

ICOM FRANCE in collaboration with  
CIMUSET, ICOM FINLAND, ICOM GREECE, ICOM ISRAEL

# Solidarity, museums: what are we talking about?

ONLINE DEBATES CYCLE, 2020-2021



# **Solidarity, museums: what are we talking about?**

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*Online debates cycle,  
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# Introduction





**T**hroughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ICOM France worked to relay and highlight museum professionals' initiatives, and to create sharing and exchange spaces in order to maintain the link between actors in the museum field.

Following the success of its first cycle of digital debates dedicated to the reopening of museums, ICOM France proposed to some partners within ICOM to design a cycle of participative debates around the theme of "Solidarities". We wanted to strongly emphasize that solidarity between different museums from different regions of the world, between different professionals and actors of the museum sector, is the idea that would allow us all to keep in touch, but also to encourage hopes, initiatives, and generosity in the midst of a chaotic and - sometimes discouraging - period.

The cycle was organized in collaboration with ICOM Finland, ICOM Greece, ICOM Israel and CIMUSET and received financial support from ICOM's SAREC (Strategic Review Committee on Grants). Each session, organized online in a large meeting format, allowed for the intervention of professionals, experts on the discussed subjects, and then to give voice to the audience, which was present in large numbers reflecting the diversity of museum professionals working in or with institutions: scientific staff, mediators, administrative staff, policymakers, stakeholders, etc. Nearly 200 people from 17 different countries attended each session and enriched the debates with their respective testimonies, their concerns, and their own situation.

Ten sessions took place between November 2020 and October 2021. The first session, initiated the day following the second lockdown in France at the beginning of November 2020, brought together the testimonies of some twenty French and foreign professionals on the consequences of the pandemic on the situation of museums. It was followed by 9 sessions during which the professionals discussed the transformations at work in museums (new issues, difficulties, challenges) appearing in different fields: the changes that the pandemic may have brought about in the definition of tasks and professions within museums (session 2), mutualization (session 3), digital technology (session 4), the solidarity economy and sustainable development (session 5), the development of professional networks (session 6), the impact of the pandemic on

solidarity between museums (session 7), the role of museums in preserving a memory of the health crisis (session 8), the link with the public (close or distant - socially, economically or geographically from museums) (session 9), the place of ICOM and its working groups in a changing museum world (session 10).

Today, remains tangible evidence of these exchanges: all the sessions were recorded and are freely available in English, French and Spanish, on our Youtube channel. This evidence finds an additional deployment with this written publication and testifies to this strong theme that reminded us of museums' meaning, credible and essential actors of our societies, and the involvement of their professionals.

We would like to thank our partners: Ech-Cherkhi Dahmali and Johanna Vahapesola (CIMUSET), Lassi Patokorpi (ICOM Finland), Teti Hadjinicolaou and Elisabeth Bague (ICOM Greece) and Nava Kessler (ICOM Israel); the moderators of the sessions: Estelle Guille des Buttes (ICOM France) and Pénélope Theologi-Gouti (ICOM Greece); Cléa Calderoni, technical and operational management and the speakers.

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# Session 1

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**Another lockdown, what now?  
A new wave of resilience?**

*Tuesday 5 November 2020*



## Speakers:

**Nathalie Bondil**, Vice-Chair of the Canada Council for the Arts

**Céline Chanas**, Director of the Musée de Bretagne and President of the Fédération des écomusées et des musées de société (FEMS)

**Pauline Chassaing**, Head of international relations at Institut National du Patrimoine, Paris

**Alexandre Chevalier**, President of ICOM Belgium

**Catherine Cuenca**, President of l'Association générale des conservateurs et professionnels des musées et des patrimoines publiques de France (AGCCPF)

**Jérôme Farigoule**, Deputy Director of the Museum Policy Department, Musées de France

**Yvon Figueras**, Director of International Development and Production at the Musée des arts-décoratifs de Paris (MAD Paris)

**Dominique de Font-Réaulx**, Director of Outreach and Cultural Programming at the Musée du Louvre

**Anne-Sophie de Gasquet**, Director of Production at the Centre Pompidou

**Emilie Girard**, Scientific and Collections Director at Mucem

**Sophie Harent**, Director of the Musée Magnin

**Sophie Kervran**, Director of the Musée de Pont-Aven and Musée de Concarneau

**Cédric Lesec**, Director of external Relations and Outreach, Musée des Confluences

**Bruno Maquart**, President of Universcience

**Laure Ménétrier**, Director of the Musée du Vin de Champagne et d'Archéologie Régionale d'Épernay

**Anne-Catherine Robert-Hauglustaine**, Director of the Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace (National Air and Space Museum of France)

**Michel Rouger**, Director of the MuséoParc Alésia

**Laurent Thurnherr**, Director of Maison de Robert-Schuman and Musée départemental de la Guerre de 1870 & de l'Annexion

**Moderation: Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France



Although the announcement of another lockdown has come as no surprise, the closure of museums has been for many professionals. ICOM France wanted to waste no time in bringing together the members of its network, because although they remain motivated to make their museums present and active via digital technologies, many have been feeling helpless about the future (duration of the lockdown, organisation of work, future of exhibitions, etc.). This session, which is the first in a new cycle, features the experiences of a number of French professionals in the aftermath of the second lockdown mandated by the French government. I suggest that each speaker focus on presenting something of particular interest for others: a best practice, innovation, suggestion or proposal. We are going to start with Sophie Harent, Director of the Musée Magnin in Dijon, who is very active on social media and has shown a lot of resilience. Sophie, what has been your reaction to the announced closure? Can you tell us what you are preparing?

**Sophie Harent** - This new lockdown is much more difficult than the first due to the uncertainty around how long it will last. It is supposed to last for a month but it will likely be extended. How do we produce things and stay the course over time, especially with very limited resources? Another essential question is how do we talk to our staff, who are feeling very anxious, particularly about

government-imposed remote working, which we are finding very difficult to put in place due to a lack of computer equipment or because certain jobs are not suited to it.

While this lockdown is more complicated than the first, we need to continue to give ourselves some room to breathe. It is very important for us to be active on social media and create content on our websites in order to continue communicating with the public and let them know that we are still here. Even though museums are closed, they are continuing to work and stay busy. At the Musée Magnin, we are trying to stay active on social media. Since November, a number of museums have been participating in a Twitter initiative called *Museum 30*. It lets us tweet about a hashtag every day (e.g. doodling, buttons, exhibitions, tools, work space, strength, why museums, etc.) and share content, show our collections and talk about our day-to-day activities. This kind of project involves staff and gets them all thinking, whatever their role at the museum. It also makes for some essential and unifying moments. Then there is the digital version of European Museum Night which museums can get involved in by posting content online, and the #Culturechezvous project launched by the French Ministry of Culture. The hashtag helps generate traffic on social media and buzz about culture in all its forms, which I feel is essential.

Museum life hasn't stopped with the closure to the public. We have actually seen the birth of networking projects which likely result from the first lockdown. We need to see, or at least try to see, the lockdown as an opportunity to create new connections or revive old ones and give them meaning. For example, a network of collector museums will be created thanks to the "heritage" division of the Musées de Nantes and will include various institutions in and outside Paris. Finally, we need to remember that we are all in this together. We have more reasons than ever to communicate and exchange. It is a way to feel less alone in this situation and to share our concerns in a world that has been so shaken by the pandemic.

**Anne-Catherine Robert-Hauglustaine** - I agree. I think there's a general sense of discouragement, because we were hoping to get through this and we showed that our premises are safe. We put everything in place to allow the public to come to museums safely during the autumn school holidays.

I'd like to add an international dimension here. We have just opened several exhibitions in other countries. You have to keep in mind that this lockdown is widespread across Europe. Museums have closed in Germany and Belgium. Our exhibitions were just open for a few days.

At the Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace, we have also been in a construction and building renovation phase, so we are focusing on these activities. We are sometimes faced with conflicting requirements. We are supposed to be remote working but we need to be present for the contractors working on site. We are also having a hard time staying on budget this year since a closed museum means we are not generating any of our own resources, but we still need to move forward with all our building projects.

Generally speaking, our teams have remained motivated. We have spent a lot of time with labour organisations to explain what is happening. The lockdown will probably last longer than what was initially announced, and 2021 is likely to be another strange year for our institutions. We have the support of our teams and government ministries, but internationally, it remains a very complex time. Thank you for organising these meetings. They are important because it's our networks that will get us through this period and help us remain confident and prepare for the future.

**Alexandre Chevalier** - Of course our initial reactions were shock and discouragement.

We were discouraged because new exhibitions were being developed or had just opened. Everything shut down very quickly. Brussels initiated the movement. Flemish Belgium resisted for a few days and then a federal consultative committee meeting was urgently convened and decided to close the entire cultural sector in Belgium.

There was shock and discouragement because there is no justification for this closure. One of the reasons given was to prevent visitors from taking public transportation even though museums had implemented strict safety protocols with limited capacity and mandatory reservations. It is incomprehensible because since museums reopened in May, they could no longer attract thousands of visitors per day. People in lockdown need to keep a bit of culture in their lives. Bookstores and libraries are considered essential services and have remained open. We cannot understand the rationale for closing museums.

We are going to try to fight. The measures are already scheduled to be reassessed on 18 November. We are going to insist that museums should also be considered “essential” to the nation.

**Dominique de Font-Réaulx** - I agree with what has been said. We made sure to respond to your invitation and be here today. Thank you for extending it to us. It is really important for us to share together. We have noticed some discouragement in our teams. At the Louvre, we got things going again after the first lockdown, with two amazing exhibitions, *Body and Soul*, and *Albrecht Altdorfer*. One of them had only been open for a week (thankfully it was able to reopen again in May 2021). The effort put in by our teams did not receive the recognition it deserved. They were discouraged by the difficulty of having to work remotely.

Despite this, a lot of positive things have been achieved. It has been a great joy. It has become evident that museums are an essential part of life. This could be seen when they reopened in June. When the Louvre reopened in July 2020, it made headlines. It was an event for everyone, not just the museum’s visitors. It also showed the strength of the visitors’ enthusiasm for the museum. They came in great numbers, with great joy. We created free “mini-discovery” tours at the museum which attracted over 40,000 people in just 3 months. These onsite initiatives were highly successful. There is a real desire for museums, places that are at the heart of society, essential to our democracies.

Since we are closed again, we have resumed our programmes on our website, Louvre.fr, which has seen a twelvefold increase in the number of visitors. We’ve put in place programmes that already existed, but we also innovated with new projects, such as Louvre Kids (*Petit Louvre*) for families, or the *Enquêtes au Louvre* podcasts. We organised live concerts in the closed auditorium. The first lecture which took place on the first day of the second lockdown, attracted over 800 people online with a lively chat, an audience double the auditorium’s capacity, and was watched on replay by 3000 people over the weekend.

There is obviously a desire for museums and the Louvre. This is an incredible asset which gives us the energy to forge ahead. By creating meaningful, high quality and online projects we are creating a new connection with the public at large. The story

and narration are crucial to bringing people together, surprising them and captivating them. Museums are wonderful reservoirs of history, and places for renewed discovery.

Working together with ICOM to show that museums are the foundations of our democracies is key in bringing us together and pooling our efforts.

**Jérôme Farigoule** - Together with the director of the French Museums Service, we set up regular meetings with major institutions across the region in order to get their feedback.

