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IC SESSIONS - 27TH ICOM GENERAL CONFERENCE 2025
THE FUTURE OF MUSEUMS IN RAPIDLY CHANGING COMMUNITIES



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ICOM المجلس الدولي للمتاحف - الإمارات العربية المتحدة UAE



IC SESSIONS - 27TH ICOM GENERAL CONFERENCE 2025
THE FUTURE OF MUSEUMS IN RAPIDLY CHANGING COMMUNITIES

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EDITORIAL

THE FUTURE OF MUSEUMS IN RAPIDLY CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Tine Bagh, Phaedra Fang, Gina Hammond, Anita Hermannstädter, Jacob Thorek Jensen, Riina Linna, Andrew Simpson, Sebastien Soubiran, Diego Vaz Bevilaqua, Giovanna Vitelli, Dorit Wolenitz and Zhao Ke

The theme for this year's triennial meeting of ICOM, the first time the global organisation has ever met in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MEASA) region, captures a forward-looking focus. It acknowledges the fast pace of change, not just within the museum and cultural sectors, but throughout the world. Perhaps at no other point of history has change been such a predominant feature of interwoven human, environmental and technological systems.

Museums, as a unique form of human technology, are also changing from being beacons of Enlightenment authority to being enablers of human agency (SIMPSON 2022a). This, and the imperative of change, is reflected in the three sub-themes of the 2025 ICOM conference in Dubai namely; intangible cultural heritage, youth power and new technologies, the three axes of heritage, people and tools through which museums do their work.

The intangible cultural heritage subtheme invites museums and cultural organisations to explore how they can proactively safeguard, transmit and revitalise intangible cultural heritage. This was initiated by the UNESCO 2003 convention, the first international instrument to define and protect "intangible cultural heritage" (KURIN 2004), then incorporated into the 2004 revision of ICOM's Code of Ethics (LEWIS 2016). In 2017 ICOM established an International Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICICH), to explicitly focus on the relationship between the tangibles and the intangibles of the museum technology. The emergence of this subtheme in Dubai reinforces its centrality to museum futures.

Many regions of the world (including the MEASA region) are experiencing a demographic boom of young people. Engaging them meaningfully with what can be done with the museum is obviously of critical importance for the future. Forward-looking adaptive qualities are needed. Our institutions are being challenged to rethink governance, programming, formats and especially relevance. They need to be dynamic spaces for young voices and crucibles for innovation.

The third subtheme of new technologies is an area of significant and rapid change. A few short years ago no-one would have predicted the rise of artificial intelligence and the profound impact on many areas of museum work. New technology brings innovative forms of interpretation and extended inclusivity, but it also brings the challenges of authenticity of experience, the ethics of digital heritage and more practical questions of capacity and resources.

Given the global trends of demographic change, technological disruption and cultural mobility, these three subthemes capture a rich mixture of contemporary ingredients for modern museum work. UMAC is fortunate to have scheduled three specialist collaborations with other International Committees as part of the Dubai conference.

"Reconsidering the division between Natural and Cultural Heritage: The Role of Natural History collections in reactivating intangible knowledge" is the theme of a collaborative session with NATHIST ICOM's International Committee for Natural History. It is pertinent to the overall conference theme and provides an excellent opportunity for a joint session under the conference sub-Theme 'Intangible Heritage'.

Much attention has been paid in recent years to reconnecting museum collections of cultural heritage – the belongings of people – with their origins and stories. The return of heritage items

through repatriation, as well as associated research and social engagement programs around culture revitalization, have contributed to the enrichment of identity and to intangible knowledge-building by connecting the past with the dynamic present, moving beyond safeguarding, to reactivating areas of intangible knowledge.

Natural History museums and collections are closely linked to scientific research, especially within university museum contexts both past and present, and their presentation to the public is most often focused on the transmission of scientific knowledge. In recent years, the process of collecting and conserving has attracted the attention of researchers and curators alike. This growing preoccupation with understanding the trajectory of objects from their source to their storage in a museum or exhibition is leading to a better grasp of their cultural dimensions, and not just as scientific artifacts. The know-how, skills and intangible knowledge required to collect, study and conserve specimens have also been reconsidered and valorised as part of the process of knowledge production and transmission. Alongside studies on decolonization, this project has also made visible the invisible people involved in this production of knowledge, in particular the role of local populations and Indigenous knowledge.

Since the 1990s, many Natural History museums and collections around the world have been renovated. Faced with environmental crises, they have become public places where environmental issues and their anthropogenic origins are addressed. This has led to new approaches to the interactions between people and nature, yet there have not been many opportunities 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. These are present in collections of both cultural and natural heritage, although they have not necessarily been integrated in current analyses. The importance and fragility of such work is now urgent, as it is directly impacted by current wars and conflicts as well as transformations of habitat, suppressing or altering material and immaterial cultural heritage.

Both the Natural History and University Museums and Collections International Committees suggest that a wider range of historic collections, especially within university museums, can be deployed to create a deeper understanding of current issues through activities such as collaborative scientific research, knowledge exchange, the reactivation of memory and cultural/social history. It is a moment not only for preserving existing intangible heritage but working actively in partnership to revitalize it.

As everyone on the authors list above will attest, friendly collaboration and cross-disciplinary exchange are at the heart of ICOM as an organisation. Every three years, the many committees and communities that make up ICOM gather to share knowledge, learn from each other, and discuss the future of museums. In this spirit, the International Committee for Science and Technology (CIMUSET) and University Museums and Collections (UMAC) are joining forces at the ICOM General Conference in Dubai to address the sub-theme “New Technologies”.

As the international committees for museums of science and technology and for university museums and collections, we share a common interest in how our members engage with digital technologies — not only in how they are collected, stored, and researched, but also in how they are interpreted and exhibited. Digital technologies challenge many of our established museum practices: unlike historical instruments or mechanical artefacts, digital innovations such as artificial intelligence, algorithms, and data-driven tools often lack a tangible materiality. How does one collect an AI model, an online platform, or an evolving dataset? And how can these be preserved and made accessible for future generations?

Under the theme “Collecting the Digital: Rethinking Materiality in Science and University Museums,” this joint session explores these questions through research-based presentations, case studies, and open discussion. Together, we will examine how science and university museums can document, curate, and interpret the digital turn in science and technology.

By bringing together researchers and practitioners from diverse institutional and global contexts, the session does not seek definitive answers, but rather to open up new ways of thinking about collecting in the digital age. It invites reflection on how museums can continue to serve as spaces for critical inquiry and knowledge exchange in a world increasingly shaped by the immaterial and algorithms.

This session thus contributes to a growing global conversation on how museums can reimagine collecting, interpretation, and research in response to the digital transformation of our societies.

The third collaboration in Dubai during the 27th general conference is with the International Committee for Egyptology (CIPEG). This International Committee has always sought to promote collaboration among museums, universities and research institutes as well as supplying partnership opportunities, sharing resources, knowledge and experiences.

The CIPEG-UMAC collaboration in Dubai investigates 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’ is here conceptualised as a modern organisation that does research, either a museum or a university. This session looks at 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. This session clearly captures some great examples of new scholarship in this changing ethical framework.

The International Committees Day of the Dubai conference posed some logistical challenges for an International Committee for Universities and Collections. Our group has no members in the United Arab Emirates, but we anticipate this will change because of the conference. Our tradition is to visit a local university and discover how materiality is embedded into the tripartite institutional mission of teaching, research and engagement (SIMPSON 2022b). Initial investigations revealed no higher education institutes in the Emirates seemingly kept material collections, let alone housed museums! This seemed a little unusual and different from other parts of the world.

The reality, however, is that there are museums and collections in universities throughout the Emirates, a region with rich cultural resources and spectacular museums. UMAC’s International Committee’s Day is taking place at the American University of Sharjah. The university has a close working relationship with the Sharjah Museums Authority (KAZAN 2017). This organization oversees 16 museums across the Emirate of Sharjah that cover various themes. These include Islamic art and culture, archaeology, heritage, science, marine life, and the history of Sharjah and the region. The Authority, established in 2006, has a vision to be a cultural beacon enhancing Sharjah’s identity and contributing to nurturing a community awareness of museums as cultural and educational resources.

The University Library also houses part of the Barjeel Art Foundation collection (KELLY 2022). The Foundation is an independent, UAE-based initiative established to manage, preserve and exhibit an extensive collection of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art. The foundation’s guiding principle is to contribute to the intellectual development of the art scene in the Arab region by building a prominent, publicly accessible art collection in the UAE. It makes sense that part of this collection would be deployed in an institution of higher education.

The session at the American University of Sharjah is focussed on the general theme of the ICOM Dubai 2025 conference under the title “Rapid Change in Higher Education: The Strategic Value of University Museums and Collections”. 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 about 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 can continue to offer higher education an identifiable value proposition and continue contribute meaningfully to society.

As you will see in this volume, the response to our call for papers elicited some interesting case studies, examples of innovative collaborations and some speculation about the future. Titles fall into three categories all of which can be linked to a purposeful institutional strategy. One section is on new technology and the digital turn as strategy, it is in part reflective of our collaboration with CIMUSET. Another is reflective of our collaboration with NATHIST as presenters explore the strategic value of natural history collections and their potential for inter-disciplinary engagement. The third, however, is all about what university museums and collections can do best when given the correct institutional settings. That is collaboration and is a central feature of any successful and impactful higher education enterprise.

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**Chairs: Anita Hermannstädter
and Giovanna Vitelli**
Session A-23 – November 12
Location: Abu Dhabi B (1:00pm)

Speakers:

1. Yuanhao Zhang
2. Phaedra Hui-Shih Fang
3. Nagmeldeen Hamza
4. Indrani Bhattacharya
5. Olivia Friis Uhrbrand

**Reconsidering the division between natural and cultural heritage:
The role of natural history collections in reactivating intangible knowledge**

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.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF JAPAN IN EDO PERIOD AND ITS REFLECTION IN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS

Yuanhao Zhang

Abstract

Recent studies suggest that in the Anthroposphere, human activity is no longer regarded as an external factor to nature, but is instead evolving into a fully integrated component on par with the geosphere and biosphere, indicating a transition to a new paradigm. The concept of the Anthropocene calls for a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between humans and nature, presenting both a significant challenge and an opportunity for natural history museums.

While natural history developed in unique ways in both Western and Eastern societies, it evolved into modern science only in the West. In contrast, Eastern natural history in Japan, represented by Honzōgaku (traditional materia medica) and Hakubutsugaku (natural history), has often been excluded from the realm of science due to its perceived lack of theory-building based on verifiable positivism. From the standpoint of modern science, emphasis is placed on objectivity and neutrality, with a strict separation between the human observer and the natural object of observation.

In contrast, Japanese natural historiography has viewed plants and animals through a human-centered lens. The topics it addresses often include art, literature, and human aesthetics, which are closely associated with everyday life. This perspective, which emphasizes an organic and symbiotic relationship between nature and humans, continues to be reflected in the representation of natural history in Japanese museums.

Hakubutsugaku (natural history) thus holds significant potential as a thought-provoking framework in contemporary discourse on the relationship between humans and nature.

