ICOM-ICME
Dubai 2025

Museums and Change:
A View to Future Generations
Addressing Technology, Sovereignty,
and Agency in Museums

CALL FOR PAPERS

Building on the theme of our 2024 conference in Mexico City of stewardship, custodianship and service, ICME proposes to continue the exploration of the historic adoption of our new museum definition and the urgent work brought forth in the latest ICOM Strategic Plan (2022-2025) to support the ongoing transformation of our sector.

With a wholly inclusive approach and following our desire to promote diversity in all our endeavors, this third, and final, installation of the *Museums and Change* series, proposes four general themes for our members to address in keeping with the ICOM Dubai 2025 General Conference. These include **youth, technology, museum agency in the face of sociopolitical shifts**, and a continued focus on **shared custodianship and collaborative practices** in our field.

As our general conference will take place in the MENA region, we welcome contributions that focus our sessions on learning about the innovations, solutions, and bottlenecks that ethnographic and world cultures museums and museum professionals in the region are addressing and experiencing.

During the ICOM Dubai 2025 General Conference, ICME and ICOM ARAB will be holding joint conference sessions on November 12th, 13th, and 15th, 2025. On November 15th, we will collaborate with SOMUS for a joint conference session. Each session will focus on one of the four themes addressed in our general call, *Museums and Change: A View to Future Generations Addressing Technology, Sovereignty, and Agency in Museums*.

Proposals should follow the four thematic areas and address one or a few guiding questions below.

Youth

Is your institution working with youth-led initiatives or youth participation to engender change in research, leadership or governance structures? Are they leading to meaningful shifts in policies or practices?

How are you staying relevant for younger generations in the face of geopolitical, societal, and planetary changes? How do you address activism or demands for activism in your institution?

What are younger generations demanding from your cultural institution? How are you meeting them where they are?

When we say youth, are we talking about temporal age or newness in practice or ideas? How do you address newness or youth as a discursive approach?

Technology

How are new technologies and social media changing the museum experience in your institution or with your practice?

How does your museum use AI or other new technologies? How are your audiences reacting? How is your institution or how is your curatorial practice incorporating technologies? Are you using them to stay relevant for younger generations?

How are you using AI? Have AI and other new technologies facilitated your work in any way?

Are there human rights implications for museums when companies train AI on open ethnographic collection databases? What is the responsibility of our sector?

How can ethnographic and world culture museums be a resource for safeguarding digital resources for source communities? How can we become advocates for the ethical use and understanding of AI technologies in the face of cultural appropriation?

Are technologies leading to new practices in safeguarding material and immaterial cultural heritage or generating serious ethical issues in our field? Do we need a set of ethical guidelines around its use and safeguarding of material and immaterial cultural heritage for ethnographic and world culture museums?

Museum Agency in the face of Sociopolitical Shifts

We live in an era replete with contentious geopolitical, climate, economic and cultural heritage issues. How is our sector addressing these multivalent, contentious historical and contemporary issues in collaboration with and in support of source communities?

Several relevant issues include:

Migration
How is your museum successfully working with migrant communities? Do you address issues such as the loss of cultural traditions and languages. Can you support intergenerational transmission of knowledge? Do you engage in collections consultations with migrant communities?

Are there new and innovative ways in which museums can support cultural heritage preservation?

Cultural Intellectual Property Rights
Does AI pose potential human rights violations with respect to the confluence of digitized collections and Open GLAM efforts in museums and Cultural Intellectual Property Rights (CIPR)?

Climate
How is your museum working in cultural heritage preservation with climate-affected communities?

Is there a confluence of technology, youth leadership and climate issues that our sector can address?

Sovereignty, Collaborative Practices and Shared Custodianship

Cultural Sovereignty and Collections
Is your museum addressing issues of Indigenous Knowledge and Data Sovereignty (IKDS)?

How can museums of world cultures and ethnography transform their roles as custodians of heritage, to become active supporters in social movements for cultural autonomy and self-determination?

How is your museum working toward shared custodianship with source communities? Can you share any success stories or concerns that you have encountered in developing your programs?

Conference Format

Our format this year will include three sessions and one International Committee Day. All of these events will be implemented in collaboration with ICOM ARAB. Sessions C will be in collaboration with ICOM ARAB and SOMUS. Please see a breakdown of the sessions below with further information that you will find listed on the ICOM General Conference website.

Session A
12th November 2025, 14:30 - 16:00

Session title
Museum Practice in the Age of AI: Use of New Technologies and Ethical Implications

Brief session description
This session explores how emerging technologies and social media are reshaping and challenging museum practice. ICME invites curators, educators and museum workers to participate, particularly colleagues working in and with Indigenous and community-based institutions. Presenters will share their experience, concerns and reflections using AI, digital tools and other innovations on curatorial and institutional practice. Are these technologies really helping museums stay relevant for younger audiences, or do they

represent a risk for community-based work? How are local communities reacting? Are these "new" tools facilitating the respect for sensitive collections and access to different knowledges and creativity, or on the contrary, are they reinforcing extraction and cultural appropriation?

ICME aims to join the global conversation on ethical frameworks as our field increasingly adopts digital tools. In this session we encourage discussions on the implications and responsibilities of using new technologies. We ask: What responsibilities do museums with Indigenous and sensitive material culture have when sharing digital collections, or when AI companies train their models on open-access ethnographic collections? We invite presenters to discuss the way museums can become advocates for digital rights and cultural sovereignty, through ethical and responsible AI use.