As you have all already said, there is this disappointing feeling of momentum stopped in mid-air. Discouragement and anger are strong words, but they are entirely justified. Dominique de Font-Réaulx talked about the desire for museums, and I would like to reiterate the extraordinary efforts made by museums to emerge from the lockdown. All the museums were very active during the lockdown with their digital offerings and projects, and especially through their efforts to quickly reopen under the best possible conditions for the public. This was no minor task. The measures put in place at museums have been effective and the protocols developed in line with health guidelines.

This second lockdown should not be seen as a form a stigmatisation of museums, even though we are suffering from it, but rather as a general measure affecting cultural sites. This lockdown is different from the first one. While everything was completely shut down everywhere in March, today there is a call to keep our activities running. We cannot open to the public, but as the Minister of Culture has encouraged us to do, we should continue with our exhibitions, restorations and acquisitions. I believe that this is essential, and we need to focus our efforts on this.

Yes, there are a lot of difficulties, such as setting up remote working when there is a lack of equipment and organisational challenges. It is also difficult to find activities for all the reception staff who can feel at a loss in museums without visitors. Some institutions have made their reception staff available to their local communities, others have developed archive classification activities, small-scale preventive conservation operations, and awareness-raising for local outreach projects with a view to reopening.

Another important point to underline is the issue of public service. Some excellent work has been done by several museums. Right now we are not able to open to the public. However, our educators are still allowed to go off site. I think there is a lot that can be done in this area. Educators and guides can go into schools. These are avenues that can be explored to allow our museums to continue operating, but differently.

**Cédric Lesec** - It is indeed very important to meet and talk about our initial approaches. We share similar experiences. The thing that seems essential to me is the need to be together and share ideas together.

While I completely agree with what has already been said, I am going to try to take another direction to add to our discussion. It is obviously important to stay positive, but it is difficult to prepare exhibitions without knowing for sure if they will open. When we emerged from the lockdown, we realised that there was a real need to invest more in popular education networks and schools through offsite initiatives. This has been the backbone of our policy. All reservations in school venues have been cancelled because the COVID-19 protocols for schools do not necessarily allow these types of outreach projects to be carried out for the moment.

When it comes to communication and resources, I see things differently than what has been said. What I mean is that for us, this second lockdown is very different from the first in that there are no school groups and a sense of weariness has set in. As with our team, I feel like if we do the same as we did the first time - though I recognise it is essential for museums to stay at the heart of the cultural and intellectual life of the country - it is going to be very difficult to keep merging communication and resources, especially if there are several closures. The problem lies in this conflation.

For museums to exist on social media, they have to generate traffic, but this makes it difficult to achieve the objectivity needed to provide real resources. There is a contradiction here. It is not easy to exist and be visible on social media while at the same time focusing on key subjects and themes that are relevant to museums. What's the right balance? Those are the feelings I wanted to share with you.

**Nathalie Bondil** - On the other side of the Atlantic, the first lockdown was a shock, like it was for everyone. However, there were different challenges in that there are a lot of private museums. There is a big difference between national museums financed by the government in Quebec, and private organisations. At the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the question of a massive furlough for employees was raised when the crisis hit. We had to fight and show solidarity to keep these positions. In western Canada, private museums furloughed up to 80% of their staff. The first lockdown was very difficult because cash flow was an immediate issue.

At the start of the pandemic, we thought we would be able to simply postpone our schedules without making intrinsic changes to the way we design our exhibitions. Today, with this new wave of the pandemic, museums are closed once again. This issue is crucial and even cruel, because we are realising that this business model no longer works under the current circumstances. Unlike in Canada, where the private sector has been lucky enough to receive federal assistance to partially maintain salaries, in the United States, the Association of American Museum Directors (AAMD) adopted a sensational measure: it has exceptionally authorised the sale, or alienation of works of art, not with a view to acquiring others, but to sustain their operations. The Brooklyn Museum has therefore sold major pieces from its collection. We haven't reached that point in Canada, but the business model is under pressure, because self-financing is essential for many institutions. This new context created by the pandemic explains a reduction in international exchanges, more restrained exhibition costs and a greater focus on local resources.

However, the pandemic has had some positive impacts, especially in terms of networks and professional exchanges. Museums have been communicating with each other enormously since the lockdown. The massive use of videoconferencing, even though it is somewhat dehumanising, has brought people closer together across countries and the world. At the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, we were able to react quickly and develop unifying exhibitions through the FRAME network (French and American Museums Exchange). This network includes over thirty French and North American museums. Because we were in lockdown, we came up with new projects together by finally getting over the distances between

us and ignoring the oceans that separate us. Thanks to FRAME grants, we are able to quickly develop online, educational and therapeutic projects. For example, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts worked with the Montreal Holocaust Museum to collaborate with museums in Rouen and Marseille. We combined our collections to launch the exhibition *Ports of exile, home harbours - The fates of Jewish people during the Second World War*<sup>1</sup> in order to highlight seventy-five years since the liberation of Auschwitz. The aim of the exhibition was to keep Jewish history alive and celebrate the courage of the witnesses and survivors of the Shoah. These digital tools and the solidarity of professional networks brought our collections and experts together.

Above all, I believe that we need to remember our quarantined visitors so they do not suffer doubly. Besides no longer being able to come to the museum, these audiences may be disadvantaged, living in challenging situations, ill, in difficulty or impoverished. The lockdown has been difficult for our teams and employees as they have been experiencing it under unequal conditions. However, we need to reach out to people who normally come to museums but who no longer have access to culture. It is an opportunity to be even more proactive and reach out to them to provide the comforting space that we incarnate as a cultural space. In this sense, all our art therapy and well-being programmes have been well appreciated.

**Bruno Maquart** - We were supposed to open an exhibition in October, at the Musée de la Civilisation in Quebec, but it was unable to happen. On 29 October, we had to close our two sites, the Cité des Sciences et de L'industrie and the Palais de la Découverte. The latter is soon to be renovated, and it was supposed to close in late November, after a month of free access for the public. This was a great disappointment for our staff. We are still going to ahead with an online auction on 21 November 2020 for the benefit of the future Palais de la Découverte building, with non-heritage lots such as decor materials, furniture or signs from the institution, rigorously selected after a long and meticulous inventory. Until the Palais reopens, you can go to the temporary site, "*Les Étincelles du Palais de la Découverte*", located in the 15th *arrondissement* of Paris.

<sup>1</sup> (<https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/ports-of-exile-home-harbours/>)

Like everyone, we have been active on the Internet with a focus on COVID-19 and research. The aim has been to make the most of the current situation, which is a huge scientific experiment in the making. We are supporting public communication on these issues and preparing for what will happen with vaccination, although France is one of the countries most sceptical of vaccines. We are continuing some of our physical activities, with our library's click and collect service.

In addition, as a scientific cultural institution with a public service mission, we have worked hard to inform the public about the virus, promote social distancing measures and encourage people to download the TousAntiCovid app.

It's about doing all this while continuing our key activities, even with no visitors present. Yesterday we got together a few staff members to organise the press launch of the "Africa 2020" season, and we are already preparing for our future exhibition, *Jean*.

**Pauline Chassaing** - First, I would like to say how much I understand that there is some wariness regarding this pandemic and that decisions are difficult to make when it comes to reorganising an entire society. However, I feel that maybe sometimes, decisions are being made that call into question the role and status of different parts of society.

In Sweden, where I am currently living and which has a different approach to France, we have seen some surprising paradoxes. I will focus on facts and facts only, since I don't know the ins and outs of decision-making. Tightened measures were recently announced as the pandemic is regaining ground here too, with museums closing from 30 October to 19 November 2020. At the same time, capacity numbers for cultural and scientific events have been increased from 50 to 300 people, and nightclubs are still open. It is interesting to look at all these decisions together and to consider the place of closed museums in this context.

**Céline Chanas** - As the president of the FEMS, I'll try to give you some information, even though I don't yet have enough feedback. I would like to congratulate ICOM for being so quick to react.

At the Musée de Bretagne, we are right in the middle of working on a temporary exhibition, so I share the feelings of our colleagues

here who have expressed frustration and discouragement. This lockdown has been different because we have the experience from the first one, but we have little visibility. It is not easy to plan ahead. We reopened our museums in June to an enthusiastic public response. At the Musée de Bretagne, we had more visitors from June to August 2020 than in 2019. Visitors were reassured by the health measures we put in place.

Being in charge of a museum, we also have the duty of leading our colleagues and teams forward. We learned a lot from ICOM France's first cycle of sessions and at the FEMS with another format that we called "MuséoCovid", which we are going to relaunch. In my opinion, the important thing today is to plan ahead, so that we stay focused and avoid spreading ourselves too thinly, and instead, properly define our role in terms of public service. At the beginning of the session, Jérôme Farigoule talked about the strategies of local and regional authorities with respect to reception staff. We're clearly in the same situation in Rennes. We are going to try to lay things out and properly manage them with our teams. At the Musée de Bretagne, we switched quickly to remote working and I would like to thank my colleagues for reacting so quickly.

We have made it very clear in our decisions that we want to continue with our projects involving economic players (including heritage conservators, digitisation providers and photographers). All our onsite projects are still going ahead. We have also defined a fairly clear framework for remote working and onsite assignments.

As to whether visitors will find their way back onto digital formats, the answer is yes. With the FEMS, we have seen smaller museums that were not on social media develop digital activities and virtual tours. Even the smallest museums are adapting. On the subject of innovations, I'll pick up on what Cédric Lesec said about offsite outreach. I think this is something that really needs to be explored. Where are people expecting us to be right now? In terms of use and public service, this is where our external activities come into play. At the Musée de Bretagne we are thinking about formats that could be deployed externally. This could be a very interesting topic to share with other colleagues.

**Laure Ménétrier** - I've heard the words discouragement, dismay and frustration and to be honest, my team and I have felt the same

way. We work at a museum that has been closed for nearly 22 years and we were about to reopen with invitations ready to be sent out, the cultural programming prepared and the reception team in training. We are uncertain about the future, and particularly about the conditions under which we will be able to open the museum, which is highly anticipated by the town of Epernay, the authority that oversees our institution and the area. A sense of nervous fatigue has set in, especially from this “stop and go” way of working over the past several months.

Over the last few days, before focusing on the public and our collections, I have been particularly focused on leading our team to think about these new working conditions. We have set up part-time remote working but we have a lot of onsite meetings we need to honour. We need to think about a new roadmap for the team and try to find new drive, motivate the team again and find the energy and collective intelligence to work out our schedule for the coming weeks.

Regarding the connection created with our visitors through digital tools, during the first lockdown, we developed a range of cultural digital content that promoted our work and our collections. However, we still need to create a relationship with virtual visitors. This doesn't really exist because we've been closed since 1998, although we have a decent audience. Digital technologies make it possible to do a lot in terms of visibility and promotion, but until now, we have been thinking of them especially as an extension to real encounters with the museum and the works, and not as something that completely replaces physical encounters. We don't really know yet how to prepare for the future in terms of having our teams make digital cultural production a priority.

In the coming weeks, the idea is to work on the cultural offering that we will have to adapt to the context when we are finally able to open: local outreach, offsite initiatives, activities for small numbers of visitors, lectures that are streamed online, etc. We had some sociocultural projects that were supposed to be implemented as part of professional and social reintegration projects. We are going to try to go ahead with them, but in a different format. How can we implement what we did imagine for our cultural project knowing that our working and reception conditions will be very different?

We are a public service. We are essential. It is up to us to see how we can fulfil these missions in this new environment.