Biographical Note

I am a PhD researcher specializing in the intersection of museology, conservation science, and the history of natural history. I conduct interdisciplinary research through exhibition experiments, visitor studies, and historical analysis, aiming to establish theoretical and institutional foundations for the sustainable support of natural history museums and their collections in Japan.

BEYOND BOTANICAL CLASSIFICATION: RETHINKING MUSEUM INTERPRETATIONS OF MILLET AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Phaedra Hui-Shih Fang

Abstract

In May 1970, botanists at the National Taiwan Museum collected an ear of millet, annotating it as "an important crop for Indigenous peoples" used for "daily consumption, brewing, and ceremonial celebrations symbolizing abundance." This specimen exemplifies millet's significance in Taiwan, where cultivation dates to the Neolithic era and growing cycles intertwine with seasonal rituals across Indigenous communities. Centuries of cultivation have produced remarkable diversity in both varieties and culinary traditions.

Recent educational initiatives reflect millet's renewed prominence. Indigenous community schools increasingly emphasize millet cultivation through agri-food education programs, while government-funded regional revitalization campaigns spotlight millet cuisines. In 2024, Taiwan's National Central University deposited 170 millet varieties from Indigenous communities to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault—Taiwan's first contribution to this global repository.

Despite increased public awareness through exhibitions and scientific narratives, museums and scientific institutions often generalize millet's characteristics while overlooking the cultural complexity underlying its cultivation and use. Indigenous peoples, who have preserved millet varieties and associated cultures, are frequently presented through vague, generalized representations.

This paper examines how museums research and interprets millet, arguing that current approaches inadequately capture its hybrid nature as both a botanical specimen and a cultural artifact. By addressing these interpretive shortcomings, millet collections could better demonstrate their potential to connect diverse millet-based cultures and illuminate sustainable human-environment relationships, revealing the organic ways people coexist with their environment.

Biographical Note

Phaedra Fang currently works at National Taiwan Museum as an assistant researcher of the Education Department, and as an awarded freelance translator. She also works as the current Secretary for ICOM NATHIST and a member in the ICOM Working Group on Decolonisation. She holds a master's in zoology and a Ph.D. candidacy in the International Program of Climate Change and Sustainable Development at National Taiwan University. Her academic interests include sustainability education in museums, citizen science, and the culinary cultures of Taiwan. With partners, she curated special exhibitions, including 'Watch Out! Elephants Coming!' and 'Sustainable New Years' Dinner Tables – Dining in the Anthropocene'. She also initiated the International Docent Training Program for her museum, creating a polyvocal space for the young generation to learn and introduce the museum.

HERBARIUM COLLECTIONS IN CULTURAL HERITAGE MUSEUM: BALANCING PRESERVATION, EXHIBITION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Nagmeldeen Hamza

Abstract

Herbarium collections are valuable for knowledge, research, biodiversity studies, and play a significant role in addressing major societal challenges such as biodiversity conservation providing a tangible link to the knowledge of past naturalists, collectors, and scientists. Natural collections are non-renewable and have huge potential for knowledge, future research and didactic purposes, but they pose challenges concerning their physical safeguarding, managing diverse data associated with, exhibition, accessibility, and preservation.

The national museum of Ras Al-Khaimah houses multiple Herbarium collections, representing plant diversity. Herbarium collections at RAK museum are organized in five files in which the specimens are contained in alphabetical order according to their family names. Each specimen, mounted on an individual card, shows a pressed example of the flower together with a photograph of the plant in its natural habitat. The details with each specimen include, name, family, Map co-ordinates of location and reference number. Duplicates of this collection are held at the royal botanical gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland, the herbarium at Oman national history museum, ministry of national heritage and culture, Muscat, sultanate of Oman.

The research presents the recognition of the challenges, promoting the long-term survival and use of these collections. procedures of museums can be used as a tool for knowledge transfer for leading a new approach of interactions between visitors and nature, shaping the connections between cultural and natural heritage in museums. The research discusses the ability of cultural heritage museums in displaying natural heritage, engaging the public in a deeper understanding of the natural world. The research applied an improvement for recognition, preservation, management, access and use of Herbarium collection, through developing practices a roadmap for knowledge, policies, procedures, tools, and methodologies for its management.

Biographical Note

Dr. Nagmeldeen Morshed Hamza Department of Antiquities and Museums Ras Al Khaimah, UAE Senior conservation scientist nagm.h@museum.rak.ae nagmhamza@gmail.com

DIVISION BETWEEN NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: RECONSIDERING NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS FOR REVITALIZING INTANGIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Indrani Bhattacharya

Abstract

The conventional separation between natural and cultural heritage has long shaped the museums and management of natural and heritage resources. However, this contradiction increasingly fails to apprehend the complex interrelations between people, ecosystems, and knowledge systems. By engaging communities in cocuration, oral histories, and participatory approaches, museums can relocate natural history collections as dynamic interfaces between tangible and intangible, ecological and cultural. This approach not only enriches the narrative potential of museums but also contributes to biocultural diversity and the ethical stewardship of heritage of India. Drawing from interdisciplinary angles of museology, ethnobiology, and heritage studies, the paper investigates how botanical, zoological, and geological collections have been used to recoup and revitalize practices such as traditional medicine, food diversity, ecological stewardship, and astral storytelling. These collections often hold embedded cultural meanings that go beyond taxonomy, offering entry points into ancestral knowledge, language, and memory. As a knowledge-practice-belief complex, traditional ecological knowledge embraces the cultural traditions of a society. It is cumulative and dynamic, erecting on experience and adapting to changes. This paper explores for a more integrated approach by examining how natural history collections, traditionally viewed as storehouses of scientific specimens, can serve as catalysts for reactivating intangible cultural knowledge, particularly in Indigenous and local communities. It appeals for heritage policies that move beyond rigid categorizations and recognize the entanglement of nature and culture. In doing so, it promotes sustainable inclusive museum practices that validate assorted worldviews and reposition natural history collections as living resources for cultural and ecological regeneration.

Biographical Note

Dr Indrani Bhattacharya is a Professor of Museology at the University of Calcutta. She has been teaching museology at the post-graduate level for the last 23 years. Her major research interests have been Application of Technology in Museums, Information Technology in Museums, Museum Security, Preservation of Natural History Specimens, Care and Conservation of Cultural Property, Natural History Museums, Women and Museums; Technology, Museums and Society and e-Content Development. She successfully supervised numbers of dissertations at Masters' and Doctoral level. She received research fellowship from the Charles Wallace India Trust for conducting her post-doctoral research in the United Kingdom. She was a Visiting Faculty in the Department of Museum Studies, University of Glasgow. She has been very active in ICOM and Museums Association of India. She attended ICOM Shanghai 2010, ICOM Milano 2016, ICOM Kyoto 2019, and ICOM Prague 2022. ICOM-India Trust awarded her Grace Morley Research Grant in 2016.

WILD WONDERFUL WORLD: EXHIBITING THE COLLECTING OF NATURE IN A CULTURAL HISTORY SETTING

Olivia Friis Uhrbrand

Abstract

The Natural History Museum Denmark is opening a new museum in 2027. In 2024 the in-house build temporary exhibition, Wild Wonderful World, was made to show an insight to the museum's rich collection and the relationship between collections and history as a build up for the new museum opening. The goal was to demonstrate through objects how nature has been collected over 400 years by pinpointing different aspects and practices of collecting nature and showcasing the connections between people and nature. This time we wanted to tell the natural history differently with the provenance story of how objects were collected rather than a scientific narrative only. We believe this was achieved through thematic rooms of what we collect, how we collect and why.

With an example of the extinct great auk, I would like to present the thoughts and practices behind integrating cultural history into storytelling, also involving political conflict and anthropogenic origins directly impacting endangered species. The learnings around the exhibition and the cultural heritage surrounding the great auk may have influenced the narrative moving forward.

The learnings from Wild Wonderful World exemplifies the importance of transparency around provenance and belongings of people in natural history collections. The internal response to critique helped to deepen the cultural perspective in the narrative for the great auk, which will be featured in the new museum.

This presentation will hopefully inspire and connect the past with present interpretation in the context of a changing contemporary social history.

Biographical Note

I have a master's degree in history with a minor in museology from The University of Copenhagen. I have previously held a position as curator of the medieval and renaissance collections at the National Museum Denmark, where the museum's history within collections was my area of expertise. Moving on from this I was employed as Exhibition Content Scientist for the temporary exhibition, Wild Wonderful World, at the Natural History Museum Denmark. Bringing the cultural history into the natural history collections was my main focus, and I selected objects and creative content for the exhibition's historical areas. I now hold the same position, but working for the new museum opening in 2027, where I am transferring the learnings from temporary exhibitions onto the new galleries and overseeing the historical areas.



Chairs: Zhao Ke and Jacob Thorek Jensen
Session B-14 – November 12
Location: Abu Dhabi A (2:45pm)

Speakers:

1. Joanna Ślaga
2. Antonella Poce, Carlo De Medio and Mara Valente
3. Panu Nykänen
4. Nayoung Hwang, Shinwon Ahn and Suyeon Kim
5. Congting Hao, Wang Nianci and Chen Deli
6. Osman Serhat Karaman

Collecting the digital: Rethinking materiality in science and university museums

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.

BEYOND THE TANGIBLE: COLLECTING THE INTANGIBLE IN CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE

Joanna Ślaga

Abstract

As digital technologies increasingly underpin contemporary scientific research, science and university museums face a critical challenge: how can institutions designed to collect and interpret material artifacts effectively preserve the intangible and often immaterial artifacts of the digital age? This paper explores this question through the lens of two ongoing initiatives—Impulse, a platform fostering collaboration between museums and research institutions, and CHExRISH (Cultural Heritage Exploration and Retrieval with Intelligent Systems at the Jagiellonian University), which investigates the entangled histories of science, data, and heritage infrastructures.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and curatorial practice, we analyze how artificial intelligence, algorithms, and data-driven tools are being integrated (or resisted) within museum collecting strategies. These technologies often lack physical form or are embedded in rapidly evolving research ecosystems, making conventional acquisition and preservation models insufficient. We argue that collecting digital science requires a rethinking of materiality itself—not as a prerequisite for collection, but as a dynamic relation between code, interface, documentation, and context.

Through case studies from university labs and industry-academic collaborations—curated in partnership with the Impulse project (IMmersive digitalization: uPcycling cULTural heritage towards new reviving StratEGies) we trace attempts to capture the socio-technical assemblages surrounding digital tools: software environments, lab notebooks, video walkthroughs, and researcher interviews. These elements, while not material in the traditional sense, offer crucial interpretive anchors for future curators, researchers, and publics.

Further, we examine the role of collecting as a research and engagement practice, highlighting the dialogic potential of exhibition as a site of epistemic negotiation. Through CHExRISH's experimental curatorial workshops, we propose that museums can function not just as custodians of heritage but as active participants in shaping contemporary scientific understanding.

Ultimately, we advocate for a post-material collecting paradigm that embraces uncertainty, partiality, and co-creation. In doing so, we ask: how can museums preserve not just artifacts, but the epistemologies, frictions, and imaginaries that constitute 21st-century science?