Session B (ICME, ICOM ARAB)
12th November 2025, 16:30 - 18:00

Session title
Transformations in Museum Practice Through Intergenerational Change

Brief session description
One of the most important forces pushing transformation in museum practice is youth. In this session, ICME wants to address the way museums and their staff are responding to youth-led initiatives and youth participation, and to their demands for activism and justice. Particularly, we would like to focus on how collaboration with new generations can provoke changes in leadership structure, museum vision and research agendas. Are these collaborations taking museums to a genuine and meaningful shift in policies or practice, or are they superficial? How are museums engaging with younger generations as partners and visionaries? We invite participants to think about what younger generations want from museums today, and how we are meeting their expectations as cultural institutions.

Moreover, in this session we want to explore how we define "youth" in museum practice. Are we talking about temporal age or newness in practice or ideas? What happens when youth is also understood as a political position and discursive approach that challenges the conventional and insists on alternative knowledge(s) and futures?

Session C (SOMUS, ICME, ICOM ARAB)
13th November 2025, 14:30 - 16:00

Session title
An Ongoing Dialogue in Shared Custodianship and Collaborative Museological Practices

Brief session description
In this session, we would like to focus on the practice of regional and community-based museums that have been created, owned, and managed by Indigenous groups, local organizations and the civil society. We invite participants to share how the museum institution is reinventing its *ethos* through the creation of small and medium scale institutions, particularly located in Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. This session explores the way collaborative practices strengthen alternative ways of being and doing, communities' identities and capacity for self-determination. We are interested in a dialogue around how shared custodianship and shared authority can be a means to defend identities and people's existence.

IC Day
November 15th, 2025

Session title
Museums Agency in the Face of Cultural Sovereignty, Migration and Climate Crisis

Brief session description
As seen in our previous ICME conferences, our museums are immersed in an era shaped by profound global challenges: geopolitical conflicts, forced migration, climate crisis and contested cultural heritage. Through educational programs, exhibitions and projects, museums are acting as active participants in shaping more just and inclusive futures. In this session, we invite participants to explore how our sector is responding to crises, particularly in collaboration with and in support of source communities. This session encourages a critical dialogue focused on justice, and on how museums can respond to global crises while remaining grounded in their surrounding communities.

In this session we would like to focus on four main areas:

Migration: How are museums successfully (or not) working with migrant and displaced communities? Are institutions addressing the loss and

transformation of cultural traditions and languages? Are we actively supporting the intergenerational transmission of knowledge? We invite contributions that explore community consultation on collections, co-curation, and innovative models of cultural heritage preservation in migrant contexts.

Cultural Intellectual Property Rights: Although the age of AI has brought new visibility to collections and museum narratives, it also poses risks relevant to discuss. Does AI pose potential human rights violations with respect to the confluence of digitized collections and Open GLAM efforts in museums and Cultural Intellectual Property Rights (CIPR)? How could ICME, ICOM and global networks contribute to policy and practice development in this aspect?

Museums Supporting Cultural Sovereignty and Collections:
Is your museum addressing issues of Indigenous Knowledge and Data Sovereignty (IKDS)? How can museums of world cultures and ethnography transform their roles as custodians of heritage, to become active supporters in social movements for cultural autonomy and self-determination? ICME welcomes critical reflections on practices of community museums, ethical repatriation, and co-curatorial practices.

Climate and Cultural Resilience:
The climate crisis escalates and in parallel, the challenges to tangible and intangible heritage. ICME would like to hear from presenters collaborating with communities affected by climate change, about practices raising awareness on the territory-community connection and ways for preserving and rethinking cultural memory. In this sense, what role can the confluence of technology and particularly youth leadership play in climate justice? Can museums serve as spaces for intergenerational dialogue and environmental activism?

Proposals

The committee calls for a variety of proposed contributions, including papers, posters, roundtables, and panels from colleagues who work on collections, exhibitions and programming that aim to diversify audiences and reconsider interpretive practice, whilst valuing and respecting traditional heritages and practices. Proposals for **papers** (**15 minutes or less**) or **panels** (**60 minutes or less**) should not exceed **300 words**. Proposals will be submitted through the ICOM General Conference website.

The following information should be included with the abstract proposal:
- Title of submitted proposal
- Indicate if it is a paper, panel session or workshop:
- Name(s) of Author(s) or presenters
- Affiliation(s) & full address(es)
- Position
- Email
- ICOM membership number (membership is not required)
- ICME Member yes/no (membership is not required)
- Technical requirements for the proposed presentation
- 150-word short biographical statement for each presenter

All proposals must be submitted through the General Conference website below **by June 22nd**: **https://dubai2025.icom.museum/call-for-papers**. A copy of the abstracts should be sent to **icom.icme@gmail.com** by **22nd of June 2025**, midnight CET. Accepted proposals will be notified by 1st of July 2025. Acceptable formats are Microsoft Word (.docx) and PDF. The abstract language must be submitted in English. Presentations will be delivered in English during the General Conference. We hope that you join us in person at the meeting, but virtual contributions are welcome.

We invite international proposals that focus on ethnographic, anthropology, world culture or society museums. However, we would like to hear from colleagues working in or on museums and museological issues, views, or topics of every kind. We are keen to review issues of coloniality, indigeneity, diversity, (in)equality and social justice. Submissions may be edited by the Conference and Scientific Committees for the program booklet. An edited volume encompassing the past three years of *Museums and Change* contributions will be developed following the General Conference.