**Sophie Kervran** - We opened the exhibition “*Réserve ouverte*” on Facebook Live and had a virtual launch on 15 October. The exhibition was developed during the first lockdown. We had Internet users vote online to choose 35 works they wanted to see out of storage for the museum’s 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The current question is whether we will be able to go ahead with the exhibition with the second lockdown.

I would also like to ask you all how you are approaching 2021. I’m feeling very uncertain about it. Should we continue with the programming we were expecting to open in February? Should we continue with our exhibitions? Will we have the budget to carry everything through?

We have been resilient and adapted but we have felt frustration and uncertainty. We are focusing on the health of our staff by working remotely as much as possible and having people on call to ensure the safety and security of the institution.

Above all, and I agree with Laure Ménétrier here, we realised that in the end, we had not anticipated the second lockdown very well in terms of digital tools. When we went back to work, we focused mainly on projects that we had to put back in place quickly, such as exhibitions and programming. We did not prepare the digital tools that we could make available to the public in the second lockdown. We are starting from scratch. The questions being raised today concern training for our teams, employment around digital technologies, the budget for them, and our capacity to innovate. Digital technology is challenging our work.

**Anne-Sophie de Gasquet** - We were saddened by this second lockdown because we had just opened the exhibition *Matisse, like a novel* a week before. The exhibition had started really well, with over 3000 visitors per day, which are great numbers considering our reduced capacity. In the summer, the public was slow to come back with the exhibition on Christo, but with *Matisse*, we had started to get excited about our visitor numbers. We also wanted to go ahead with the exhibitions of living artists this autumn, particularly the Marcel Duchamp Prize with four artists featured in an exhibition that had

only opened three weeks before, and the Martin Barré exhibition, which had opened two weeks before. The real disappointment came with the Move Festival, which opened the day before the lockdown.

For our teams, the advantage at the Centre Pompidou is that remote working is a well-oiled machine. It had already been put in place two years ago so it was already common practice. The teams had already started being equipped and the first lockdown accelerated things. Compared to the first lockdown, we are used to working remotely. All our meetings and preliminary and final designs for exhibitions in the coming years are going forward.

The difference with the first lockdown is that we have been authorised to have teams that cannot work from home work on site. We were in the middle of taking down the Christo exhibition, so we have been able to remove the works and continue to accept loan requests from French and foreign museums. We are still operating and the dynamics are different from the first lockdown. Another difference is that we have been able to continue rehearsals for our performances.

I think that the challenge will be to keep an eye on staff morale. You can tell that those who are able to want to come back on site. We will now have to sustain a positive morale over the long term.

Things are up in the air for our 2021 programming. We prefer to wait for the government announcements next week about how long the lockdown will last. Our short-term priority is virtual tours which have existed for several years but that we need to put online as soon as possible. This week our teams are working on the virtual tour of the Matisse, Martin Barré and *Globale Résistance* exhibitions. As for educators from the Centre Pompidou getting involved in schools in Paris, this was set up during the first lockdown. Our visitor services department is currently working on it.

We are now trying to reinvent ourselves and come up with new projects.

**Emilie Girard** - I'll start by making an initial observation. We transitioned to remote working very quickly because we were well equipped after the first lockdown. However, things are not as easy in terms of staff morale. We need to keep having meetings so that there is no discontinuity, for things to keep running and to keep morale as high as possible.

Secondly, at Mucem, we did little to plan for a second lockdown. We learned from the first lockdown to add remote programming to our onsite programming with access on Facebook and our YouTube channel. This new habit has enabled us to react quickly. All our programming and exhibitions scheduled for this week were put online so that we could continue to provide our services. We launched the “*Les lundis d’après*” (Mondays after) cycle, which are now more like “Mondays in the middle of it”, as well as our cycle of talks “*Temps des archives*” (Archive time) dedicated to times of crisis this year, the first of which is on the COVID-19 crisis. We are working hard to continue our activities.

I would like to underline the urgent need that we are feeling to reopen even more quickly than we were able to after the first lockdown. That’s why we are working to keep the wheels turning. For example, in early December, we plan to open a revamped version of part of our permanent galleries. We are working and moving ahead as if we are going to reopen. Exhibition design work is going forward, loans and transport companies are confirmed for the moment, we are continuing to work with our conservators, to loan works and prepare acquisition projects so that we can put things back in motion swiftly and reopen with relatively normal operations as quickly as possible. We all feel a sense of urgency on a daily basis now.

I’ll also mention our desire to create teasers. We were supposed to open an exhibition called Folklore this week in partnership with the Centre Pompidou Metz. We created an online launch event and a 40-minute TV programme featuring the curator, focusing on the exhibition’s installation. We also created short teaser videos that we posted online. All these activities offer the opportunity to promote the museum and encourage people to come to the exhibition as soon as they are able to.

**Yvon Figueras** - I won’t repeat what has been said about everyone’s disappointment with the decision to close museums once again and the difficulties related to internal resources. These are our biggest concerns at the moment. The Musée des arts décoratifs (MAD Paris) inaugurated the widely popular exhibition *Luxes* just two weeks before the lockdown. It has therefore been a hard blow.

One of the first issues we chose to move forward on, right from the first lockdown, was the question of timing. We reviewed all

our programming from this new perspective, supposing that the public would return after the first lockdown, but certainly in a different way. In April 2020, we decided to redesign the museum's entire layout, which includes temporary and permanent exhibitions, while trying to preserve the projects included in our initial 2020 to 2023 programming, by extending their exhibition period, and reorganising some of them with our partners, some of whom are in other countries when the exhibitions were co-produced or travelling exhibitions.

This international dialogue and ability to talk with our colleagues about the problems they are currently encountering lets us see how they are handling the situation, which is difficult for all institutions.

Through this communication, we are taking the time to reorganise projects with all the players involved and think about how we should plan future programming. For 2021 and probably for the years to come, we have decided that we will revise the number of exhibitions we present, and wherever possible, their duration.

As far as remote working is concerned, during the second lockdown, the way things were organised has allowed us to move forward quite quickly and easily. During the first lockdown, we had a few small technical problems due to the urgency of the situation and the fact that some equipment could not be distributed in time. With this initial experience and our concern about another closure, we quickly provided equipment to everyone who could work from home. The organisation fell naturally into place. For those who have to work on site (conservators, workshops, security), we have set up shifts so that everyone can work safely (e.g. reorganised work hours to facilitate travel).

**Laurent Thurnherr** - The shock of the announcement of the second lockdown has been summed up very well.

However, I was relatively surprised by the reaction of my teams. There were two types. First, there were those who did not want to lose any time and began quickly working from home. They had organised themselves and learned lots from the first lockdown, which enabled them to acquire proper work methods relatively quickly. And then there was part of the team who was more concerned about how they were going to cope with the same situation as in March. There was a lot of support work to be done. Although the teams

from the two sites officially have pooled resources, in reality, they work on projects that are very specific to each site.

So a whole organisational system had to be put back in place, and on both sites we had building work in progress. At Maison Schuman, the museum is still in the process of being transformed. It should have been inaugurated in June, but was delayed due to the first lockdown. The exhibition at the Musée de la Guerre was postponed to 2021, mainly due to loan issues. We preferred to err on the side of caution and postpone things by 10 months. At the same time, we used the experience of the first lockdown to enhance the narrative of the exhibition.

This second lockdown has been a shock for us, especially after such an intense summer. We had more visitors than ever before to our sites. In addition, at both museums, two anniversaries were marked by major commemorations, with visits from government ministers in quick succession, one in August at the Musée de Gravelotte and another at Maison Schuman in September. The lockdown has also been a sudden interruption for school trips that were planned.

Like everywhere, it has forced us to reorganise things at our sites in terms of stocktaking, inventories, storage and receiving construction contractors. For a small museum overseen by local authorities, this second lockdown requires intellectual and administrative, as well as technical and manual organisation, and the willingness of everyone to get involved and contribute in spite of the circumstances.

One of the things that has been important in coming to terms with this lockdown has been the Ministry of Culture's announcement of its intention to put the Night of Museums on social media. The team of educators at the Musée de la Guerre decided to quickly develop original digital programming and create new content. During the first lockdown, we set up digital content (films, videos, games, etc.) on social media and the Moselle website. The challenge of this second lockdown is to develop new content with a sufficient budget. The expenditures incurred for digital technologies during the first lockdown did not give rise to additional funding. We have therefore had to find a new way to work and create this content.

**Catherine Cuenca** - We heard how some of the museum directors are feeling. This period has been difficult for everyone

and it has taken a lot of ingenuity and efficiency to set up remote working and organise activities adapted to the situation. Staff have been working hard, because they were also busy in October with wrapping up budgets for the end of the financial year, and HR departments have been working hard to organise remote working. One of the problems has been the ability to provide equipment and logistics resources for people to work from home. Psychologically, some staff had a hard time under lockdown, from being away from their colleagues and for scientists and educators, from being away from the public. The departments most affected have been those in contact with visitors, with exhibitions that have just opened between the lockdowns. However, some colleagues have enjoyed the ability to refocus on key work, on collections and projects that had been put on the back burner, and to get back to their main tasks.

**Michel Rouger** - I share the overall feeling. I think we are closing at the worst possible time because in addition to the health crisis, the strong resurgence of the pandemic is contributing to the anxious atmosphere created by terrorism. The closure of places like ours, which are places for community, openness, curiosity, dialogue and sharing, comes at a terrible time and adds to the gloomy mood.

In terms of digital technologies, we decided to put a lot of things on our website in the spring. Through discussion with our teams, this time we decided to not go for digital overkill, but to better enhance what we have already put online, including the virtual exhibition and podcasts that we posted online quickly to give us a digital presence, but which we can improve. The only new thing is that we are going to do our first Facebook Live with Catel, the comic book author whose exhibition unfortunately ended far too early. She was supposed to be at MuséoParc for a book signing. We are therefore going ahead with the event via videoconference. For 2021, we have a big project beginning in December to redo the permanent exhibition. We are therefore juggling between working from home and onsite work. We are looking ahead to 2021 and preparing our programming. We are determined to build our cultural programming because it is symbolically important to show that we are trying to stay active.

## Discussion

**Marianne Lombardi** - Is anyone considering cancelling exhibitions for six months and doing something else, such as substantive work?

**Anne-Sophie de Gasquet** - We are not planning on cancelling any exhibitions. The only question is whether to extend certain exhibitions that have not been seen very much. The problem is that it can have repercussions on the following exhibitions. During the first lockdown, we managed to reschedule everything without cancelling anything. We were determined to focus on the exhibitions of contemporary artists who had more at stake. Right now we are wondering about extending some exhibitions.

**Dominique de Font-Réaulx** - At the Louvre we are also trying to keep all our programming. We are waiting to find out a little more so as to put everything into perspective. We have also managed to maintain all our activities and we will see what we do in the future. I agree with everything that has been said, especially about our commitment to our teams. However I think that even though we are feeling discouraged, we have shown new ability with what is being done on site and online, with something that is more of a complementary rather than opposing approach. Digital technologies can be used to help people rediscover works and stimulate the interest in museums that we all share. The thing that worries me most is the stop and go effect of these lockdowns, which will be very difficult to manage, especially with our teams. I think our little museum community is looking to us, but so is a much wider circle. The stakes are high.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Jérôme you have heard the expectations and messages of hope and concern.

**Jérôme Farigoule** - Unfortunately, we're in a time of crisis, and things are therefore unpredictable. We can only hope for a reopening, but right now we can't say anything about it. All the messages have been clearly heard.