Biographical Note

Joanna Ślaga, PhD, is a curator and researcher specializing in the intersection of contemporary science, digital heritage, and museum practice. Based at the Jagiellonian University Museum in Kraków, she leads initiatives exploring how academic museums can collect and interpret emerging scientific knowledge, especially in the digital age. Her work is grounded in collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to curatorship, with a focus on AI, data-driven research tools, and their cultural significance. Joanna is actively involved in the Impulse project, which fosters cooperation between science museums and research institutions, and contributes to CHExSHIR (Contemporary Histories of Experimental Science and Heritage Infrastructures in Research), a program investigating the material and immaterial legacies of contemporary science. She has published and presented widely on museum futures, digital materiality, and the evolving role of university collections as sites of both preservation and critical engagement.

BEYOND THE OBJECT: THE UNIVERSITY OF TOR VERGATA'S VIRTUAL MUSEUM AS A LIVING DIGITAL COLLECTION

Antonella Poce, Carlo De Medio and Mara Valente

Abstract

The Virtual Museum of the University of Tor Vergata, a project developed under the RESTART program ("RESearch and innovation on future Telecommunications systems and networks"), presents a practical case study in collecting, interpreting, and exhibiting contemporary digital heritage. This initiative directly confronts the challenges of preserving innovations that are often intangible, such as algorithms and AI. Our approach moves beyond traditional object collection by creating a "living" digital ecosystem.

The project's core is not a static repository of digital files, but an integrated, functional system. This system includes a dedicated 5G network, interactive totems, and an immersive virtual environment built in Unity 3D. This infrastructure is used to exhibit two main types of content: 3D digitized cultural heritage from the Tor Vergata territory and, crucially, the contemporary scientific research projects developed within the university itself.

This initiative challenges conventional ideas of materiality. The "collection" includes not only the 3D models of archaeological artifacts from the local Roman Suburban area but also the AI engine that personalizes user experiences, the interaction data gathered from users, and the semantic relationships between objects. We employ Object-Based Learning (OBL) and digital storytelling to foster public engagement and develop key skills like critical thinking. User profiling is achieved through both explicit feedback and implicit data from non-invasive sensors that anonymously analyze wellness and engagement levels, which constantly refines the AI's recommendation algorithm.

This paper will explore our strategy for documenting this multifaceted digital system, raising critical questions about what constitutes the "object" of collection when dealing with AI. Is it the algorithm, the dataset, the hardware, or the holistic, evolving user experience? We present the Virtual Museum as an innovative model for how university labs can collect and interpret their own ongoing scientific heritage in a way that is dynamic, engaging, and socially inclusive.

Biographical Note

Antonella Poce is full Professor in Experimental Pedagogy at the Department of History, Heritage, Education and Society – University of Roma Tor Vergata, where She teaches Experimental Pedagogy, Educational Research Methodology, Museum Education. From December 2020 to February 2023, was employed as full professor in the same subject at the Dept. of Education and Humanities, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, where she started and chaired the INTELLECT International Research Centre for Research into Heritage and Museum Education, Well-being and Teaching Technology. She presently chairs the following joint (TOR VERGATA/UNIROMATRE) post graduate degrees: annual "Empirical Studies in Museum Education" and biennial post graduate course "Advanced Studies in Heritage Education". She coordinates national, international and European projects, and she has chaired international academic committees focused on evaluation and distance learning. Her research concerns innovative teaching practices in higher education at national and international level.

AVIATION MUSEUMS NEW FACILITIES – A POSSIBILITY OR A DISASTER

Panu Nykänen

Abstract

The Finnish aviation museum moves to new premises in 2027. Museum has been located in present facilities for 40 years, and the museums archives and collections have been in the basement of the hangars.

The new premises will be in the neighbouring block, near the Helsinki – Vantaa airport. Migration though forces the archives and the library to reorganize and rethink everything, including the future needs for research and the accessibility of the collections.

A fundamental problem with the archives has been the nature of the collections. The archives were formed based on personal collections of the first generation of the aviators in Finland, and the hastily rescued archives of several commercial aviation corporations and aviation clubs. Special attention has to be paid to technical literature and documents, usually not understandable for the researchers without a technical or aviation education. Very special types of material in the archives are the thousands of technical drawings and the hundreds of shelf meters of aircraft manuals.

In the presentation the future of the collections and the special need for understanding the technical material is discussed. What will we lose when we are forced to remove something from the collections? How are the collections to be opened to research, and what would be the role of digitalization in the process? How may the personal archives of the first aviators open the view to the modern society of 1920's and 1930's in Finland?

Biographical Note

I am a senior researcher on the field of history of science and technology. I have published 20 books over the history of technical research. I am working at the moment as a researcher for the Finnish Aviation Museum, my task is to prepare the archives of the museum for a migration to new premises. My last publications have considered the aviation culture in Finland during the interwar period.

MATERIAL TRANSFORMATIONS: CEMENT, HERITAGE, AND INNOVATION IN THE 2024 PROJECT

Nayoung Hwang, Shinwon Ahn and Suyeon Kim

Abstract

Hanyang University Museum's 2024 Cement Project redefines the curation of industrial materials through its interdisciplinary examination of cement—a foundational yet historically overlooked element of Seoul's built environment.

Developed in collaboration with the university's East Asian Architectural Research Center and Multi-scale Construction Materials Lab, the project confronts critical questions about urban heritage: the preservation of 1960s–70s concrete structures in Seoul's rapidly redeveloping landscape, and the study of cement's role in early 20th-century cultural heritage restoration. Simultaneously, it showcases groundbreaking research from Hanyang's engineering departments, including lunar concrete (designed for waterless extraterrestrial construction), eco-friendly cement derived from discarded seashells, and 3D printing technologies enabling mold-free fabrication.

Beyond technical innovation, the exhibition explores cement's cultural dimensions: its emotional resonance in Korean modernization, ties to urban regeneration in districts like Gangnam, and evolving narratives of sustainability. Public engagement was central to the initiative, featuring workshops with material scientists, expert lectures on conservation ethics, and creative competitions (architectural designs and video essays) inviting reinterpretations of cement's materiality. A collaboratively published cement archive book, produced with industry associations, extends the project's scholarly impact.

By integrating industrial archaeology, materials science, and community dialogue, the project exemplifies university museums' unique capacity to transform everyday materials into cultural discourse. It positions cement not merely as an engineering commodity but as a dynamic artifact embodying technological ambition, urban memory, and ecological futures. This model demonstrates how academic institutions can bridge specialized research and public understanding, turning local material heritage into globally relevant conversations.

Biographical Note

Hwang Nayoung studied architecture in college and Buddhist art in graduate school. She worked as an assistant at the National Museum of Korea in Seoul, where she organized exhibitions, artifact surveys, and academic conferences on Asian art. Since 2013, she has been a curator at Hanyang University Museum, organizing various interdisciplinary projects related to architecture, engineering, and art. From 2019 to 2022, she served as secretary general of the Korean Association of University Museums, planning and operating projects that promoted university museums. Nayoung is interested in the evolving role of university museums in the rapidly changing Korean university landscape.

BEYOND ARTIFACTS: CAPTURING FLEETING REACTIONS AS DIGITAL HERITAGE IN MUSEUMS

Congting Hao, Wang Nianci and Chen Deli

Abstract

Digital technologies transform not only what museums collect but how we understand visitor experiences. This research introduces the Spontaneous MicroExpression Dataset in Museums (SMEM), a novel approach to documenting intangible, emotional responses as digital heritage. Unlike staged lab settings, SMEM captures authentic, fleeting micro-expressions (MEs) of 31 museum visitors, resulting in 226 annotated video clips reflecting genuine emotional states (negative, positive, surprise, others). Each ME's facial movements were meticulously annotated, enabling the study of subtle, real-time reactions often invisible to traditional observation.

We employed optical flow techniques to analyse facial dynamics and developed a lightweight CNN model for ME recognition, achieving 0.73 accuracy. This demonstrates the feasibility of using AI to interpret complex human behaviour in authentic cultural settings.

SMEM directly addresses the session's core challenge: collecting digital phenomena lacking physical form but holding profound significance. The dataset itself becomes a digital artifact—preserving both the materiality of facial movement (through annotated video) and its conceptual value in understanding emotional engagement. It offers museums an alternative strategy: capturing behavioural data as critical heritage when physical objects fall short.

We argue that such datasets expand the scope of scientific and university museum collections. They enable future research on visitor experience, inform exhibit design, and foster new forms of public engagement. SMEM exemplifies how museums can rethink materiality by collecting and curating the digital traces of human interaction, balancing tangible documentation with intangible impact in the digital age.

Biographical Note

Hao Congting is the head of education and curation in the ESTM. Her research interests include cultural heritage and museology.

FROM COLLECTION TO ASSEMBLY: TOWARD AN EPISTEMIC APPROACH TO DIGITAL ART CONSERVATION

Osman Serhat Karaman

Abstract

This proposal argues that collecting and conserving digital art requires a fundamental rethinking of how museums approach cultural heritage. Interactive, processual, and technologically contingent works defy traditional preservation frameworks focused on material stability and object permanence. Hardware deteriorates, software becomes obsolete, and platforms evolve—yet such works can still generate meaning and critical reflection. Preserving that capacity demands a shift from material fixity to epistemic continuity: sustaining interpretive and experiential potential across time and transformation.

Rather than maintaining a singular, original state, conservation should focus on a work's generative structure—its ability to produce meaning in new contexts. As Jeffrey Shaw notes, the “material shell” of a digital work is often secondary to its conceptual and experiential logic. Likewise, Annet Dekker argues that static documentation fails to convey the performative and relational dynamics of digital practices. Conservation, in this light, becomes less about freezing form than enabling transformation.

Such an epistemic approach requires both technical expertise and interdisciplinary collaboration across the arts, science, and technology. Cybernetic thinking offers useful tools for understanding digital artworks as dynamic systems shaped by feedback, interactivity, and environmental responsiveness. From a biological perspective—especially drawing on Paul Nurse's view of life as information—digital artworks can be seen as informational organisms. Their conservation depends less on preserving static parts than on sustaining conditions for epistemic vitality.

University museums are well positioned to support this shift. Embedded within research ecosystems and connected to multiple disciplines, they can function as laboratories for conservation as a critical, collective, and iterative process. In this expanded role, echoing Peter Weibel's vision, the museum evolves from *Sammlung* (collection) to *Versammlung*: a space for public reasoning and shared inquiry into how—and why—fragile yet meaningful cultural forms are preserved.

Biographical Note

Osman Serhat Karaman is a graduate of Hacettepe University (Ankara, Türkiye), Department of Information Management, and currently serves as Senior Advisor of Digital Museum Practice at Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum (Istanbul, Türkiye). His work focuses on digital preservation, new media art, and museum technologies. Karaman led the international research project Technological Arts Preservation, addressing the conservation challenges of emerging media, which resulted in the co-edited book *Technological Arts Preservation* (2021). He contributed to global platforms such as the MIT Open Documentary Lab's “Documenting the Interactive Documentary” webinar and presented “Preserving Immersive Media: Non-Technical Challenges” at the 17th iPRES – International Conference on Digital Preservation. He is also a member of the European Media and Born-digital Art Conservation and Knowledge Network (2025–2029), a COST Action supported by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology.



