

## ICOM 27<sup>th</sup> General Conference "The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities"

**Date:** November 2025    **Venue:** Dubai, UAE

**A Joint Conference between ICMAH, ICR, DRMC**

### INTRODUCTION

Regional museums serve as vital historical and archaeological heritage custodians, bridging the gap between local communities and global histories. However, in an era of rapid urbanization, climate change, and digital transformation, these institutions face unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Natural disasters, political instability, and conflict pose significant threats to regional museums, jeopardizing their capacity to preserve historical, archaeological, and cultural heritage artifacts, as well as the safety of their staff and the integrity of their infrastructure.

ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History (The **ICMAH**), International Committee for Regional Museums (**ICR**), and International Committee for Disaster Resilient Museums (**DRMC**) are inviting scholars, museum professionals, archaeologists, educators, and community advocates to contribute papers that discuss the preservation of regional museums and their archaeological collections during critical periods. Additionally, the conference will facilitate discussions regarding potential mitigation strategies to effectively respond to such crises through **Session A**.

**Session B**, will be the joint session of **ICMAH**, & **ICR** where the focus on reimagine, how regional museums can leverage technology, participatory practices, and inclusive narratives to remain relevant and resilient. Additionally, explore innovative strategies for interpreting archaeological collections beyond traditional display methods, while addressing the evolving role of regional museums as dynamic spaces for education, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

**Session C**, will be a separate session for each Committee. So, ICR is designating this session to discuss, "*Regional Museum Branding / The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing*".

#### **IC DAY/ Offsite Meeting**

The off-site meetings will be separate for each committee. ICR Offsite Meeting/IC Day will be held in Sharjah, Islamic Civilization Museum on Nov 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

**SESSION A (CONFERENCE FORMAT) : 12th November 2025, 14:30 - 16:00**

***Session A: "Strategic Planning for Regional and Local Museums in Response to Crisis for the Archaeological Heritage Preservation"***

***ICMAH, ICR, DRMC***

This session is designed to examine how museums prepare for significant events and the insights that can be derived from museum professionals during or after such incidents. The experiences of these professionals in disaster response provide valuable information to the museum sector regarding strategies aimed at safeguarding lives, collections, and archaeological sites. This knowledge will be disseminated through case studies that detail effective planning prior to disasters, responses during crises, and successful communication strategies that have been implemented.

- **Resources allocation:** to protect archaeological sites and collections from potential risks.
- **Risk Management plans:** that involve input and participation from local communities in regional museums.
- **Innovative Methods & Strategies:** to prioritize historical and archaeological collections for preservation during emergencies, ensuring smart resource allocation, and the successful interventions to uncover the key factors that contributed to their effectiveness
- **Fast Response:** the essential responses that must adopt in times of conflict or crisis.
- **Museums & Communication:** The pivotal role museums play in communication during disasters and their critical contributions during the recovery phase.
- **New Generation of Museum Professionals:** Involvement of youth in protection of local identities and cultural heritage.

**SESSION B (TRAINING/ CONFERENCE FORMAT) : 12th November 2025, 16:30 - 18:00**

*Session B: "Interpreting History and Archaeology at Regional Museums - Beyond Display and Innovative Interpretation of Archaeological Heritage"*

*ICMAH & ICR*

Integrating advanced technology into archaeological practices has revolutionized how researchers uncover, document, and interpret the past. During excavation and documentation, tools such as LiDAR, 3D laser scanning, and GIS enable precise mapping of sites, even beneath dense vegetation/urban layers. These methods enhance accuracy and preserve fragile artifacts by reducing physical handling. Beyond the field, technology plays an equally critical role in communicating archaeological findings to the public. Museums now employ Virtual Reality (VR) to transport visitors to ancient sites, while Augmented Reality (AR) overlays interactive reconstructions atop excavated ruins or artifacts. Interactive touchscreens and holographic displays contextualize objects with multimedia narratives, bridging the gap between ancient cultures & modern audiences. Digital databases and online platforms, such as *3D Heritage Archive*, democratize access to discoveries, while AI-driven apps tailor educational content to diverse learning styles. By merging cutting-edge technology with traditional archaeology, researchers & educators foster a deeper, more inclusive understanding of humanity's shared heritage.

**Theme 1: Interpreting History and Archaeology at Regional Museums**

- **Community-Centered Narratives:** Engaging local communities in co-creating historical and archaeological interpretations.
- **Decolonizing Heritage:** Addressing colonial legacies in historical and archaeological collections and redefining ownership.
- **Balancing Local Identity and Global Standards:** Strategies for aligning regional museums with international best practices without erasing local distinctiveness.