Digital technologies are not just a long-term effect of the crisis. They are everywhere in our lives and I think that everything that has been developed just confirms that. There are clearly issues, such

as a certain digital divide between institutions. There are those able to provide a digital offering and those that are more vulnerable, sometimes with the added complexity of not having the independence to deal with these issues under their overseeing bodies and local authorities. We are very aware of this issue. Finally the fact that digital technologies cannot replace contact with the works is another issue.

On the positive side of things, which we need to focus on because they are an opportunity for the future, the government has announced measures to support the cultural sector as part of the recovery plan. Coincidentally, the considerable increase in our budgets from appropriations should also allow us to think about the future and help the investment projects of institutions, providing you with better and broader support. These are things that we can focus our actions on within the central administration. However, there will be no operating grants.





# Session 2

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**Are new ways of working  
generating new solidarities?  
Between different professions?  
Between employees  
and people with insecure jobs?  
Between museums?**

*Tuesday 15 December 2020*



## Speakers:

**Claire Cesbron**, Visitor Department Manager at the Pont-Aven Museum and Musée de la pêche in Concarneau

**Anne Dopffer**, Director of French national museums of the 20th Century for the Alpes-Maritimes

**Béatrice Salmon**, Director of the French National Centre for Visual Arts

**Romane Sarfati**, Managing Director of the Sèvres Manufactory and of the National Museums of Sèvres and Limoges - Cité de la Céramique

**Leena Tokila**, President of the ICOM International Committee for the Training of Personnel (ICTOP)

**Moderation: Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France



For several months now, the health crisis has been transforming the work of institutions. Museums have demonstrated an exemplary attitude in terms of their creative capacity, compliance with regulations and their determination to be forward-looking. Now, more than ever, museum professions have undergone fundamental changes. Some functions, such as digital technologies, have become more prominent than ever. New issues, such as the importance of sustainability, remote working, cooperation between each other and/or with our colleagues in other countries are new challenges that will change the way we work.

Solidarity is the key issue today.

ICOM France has tried to underline that solidarity is what will strengthen our ties with all our international colleagues. The

lockdowns, closures, remote working and job insecurity have aroused generosity and the desire to exchange and share ideas. What does this look like?

Is it true that new ways of working have also created new forms of solidarity? Are these changes and new ways of cooperating sustainable? What kind of feedback are we getting? What are the problems? How can we reinvent the jobs of the future? With what resources?

Five speakers will be providing their perspectives.

This is a major topic of the greatest importance, which obviously takes us back to the meaning of these professions...

**Anne Dopffer** - It is important for us to be able to communicate about our experiences. However, during this time, with all its practical and technical problems, we also need to bring back meaning, and solidarity is a subject that reminds us of that.

The three national museums of the 20th century in the Alpes Maritimes *département* (Musée National Marc Chagall in Nice, Musée National Fernand Léger in Biot and Musée National Picasso La Guerre et la Paix in Vallauris) are grouped into a national department overseen by the French Ministry of Culture. We share this status with a dozen other national museums.

• ***Museums already pooling their resources: solidarity is in their DNA***

These three museums were created in the 20th century, so they are relatively recent, but they have been pooling their resources since 1994. They therefore have solid experience in this area. Solidarity is part of our DNA and is reflected in every aspect of our work. Each museum has a specialised cultural team, because to carry out our mission properly, you have to start with the collections, the artist and the history of these collections, but we also have joint teams that work across the three sites. We already know how to work remotely and coordinate work. This kind of solidarity is also applied financially since we share our revenue. With 180,000 visitors per year, the Musée Chagall in Nice is the driving force behind it. This enables us to finance projects in the other museums that have fewer visitors. However, the current situation has definitely disrupted the organisation of work within the museums and the connection with the public and artists.

• ***Maintaining the connection within the museum through various digital tools***

So this was our starting point, but like all of you, we found ourselves faced with the COVID-19 crisis and managed to set up tools quite quickly to work across all the sites. The first issue was shared servers. Staff didn't have access to shared files and resources at home. Fortunately, we had already started to set up shared networks, which proved to be very useful. However at the beginning of the lockdown, staff were not equipped with computer equipment. Things improved significantly at the end of the first lockdown. We were given RSA keys that provide remote access to resources.

Like everyone else, we learned how to work in virtual meetings. At first, we felt that the meetings were more efficient as everyone knew that the speaking time was limited. However, over time, we realised that all the communication that goes on before and after these meetings, which allows for precious informal exchanges, was no longer possible.

I quickly saw that that the connection that was impacted the most due to a lack of daily communication was between the administrative/cultural teams and the reception/security teams. This was a big problem, so we quickly set up communication methods that we had not used before. This included emails with all the staff, as well as other less formal methods, such as social media networks, to keep them informed of things happening at the museum that they couldn't see. I felt that it was very important to diversify these tools, to stay connected and constantly adapt them as the situation progressed. In particular, we decided to create a newsletter because a lot of things were still happening despite the closure and lockdown, and it was important to keep the teams informed so that they wouldn't end up with a mountain of things to catch up on when they came back.

There is one area in which we weren't proactive enough and that is remote training. When we developed our training strategies for 2021, I asked that particular efforts be made in this area, especially for reception and security staff, as we are not always sure that they have the computer equipment they need.

• ***Maintaining solidarity with cultural partners and artists***

A second area in which it was important to maintain a sense of solidarity was our relationships with our cultural partners, and especially the artists.

Outside our exhibitions, we programme around forty events per year with cultural institutions (Opéra de Nice, Piste d'Azur, circus training organisation, etc.). It was important to maintain a connection and continue our programming with them.

Little by little, as the lockdown continued, it became essential to come up with ways to maintain our programming and support them, particularly young artists that we reach out to for performances or events. For *La Nuit des Musées*, we anticipated that the lockdown would be extended and decided to use a film to keep a record of the performance that had been planned. We were able to broadcast the film live, which enabled us to pay the artists even though they didn't get to have a live audience. It is not easy to make films with sufficient aesthetic and artistic quality to compensate for a performance. You have to have the right resources and I must admit that we are not fully equipped. We quickly hit our own limits in terms of the capacity to develop content collectively and our ability to produce footage that was interesting enough to stop audiences going to watch another institution's broadcast.

Solidarity with artists is very important and we do our best to keep a connection with them and ensure that the projects we commission from them come to fruition.

Finally, there has been solidarity with our museum colleagues. I was impressed with what happened during the first lockdown and the way we all helped each other reschedule, postpone and extend our exhibitions. At our museums, this was a difficult issue because the Chagall and Léger museums are highly sought after for external loans. And since we work jointly with cross-cutting roles, this can also have an impact on our teams working on exhibitions in the 3 museums at the same time. These delays are difficult to reschedule.

There was a lot of solidarity, but this may be a little less the case now that the crisis is ongoing. We are all equally limited in the answers we can give our colleagues because we're in a state of uncertainty. As far as loans are concerned, some colleagues felt that if we can't transport, we can no longer loan pieces. I disagree and think it's a shame that some organisations have completely put a hold on their loans.

When it comes to dialogue with colleagues in a broader sense, the situation has deteriorated a little, maybe because we are tired and every question we ask raises another.

- ***Continuing to develop projects with a new timeframe***

For our part, we have still managed to develop projects and we're finishing the installation of a very important work by Fernand Léger, thanks to a five-year loan from the Cnap (National Centre for Visual Arts - *Centre national des arts plastiques*). The Cnap was a real help despite the circumstances.

I would like to emphasise the need to develop longer-term projects and long-term loans are conducive to this because we are faced with time frame issues. At first we were adjusting to new circumstances. However we ultimately need to make much more deep-seated changes. Perhaps it is time to revisit our events mindset, where exhibitions are developed as 3-month events, but also all our programming to encourage local visitors to come to our museums on a regular basis.

- ***Solidarity with the public***

For me, one of the most difficult issues is solidarity with the public. We are used to a relatively top-down approach to dialogue with our visitors, even though we are trying to make more room for interaction and exchange, and give them a place in experiences that are a little different. However, this is still a difficult subject because we need to invent new forms and find existing communication tools that are currently being used by museums to communicate with the public, which we can turn around to communicate in the other direction.

**Claire Cesbron** - The Musée de Pont-Aven and Musée de la Pêche in Concarneau have been pooling resources since 2012. Two teams have learned to work together jointly on two separate sites. We're used to remote working but the lockdown and health crisis were still a huge challenge.

- ***Working methods and solidarities within teams***

The relationship between museum staff, as well as the way they work together, changed, in order to adapt. Although the teams were used to remote working, we had to reorganise our working methods and implement new, more specific tools to organise work between the different departments of the museums.

We also launched a collaborative and participatory exhibition that was supposed to last a few weeks but will end up lasting much

longer. Our teams were truly committed to this collective initiative. Everyone rallied together due to the reorganisation of events. We set up a public vote to develop an exhibition that got the public involved, which was not easy. All the teams were extremely supportive of each other in developing the projects. We felt a strong desire to see all the projects through to the end and a great sense of willingness on the part of everyone.

• ***Solidarity with local cultural players: tour guides and artists***

There has also been solidarity with local cultural players and tour guides. We use tour guides on a regular basis, paying them on a per-service basis. We didn't want them to be forgotten and wanted to help them. They are cultural players who are part of our museum life. The decision was made to still pay for the services that were unable to be carried out. We will need to carry certain initiatives into the long term since visitors won't be coming back in droves just yet.

The same applies for cultural actions with artists. We don't work with large institutions, but with independent artists around one-off events. We had to integrate a long-term way of working that includes the possibility of remote actions.

Obviously, France's unique system that supports museums encourages long-term solidarity with other players who have less job security.

• ***Redefined missions: long-term sustainability and strategy***

The two lockdowns were experienced differently. The first was a time of urgent adaptation to a new timeframe. The technological and technical obstacles were not that difficult to overcome because we were supported and tools exist for working remotely and adapting relatively easily. The lockdown was actually experienced as a "gift" of time where we were able to refocus our activities.

However, the second lockdown was a real turning point and led to lots of questioning. Our teams experienced it as a redefinition of their missions. We normally have contact with visitors on a daily basis, but since that was no longer possible in the same way, questions about our fundamental missions were raised. During the second lockdown, we went beyond short-term projects and focused on the long-term sustainability of methods. We are now going to

focus on strategy and long-term encounters and relationships with the public. We are used to experimentation and human relationships. This lockdown has led us to strategies that are no longer plan Bs and that focus more on digital technology and the integration of a long-term remote component. A one-time approach has become a permanent integrated part of daily life.

Today, I think that it is this change that is key, and that needs to be taken into account. Museum educators have been forced into a corner, which raises the question of skills and training. Our training strategy has also been completely revised. We are going to have to take the time to lay everything out and decide what can be done in the long term and not deal with the crisis too quickly. It is going to be essential to rethink these training strategies and incorporate new working methods into our workload management. This still raises lots more questions, and new issues and new challenges for our teams.

- ***The solidarity of networks***

Working in networks can help teams, especially for smaller museums. The initiative could be managed by outreach associations, curators or more broadly, by institutions, to help this develop into a long-term approach. Working in a network can help us examine ourselves and assess what works and what doesn't, and therefore have a meaningful long-term impact.

There has been a lot of discussion among colleagues about health protocols and reopening – very specific questions – but the challenge is to maintain commitment in the long term and see how this initiative, developed in a time of crisis, can be integrated in a productive way in the future. The central issues are not necessarily technological challenges, but long-term questions about training and the integration of new ways to reach out to the public.