Chair: Tine Bagh and Andrew Simpson

Session C-6 – November 13

Location: Sheikh Maktoum Hall B (2:00pm)

Speakers:

1. Melanie Pitkin, Ronika K. Power and Jacinta Carruthers
2. Ashley Arico
3. Faten Kamal
4. Ahmed Rashed, Tarek Rashed and Arch Basma Shaheen
5. Meng-Chieh Tsai
6. Min Ma

Ancient civilisations and the contemporary academy

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.

UNLEARNING ENTRENCHED WAYS OF SEEING: PRACTICAL INSIGHTS INTO NEW ETHICAL APPROACHES FOR COMMUNICATING EGYPTIAN MUMMIFIED HUMAN REMAINS AT THE CHAU CHAK WING MUSEUM, SYDNEY

Melanie Pitkin, Ronika K. Power and Jacinta Carruthers

Abstract

As Alice Stevenson has observed, museums have long been responsible for constructing museum publics' expectations around the display of ancient Egyptian mummified human remains, although we are often blind to it. This paper explores the recently published culturally specific guidelines for the care of Egyptian ancestral remains at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney, designed to enable museum publics to unlearn entrenched ways of understanding and engaging with the ancient Egyptian dead. While these guidelines apply to all platforms of the Museum, this paper focuses on the new messaging being implemented in our galleries, online interface and through our education and public programmes. The paper examines how this messaging is, and could be, 'transmitted' and 'consumed' through mainstream media, teaching, visitor photography and social media platforms. Additionally, it addresses how such a sensitive topic is navigated within the context of a University Museum located on unceded Australian Aboriginal land confronting its own complex colonial histories.

Biographical Note

Dr Melanie Pitkin is Senior Curator of the Nicholson Collection of Antiquities and Archaeology at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney. She has extensive experience working in museums in Australia and the United Kingdom, and providing support to colleagues at museums in Egypt.

Melanie holds a PhD in Egyptology and an honours degree in ancient history from Macquarie University, and a Masters in Museum Studies from the University of Sydney. Prior to joining the Museum in February 2022, Melanie worked as a Research Associate (Egyptian Antiquities) at the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Prior to this she worked for more than a decade at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

PUBLISHING ANCIENT EGYPT IN A DIGITAL AGE: ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

Ashley Arico

Abstract

Digital publishing provides opportunities for museums to make research into their collections freely available to a global audience. *Ancient Egyptian Art at the Art Institute of Chicago* (by Emily Teeter and Ashley Arico; <https://doi.org/10.53269/9780865593213>)—a born-digital catalogue published in spring 2025—provides a recent case study for the use of such publishing platforms for Egyptological collections. Featuring over 100 artworks from the permanent collection, this richly illustrated open access resource is the first scholarly publication dedicated to the Art Institute’s ancient Egyptian collection in more than a century. This paper will introduce this new publication, which utilizes the museum’s newly redesigned web-based publishing platform; reflect on some of the challenges faced in producing this volume in a digital-only format; and highlight the advantages of this approach for collection accessibility and future study.

Biographical Note

Ashley Arico is Associate Curator of Ancient Egyptian Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. She holds a PhD in Near Eastern Studies with a focus in Egyptian Art and Archaeology from Johns Hopkins University. Ashley is co-author and editor of *Ancient Egyptian Art at the Art Institute of Chicago* (2025). She also serves as the editor of the *CIPEG Journal*.

EXPLORING HERITAGE AND HUMAN REMAINS: BIOARCHEOLOGY AND MUSEUM STUDIES IN EGYPT

Faten Kamal

Abstract

Egypt's exceptional preservation of human remains offers unparalleled bioarcheological insights into ancient life. While early archaeology prioritized artifacts, late 20th-century scholarship recognized human remains as vital for understanding biological and cultural history. This paper examines their display through Egypt's museum evolution, analysing shifts from colonial-era collecting to contemporary ethical frameworks.

The study begins with the Boulaq Museum (1858), Egypt's first state-sanctioned mummy collection, tracing its post-1878 flood relocation to Giza and its eventual move to the Egyptian Museum (1902). Case studies, including regional museums such as the Sharm El-Sheikh Museum, demonstrate how exhibition strategies have shifted from sensationalized displays to ethically conscious presentations, particularly in the Egyptian Museum's recent approaches.

A pivotal moment in this discourse was the 2024 Roundtable on Ethical Approaches to Mummified Remains, organized with the approval of Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities on Ethical Approaches to Mummified Remains, where Egyptian scholars established guidelines on dignity, conservation, and education. The Human Remains Research Project (HRRP)—a collaboration between the Chau Chak Wing Museum, Macquarie University, and University College London (since 2022)—informs this analysis. We evaluate current protocols against international standards, focusing on:

1. Consent and cultural affiliation
2. Conservation vs. accessibility
3. Educational value vs. potential distress

The paper concludes by proposing context-specific frameworks for Egyptian museums, balancing scientific research with community sensitivities. These recommendations aim to position Egypt as a leader in ethical bioarcheological exhibition standards, contributing to global heritage stewardship while respecting local perspectives.

Biographical Note

I am an accomplished Egyptologist and museum curator with a PhD from Cairo University and Leiden University (2023), specializing in the palaeography and lexicography of ancient Egyptian texts. My career includes roles as Curator at the Egyptian Cairo Museum (2024–present), Former Deputy Director at Sharm El-Sheikh Museum (2020–2024), and Egyptologist at CEDAE (2017–2020). I have published peer-reviewed book chapters and journal articles focused on hieratic ostraca and papyri and have presented at international conferences such as ICE XIII (Bedouins Heritage) and the Australasian Egyptology Conference.

I actively organize workshops and serve on committees, including those addressing ethics in human remains (WAC10, 2025) and digital marketing in museums. I am a member of ICOM Egypt and the International Association of Egyptologists. Additionally, I contribute to projects like the Fitzwilliam Museum's Coffins Project. My expertise encompasses research, curation, and heritage management.

MUMMIES AND MUSEOLOGY – A CIVILIZATION RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

Ahmed Rashed, Tarek Rashed and Arch Basma Shaheen

Abstract

This paper explores the ethical complexities surrounding the public display of mummified human remains in modern museums. It asks whether current museological practices compromise the dignity and spiritual legacy of ancient civilizations by reducing sacred remains to disconnected artifacts. Framed within the emerging discipline of Civilization Rights and the Universal Declaration of Civilization Rights, the authors argue that ancient cultures possess intrinsic rights—parallel to human and animal rights—entitling them to respectful representation and cultural integrity. Through comparative case studies, ethical analysis, and stakeholder perspectives, the paper proposes alternative display strategies that reconcile scientific preservation with moral responsibility. It critiques colonial-era exhibition methods and calls for decolonizing museum practices by empowering communities to shape their cultural narratives. The establishment of the Civilization Rights Institute in Virginia marks a new era in museology, advocating for a globally recognized framework that honors civilizations as living legacies.

The study supports international efforts to recognize Civilization Rights, suggesting that violations—such as removal or misuse of artifacts—constitute moral and cultural crimes. It promotes a Civilization Rights Rating System to assess civilizational value and encourages global museums to adopt policies prioritizing posthumous dignity and community stewardship. Ultimately, this research aims to transform museum ethics, urging institutions to honor the ancestors and their rightful place in history.

Biographical Note

Professor of Architecture and Founding President, Civilization Rights Institute, Consulting Engineer, and distinguished Civilization Rights Activist with nearly four decades of extensive academic and professional experience in heritage conservation, urban planning, and sustainability. He is the Founding President of Civilization Rights LLC and the Founding Director of the Farouk El-Baz Center for Sustainability and Future Studies at the British University in Egypt. His tenure as Chair of the Architecture Engineering Departments at both the British University in Egypt and Mansoura University has reinforced his expertise in strategic planning and sustainable program development in architecture and urban environments. His career is marked by leadership in more than 35 high-impact projects across various countries, focusing on sustainability, green technologies, and the conservation of heritage. These projects, implemented in diverse geographic contexts, reflect his commitment to sustainable tourism, inclusive public participation, and rigorous environmental impact assessment.

RE-ANNOTATING REVELATION AND REIMAGINING TAFSIR: ISLAMIC FEMINIST RECONFIGURATION OF QURANIC AUTHORITY THROUGH DIGITAL HUMANITIES TOOLS

Meng-Chieh Tsai

Abstract

This presentation explores how new technologies can intervene in one of the most enduring systems of meaning-making: Islamic exegesis. As a religion fundamentally based on interpretation (tafsir), Islam has long centred its theological authority around the act of explaining and re-explaining the Quran. Yet this interpretive practice has historically been monopolised by male scholars and institutions, marginalising the voice and agency of Muslim women.

Drawing from the speaker's philosophical research, this paper proposes that by revisiting the Quran through Jacques Derrida's deconstructive methods—understood not as destruction but as hyper-faithfulness to textual plurality—and applying digital humanities tools in GLAM and the contemporary academy, we may begin to pluralise access to divine meaning. By incorporating open annotation platforms like Hypothes.is, semantic graph technologies such as Neo4j, corpus-level feminist tagging systems (e.g., spaCy, Prodigy), and nonlinear publishing tools like Scalar or Manifold, it enables the coexistence of multiple, embodied, and sometimes contradictory readings. These tools support an ethics of interpretation grounded in ambiguity, plurality, parallelity and situated religious agency.

Crucially, this is not an abandonment of faith, but a reclamation of interpretive dignity from within it and Quran, the divine scripture. In a religion where interpretation is sacred, reclaiming the right to annotate, to hesitate, and to reframe is itself a religious act. This feminist re-annotation infrastructure opens space for Muslim women to re-situate themselves not as objects of law but as interlocutors of revelation—rematerialising the Quran as a dynamic, co-produced epistemic field within the contemporary academy.

Biographical Note

Meng-Chieh Tsai is a young researcher currently completing her MSc in Data, Inequality and Society at the University of Edinburgh, and will begin her MPhil in Digital Humanities at the University of Cambridge in October 2025. With an academic background in philosophy, feminist theory, and Islamic studies, her research engages critically with sacred texts, algorithmic systems, and visual archives, drawing from posthuman feminism, epistemology, and the digital materialities of knowledge. She explores how interpretive agency can be reconfigured through digital infrastructures—across religion, aesthetics, and computation—and how feminist thought can intervene in both ancient exegetical traditions and contemporary algorithmic cultures.

THE VERSIONS OF THE FOUR MEDICAL TANTRAS THANGKA COLLECTED BY THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CHINA AND A COMPARATIVE STUDY METHOD

Min Ma

Abstract

The Tibetan Thangka of the Four Medical Tantras is a natural product arising from the integrated development of Tibetan medicine, religion, and art.

I. Versions

The standard set of eighty Four Medical Tantras Men-Thang (medical thangkas) evolved historically from numerous anatomical and pharmaceutical charts, including the Illustration of Viscera, Lamp of Anatomy, Blueprint of Medicines, and the anatomical depictions of the Northern Tradition and medicinal illustrations of the Southern Tradition of Tibetan medicine. Sixty Men-Thang illustrating the Four Medical Tantras were completed in 1688. Later, based on texts like the Somaratsa, additional thangkas depicting urine diagnosis, moxibustion points, and regional medicinal substances were created. By 1703, the set expanded to seventy-nine thangkas. In 1923, an eightieth thangka depicting famous historical Tibetan physicians and protector deities was added, finalizing the standard eighty-scroll set. Since the 20th century, attempts within China to compile a complete matching set from surviving individual Thangka have been unsuccessful. The Four Medical Tantras Thangka collection at the National Museum of China, featuring re-drawn thangkas with unified style and dimensions, constitutes the most extensive unified collection known today, with both individual scrolls and the overall set being the largest in scale. The detail and artistic quality also surpass previous versions.