**Theme 2: Beyond Display: Innovative Interpretation**

- **Documentation and Mapping:** working on field and the use of GIS mapping systems, photogrammetry, LiDAR, drones, 3D scanning, GPR, digital databases.
- **Digital Tools and Immersive Technologies:** AR/VR for reconstructing archaeological sites. AI-driven storytelling and interactive databases.
- **Multisensory Experiences:** Tactile exhibits, soundscapes, and olfactory installations to enhance accessibility.
- **Case Studies:** Successful reinterpretations of historical and archaeological collections (e.g., reburial ceremonies, digital repatriation).

**SESSION C (CONFERENCE FORMAT) : 13th November 2025, 14:30 - 16:00**

*Session C: “Regional Museum Branding / The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities”*

*ICR*

In an increasingly competitive cultural landscape, regional museums must craft strong, authentic brands to engage local communities and attract wider audiences. This session explores effective strategies for defining and communicating a compelling brand identity, balancing heritage with innovation, and leveraging digital tools to enhance visibility. Museum branding and marketing experts will share case studies, best practices, and actionable insights to help regional institutions differentiate themselves while staying true to their mission. Attendees will leave with practical approaches to storytelling, audience engagement, and partnerships that elevate their museum’s presence and impact.

**Themes:**

- **Telling Local Stories:** How Regional Identity Shapes Museum Branding
- **From Heritage to Hashtag:** Branding Regional Museums in the Digital Age
- **Collaborative Branding:** Partnerships Between Museums and Local Communities
- **Crisis, Change, and Rebranding:** Adapting Regional Museums to New Realities

**OFFSITE MEETING / INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE'S DAY NOVEMBER 15, 2025**

*IC Day: “The Role of Regional Museums as Institutions Rooted in Local Histories and Identities”*

Museums today stand at a pivotal crossroads, facing unprecedented shifts in their social, demographic, and environmental landscapes. As trusted institutions embedded in local and regional contexts, museums are uniquely positioned to foster community resilience, inclusion, and creativity. We invite proposals that explore how museums respond to rapid changes, reimagining their roles not only as preservers of heritage but as dynamic agents of social transformation. From addressing underrepresentation and historical biases to embracing new narratives and diverse voices, museums have the power to shape more equitable and connected futures. This call highlights innovative programming, design, education, and leadership strategies that support adaptive, inclusive, and forward-thinking practices. Join us in sharing insights, challenges, and solutions that position museums as vital contributors to thriving, diverse communities in transition.

**Themes:**

- **Adapting to Demographic Shifts - Museums as Spaces for New Community Narratives:** How changing populations influence museums content, language, and outreach.
- **Flexible Futures - Designing Museums for Social, Economic, and Environmental Volatility:** Innovations in museum planning and programming in the face of rapid change.
- **Participation Over Preservation? Museums Navigating New Roles in Dynamic Communities:** Balancing traditional roles with activism, inclusion, and responsiveness demands.
- **Museums as Agents of Change—Fostering Resilience and Social Cohesion:** Museums play a proactive role in guiding communities through transformation.
- **Diversity and Inclusivity in Regional Museums**
- **Historical biases in Collections**
- **Underrepresentation of marginalized groups:** Indigenous communities, people of color, Migrated Communities, and those with disabilities.
- **Museum Education on Contextualization and Interpretation**
- **Strategies to improve inclusivity:** Ensuring diverse staffing and leadership

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

- The language of the conference is **ENGLISH**, NO simultaneous translation will be available in both languages.
- For papers submission, and submission instructions, and dates, please Visit ICOM Dubai website (<https://dubai2025.icom.museum/>)
- Application for travel grants shall be announced later.
- The presentations will be in PowerPoint format during the conference and the full papers will be delivered in the same time.
- Instructions for writing the full text will be communicated for accepted papers.
- Two joint sessions, each committee will hold a separate session solely for its members. Please note the topics covered in these individual sessions.

## ORGANIZING COMMITTEES & PARTIES

The Conference is organized by ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History (The **ICMAH**), in cooperation with International Committee for Regional Museums (**ICR**), and International Committee for Disaster Resilient Museums (**DRMC**).

## CONTACTS & INFORMATION

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Or visit: <https://icmah.mini.icom.museum/>, <https://icr.mini.icom.museum/news/>, and <https://drmc.mini.icom.museum/>

We look forward to receive your abstract then the paper contributions and participation.

Respectfully,

**ICOM-ICMAH-ICR-DRMC Boards**