**Romane Sarfati** - The institution includes the Sèvres Manufactory, the National Museum of Ceramics of Sèvres and the Adrien Dubouché National Museum of Limoges. It is one institution on two sites located 400 km apart, with a manufactory and two museums. Their activities are connected but fundamentally different in terms of professions. We have activities ranging from artist residencies to production in the manufactory workshops, training for young apprentices learning the trades of the manufactory and a modern art gallery

activities for works produced at the manufactory. Of course there are also the activities of our museums that you are familiar with. We represent a great diversity of missions and professions, which is why we each experienced the COVID-19 crisis very differently depending on the nature of our activities, and from one lockdown to the other.

• ***Solidarity and cooperation between staff: maintaining a connection***

The two lockdowns were experienced differently. During the first lockdown, all staff were asked to stay home, apart from those required to ensure minimum service. During the second lockdown, artisans at the Manufactory were able to continue working. That's 120 artisans out of 240, which is 50% of staff!

In terms of solidarity and cooperation, the challenge during the first lockdown was to avoid isolation at all costs, and to maintain the connection between staff who didn't all have a computer or mobile phone. It has been a real challenge to maintain the connection with all the teams. The issue was to avoid isolation and financial insecurity for some, and for the teams working from home, to ensure that they had proper working conditions, even just in terms of equipment.

The reception and security staff in Sèvres still couldn't work during the second lockdown. We therefore tried to give them new tasks in the museum, especially with the creation of a new shop at the museum in Sèvres. In Limoges, the team is responsible for security so it was less important to find new jobs for them. But their teams still showed initiative, and put training programmes in place for the reception and security staff.

The crisis also strengthened the ties between Sèvres and Limoges. The two institutions are 400 km away from each other, and being able to organise video conference calls every week enabled the director of the Museum of Limoges to be with us every week during management committee meetings. It was the same for the various coordination meetings and bodies of the institution.

Remote working and online meeting tools were a great help for organising these better prepared and more concise meetings. However, we really missed all the little exchanges in the hallways or at the coffee machine that are so important in facilitating mutual understanding.

- ***Between the right to disconnect charter and team engagement***

Internal communication and social dialogue were very important and kept us busy. We worked with all the labour organisations to draw up a business continuity plan, a recovery plan and a remote working charter, which we had initially planned to implement next year, but which the context led us to implement at the same time as the right to disconnect charter. Although these charters were approved, I have to admit that with the dedication of our teams, the stream of emails has continued in the evenings and on the weekends. It was still important for us to put all this in place.

Our teams have been highly productive during this time, especially while working remotely. The “*À table !*” exhibition in particular comes to mind. It is a very important exhibition for us that was supposed to be inaugurated in Sèvres on 16 November 2020. We are holding our breath for the opening date of this exhibition, which has been produced throughout this period. The teams have been remarkably committed and engaged in this project.

The teams were also very active on social media and developed and created numerous quizzes, stories and content that we had not previously programmed. Obviously, we’re wondering what will happen when we reopen and how we will manage to keep up these new dynamics without disappointing our visitors.

- ***Solidarity between non-cultural partners***

Cooperation has developed with other cultural institutions, especially when it came to loans that we postponed to adapt to their programming.

It has also developed with service providers and non-cultural partners, whom we have been quick to pay in order to do our best to avoid putting them in financial difficulty. On the flip side, a partner who organises events on our site loaned us the Sèvres Orangery so that our staff could have lunch under the required health conditions.

- ***Meaning of our work***

We are lucky to work for cultural institutions with strong values and major funding from public authorities. Passing on know-how, artistic creation and sharing cultural experiences with as many people as possible is at the heart of our work. The crisis has increased our confidence in our missions and our values, while

the State reassured us of its support and guaranteed a controlled economic recovery, even if our financial situation has deteriorated. Beyond the confidence and energy that this has given us, I am deeply confident that taking or “giving ourselves” the time for creativity and to admire the beauty of works will be powerful tools for building the world of tomorrow.

**Béatrice Salmon** - We are a public institution that supports the visual arts through a dual set of actions: direct support for artists and anyone who assists them through a series of initiatives (e.g. grants) and another component that consists of our collection, which has grown through quite extraordinary continuity since the 18th century, with a public policy that considers that acquiring art from living artists is a form of support. Today the collection has around 105,000 works used as a resource for museums. Museums have the responsibility of having collections that can be presented to the public. We do not have a direct relationship with the public, but through the museums, we have a network of professionals, and it's with this network that the question of solidarity first arose.

• *Different working conditions between two lockdowns*

Like my colleagues, the two lockdowns were experienced differently.

We have a collections project that began a year ago in preparation for the the Cnap's move to Pantin in 2024<sup>1</sup>. The move will bring all the collections and teams together onto one site. To prepare for the move and make sure that it takes place under the best conditions, we've embarked on a collections project that will review the 40% of the collection currently in storage. 40,000 works will be processed to prepare them for the new storage site. Following a call for tenders, this collections project was entrusted to a consortium combining various skills, including management, curating and documentation. It is a team of around ten people with independent status who have been working on site for a year, in close collaboration with our own teams. The first lockdown resulted in this project being immediately suspended, which was heartbreaking, and also a problem with respect to this external team.

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://www.cnap.fr/chantier-des-collections/web-serie/episode-1>.

For the rest of the teams, the Cnap was quite well prepared for computerised and remote working in terms of equipment and experience. Things were already in place and we optimised them to the fullest.

The second lockdown was quite different. Our management teams were able to come back, combining remote working and a more flexible form of onsite work. We were also able to bring back the team working on the collections project, which was very important.

• ***Increased initiatives for artists***

At the same time, we have created a number of new initiatives using special funds provided by the Ministry of Culture and other partners in a spirit of solidarity to support and help artists make it through the crisis.

For artists who provide outreach services to museums, the closure of these institutions led to real job insecurity. Some organisations and local authorities were able to continue paying artists but this was not always the case. We therefore set up an emergency fund to offset their income loss.

All this work was carried out virtually by Cnap teams who have worked diligently to fulfil our missions even though there are not many of us. Our resources were multiplied tenfold and so were our actions. However, we were lucky to have job security, which is somewhat unique to France and reassuring, but it also gave us a sense of duty in our collaborations with those outside our organisation who do not enjoy the same protection.

• ***Obligation of results towards museums***

For the management of our collections, we are constantly changing things, because our loan and long-term loan activities are contingent on constant scheduling changes.

We definitely have an obligation of results and solidarity towards museums.

Thanks to the various aspects mentioned above, we have been able to meet a number of requests. Since the end of the first lockdown, over a hundred works were sent to the Bordeaux Museum of Modern Art (CAPC) for a long-term loan which has significantly contributed to the new display of the museum's permanent collections.

The Cnap hopes to represent the interests of the whole network of museums and to work hand in hand with the artists with whom we have a natural and permanent relationship.

**Leena Tokila** - ICTOP is the International Committee for the Training of Personnel. It is one of the oldest ICOM committees and was created in 1968. It is not a large committee, but we're very active. ICTOP focuses on staff training, at a post-secondary level and for professionals during their careers.

From our perspective of the situation of museum professionals, their jobs have been updated by the crisis. A few years ago, ICTOP published a museum skills guide<sup>2</sup>. Clearly, new professional categories need to be added to the guide.

- ***Learning by doing***

The pandemic has had a major impact on how museums operate. Museums have made a huge leap when it comes to digital technology. The learning by doing educational model has been implemented. Professionals had to communicate with the public about new ways to explore museum activities. The health crisis forced them to quickly learn how to produce digital services for exhibitions and access to collections. Professionals need to share their knowledge, communicate and develop partnerships so as to be stronger and more effective together. We have to increase solidarity through dialogue in order to overcome the crisis. We need to work in such a way that allows museums to adapt.

- ***Equal access to digital training***

Equality is essential for human resource development in museums.

More than ever, the crisis has underlined the importance of equality in institutions when it comes to individual skills development. All staff members need to be treated the same way regardless of their job or position in the institution. Equality means equal access to education, training and personal development plans. I am pleased to hear that there are training projects for staff among us. This is not the case in all museums. It's an area that we still need to work on.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.icom-musees.fr/ressources/referentiel-des-professionnels-des-musees>

• ***Digital skills of the public***

We've been talking about the digital skills of museum professionals. The crisis has changed the relationships our professions have with digital technology. What do we mean by that?

For museums, it means providing professionals with the opportunity to acquire digital skills for managing digital collections, digitisation strategy, cataloguing, evaluating digitisation quality, digital accessibility, online learning programmes and digital experiences.

But shouldn't we keep in mind that digital services are for visitors? Are museums able to help visitors acquire these types of skills so that they can use the services offered? It is important to remember the digital skills of the museum audience. Even if the museum is extremely well equipped, it needs to be able to assist and help visitors take full advantage of its digital services.

• ***Training strategy for the new future***

When it comes to training, we need to think about the new future, and training is essential to preparing life post pandemic. Jobs in museums have changed, are changing and will continue to change. With these changes, institutions will need to train and acquire new skills.

The post-pandemic world also means tackling issues surrounding sustainable development, knowledge of our cultural environment and the role of museums in society. We need to focus on the immediate impacts of the pandemic on the activities of museums, but in the aftermath of the crisis, we should consider these issues and think about how to prepare museum professionals to deal with them.

It is essential to keep in mind that conditions are not the same everywhere in the world, even though the crisis seems common to everyone. The situation and operational environment in Africa are very different. We are currently working on a collaborative project application with our colleagues in Africa to give museums there a more meaningful role. Museums need to reconsider their role in the area of education, so that they can help society.

I know that it is very difficult to provide a blanket approach to these training issues because there are many differences between countries. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement has had a big impact on American museums, unlike museums in Finland.

The challenge of the post-COVID-19 world is equality.

Although the situations are different, what unites us is the way we view and prepare for the new future and ICOM is an excellent network for enabling ideas to be exchanged.

## Discussion

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - I believe I can draw out two issues in what you said. The first concerns remote working. We think that in some way or another, it is going to become commonplace in the way we work. What are the right conditions for remote working? We can't ignore the discrimination and inequalities that exist with remote work. How do we provide the same opportunities to everyone with these new ways of working?

**Romane Sarfati** - That is the whole question with equipment conditions, with access to computer tools and resources. However it also raises the issue of the space in which we work at home. The difference between the two lockdowns comes to mind. In the second, children were able to go to school.

It's all about balance. The remote working charter we've been working on in Sèvres is based on the idea of finding the right balance between working on site and working from home a little for specific tasks and projects. This raises the issue of conditions and the right balance between remote and on site working.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - What is remote working training? In some way, there is a paradox with remote working. We're far away from each other yet extremely close, more connected. We've seen this with our series of conferences, which have brought together a lot of participants from all around the world. Are there training programmes that enable us to all be equal when it comes to remote working?

**Leena Tokila** - The Finnish Museums Association is working on preparing a series of webinars for museum directors<sup>3</sup> to teach them how to be good managers for remote workers. For example, they need to contact their teams regularly and have online meetings with employees several times a week so that they are not left on their own. It is important for employees to feel connected and for the institution to communicate with them.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.museoliitto.fi/en.php?k=9067>

One of the positive aspects of remote working is the issue of costs. There are many countries with museum professionals who are unable to attend conferences due to the high cost of travel and accommodation. However, this is now becoming possible through the ability to participate on line. On the one hand, I'm very pleased with these opportunities, but on the other, problems have arisen with this new type of organisation within museums.

**Romane Sarfati** - Sharing skills is essential. However it is not easy to pool resources, especially due to distance, and it is important to not have objectives that are too "technocratic".