II. Comparative Study of Imagery, Artifacts, and Texts

The Men-Thang exemplify the fusion of mature Tibetan painting artistry with scientific realism. The vast majority of objects depicted in their detailed vignettes correspond to actual artifacts and contemporary utilitarian items. The paintings interpret, explain, and reconstruct the functions, usage contexts, and relationships between these objects. The National Museum of China holds examples of most artifact types illustrated in the Four Medical Tantras Thangka. This enables research cross-referencing the imagery with physical artifacts. This comparative approach has corrected misinterpretations found in existing Chinese publications regarding the illustrations. Simultaneously, the imagery has been crucial in identifying the usage scenarios and purposes of some artifacts.

Biographical Note

Ph.D., Tsinghua University Research Fellow and Curator, National Museum of China Board Member of ICOFOM ASPAC Secretary-general of Professional Board of Cultural Industries-CNSPAC Board Member of the Theory Committee of the Chinese Arts and Crafts Institute Member of China Artists Association.

Major research interests are Art history, cultural relics identification and collection methodology. Collected over 5000 pieces of artifacts related to important figures and important events of the PRC, important works of contemporary art masters. Guided the establishment of several large-scale museums at the national and provincial levels. Planned nearly 20 important national and international exhibitions. Consultancy work for several national-level or ministerial-level museums. Published several professional books and articles. Won the “Gold Award” at the US Printing Awards of the Printing Industries of America twice. Teaches Musicology at Central Academy of Fine Arts and judges on several arts and art crafts competitions.



**Chairs: Andrew Simpson, Gina Hammond
and Zhao Ke**

UMAC Award Chair: Akikio Fukuno
15 November - IC Day
American University of Sharjah Library

Sessions:

1. 2Horizons
2. New technology, digital and strategy
3. Collaborations and strategy
4. Natural history, interdisciplinarity and strategy
5. UMAC Award

Rapid change in higher education: The strategic value of museums and collections

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.

**ICOM International
committee for university
museums and collections**



Chair: Andrew Simpson
15 November - IC Day
American University of Sharjah Library

Session 1:

2Horizons

1.1 Nuha Alshaar and Suheil Dahdal

1.2 Amareswar Galla

ACADEMIA FOR SOCIETY: THE CENTER OF ARAB STUDIES AND ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS' COLLABORATION WITH THE SHARJAH MUSEUMS AUTHORITY

Nuha Alshaar and Sohail Dahdal

Abstract

This presentation highlights the American University of Sharjah's Centre for Arab Studies and Islamic Civilizations collaboration with the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA) to preserve and disseminate heritage. We will introduce our Oral History Project and the Digitization of endangered Northern Emirate Dialects. We will discuss how immersive media research at AUS interfaces with SMA to reimagine heritage in the digital age. Situated within a creative practice research framework, the work investigates how virtual and augmented reality can serve as tools for preserving, interpreting, and sharing Emirati history with new audiences. Through projects such as Resistance Monument AR and Emirati Stories VR, developed in collaboration with the SMA, the research examines how museum archives and oral histories can be translated into interactive storytelling environments. These works aim to create emotional, multisensory connections between young audiences and cultural heritage, shifting museums from static repositories into living spaces of engagement and co-creation. The presentation outlines the methodologies emerging from AUS's research ecosystem, where interdisciplinary teams of students, faculty, curators, and technologists collaborate to develop prototypes that merge academic inquiry with community impact. It highlights how these collaborations not only produce innovative digital experiences but also generate new insights into how immersive technologies can shape heritage communication and learning. By positioning museums as partners in research rather than sites of display, this work advances Sharjah's broader cultural vision of connecting youth with heritage through innovation. Ultimately, it demonstrates how immersive media can transform the way history is experienced, remembered, and transmitted, creating participatory spaces where technology deepens cultural understanding.

Biographical Note

Nuha Alshaar is the Director of the Center for Arab Studies and Islamic Civilizations at the American University of Sharjah. She also serves as a Professor of Islamic Intellectual History in the Department of Arabic and Translation Studies at the same university. Her research and publications span various aspects of Islamic heritage, including *Muslim Sicily: Encounters and Legacy* (2024) and *Ethics in Islam: The Value of Friendship in the Political Thought of Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi and His Contemporaries*. In collaboration with the Sharjah Museums Authority, she organized the international conference *Travel Writings and Storytelling Across Cultures*.

Sohail Dahdal is an immersive media creator and researcher whose work bridges storytelling, technology, and heritage preservation. Based at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), his research explores how virtual and augmented reality can reimagine Emirati history and engage youth with cultural heritage. In collaboration with the Sharjah Museums Authority, he has developed projects such as Resistance Monument AR and Emirati Stories VR, which integrate museum archives, oral histories, and creative practice. Through these projects, Dahdal examines how immersive media can transform museum spaces into participatory environments, where audiences experience history emotionally and interactively rather than as static displays.

INDIGENEITY, ACADEMY AND INCLUSIVE MUSEOLOGY

Amareswar Galla

Abstract

How can University museums help us to become good ancestors? Like sacred rivers where individual affiliations dissolve into inclusive collectives, museums could become sites of intercultural dialogues beyond binaries transcending liminal spaces. This presentation focusses on the museum project at the Kalinga Institute of social Sciences with over 42000 Indigenous students from 64 tribes. It is a fully free and fully residential institution. They bring with them Indigenous Knowledge Systems that amalgamate gradually into a fusion that is engaging across and beyond the essentialist colonial categories into a contemporary dynamism adding new dimension to the discourse of living heritage and museology (<https://onmuseums.com/>).

Biographical Note

An unhyphenated IndoAustralian - former Vice President, President Asia Pacific Alliance, & Chairperson Cross Cultural Task Force ICOM, Paris - with a 40-year record on Indigenous driven affirmative action programmes, Arts and Cultural Policy Development, Urbanism, Intangible Heritage, World Heritage, Intercultural Dialogue, Heritage Tourism and SDGs/UN Agenda 2030). (<https://inclusivemuseums.org/>) During this period he held full professorial positions at the Australian National University & the University of Queensland in Australia and the University of Split in Croatia. He is currently the Pro-Chancellor & Distinguished Professor of Indigeneity and Inclusive Museum & Heritage Studies, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Bhubaneswar, India, the world's largest Indigenous educational institution. A founding member of the UNESCO-UNITWIN Network on Culture, Tourism and Development; UNESCO Chair on Inclusive Museums and Sustainable Heritage Development, India (2021- April 2025); & Producer and Editor of the flagship project on the UNESCO 1972 World Heritage Convention: World Heritage: Benefits Beyond Borders, Cambridge University Press & UNESCO Publishing, 2012. (French & Korean versions in 2013).

**ICOM International
committee for university
museums and collections**



Chair: Gina Hammond
15 November - IC Day
American University of Sharjah Library

Session 2:

New technology, digital and strategy

2.1 Yu Homma, Yukihiro Oshima & Goki Miyakita

2.2 Zhao Ke, Ye Guilan and Lv Hongyin

2.3 Yu-Hua Tsai

2.4 Jéssica Tarine Moitinho de Lima and Wanessa Pires Lott

2.5 Ana Claudia Berwanger

2.6 Elena Corradini, Francesco Badia, Andrea Gambarelli,
Fabrizia Ferragina, Giovanna Menziani and Elisabetta
Genovese

"DIGITAL COMMONS PROJECT": FOSTERING BROADER ENGAGEMENT WITH DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

Yu Homma, Yukihiro Oshima and Goki Miyakita

Abstract

In Japan, museums' digital collections are increasingly integrated into the country's cultural infrastructure. This shift follows developments such as the 2023 revision of the Museum Act, which positioned the creation of digital collections among museum duties, and the establishment of a cross-institutional collection-search platform. Despite this progress, the communities involved in creating, maintaining, and using digital collections are still limited. Museums as collection holders and university based research groups largely lead the collection development. Their use mostly stays within educational settings such as universities, schools, and libraries. Consequently, for most people outside these specific communities, digital collections often lack accessibility and personal relevance.

To address this issue, Keio Museum Commons launched the "Digital Commons Project" in 2023, utilising the university museum's setting, which encourages collaboration among people from various backgrounds. Through field research, designing and running learning programmes, and openly sharing resources, this project explores ways to develop and utilise digital collections collaboratively with varied community groups.

This presentation will report on the insights and difficulties that have emerged from the project, focusing on our attempt to define a digital skill set for engaging with digital collections and on the design of learning workshops to support its acquisition.

Biographical Note

Yu Homma (associate professor, Keio Museum Commons: KeMCo) is an archivist, curator and programme coordinator. She is interested in practicing commons, archives and digital humanities in university museums. Yukihiro Oshima is a project researcher of the Digital Commons Project at KeMCo and specialises in workshop design and facilitation. Goki Miyakita (senior assistant professor, KeMCo) specialises in learning design, especially social learning, and leads student projects and Digital Humanities initiatives at KeMCo.

LIVING LABS IN GLASS BOXES: A "SEMI-IMMERSIVE" APPROACH TO BREAKING BARRIERS IN UNIVERSITY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITIONS

Zhao Ke, Ye Guilan and Lv Hongyin

Abstract

Science and Technology exhibitions face unique challenges in higher education museums, where complex subjects struggle to engage diverse audiences. This paper presents a case study from the Electronic Science and Technology Museum (ESTM)'s exhibition "The Dao of Square and Circle: From a Mustard Seed to a Universe" on integrated circuits. We introduce a "living semi-immersive" methodology that rethinks traditional display paradigms by integrating three key innovations: First, we transformed an operational chip research and manufacture laboratory into a dynamic exhibit space. Visitors observe authentic workflows through viewing portals, creating "glass box" immersion while preserving workspaces. Second, our layered narrative structure combines historical timelines, manufacturing processes, and geopolitical contexts – making specialized knowledge accessible through physical metaphor (e.g., "Mustard Seed to Universe" scaling). Third, we cultivated contemplative engagement by positioning visitors as witnesses to active science, dissolving barriers between theory and practice. Early evaluation shows this approach:

- Increases dwell time by 40% compared to static tech exhibits
- Stimulates cross-disciplinary dialogue (engineering students explaining processes to humanities peers)
- Preserves research functionality while expanding public access
- Creates "stealth learning" through environmental storytelling

By embedding real scientific workflows into exhibition design, we demonstrate how university museums can leverage their unique assets – live research environments to create boundary-breaking experiences. This model offers a replicable framework for institutions navigating digital transition, suggesting that partial immersion in authentic contexts can build relevance more effectively than full digital simulation alone. Our findings contribute to strategic discussions about the value proposition of material collections in rapidly evolving academic ecosystems.

