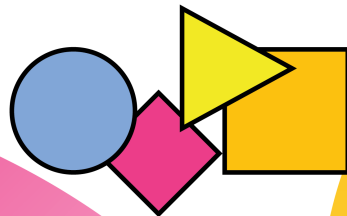


Recommendations from the Qatar Museums expert panel and conference on “The Future of Museums”

THE FUTURE OF MUSEUMS AND MUSEOLOGY PRACTICES IN A CHANGING WORLD

International Conference hosted by ICOM Qatar and Qatar Museums,
in collaboration with ICOFOM.

Held at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), Doha, Qatar,
1-3 December 2024



متاحف قطر
QATAR MUSEUMS

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Museums at the forefront of cultural, digital and ecological diplomacy

“Museums, museology and ICOM are at a turning point in their history. We are facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Respect for diversity, inclusion and participation are the keywords. Global challenges call for global cooperation.”

(Alberto Garlandini, Opening Panel, 1 December 2024).

- **Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI is growing rapidly in the museum sector. The digital transition is creating tremendous challenges and opportunities all at once. The spread of AI offers new possibilities but poses serious problems. There is a lack of veracity on AI platforms due to outdated, erroneous or contradictory reference data and ‘hallucinations’. Papers also discussed how AI can be used to increase efficiency in certain museum processes, such as catalogue tagging. **Recommendations:** Because museums are credible institutions, professionals must guarantee that new AI applications for museums are fed with reliable, quality data, and conform to international legal, ethical and institutional standards. Human creativity and the practice of care beyond AI competencies are key.
- **Museums and digital innovation:** The conference explored how museums are deploying multiple cutting-edge technological innovations, ranging from large-scale infrastructures requiring substantial investment to open-source and utility technologies for wider use. Social media is omnipresent and can be used effectively as a tool for museum communication, accommodating a plurality of voices, but we should be cognisant of digital illiteracy and the digital divide, notably in the Global South where many communities do not yet have access to secure internet or smartphones. Moreover, digitisation and generative AI require immense energy consumption. **Recommendations:** Museums must be inclusive during the technological transition and invest in tangible and intangible heritage preservation through digitisation. They should be mindful of the environmental impact, attempt to limit CO2 emissions, use of paper and energy waste, and promote recycling and reuse where possible.
- **Museums, conflicts and disasters:** Museums and their collections are often victims of conflicts and natural disasters. The conference offered the opportunity to hear from professionals working at the museums and sites affected and to learn from their long-term recovery measures. Active international members of the Blue Shield provided insights into related policies and actions. **Recommendations:** Even in the most difficult situations, museums must keep alive the channels of communication and dialogue. Long-term personal and professional relationships should be preserved to create and maintain conditions for mutual recognition and lasting peace.
- **Museums and the climate crisis:** The conference explored a range of issues in the face of the climate emergency, for example, how global warming is affecting some museums in negative ways such as through rising sea levels and flooding; how new museums are being designed to tell engaging climate stories deploying green technologies; how museums are enhancing biodiversity and ecological justice; and how young people are playing a role in fostering the SDGs. **Recommendations:** Sustainable development, and notably SDG 13 on the climate crisis, needs to be addressed through our museums in order to slow down the worst effects of global warming and uphold cultural rights in more equitable ways. In the words of UNESCO, “Development without culture is growth without a soul”.

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- **Museums and communities:** While the traditional functions of conservation, exhibition, education, and promotion of collections associated with museums remain important, in recent years there has been a firm “social turn” in museology. As a result, decolonisation is one of ICOM’s current strategic goals (2023–27). Communities now expect active participation, notably in the display and interpretation of their cultures. **Recommendations:** Museums are among the most trusted institutions in the world. In line with the new ICOM Definition of a Museum (2022), theory should be put into practice concerning the accessibility of museums for all peoples. Training should be provided on participatory action research for museums, and effective community relations should be promoted at all levels.
- **Museums and young people:** Young people today are scared for their future in relation to the climate emergency. The conference, and notably the workshop on “Young People Shaping the Future of Museology through the lens of the SDGs”, highlighted the role that young people can and should play in determining the future of their planet through the agency of museums. **Recommendations:** We need to amplify the voice of young people in museums globally, increasing their role in informed decision-making processes for the museum and heritage sector. Intercultural dialogue between young people in different regions will foster cultural understanding and promote a safer and more peaceful future for all.
- **Transnational museologies:** The conference discussed the role of museology as a philosophical discourse in a changing world, and attendees listened to fascinating opinions and debates from the Arab world as well as further afield. This raised issues relating to the purposeful museum pedagogies needed to face our current global challenges. **Recommendations:** We should aim to provide greater opportunities for sharing knowledge about cultural understandings of museology and museum practice between regions, including raising awareness of our core philosophies, texts and methods. We need to experiment with new museologies with greater universal appeal. It is essential to invest in training and continued professional development across cultures and disciplines. These need to extend beyond heritage policies. A greater understanding of the social, cultural, political and environmental roles of museums is needed to build global peace and prosperity.
- **Museums and international relations:** The conference showcased a wide range of museum case studies from across the Arab region and beyond. Regional and national differences exist, but meetings such as Doha 2024 and the fostering of cultural understanding promote the global reach of social and economic policies of governments, the UN, museum support agencies and NGOs such as ICOM. **Recommendations:** We should aim to strengthen the museum network of the Arab world and exchange knowledge globally. For example, Qatar Museums has dedicated its efforts in the international relations field of museums, culture and heritage and ICOM Qatar is heavily invested in utilizing the network to enhance global knowledge exchanges and to enhance the future plans in this area.

These recommendations have been inspired by all the papers presented at the Doha 2024 conference. This text cites extensively from keynote session presentations by Alberto Garlandini, Alissandra Cummins and Samuel Franco, chaired by ICOFOM Chair Karen Brown.

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