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Is the situation different in other countries besides France or Finland?

**Teti Hadjinicolaou** - The topic we're talking about is very important and we need to persevere. In Greece, this subject has not yet been fully addressed. We all need to continue the debate so that we arrive at some useful conclusions. The remarks of our colleague from ICTOP were very enlightening and I think they could contribute to our work. We can make progress all together.

**Stéphanie Wintzerith** - In Germany, solidarity is, of course, a very important issue. I do not think there is a big difference with France. The situations are quite similar.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Some of you have talked about the unique case of France and a system that has provided museums with significant support, which has led to quite different behaviours. Do you think that government support has fostered solidarity between individuals, and insecure professions?

**Claire Cesbron** - I think this will play out in the long term. When it comes to relationships with artists, being able to defend their actions by offering payment for their services (even if it is in another form) is definitely important. Support from local authorities who did not cancel everything will strengthen solidarity over the long term. Museum institutions demonstrated solidarity towards artists and insecure professions during the pandemic. The challenge is for this solidarity to continue in the post-pandemic world.





# Session 3

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**Pooling resources  
as an expression of solidarity**

*Tuesday 19 January 2021*



## Speakers:

**Maud Boissac**, Cultural Affairs Director of the City of Cannes

**Richard Dagherne**, Director of the Palais des Ducs de Lorraine - Musée Lorrain and Nancy-Musée

**Diana Pardue**, President of the Disaster Resilient Museums Committee (DRMC) and Head of the Museum Service Division, Statue of Liberty NM and Ellis Island (New York)

**Pierre Pénicaud**, Heritage Inspector, College of Museums, Heritage Directorate of the French Ministry of Culture and co-author of the report on the organisation of museums in France in line with territorial reforms

**Sophie Warlop**, Director of the Museums of Dunkirk.

**Moderation: Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France



There are paradoxical perspectives on sharing or pooling resources (“*mutualiser*», in French). For some, pooling resources means losing singularity and distinctiveness, and even independence.

However, as Juliette Raoul-Duval points out in her introduction, the position of today’s debate is different. The aim is to develop solidarity and in this sense, pooling resources is a means to an end.

**Pierre Pénicaud** - Together with Bruno Saunier, General Curator of Heritage and Inspector of Heritage from the College of Museums, we prepared a report for the General Director of Heritage in 2020 which examined the changes experienced by museums under numerous territorial restructuring initiatives. These include the merger of regions, changes at the *département* level and the creation of public establishments for inter-municipal cooperation (EPCI).

We have identified a real shift in the organisation of museums. This is the reason why we added the sub-heading “Towards increased transfers and pooled resources”.

To write our report, we started with a sample of around one hundred museums and then narrowed them down to around thirty examples. We drew on the services of the central administration (the local offices department at the Services des Musées de France - SMF) and were heavily reliant on the decentralised service of the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRACs). In general terms, it is interesting to note that the French Heritage Code does not specify how museums should be organised, leaving a lot of freedom to local authorities in how they are organised. What struck us was the complex and changing nature of territorial organisation, which makes the organisation of museums unstable.

- ***Transferred responsibilities***

First, transfers: a number of museums have been transferred to another level of government (most were managed municipally and some were transferred to be managed at the metropolitan area or urban agglomeration levels). There are some major trends at different levels. The regions, which had little to do with museums, have increasingly taken over the management of some institutions. We are seeing the opposite with *départements*, which have become less involved. As for metropolitan areas, they have been taking on increasing management of museums, with a number of full or partial transfers.

- ***A shift towards pooled resources, beyond the field of museums***

What was really remarkable was the shift towards pooling at several levels, between museums or with other departments within the same local government. Around twenty years ago, efforts were made to pool resources but they fell by the wayside. But what does it mean to pool resources? It means sharing buildings (joint reserves), and human and/or financial resources.

The tendency is to group all these aspects together, and to appoint a director of museums who, in most cases, is a scientist from the museum field, and not an administrator, contrary to what we might have feared. The director of museums may be a director of one of the museums, or not be directly responsible for any of them. Having responsibility for one of the museums can be problematic because

it is important to avoid favouring one museum over the others. The example of the city of Nancy is interesting because there has been a kind of rotation system in the management of the city's museums.

Joint departments allow for reorganisation. Some areas, such as administrative divisions, visitor services, and collection and management teams are easier to merge. Distance, rather than differences, makes it more difficult to pool resources. The case of the two national museums of ceramics in Sèvres and Limoges, located 400 km from each other, in extremely different contexts, is an example of this.

Another aspect that stood out was that pooling resources is becoming more prevalent outside the museum sector. In general, local governments are thinking about all types of heritage. In Marseille, the city's Museum of History has taken over the archaeology department. In Aix-en-Provence, the archaeology department has taken over the Muséum. There is no pattern. It is easy for museums and archaeological sites to pool resources, along with museums and cities of art and history (through the creation of local architecture and heritage centres (CIAP)), archives departments, libraries and universities. Pooling resources has become a real movement.

• ***Advantages and drawbacks of pooling resources***

What are the advantages? Firstly, there is strength in numbers. Smaller institutions become larger, with more political clout. Thus, diversity is the key to success (for example, pooling the resources of a Museum and a Museum of Fine Arts, having the scientific and cultural projects of museums taken over by archives departments, etc.). In this sense, pooling resources creates solidarity.

Of course there are drawbacks and limitations (scientific aspects, for instance). Pooling is often initiated by politicians thinking that money will be saved. However, pooling resources does not generate savings. When institutions are stronger, they ask for more. There are also limitations when it comes to versatility. And then there are difficulties linked to the complexity of hierarchical structures that need to be redesigned. We need to change the paradigm of how things

work. Our government central services have not embraced this major shift. However, pooling resources at the local and regional government level has been supported by Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRACs).

To conclude, these mixed and inter-disciplinary approaches are really very positive. Cross-cutting approaches are enriching, and enrichment means solidarity.

**Sophie Warlop** - The Lieu d'Art et d'Action Contemporaine (LAAC) and the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Dunkerque began pooling resources all the way back in 1994. A report on the two municipal museums highlighted a lack of competition, which initially led to a partial merger. Only the administrative, scientific and technical teams were pooled. Each museum had their own reception and security teams. All the teams were fully merged in 1998.

- ***Maintaining an identity***

We have also been pooling resources with heritage sites for many years. All this has been consolidated. Our budget is fully integrated, there is no longer any distinction between our facilities and pooling affects almost our entire organisational structure. Our units are cross-cutting. The administrative department, technical division, outreach service, collections, security and a communications officer work in a fully cross-functional manner.

However some positions are dedicated to projects. For example, there is a curator for the LAAC project to maintain the identity of the site. We also want to hire a curator for a new project for the Musée des Beaux-Arts.

- ***Capacity-building coupled with the issue of responsibility***

This long-standing pooling of resources has helped build the capacities of our teams, whether for Category C staff (e.g. merging the technical staff has enabled us to hire a carpenter, an electrician and a painter) or the scientific team. We have also been able to recruit specialists. We have really been able to build our capacities at every level (for outreach, we have a staff member dedicated to specific audiences). These pooled resources give us the capability to tackle major projects and the ability to bring together a larger team and be more ambitious with our projects.

As far as drawbacks are concerned, our organisational structure is very complex, which requires division managers who are very good at what they do, but who need to be able to get along. We opted for a project-based structure with rotating management so that everyone has a turn heading up a project.

• *Effective pooling that aims to expand*

In the scientific and cultural plan that has just been written, other questions about pooling resources are raised. The LAAC is located near the Regional Contemporary Art Fund (FRAC) Grand Large, with whom we have carried out several projects, including developing common service contracts, aligning our pricing policies, working on opening hours and developing a combined pass. These joint projects have encouraged collaboration between the teams, but they have also enabled us to work on joint budgetary management for projects and seek patronage. Collaboration between the museums and the FRAC has been very effective.

We have partnerships with other museums in the area and we are talking about continuing to work through networks, such as the Art Contemporain network, which is very well organised, or by creating a heritage network. We are trying to come up with forms of travelling projects to reach out to the public. This means targeting our own audiences and new ones. By pooling resources, we are able to reach other people by using each of our networks. I am a staunch advocate of pooling resources, which we have seen to be very effective, and which will be applied to other exciting projects in the agglomeration.

**Richard Dagorne** - The municipal museums in Nancy were merged in 2017. This includes the Musée des Beaux-Arts, le Palais des Ducs de Lorraine - Musée Lorrain and the Musée de l'École de Nancy. Each one has its specificities: Villa Maïorelle at the Musée de l'École de Nancy, and Maison Jean Prouvé, which is part of the Musée des Beaux-Arts.

• *Specific tools and jobs*

Pierre Pénicaut talked about the overall approach to pooling resources. I would like to make two points. Within the museum team in Nancy, we have a person in charge of heritage promotion who acts as an interface between the museums and their collections

and more urban-based promotion. She makes sure that the museum collections are not forgotten when we work at a city-wide level. We also have an even newer specificity: an urban arts development officer at the Musée des Beaux-Arts. They act as a liaison with a rapidly developing sector.

Prior to 2017, we ran a number of joint experiments around themes common to more than one institution, such as art nouveau. In 2013, we set up a shared reserve, which is an extraordinary tool. It is important not to think like an owner, but to de-compartmentalise the reserves. Finally, over the past ten years, the Musée de l'École de Nancy has had exhibitions at the Musée des Beaux-Arts several times, as will the Musée Lorrain while it is being renovated.

The way we pool our resources is interesting because it does not go as far as the museums in Dunkirk. We have kept a large portion of our teams, including security, technical management and documentation teams. We currently have two large shared departments: the General Secretariat and the Public Affairs/Communications Department. As for the question of museum educators, we require that they be able to work on two sites.

The Musées de Nancy management team includes the three museum directors, the general secretary and a curator dedicated to public affairs and communication, which is essential for keeping a focus on the public.

• ***The effects of pooling resources***

What are the effects of pooling resources? From my point of view, it has allowed capacities that were only in place in one institution to impact all the others. This is true both in the area of revenue management (there was expertise, but not necessarily in the largest museum) and in the area of communication (a wonderful staff member at one of the museums who has made their expertise available to all the institutions).

Pooling resources also means better information-sharing between the museums. During the lockdown, we were able to use the time to work on the joint scientific and cultural project for the museums of Nancy, via remote meetings, which helped us to keep our teams on their toes.

• ***Conditions for success: harmonisation, equality and shared values***

I think it is important to underline the conditions for successful resource-sharing. Solidarity, which is what today's meeting is all about, is better expressed in projects that bring together teams that are not already merged. It is not easy to implement pooling because the habits and practices of each museum can be well entrenched, and it is not always easy to change them. Work has to be done to harmonise practices.

As Pierre Pénicaut said, when you are both the director of an institution and the head of a joint structure, you have to be fair in managing budgets so that no one is left out and that coordination work is done in an extremely equitable manner.

My last point is what I believe to be the most important, and that is the need to create a common culture. I even suggested including a chapter called "Shared values" when we were writing the scientific and cultural project. Shared values are at the heart of our discussions on public safety and security, reception, conservation-restoration, research and dissemination. These areas have not been merged yet, but we can slowly work towards pooling resources, provided that a common foundation is built.

**Maud Boissac** - Although the museums were already pooling resources when I arrived, I consider myself a witness to and active player in the municipal policy of pooling resources. We have been working on a 5-year city-wide project that pooled resources called "When art feeds the city" (*Quand l'art nourrit la cité*). Its goal is to mainstream artistic and cultural education and enrich the city with art and culture. It is a vast project that requires a lot of resources.

