richard Kurin*

Earlier this year, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage came into force as international law, and now has been ratified by more than 60 nations. It will likely become the standard for how living cultural heritage is preserved and encouraged. The International Council of Museums has viewed this development as both a challenge and an opportunity. Should governments around the world now designate museums as the primary agencies for the new Convention? Can museums really safeguard intangible cultural heritage? How has the Smithsonian Institution - the national museum of the United States viewed in this role - reacted, and might there be any parallels with Australian institutions?

The lecture will be followed by audience questions and discussion chaired by Professor Amareswar Galla, Professor of Museum Studies at the University of Queensland and Chairperson of the Cross Cultural Task Force of the International Council of Museums, Paris.

### Dr Richard Kurin

Richard Kurin is responsible for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, a massive exposition of living cultural heritage held annually on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and other programs which have won huge professional and popular acclaim. He has produced major U.S. national cultural programs for presidential inaugurations, the Atlanta Olympics, the White House, the dedication of the National World War II Memorial and the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian.

Dr Kurin is a former Fulbright fellow with a PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Chicago and professorships at Johns Hopkins University, George Washington University and the University of Queensland.

He served on the first international jury for UNESCO's masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity. Since 2004, he has also served as the Acting Director of the Smithsonian's National Programs.