Biographical Note

Zhao Ke is the director of the Electronic Science and Technology Museum, and an associate professor in University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. He earned his PhD in Microelectronics and Solid-state Electronics. His research interests include the history of electronic science and technology and university museums.

Ye Guilan is the head of collection in the ESTM. Her research interests include collection management and cultural heritage.

Lv Hongyin is the c researcher in the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China. Her research interests include higher education.

NCKU MUSEUM'S "SPIRITUAL VESSELS" EXHIBITION: A NEW ERA OF RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

Yu-Hua Tsai

Abstract

Since 2007, the National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) Museum has been known for its focus on university history. However, the upcoming 2025 special exhibition, "Spiritual Vessels: An Illustrated Guide to the Making of King Boats (Ong Chun)," marks a significant shift. This unique exhibition explores the intangible cultural heritage of King Boat construction and the foundational engineering knowledge of shipbuilding. The project has gained considerable attention, thanks to strong support from NCKU and Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council.

This groundbreaking exhibition directly resulted from NCKU's 2023 interdisciplinary research program. This initiative encourages faculty from multiple colleges to collaborate on projects, prioritizing those linked to UN Sustainable Development Goals and internationalization. While traditional wooden junks are largely gone, King Boats maintain their construction techniques in Taiwan due to their spiritual significance. This practice, particularly the Ong Chun/Wangchuan/Wangkang ceremony, rituals, and related practices for maintaining the sustainable connection between man and the ocean, is now recognized as a world intangible cultural heritage in China and Malaysia, which has significantly elevated its international profile. The "Spiritual Vessels" exhibition stems from a two-year research collaboration, achieving breakthroughs in technical preservation, digital archiving of vessels, and performance analysis. This exemplifies how evolving university research policies foster new possibilities and elevate the NCKU Museum's community engagement.

Biographical Note

Yu-Hua Tsai, Ph.D. in Architecture, possesses expertise in the history of Taiwanese architecture. My tenure at the NCKU Museum began in 2018, focusing on the research and supervision of the university's historical buildings, alongside curating exhibition series on the history of engineering education in Taiwan. Commencing in 2023, supported by interdisciplinary project funding from NCKU, I collaborated with faculty from the Department of Systems and Naval Mechatronic Engineering and the Institute of Art Studies to establish a research team dedicated to King Boat studies. Within this project, I am primarily responsible for conducting fieldwork and investigating historical documentation. The culmination of this research has served as the foundational material for the exhibition, *Spiritual Vessels: An Illustrated Guide to the Making of King Boats (Ong Chun)*.

EMBEDDING STRATEGIC MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF UFPA'S NETWORK OF COLLECTIONS AND MUSEUMS

Jéssica Tarine Moitinho de Lima and Wanessa Pires Lott

Abstract

The Network of Collections and Museums at the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA) is uniquely integrated into the undergraduate Museology curriculum, strategically positioning university museums and collections as fundamental components of higher education. By embedding collection management directly into academic activities, students actively engage with museological challenges, acquiring practical skills aligned with contemporary professional requirements. Through hands on projects involving management, documentation, and preventive conservation strategies tailored specifically to tropical conditions, students gain authentic museum experience while contributing directly to preserving and managing the university's heritage. The program emphasizes collaborative methods, promoting active interactions among students, academic staff, and local communities. This approach enhances the visibility and accessibility of the collections, resulting in increased community engagement. Within this framework, university collections and museums provide critical environments for practical experiences that are essential for professional museological development. The diverse nature of these collections also enriches classroom theory, making theoretical concepts more tangible and accessible, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience. Moreover, it is important to recognize that theoretical knowledge does not always translate smoothly into best practice, especially in the Amazon region, where unique challenges require creative adaptations, acknowledging that ideal solutions may not always be achievable. This case study represents a strategic response to the rapid transformations occurring in higher education, illustrating how the integration of museological practices into academic curricula not only better equips students but also strengthens the university's capability in cultural heritage management and community outreach. Our experience provides valuable insights and scalable approaches for other university museums and collections aiming for meaningful, integrated engagement within the higher education sector.

Biographical Note

Jéssica Tarine Moitinho de Lima is a museologist, coordinator and professor of the museology course at UFPA. She coordinates the Network of Collections and Museums at UFPA and teaches Museology, with a focus on collection management, preventive conservation, and university museums. Her work engages with the intersection of science, heritage, and education in the Amazon region.

Wanessa Pires Lott holds degrees in History and Museology, with two master's degrees: one in Social Sciences/Urban Management and another in Anthropology. She completed her Ph.D. in History at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. Currently, she is an Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), teaching in the undergraduate programs in Museology and Conservation and Restoration, as well as in the Graduate Program in Cultural Heritage Sciences (PPGPatri). Her academic and professional experience lies at the intersection of History and Anthropology, with a particular focus on heritage studies and critical approaches to cultural preservation.

EIAM - INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM FOR MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS AND LABS

Ana Claudia Berwanger

Abstract

The communication presents the general lines of EIAM - Interdisciplinary Team for Museums, Collections and Labs, a model of museum education conceived at the Federal University of Espírito Santo, given the absence of Museology courses in the region, and given the presence of around 80 museums that lack management and qualified professional services.

We start from the understanding that university museums do not only fulfill the role of storage, conservation, research and public communication of their collections and scopes, but can be converted into complex platforms to promote higher education for professionals not directly linked to the world of museums. After all, well-structured museums require professional services from different areas (design, architecture, engineering, computing and AI, journalism, advertising, law, management and finance, psychology, etc.).

The office (EIAM) has been designed as a high-level, multidisciplinary and museum-based educational space, dedicated to training professionals from different areas, based on the combination of theoretical training and practical experiences within university museums, from the pedagogical approaches of project and problem-solving based learning.

In addition to providing immediate assistance to university museums, the EIAM's medium-term goal is to quickly train professionals to work in regional museums, improving the quality of the cultural, museum and tourism scenario in Espírito Santo, as well as opening up a new job market for young graduates.

Biographical Note

Ana Claudia Berwanger is an Associate Professor at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (Brazil), working since 1999 in the education of young designers. Over the past five years, she has been dedicating herself to an academic conversion, focusing on the study of museums from a design perspective, to develop a local museum education system and map the university's collections. In April 2026 she will begin post-doctoral research on technological resources in exhibitions, museum fatigue and accessibility. In 2024, she carried out a Museum Studies Mission in Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium, supported by FAPES. She is a student of the MBA in Museum Management and Innovation, by ABGC.

UNIVERSITY OF MODENA AND REGGIO EMILIA MUSEUMS COLLECTIONS FOR PEOPLE'S CARE WELFARE AND WELLBEING

**Elena Corradini, Francesco Badia, Andrea Gambarelli, Fabrizia Ferragina,
Giovanna Menziani and Elisabetta Genovese**

Abstract

Manipulation of museums specimens can support mental and emotional wellbeing, further becoming a potential tool to support community development. Therapeutic potential of museum objects is increasingly recognised as an essential dimension of museums practice. Our contribution introduces tactile approaches to explain how physical interaction with museums specimens can provide cognitive, emotional, and social benefits. There is a broad review of studies on potential benefits of introducing cultural experiences into care settings, including for dementia, mental illness. Interacting with museum specimens can trigger ideas, memories, emotional responses, and stimulate dialogue and self-expression. Manipulation of museums specimens can have a positive impact on the volunteer facilitators psychological wellbeing, in terms of communication skills, reflexivity, creative engagement and the use of interpersonal skills. These approaches can emphasise museum specimens as catalysts for individual growth, self-reflection, and healing. Starting from the ICOM definition museums are “accessible and inclusive” and “foster diversity and sustainability”, the reflection on the potential of manipulation of museum specimens can also be extended to the field of intergenerational dialogue.

Our project involves fossils of Paleontological University Museum of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. The protocol, developed through the “Touchwell Project to employ Archaeological collections for People's care” involves the following steps:

- creation of sets of Paleontological University Museum collections specimens
- creation of cultural contexts through museum collections specimens for experiences of manipulation with elderly people with dementia, according to a model of cultural welfare
- experimentation of evaluation kits and tools of each experience conducted with elderly people with dementia to return quantitative measures through the Toolkit Radar (<https://iris.cnr.it/handle/20.500.14243/460639?mode=complete>) and qualitative data on the impact that culture can have within care practices through ATLAS.ti a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software which facilitates the analysis of qualitative data.

Biographical Note

Professor of Museology and Restoration at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Elena Corradini was director of the Museums Pole of the same University and is coordinator of the Italian University Museums Network. She was board member and vice-president of UMAC; board member and vice-president of the Italian Committee of ICOM. From 1980 to 2006, she worked for the Ministry of Culture as Director of Archaeology in Modena, Bologna and as Director in Rome. He is a journalist and editor of the bilingual online magazine University Heritage. Her study interests include museology, the history of collecting, museum education with a focus on accessibility and social inclusion, the study and valorisation of cultural heritage with specific attention to university heritage. She has organised national and international seminars. She is the author of approximately 180 publications, including journal and conference papers on museology, history of collecting, conservation and the enhancement of cultural heritage.

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Session 3:

Collaborations and strategy

3.1 Paul Donnelly

3.2 Valerie Innella

3.3 Rosemarie Wagner

3.4 Wardah Naeem Bukhari and Aisha Saddiqa

3.5 Alice Nogueira Alves and Marta Frade

3.6 Miranda Stearn

THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS AS CORE BUSINESS: THE CHAU CHAK WING MUSEUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Paul Donnelly

Abstract

Museums and galleries in the university context risk being 'nice to have' rather than core business. This paper shares the strategies and directions taken at the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney to be a central part of the student, staff and alumni communities that engender connectivity to the University, and each other. Opening in 2020, the Chau Chak Wing Museum brought together three collections with their origins from the 1850s in what was then a progressive move at Australia's first university to inspire and instruct students with Mediterranean antiquity. Over the past 175 years the collection has grown to 470,000 items spanning antiquity, Indigenous cultural material, Pacific cultural material, scientific instruments, historic photographs and natural history including 18th century entomology of international significance.

Biographical Note

Paul Donnelly is the Deputy Director of the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney. Paul works with the curators and broader team in developing the exhibition program for the Chau Chak Wing Museum. Before this, he was a curator of decorative arts and design at the Powerhouse Museum (Museum of Applied Art and Sciences) where his curatorial responsibilities expanded across many collections including numismatics, ceramics, furniture, and design.

His PhD focussed on Bronze Age ceramics of the Levant. He is Co-director of the University of Sydney Zagora Archaeological Project in Andros Greece, and is a member of the university's Pella excavation team in Jordan.

CAMPUS COLLABORATIONS: NEW PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

Valerie Innella

Abstract

At Casper College, collaboration between a museum studies program, campus museums and collections have increased significantly in the past two years. Based on similar partnerships, a “Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums” union was formed. At a small institution, these stakeholder discussions have yielded large opportunities, from the purchase of Virtual Reality equipment that will record the galleries for innovative exhibitions viewing to a Wellness Week of programming for the campus community. This session explores the recent construction of a cooperative exhibit using academic collections in fine art, paleontology, natural history, and geology. Subthemes within the exhibition explore diverse concepts that allow a broad consideration of Wyoming and our “Western” heritage and culture. Components of the exhibition were developed by students in the museum studies program as well as students in diverse majors across campus.