In a context where government funding has been cut by 12%, pooling resources has become a way to move forward.

• ***Expanding the offering and technical capability***

When we meet with all the teams, we ask them about their skills and how more responsibilities can be given to certain positions in order to expand the offering.

17,800 young people have an artistic and cultural project. Monitoring tools have to be put in place, as well as contracts

with partners (school principals, education authorities) and other cultural institutions.

We have pooled all the museum educators for all cultural facilities by creating a coordinator position: a staff member at the municipal archives has become artistic and cultural education coordinator. This has enabled us to think about how to expand and share skills and technical capacities for this project. In the end, it's about radically shifting paradigms and de-segmenting the offering that was available to teachers and recreation centres. All the directors, museum educators and people in charge of public services will work together on much more inter-disciplinary projects that focus on theme-based adventures with a common thread that makes things clearer by expanding the available offering - a single theme explored through museum collections, performances and cinema.

• ***Pooling resources: a common political culture?***

With this project, we have become a place for experimentation and a national laboratory. Today we are putting tools in place for any towns or cities wanting to mainstream cultural education.

We now have 300 projects developed together every year, which are offered to the public, schools and recreation centres.

This is a real change in terms of sharing. The common culture is therefore not so much related to the museum facilities, but to the city's cultural policy.

• ***Pooling resources on a city-wide scale***

More generally, there was a desire to put art in the public space. In this respect, we also have a project with the city's municipal departments to make them patrons of the arts. For example, the parks department can work with an illustrator to design the urban furniture in a city park, and the roads department can collaborate with a contemporary artist on the redevelopment of a neighbourhood. This project affects 2,500 city employees and also increases our budget.

What is interesting is that it also empowered other professions and enhanced the importance of cultural educators within this project.

In addition, it was a way to get staff involved, change their objectives and expose them to other cultural sites and people. The idea

of de-segmenting things had a positive impact on the community in terms of acceptance of the project and expanding the reach of the city of Cannes.

**Diana Pardue** - The international committee of which I am president is one of the most recent to be created. Our role is not just to raise awareness about the importance of emergency planning. It is also to disseminate information and provide museums with training. The DRMC works in collaboration with the standing committee and the heritage preservation department. Managing museum emergencies requires proper communication and coordinated actions.

One of the most recent examples of this cooperation is the emergency response to the explosion in the port of Beirut, coordinated with ICOM's various cultural associations and the city's museums.

Emergency preparedness plans should be developed before a disaster occurs. The idea of solidarity is very important for our committee, whose members work in cooperation with various international organisations, such as ICOMOS, as well as with national organisations, in order to provide an effective and rapid response to museum emergencies.

- ***Collaboration between museums is essential in handling COVID-19***

The nature of ICOM's International Committees ensures that museums cooperate and share ideas and information with each other. In providing an emergency response to COVID-19, it is essential for museums to collaborate with the authorities and other museums, with shared evaluation of training. Museums need resources for staff, equipment, and when it comes to COVID-19, they need to make health and safety a priority.

- ***Training as a tool for pooling resources***

Since training is often outsourced nowadays, it is a joint action. By taking part in training together, museums can create a common culture.

## Discussion

**Teti Hadjinicolaou** - Resources are beginning to be pooled in Greece. For example, the National Museum of Contemporary Art will provide assistance. With a smaller museum, resources can be pooled for things like conservation, administration and education. We're starting to think about these things and are taking the first steps. There are big issues and we need to look at them in a different way.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Is it a French idea that pooling resources is something new? Is there anyone who thinks this is not a good thing? Do staff have concerns about pooling resources?

**Stéphanie Wintzerith** - I can share my experience from ten years ago at a museum in Germany with a somewhat developed system for pooling resources. It was a regional museum funded by the Länder, with 7 or 8 branches in the area. Distance is a factor that makes it more difficult to pool resources effectively. There were a number of expansions or additions that were not necessarily well integrated and efforts were not always made to pool resources. It gave the impression of a patchwork rather than a functional structure that was effective for day-to-day work. However, pooling resources is not unusual in Germany.

**Juliette Roland** - I am an independent sociologist and I work on museums in the Rhône-Alpes region. There are many examples of unsuccessful pooling. People are often reluctant for human resources to be pooled (who will be in charge of what, what museum will lose staff, etc.). The first years following mergers sometimes require difficult adjustments. The problems can sometimes run deeper, particularly if the collection is separated from outreach, for example. When a museum education department is pooled with other heritage sites, you end up with museums of France that lose part of their mission. However, I have seen all the positive aspects highlighted by Mr Pénicaud for myself. I also wanted to bring up the issue of ways for cooperating these days. In Auvergne, we are trying to implement remote collective learning methods in order for museum educators and curators to work together in a cross-cutting and participatory way, because working together via video

can be impersonal and difficult. It may be time to invent methods for communicating, managing meetings and sharing experiences that are different from classic webinars. This is perhaps an avenue to be explored. In any case, we are experimenting with the DRAC in Auvergne on this.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Pierre Pénicaud, you did not talk about the COVID-19 crisis in your presentation. Should it be seen as a factor in accelerating the pooling of resources or not? Do you think that anything has changed over the past several months?

**Pierre Pénicaud** - It is true that we carried out our inspections in 2019 and wrote our report in 2020. I cannot tell you if the crisis will accelerate or change things in terms of pooling resources. However it has changed people's relationships with each other. One problem concerns organisational and hierarchy aspects. We need to reinvent operating methods, which also requires training for managers, so that they learn how to manage these new methods. It is not possible to operate on a project basis alone, as museums are lasting institutions that need to operate on a long-term basis, and not just be focused on one-off projects.

Pooling resources can be very useful, but it is essential to understand what can make it fail. It is important that institutions with pooled resources keep their identities and do not lose them in a merger. This identity is often personified. The museum is identified by people. There is this idea of personification. This is inevitably going to have a scientific orientation, because it is the collection that gives the museum its identity. I have seen a few examples of pooled resources where there were no longer any museum managers. The director of museums was in charge of each of the institutions. I think that can be dangerous. Pooling resources requires balance. The scientific and cultural project can be pooled, but to keep the identity of each institution, it needs to be adapted. A new form of scientific and cultural project needs to be invented. A joint scientific and cultural project that is adapted for each institution. There are no rules or a one-size-fits-all solution. Besides, each institution organises itself how it wants and tries out different things.

**Juliette Raoul Duval** - For some, pooling resources can feel like a loss of identity, especially for museums integrated into other types of

institutions. Pooling resources between museums is not necessarily the same as between a museum and another kind of institution. We asked whether pooling resources is an expression of solidarity. Are there systems for mutual aid or forms of professional generosity that make museums that have lost fewer resources offer solidarity?

**Diana Pardue** - Museums have decided to work together and think about how they can contribute in emergencies. There are workshops and pooling of supplies. Some businesses provide assistance after disasters. For example, the disaster in Beirut spontaneously sparked outpourings of solidarity. COVID-19, which affects everyone, has not given rise to quite the same forms of solidarity. Training is a tool for pooling resources.

**Juliette Raoul Duval** - Training as a tool for pooling resources seems obvious once you have seen it. Of course, training that is outsourced is a pooled action. Museums take part in training together.





# Session 4

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**Free access, accessibility,  
sustainability, social  
networks, etc. Are digital  
technologies an expression  
of solidarity?**

*Tuesday 16 February 2021*



## Speakers:

**Anastasia Chourmouziadi**, Associate Professor of Museology, Department of Cultural Technology and Communication, University of the Aegean (Greece)

**Ech-Cherki Dahmali**, President of CIMUSET (ICOM's International Committee for Museums and Collections of Science and Technology) and Director of the Maroc Telecom Museum

**Brigitte Liabeuf**, Consultant for Museums and Visual Arts, DRAC Auvergne-Rhône Alpes

**Pierre-Yves Lochon**, Associate Director of Sinapses Conseils and Director of Clic France

**Paul Salmona**, Director of the Museum of Art and History of Judaism

**Moderation: Estelle Guille des Buttes**, Treasurer adjunct of ICOM France.



The subject that brings us together today is digital technologies. As Estelle Guille de Buttes points out, museums did not wait for the COVID-19 crisis to start communicating digitally with their audiences. However, COVID-19 seems to have accelerated the process. The vast majority of museums across the world have taken to digital tools to stay connected with visitors and continue to exist and be useful. Could digital technologies offer solidarities between professionals, citizens and the public? They say that a museum with less onsite visitors means a museum with fewer visitors to its website, and vice versa. However museums are developing an increasing online presence with communication, cultural outreach and dissemination of their collections. Digital technologies have been leaving the technical sphere to become a strategy in their own

right. What is a digital strategy? What are the target audiences? Can we integrate and interest all audiences? Few statistics are currently available, but the ones we have show that our online museums have reached more young people.

There is also the question of people with disabilities. What digital offerings can museums provide and through what channels? There are new questions that have arisen in the current context. What changes have been observed in terms of offerings and the tools used? What kinds of innovative experiments have been carried out? Should exhibitions be free, paid or a mixture of both? What training is available for using digital tools properly? Who should be responsible for them within museum teams?

**Ech-Cherki Dahmali** - CIMUSET did not hesitate to participate in this session, which is taking place at a critical time when we need to show solidarity with each other, especially as museums begin to feel a loss of public and private support. In the Arab world, 24% of small private museums have closed their doors for good.

• ***Digital tools, financial resources and staff training***

To come to today's theme, the first question we need to ask is about the museum's relationship with digital technologies. Having an online connection, a virtual exhibition, online events, a live show and activities, newsletters and of course being present on social media or having a website are all methods used by museums to stay in contact with the public.

However, the question is whether all museums around the world have been able to use these tools and whether a portion of their budget is always set aside for digital technologies. In Africa, 40% of museums currently allocate less than 1% of their budget to digital technologies. In addition, in most cases, staff in charge of digital technologies are what can be called digital immigrants, which means they have immigrated to digital technologies but have not been trained in them, as opposed to digital native employees. This lack of skills can be felt in communication with the public.

• ***Digital technologies to serve the collection***

Do we need digital technologies today to promote museums or to inventory the collections? Some museums have underlined the need for digital technologies, not so much for publicity, but to digitise

inventory files, as inventory is the capital of museums. Digital tools are used to store documents about collections and ensure the security and preservation of the museum's capital. Museums have other priorities, in particular the management of collections.

- ***Technology tools: supportive yet subject to inequalities***

Are digital technologies an expression of solidarity? It's a two-sided coin. They can create solidarity when content, which was formerly paid, is made available to the public for free, or if the museums offer virtual tours. However, when it comes to the availability of these tools around the world, the use of digital technologies is subject to inequalities because for some museums, their priority is the management of collections and not communication.

**Pierre-Yves Lochon** - I'll start by mentioning an idea that is important to me but that is not yet a given. A digital strategy only makes sense within the framework of an institutional strategy and with a view to achieving an overall objective: capturing or expanding an audience, better promotion of a collection, expansion of a brand or reputation, economic development or the generation of internal resources. For me, digital technologies can only ever be a tool to serve these different strategies, and not an end in themselves. However they have definitely become an increasingly essential tool.

