



## UMAC in Dubai

At the 27<sup>th</sup> ICOM General Conference in Dubai this year UMAC is collaborating with three other international committees to produce a diverse and relevant program of presentations. We are collaborating with ICOM NATHIST (Natural History), ICOM CIMUSET (Science and Technology) and CIPEG (Egyptology).

Below is a description of each collaborative session plus a description of our own International Committee's Day UMAC session. This information will go live on the ICOM Dubai website shortly with a call for papers. We provide this information now so you can plan and prepare to make a submission for one (or more) of these sessions.

**ICOM Dubai 2025 registration is now open!**

<https://dubai2025.icom.museum/registration>

***Reconsidering the division between Natural and Cultural Heritage: The Role of Natural History collections in reactivating intangible knowledge***

*Session A – November 12 afternoon*

Reconnecting museum collections of cultural heritage – the belongings of people – with their origins and stories has contributed to the enrichment of identity and to intangible knowledge-building by connecting the past with the present, moving beyond safeguarding, to reactivating areas of intangible knowledge.

Natural History museums and collections are becoming public places where environmental issues and their anthropogenic origins are addressed. This has led to new approaches to the interactions between people and nature, with a desire to showcase the close connections between cultural and natural heritage in articulating issues which now affect modern societies across the world, such as climate change, increased pollution, migration and habitat loss.

We believe collections of cultural and natural heritage need to be more integrated in current analyses. This work is now urgent, as it is directly impacted by current wars and conflicts as well as transformations of habitat, which have altered material and immaterial cultural heritage. This session welcomes case studies and reflections on the interdisciplinary potential of such work.

## ***Collecting the Digital: Rethinking Materiality in Science and University Museums***

*Session B November 12 evening*

Digital technologies present a unique challenge for science and university museums. Unlike traditional scientific instruments or artifacts, digital innovations—such as artificial intelligence, algorithms, and data-driven research tools—often lack a physical presence that corresponds to their profound societal impact. This session explores how museums can collect, document, and interpret digital and contemporary scientific heritage in ways that preserve both their material and conceptual significance.

Bringing together perspectives from universities and museum professionals, this session will examine key questions: How do we collect and exhibit AI and other digital technologies? When is the physical object necessary, and when can alternative collecting strategies be employed? How do decisions about what to collect shape future research and public engagement?

Through a keynote presentation, case studies, and discussion, this session will highlight innovative approaches to collecting scientific heritage from university labs and beyond. Rather than providing definitive answers, it will raise critical questions about the evolving role of collections in the digital age, balancing materiality, research, and dissemination.

## ***Ancient civilisations and the contemporary academy***

*Session C November 13 afternoon*

We will investigate the changing understanding of the materiality of ancient civilisations, particularly ancient Egypt, through the contemporary academy and other forms of cultural production and consumption. By ‘contemporary academy’ we understand a modern organisation that does research, either a museum or a university. We want to discuss how new technologies are transforming the generation and transmission of knowledge and how a new wave of emerging scholarship requires a sound contemporary and ethical framework for both knowledge generation and dissemination.



## ***Rapid Change in Higher Education: The Strategic Value of Museums and Collections***

*November 15 ICs Day*

In this session we investigate the future of material collections and museums in higher education.

The rapid pace of change in higher education pedagogies, research methodologies and public engagement modalities in recent years has produced many challenges and opportunities for university museums. Reconfiguration and rethinking the very nature of higher education raises some fundamental questions on the role of museums and material collections in the future academy,

To remain relevant, university museums must embrace change through digital technologies, foster interdisciplinary collaborations, and actively engage with diverse communities and epistemologies. By doing so, we continue to offer higher education an identifiable value proposition and continue contribute meaningfully to society.

This session, marking the first time UMAC has met in the UAE, will explore the future of university museums and collections.