Biographical Note

Valerie Innella Maiers, Ph.D., teaches art history and museum studies at Casper College and serves as curator for the art galleries on campus. Her research is in the area of academic and museum partnerships, especially in art and natural science. Dr. Maiers has also been fortunate to teach study abroad courses for the University of Wyoming. Recently, she was the recipient of the Governor’s Art Award, the Garth Shanklin Leadership Award at Casper College, and appointed to the Wyoming Arts Council. In 2025, she co-presented “Handle with Care: Navigating the Risks and Innovations of hazards found in Museum Collections: Contextualizing Radioactivity” at the 27th annual International Congress of History of Science and Technology and “Storytelling through Technology: Stories Told, Stories Forthcoming” for the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries. Co-authored articles have been included in the *Journal of Natural Science Collections* and *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals*.

SEPARATE MUSEUMS, ONE UNIVERSITY; MCGILL UNIVERSITY'S PUBLIC VS PRIVATE PROBLEM IN STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Rosemarie Wagner

Abstract

This is an in-depth case study comparing the two major university museum programs and collections of Harvard University and McGill University (often called the Harvard of the North). I make the case that opening the private Harvard University museums and collections to the general public is an innovative and inclusive framework model allowing the diverse community interests to learn and discover, and uplifts society in general. Moreover, implementing a strategic plan that sees several science and art museums under one larger Harvard University Museums umbrella administratively and musicologically allows for innovative and far-reaching community dialogues. This is compared to the northern model in Montreal, Canada where we see a separate administration of five separate campus museums at McGill University, whose collections and programming is largely closed to the public in a metropolitan city. The two models are compared for global impact and sustainability.

Biographical Note

Rosemarie Wagner is an independent cultural historian; Vice President North America for the World Federation of Friends of Museums, an affiliate organization of ICOM International, and the former Executive Director of the Canadian Federation of Friends of Museums, where she led 100,000 museum volunteers. Rosemarie has a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from the University of Toronto; a Master in History from the University of Guelph and completed her doctoral course work in History at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. She lives in Montreal, Canada and Hyderabad, India.

THE UNSEEN FUTURE OF UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS IN PAKISTAN: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY INTEGRATION

Wardah Naeem Bukhari and Aisha Saddiqa

Abstract

This paper addresses a critical gap in the strategic planning of higher education in Pakistan: the marginalization of university museums and collections. Currently, these institutions operate within a fragmented policy environment, largely perceived as departmental "subject museums" for disciplines such as archaeology, as evidenced by the museum at Hazara University. They function without formal recognition or dedicated funding from national higher education bodies, a model that notably excludes key academic domains like the fine arts and limits their potential as interdisciplinary resources.

Using the Lahore College for Women University (LCWU) History Museum as a primary case study, this paper proposes a strategic blueprint for integration. The museum, currently a legacy repository of alumni memorabilia, is poised for transformation. The study outlines a three-pronged strategic plan for higher education institutions: (1) digitizing the historical archive to optimize physical space; (2) establishing a Permanent Collection of Pakistani Fine Art to leverage the university's own renowned faculty and artists; and (3) creating a Contemporary Gallery to provide a vital platform for M.Phil. and Ph.D. scholars.

The LCWU model demonstrates that strategic planning can transform university museums from overlooked assets into central academic hubs, directly fostering pedagogy, research, and community engagement. This strategic shift is posited as essential for aligning such institutions with the goals of modern higher education. The paper concludes with a call to action for university leadership and the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to formally integrate museums into core strategic and policy frameworks, thereby securing their role in fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and unlocking their unseen future.

Biographical Note

Dr. Wardah Naeem Bukhari is a Lahore-based art historian, curator, and educator. She holds a PhD in Art History and serves as Assistant Professor in the Department of Graphic Design at Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), one of South Asia's oldest women's institutions. She has worked as a curator at LCWU's Gangaram Museum of Arts, History and Science, where she contributed to developing inclusive and educational displays. She also curated the History Museum Galleries at LCWU as part of the university's centennial celebrations (1999–2022). Bukhari co-curated two major exhibitions at the Fakir Khana Museum: *Heritage Revived: Artistic Expressions from Punjab's Golden Era* (2025) and *Reimagined: Contemporary Art and Ecology* (2024). Her work focuses on regional heritage, inclusive curatorial practices, and integrating museums into higher education policy. She has a special interest in South Asian textiles and their historical, cultural, and contemporary significance.

Dr. Aisha Saddiqa is the Chairperson Graphic Design Department, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS IN TRAINING FUTURE MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS

Alice Nogueira Alves and Marta Frade

Abstract

Changes in pedagogical practices in higher education have resulted in the implementation of active learning approaches. Among the various strategies applied, practical experimentation as a means of consolidating theoretical knowledge has been common, and in some cases contributes to preparing students for real-world work environments.

This practice is quite common in collections held by faculties and schools of Fine Arts, which are often used in the development of master's and doctoral projects in the fields of museology and restoration.

This proximity to the collections has also been fostered at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon, providing students with direct exposure to objects from the beginning of their undergraduate studies – a process which continues throughout their academic path and, in some cases, leads to doctoral projects.

In the case of ceramic and plaster collections, the initial approach begins with the preventive conservation practices, helping students identify issues found in museum storage rooms. This direct contact with objects – their handling, transport, cataloguing, cleaning and packaging, as well as the reorganization of storage rooms is grounded in knowledge provided by international institutions and projects.

These practices are highly valued by students, who consider them fundamental to their academic training. They highlight their importance in raising awareness of the value of these collections, how they should be handled and preserved, and in fostering collaborative work. Many say that this experience sparked their interest in pursuing careers in museology, equipping them with extremely useful tools for their professional future.

Biographical Note

Alice Nogueira Alves is a Conservator Restorer. Since the beginning of her academic training, issues related to the history and theory of restoration and the way diverse cultures see the artistic object gained fundamental importance in her academic interests, which culminated in the completion of a PhD in Art, Cultural Heritage, and Restoration, at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon, in 2010. Currently, she is a Guest Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon.

Marta Frade began her training at the Professional School of Heritage Recovery in Sintra in 1997, where she cultivated her interest in the heritage executed in plaster. This material proved to be of the utmost importance in her academic career. She completed her degree in Conservation and Restoration at the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar in 2005. Since 2011, she teaches as a Guest Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon and finished her PhD in Conservation and Restoration of plaster sculpture in 2018.

INNOVATION: POSITIONING, PRACTICE AND PITFALLS

Miranda Stearn

Abstract

At a time when university finances are under extreme pressure in the UK, sharpening the value proposition of university museums and cultural organisations in relation to the core priorities of our parent institutions, without losing our own identities, has never felt more urgent. We need, and want, to be more than a 'nice-to-have'. As we make the case, each of us will strike a different balance between emphasising our contributions to research, teaching and learning, knowledge exchange, impact, engagement, civic role, widening participation – to name a few. This paper asks, what happens if we seek to make innovation a key part of our positioning? How can we demonstrate our distinctive potential to catalyse new approaches and be part of finding new solutions? How does aligning ourselves with an innovation agenda impact what we do, and how we are perceived?

Lancaster Arts, a university-based combined arts organisation that includes an accredited museum, has been exploring these possibilities in recent years. This paper will share what this has looked like, and where it might be taking us, as a starting point for wider discussion about the potential benefits, and risks, of making innovation a core part of our identity and our contribution.

Biographical Note

Miranda Stearn is a cultural professional with 20 years' experience working in the UK sector. She is equally at home in the spheres of combined arts, museums and heritage, with particular experience in cultural learning in local authority and university contexts and has spent the past 10 years working within university museums and cultural organisations. Currently Curator at Lancaster Arts, part of Lancaster University in the North-West of England, she leads the Peter Scott Gallery, the university's accredited Museum, and helps shape a contemporary combined arts programme with a focus on social and environmental justice. Her previous experience includes arts and heritage development within a sector-leading local authority arts service, a learning-focussed policy role for a UK-wide funder, and Head of Learning at The Fitzwilliam Museum, part of University of Cambridge Museums. She held the Cultural Learning Fellowship and part of the 2024-25 Clore Leadership Fellowship.

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Session 4:

Natural history, interdisciplinarity and strategy

4.1 Tannis Davidson

4.2 Caterina Giovinazzo, Lorenza Merzagora, Daniela de Abreu, and Lucilia Chuquela

4.3 Hubert Kowalski

4.4 Ayumi Terada

4.5 Sayuri Tanabashi, Shikoh Shiraiwa and Suzie Thomas

4.6 Penelope Theologi-Gouti, Ioannis Iliopoulos, Stylianos Mystakidis and Irini Kotzamanidi

THE GRANT MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY - REDEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY FOR THE NEXT 200 YEARS

Tannis Davidson

Abstract

Since the foundation of University College London (UCL), the Grant Museum of Zoology has been a vital resource supporting research, teaching innovation and scientific advancement at the university. The Museum collections are still in use nearly 200 years later – and continue to be a key, unique part of the UCL student experience. They are used by students across the university in teaching, for research, in extra-curricular activities, to gain volunteering experience, for student placements and more.

The Grant Museum is also key research partner for collaborative projects at UCL and beyond. ‘Experimental museum’ and ‘old specimens, new technology’ aptly describe how the Museum plays an active part supporting cutting-edge research. As a public museum, the Grant Museum also plays a critical role in communicating new UCL research, innovation, aims and aspirations to wider audiences including school children, external researchers, alumni, visiting academics, and public visitors.

Recent redevelopment work reframing the collection as a resource for scientific advancement and collaboration on climate change, biodiversity conservation and human impact on nature aim to inform and influence visitors to connect with the natural world and to inspire positive action. Both public programming and new teaching modules are better supported by the new displays and interpretation ensuring that the Grant Museum remains a valuable collection for all.

This paper will discuss how the Grant Museum redevelopment work embracing its identity as ‘working’ university museum has been central to its strategic planning and essential for internal advocacy and future proofing.

Biographical Note

I am Head of Zoology and Science Collections at University College London responsible for the Grant Museum of Zoology, UCL Pathology Museum, UCL Science Collections and the Auto-Icon of Jeremy Bentham (teaching, research, public programmes, exhibitions). I recently led the major capital project and redevelopment of the Grant Museum which included significant work reinterpreting and redisplaying the displays to highlight the human impact on biodiversity and how the collections can inspire and challenge us to rebalance our relationship with nature towards positive action.

My research interests include object-based and experiential learning, innovation in collaborative research (artists and science) and science communication. I am particularly interested in alternative immersive means to connect visitors with biodiversity such as through audio, bioacoustics and music.

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF MAPUTO: A STRATEGIC ASSET FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRANSITION

Caterina Giovinazzo, Lorenza Merzagora, Daniela de Abreu and Lucilia Chuquela

Abstract

In the context of rapid transformation within higher education, the Natural History Museum of Maputo (MHNM) is emerging as a strategic platform for interdisciplinary education, scientific research, and community engagement. As part of a collaborative effort between the MHNM, the COREBIOM project funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, and Sapienza University of Rome, the museum is undergoing a major redesign that reflects new educational priorities.

The renewed exhibition concept is not only aimed at communicating the richness of Mozambique's biodiversity, but also at promoting ecological awareness and experiential learning. By integrating interactive displays, discovery-based activities, and spaces for temporary exhibitions, the MHNM is being transformed into a living, flexible learning environment.

This repositioning enhances the museum's role as an open, transdisciplinary resource that serves both academic communities and the wider public. It supports the evolution of curricula, encourages collaborative teaching methods, and fosters dialogue between science and society.

By leveraging its collections as dynamic tools for education and engagement, the MHNM offers a compelling model of how university-affiliated museums can adapt to and anticipate the needs of a rapidly changing academic landscape. Its transformation highlights the essential contribution of cultural and scientific heritage institutions to the future of higher education in Mozambique and beyond.

Biographical Note

Caterina Giovinazzo is a professional working in the field of cultural and scientific heritage enhancement, with an academic background in museum studies and a strong focus on science communication and public engagement. She collaborates with universities and cultural institutions, contributing to exhibition design, third mission activities, and the dissemination of scientific knowledge to broader audiences. Over the years, she has developed extensive experience in writing accessible content for magazines, exhibitions, and educational programs aimed at translating complex ideas into engaging narratives. Her main interests include the relationship between science and society, botany, and participatory strategies for the promotion of cultural sites. She is currently based at the Botanical Garden of Sapienza University of Rome, where she coordinates cultural projects and outreach initiatives. Her approach combines scientific accuracy with a sensitivity to the emotional and narrative dimensions of knowledge.

ACADEMIC STRATEGIES AS A KEY TO SECURING THE FUTURE OF UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS AND MUSEUMS

Hubert Kowalski

Abstract

Academic strategies are documents defining the goals and directions of the institution's development for a specified period of time. They usually include a vision, mission and specific goals to be achieved, taking into account, among others, improving the quality of education, adapting to the needs of the labor market, or social and environmental development.

The last few years have forced the development of new university strategies. These documents, important for the activities of a given unit, are considered strategic. They set the course for at least a decade ahead - in some cases much longer. It is based on these documents that the organizers/rectors manage the university. The university managers at individual levels refer to the provisions of the strategies. Individual points are cited and used as arguments in the proposed changes. Importantly, the strategies are largely created based on consultations with the academic community. Placing appropriate provisions in the strategies can guarantee not only the protection of museum but is also an opportunity for the development of individual units caring for the protection of the academic heritage.

The presentation aims to show how it was possible to implement such provisions in Poland. But importantly, how many of the provisions in the strategies can be used today to support museums and academic collections.

Biographical Note

Hubert Kowalski, Professor at the Department of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Director of the University of Warsaw Museum. His research focus is the reception of the artistic culture of ancient Greece and Rome in European art, looting of the cultural goods in the Early Modern Era, history of museology. President of the Association of University Museums in Poland.

MUSEOGRAPHY OF UNIVERSITY BOTANICAL COLLECTIONS: A PERSPECTIVE FROM BOTANICAL ARTSCIENCE STUDIES

Ayumi Terada

Abstract

In recent years, the social role of museums has been re-examined, with increasing emphasis on the idea that museums should not merely serve as institutions for transmitting existing knowledge and values, but also as creative spaces that foster new perspectives and dialogue. This paper explores methodologies for re-evaluating botanical collections in university museums—particularly those with characteristics of ArtScience, such as botanical illustrations and plant specimens. The concept of ArtScience, which merges artistic and scientific approaches, has gained attention in recent interdisciplinary and intermedia research. Botanical illustrations are among the most classical examples of ArtScience, and plant specimens may also be viewed in a similar light—as natural objects transformed into cultural artifacts. UMUT (The University Museum, The University of Tokyo) preserves botanical illustrations and plant specimens collected for research and educational purposes at the University of Tokyo, dating from its founding in the late 19th century to the present. These include some of the earliest historical botanical collections in Japan. UMUT has organized exhibitions that present these collections from the University of Tokyo, aiming to bridge the realms of art and science. This paper discusses the challenges and possibilities of interpreting and utilizing botanical ArtScience collections through practical case studies of exhibitions held at the university museum, in the broader context of the evolving social role of university museums.

Biographical Note

Ayumi Terada is an Affiliate Associate Professor in the Department of Intermediatheque at The University Museum, The University of Tokyo (UMUT). She specializes in museology and art studies, focusing on innovative approaches to utilizing university museum collections and scientific knowledge to foster creativity and promote object-based learning. Her research explores how academic collections can inspire interdisciplinary thinking and engagement across the arts and sciences. She is currently engaged in studies on botanical illustrations and botanical-themed art through an interdisciplinary framework called Botanical ArtScience Studies, which integrates both artistic and scientific perspectives. She has curated several international collaborative exhibitions, including “Cattleya Rhapsody – Orchids Blossom Colombia Version” (2023), in partnership with the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Bogotá, and “Formosa Orchids Blossom” (2025), co-organized with the National Museum of History, Taiwan.

OBJECT-BASED LEARNING AS CROSS-DISCIPLINARY LEARNING FOR EDUCATION FOR PEACE AT THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TSUKUBA

Sayuri Tanabashi, Shikoh Shiraiwa and Suzie Thomas

Abstract

Against the backdrop of increasing international tensions, such as the Russia–Ukraine War and Israel– Hamas War, the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2024. With the outbreak of the Israel–Iran conflict, the global risk of violence has increased even further. The presenters incorporate a wide range of university resources including objects, including those housed in the university library, as materials for Education for Peace (EFP). Object-based learning allows cross-disciplinary learning in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences at university museums, libraries, and archives. Accordingly, the presenters focus on the liberal arts program for first-year university students in a university library setting.

In the liberal arts program, brainstorming session was conducted to address global issues. In this cross-disciplinary session, students showed a deep interest in the topic of peacebuilding and expressed a desire to explore it by focusing not only on war affairs but also on coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious communities. The students suggested themes centred around global issues, such as diversity and disparity, environment, questions surrounding human existence and behaviour, environment and value judgments, and human happiness, and made posters like the exhibition panels. Through poster tours, including gallery talks, students narrated how to deal with global issues and build a peaceful and sustainable society. The program proved to be highly efficacious for first-year university students with regard to EFP.

Biographical Note

Sayuri Tanabashi studied object-based narratives at the Museum and Archives of Tokyo Institute of Technology, Nature and Science Museum of Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, and Agricultural and Life Sciences Museum of the University of Tokyo. She works at the Organization for Advanced Teaching and Learning of the University of Tsukuba.

UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS AS STRATEGIC TOOLS FOR ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE EXAMPLE OF THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF PATRAS, GREECE

Penelope (Peny) Theologi-Gouti, Ioannis Iliopoulos, Stylianos Mystakidis and Irimi Kotzamanidi

Abstract

This paper describes University Museums (UMs)' strategic value as tools for sustainable development through a case study, the Science and Technology Museum (STM) of the University of Patras (UP), Greece. It highlights STM's experimental approach, engaging to SDGs' values. The donation of earth raw material collections, in 2019, sparked a circle of exploration and experimentation. The first step included development/implementation of educational programs (EPs) on earth raw materials to accommodate school education's specific educational requirements. The second step strives to explore geological collections connections to collections on display in STM's permanent exhibition on telecommunications and everyday life. Thus, on the International Museum Day 2023 "Museums, Sustainability and Well-being", the innovative EP "Chasing earth raw materials in STM", was launched based on digital technologies. The third step started in 2024, after STM's selection by ICCROM's "Our collections matter" program to explore that connection through the lens of the SDG's. Hence, innovative museumkits (MKs) have been developed, permanent EPs were updated, and a contest was launched to serve the SDGs. The procedure includes museum staff/affiliates, university/school students and teachers that co-create content being actively and cognitively engaged. These EPs facilitate building mental connections and strong partnerships for creators and consumers, empowering awareness, interest and knowledge on the value of earth raw materials and their embodiment in the SDGs, influencing participants' lifestyles and surrounding people. Early Implementation has broadened outreach while enhancing academic discourse/visibility on SDGs and strengthened UP's social interaction and resilience, demonstrating UMs' strategic importance in advancing sustainability values/practices in higher education and society at large.

Biographical Note

Penelope Theologi-Gouti. Architect-Ethnologist (DEA), Head Curator of STM-UP, Chair ICOM-GR, Chair ICOM Resolutions Committee <http://stmuseum.upatras.gr/index.php/en/2018-07-26-09-28-00/2018-07-27-10-3539/2018-07-27-10-42-07>

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UMAC 2025 Award Finalists

Chair of the UMAC Award Committee:

Akiko Fukuno

15 November 2025

The UMAC Award is presented annually to a university museum or collection in the world whose projects or initiatives demonstrate innovation and creativity, excellence and transferability of ideas that can be adopted by other university museums and collections, and that have significant impact on the host university, the community or society at large.

The Award will be announced during the ICOM DUBAI International Committee Day, at the American University of Sharjah Library.

2025 Finalists in alphabetical order:

JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Project Title: “**Ladies, what do you need that for? Women at the Jagiellonian University**”

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY TEECE MUSEUM OF CLASSICAL ANTIQUITIES

Project Title: “**Accessibility Project**”

UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA MUSEUM (MUN)

Project Title: “**Arts and Life**”





Jagiellonian University Museum



Project Title: Ladies, what do you need that for? W Jagiellonian University

No Label
Apply a sensitivity label to help your organization stay secure.

In 1894, the first female students were admitted to the Jagiellonian University, opening the doors of higher education to women. But does this milestone mean women were entirely absent from the University before then? What about Queen Jadwiga, its co-founder? Or the many women who worked behind the scenes - cooks, caretakers, administrators, whose contributions have long gone unrecognized? The 130th anniversary of this historic admission offered a perfect opportunity to reflect on the often-overlooked presence of women in the University's past. To honor their legacy and spark conversation, we created a special exhibition that brings their stories to light.



University of Canterbury Teece Museum of Classical Antiquities



Project Title: Accessibility Project

In 2024 the UC Teece Museum expanded efforts to diversify its services by undertaking an Accessibility Project comprised of an audit and a new phase of creating audio descriptions. The Audit assessed museum facilities and procedures to understand what changes could be made to make the Teece more accessible to members of the Deaf and disabled community.

The audit also aimed to provide a framework for other heritage collections to learn from and apply to their own contexts. Similarly, the Audio Descriptions sought to increase investment in the creation of resources designed specifically for the Blind and low-vision community.



University of Navarra Museum (MUN)



Project Title: Arts & Life

"Arts and Life" demonstrates how specialists in Palliative Care at the University of Navarra utilize the Museum of Contemporary Art as a key tool for advancement in the scientific field, university teaching, and transferring knowledge to society.

The theater play "Cicely and David" is the most recent initiative complemented by innovative research and teaching activities, where exhibitions and artworks from our Collection serve as resources for members of the ATLANTES Research Group, a collaborating center of the World Health Organization (WHO), which belongs to the Center for Research in Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Navarra. The group has entrusted its progress in the university museum since its inauguration in 2015 to the present day. With proven results, they will continue to do so and encourage researchers from all fields to rely on art for their development.

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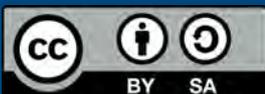
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