- ***Digital tools for targeted audiences***

I would like to compare 2 figures: 78% of people in France log onto the Internet every day and 76% of French people over the age of 14 are active users of social media. Also, according to Ministry of Culture data, 29% of French people visited an exhibition or museum in 2018, which is 11% less than in 1997 (78% of which were online visits and 29% in-person visits to museums). Each strategy targets a specific audience and there is no doubt that digital tools make it possible to reach out to a younger or foreign target audience (social media, podcasts, etc.). They are essential in these cases. The Ministry of Culture study said that between 1973 and 2018, the proportion of French people aged 15 to 24 and 25 to 29 who visited a museum during a twelve month period dropped by 10%. Now, more than ever, we need to develop communication and digital outreach policies adapted to these audiences who we have had a hard time attracting to our museums. The success of TikTok

at some museums is a good example of how these digital tools have been adapted for audiences targeted by museums.

• ***Digital technologies in the COVID-19 era: 5 new trends***

COVID-19 has generated a lot of experimentation and the emergence of new tools, content and service trends that I'll sum up in 5 ideas.

1°- The “Do it Yourself” approach to producing videos and content helps to democratise access to digital technologies for museums with fewer means and financial and human resources. Smaller museums have been able to embrace digital technologies to a greater extent.

2°- Less formal messages with greater involvement from museum educators and curators who are speaking up, especially people we are not used to seeing. This shift away from formality makes it possible to produce and pass on a more subjective and therefore more accessible narrative.

3°- A greater emphasis on events and spontaneity with live-streamed tours and exhibition openings.

4°- Increased public participation through challenges, online contests and collection of objects.

5°- A major shift away from a traditional in-person approach to online activities such as shopping, workshops, conferences and school trips. The COVID-19 crisis has acted as an accelerator and I am convinced that the rapid changes to visitor and museum practices and behaviours are here to stay.

• ***Under what conditions can digital technology be monetised?***

For me, monetisation entails three conditions: public acceptance, compatibility with the museum's mission, and the added value provided. When you look at experiments that have been carried out for sales of digital activities, monetisation is only accepted or justified where there is human outreach, interaction and a reasonable price. The online courses offered by the Victoria and Albert Museum and Paris Musées, micro-tours by the Fondation Cartier and the Cité de l'Architecture, and the summer camps organised by many American museums have been successful. However, we have seen some bad examples of monetisation that have led to partial failures and a poor image for all concerned. These include videos

without interaction, unguided tours or limited access to the digital collections.

• ***Digital technologies are an expression of solidarity between professionals and the public***

In conclusion, I would like to go back to the title of this session: “Are digital technologies an expression of solidarity?”. My answer is: without a doubt! Digital technologies encourage solidarity between professionals. Their complexity and the fact that they are constantly evolving, encourages us to share best and poor practices. Moreover, their very nature facilitates the pooling of resources. The collective initiative launched by CLIC in 2020 was a real success. The video tour of France’s locked down cultural sites, organised with around twenty museums and cultural sites attracted over 2 million Facebook followers. The virtual exhibition co-produced with over 65 French collections attracted over 400,000 visitors in seven months. In this sense, digital technology can create solidarity between museums and their audiences. One example of this is the organisation of workshops, conferences or virtual tours that reach people living a long way away or who are unable to attend in person. There is also the example of participatory funding actions that support artists, keep museums in financial trouble afloat and launch new activities such as family-gear outreach, like at the Louvre. In many cases, digital technologies are a way of bringing museums and solidarity together.

**Brigitte Liabeuf** - The Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRACs) is active in this large region where we work with 135 Museums of France.

We have both nationally and internationally renowned museums run by a metropolitan area, and a local museum run by a village of 200 residents. Before talking about solidarity, I would like to underline the fact that not all museums are equal when it comes to digital technologies. Some areas in our region do not have access to the Internet. These two types of museums have very different human and financial resources. Consequently, access to and use of digital technologies is not equal.

• ***An improvised digital strategy for small museums***

Another point is perhaps linked to something that is specific to France: 80% of museums are supported by a local or regional

government. During the first lockdown, many of our colleagues told us how difficult it was for them to implement actions on social media because they are not in charge of their own communication. Communication is managed by an independent department. This silo approach prevents the fluidity expected from digital technologies and impacts the connection museums have with their visitors. That said, we have seen that on a regional level, despite these shortcomings, the best examples have come more from small museums that did not have a digital strategy before the pandemic and figured things out along the way. For example, initiatives led by museum educators who give explanations about their museum's works. Museums without a strategy have made the most of social media by doing things themselves. Actually, it's a shame that the Ministry did not include them on the "Culture Chez Nous" website, favouring good institutionalised examples over small initiatives.

• ***New content and a new way to communicate with the public***

As far as content for digital tools such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube is concerned, people were given the chance not only to visit the temporary exhibitions that were not open, but also to participate in art workshops, especially for children.

We also saw the willingness of museums to give behind the scenes looks at their operations. Many showed the installation and takedown of an exhibition, restoration activities, and some who do not normally communicate about their acquisitions policy posted their latest acquisitions online. It was a way of showing that despite the closure, their teams were working hard. We have also seen a new way of communicating with the public. They are invited to take part in quizzes, games and challenges that use humour to interpret works.

• ***Solidarity between professionals thanks to digital technologies***

When it comes to solidarity between professionals, everyone has become accustomed to videoconferencing tools. While we wondered how we were going to manage to continue exchanges remotely, for example with the informal annual meeting of the region's museum educators, digital tools proved that it is still possible to communicate and share experiences. Finally, as far as the DRAC is concerned, we have been examining our position and

how we can continue to support these initiatives through remote exchanges with the public, whether through actions in public space or support for museums that do not have a lot of resources.

**Paul Salmona** - The lockdown was an extraordinary opportunity in terms of the use of digital tools that were already quite well developed at our museum, with our entire collection and documentation online. The lockdown and thinking about what we were going to do were particularly stimulating. For our museum, it was an opportunity to increase our knowledge of digital technologies and their use.

• ***Bringing together teams to develop our digital offering***

One of the biggest advantages is how the cultural and scientific team have been brought together to work with these various tools. This not only enabled us to improve our offering on the Internet, but also to maintain an important connection with the public.

To do this, we developed a series of newsletters, we reviewed the way we present our collection and redid the records for our key works, which had not been worked on for several years. We also put thought into outreach for schools and school children, and alternative training sessions for teachers.

• ***Technological tools for a broader audience***

The museum has a local audience, with 6 to 8 exhibitions per year, a bookshop, a library, and an auditorium. We had to use our online offering to replace this close relationship with the public. As for the auditorium, we have been able to continue producing a series of interesting sessions, with a huge geographic expansion of our audience. For example, we organised a talk with Daniel Mendelsohn, the author of *The Lost*. This discussion between Paris and New York attracted over 600 online participants, which is three times the capacity of our auditorium, with people from the region and around the world. This phenomenon confirms that streaming these events reaches a wider public, which opens up strong opportunities for the future. Now we do need to explore the question of pricing, which I will not discuss because we do not yet have all the answers. Actually, when I was managing the auditorium at the Louvre, I always regretted the fact that we couldn't broadcast recordings online afterwards in order to widen our audience.

• ***Digital technology: a tool for getting people involved***

Finally, the last thing we did was organise an online fundraising drive following the acquisition of 200 courtroom sketches from the 1898 trial of Emile Zola and Dreyfus' appeal at the Lycée de Rennes. The museum acquired the drawings in December, using the museum's own funds. In just a few days, we raised over €50,000 online, which shows the power of the Internet.

**Anastasia Chourmouziadi** - Almost ten months ago the Museology Lab of Aegean University decided to record Greek museums' response to the unprecedented phenomenon of COVID-19 pandemic. Both Greek society, in general, and Greek museum-people, in particular, thought that the lockdown caused by the pandemic was a shocking but brief event, and reacted more or less spontaneously. Greek citizens proved, against all odds, quite obedient to the experts' guidance and were exemplary in adopting the new way of life, although this cannot be said for Greek museums. Based on data retrieved from the official portal 'Odysseus' of the Greek Ministry of Culture, the Museology Lab's team obtained an overview of the digital activity of museums during the lockdown period.

• ***Digital tools does not mean digital activity***

The results are quite enlightening, though not surprising at all. Research has shown that the majority of Greek museums lack their own website, therefore, museums present only in Odysseus catalogue were shut down in every sense during the lockdown. However, the existence of a website, although necessary, was not a sufficient condition for the development of online activities. Indeed, only half of those possessing a website took action, mainly informing the public about the mandatory closure along with other general announcements. Apart from that, sixteen museums provided multimedia content, nine educational programs, ten offered a virtual tour, and two museums invited their visitors to a Live Streaming Tour. Needless to say that we have to do with well-known museums with large audiences, rather stable revenues and funding, permanent staff and external collaborators with expertise in digital media. Most digital contents pre-existed, and only a few museums developed new multimedia content during the quarantine. Moreover, during the second lockdown, some museums decided to realise their already programmed talks and

discussions online, so that the audience could attend, and -theoretically speaking- participate. All in all, this kind of activity cannot be considered as an alternative to museum visits. Their role is to keep the audience warm until the end of the lockdown.

Overall, the data we collected show that Greek museums were unready for a digital turn. Even if technological affordances are available, *ad hoc* digital material is not easy to build up, especially under pressure. Interestingly enough, during the second lockdown things changed for the worse, instead of getting better. Something that, in our opinion, supports the hypothesis that Greek museums are anxious to return to their pre-pandemic way.

• ***Technological tools are secondary to physical objects***

We cannot imagine museum practice without the physical interaction between artefacts and visitors. Almost fifty years after the first critical voices have been heard, Greek museums still believe that their strong point is the authentic physical object and its aura. Most Greek museums are content with that. A few spend a lot on digital applications that are proudly presented to the media. Nevertheless, most digital additions in physical museum exhibitions are merely supporting the focal element - the object - either providing numerous information that visitors do not ask for, or offering technical wonders. In either case, the artefact remains physically and intellectually intact. On the other hand, physical visitors are necessary not only for their financial contribution, but also because their counting justifies the museum's existence. So far, most Greek museums have been reluctant to digitally share their collections. Therefore, during the pandemic, even the already digitised collections were not used. And when used, the digital product is, in fact, an on-line catalogue.

• ***Digital technologies: an unequal antidote in Europe***

We believe that the awkward response of Greek museums to the pandemic situation will be bequeathed to the future as an awkward use of digital affordances. Thus, the problem - if we believe that there is actually a problem - won't be solved when Greek museums will obtain, somehow, the necessary substructure, financial means, and digitally informed personnel. It will be faced when we will start thinking differently. Perhaps, the digital is the vaccine for Greek museums suffering, but vaccination needs ample doses and planning.

## Discussion

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - Thank you for your observations. After hearing your various thoughts, which were very complementary, I suggest we open up the floor to questions.

**Musée de la Poste** - We were very active during the first lockdown, organising games and podcasts for children and a strong presence on social media. For the second lockdown, we continued with other themes, but not as intensely. What worked well for us was the conference, *L'homme sur Mars ou l'impossible en préparation* (Man on Mars or preparing the impossible), which we invited the astrophysicist Francis Rocard to speak at<sup>1</sup>. The event was live-streamed and attracted a lot of people. It was then posted on YouTube. We limited the capacity to 100 people, which was a mistake. For our exhibition "*Rêver l'Univers*", which opened in September for just 2 months, we came up with the idea of making a film with the artists talking about their works. The twenty-minute film was broadcast via traditional media, as well as on social media, and was viewed 5,000 times. We have an upcoming exhibition on the art of postal stamps, which was supposed to open in March, but has been postponed to April. We are currently exploring how to let people experience it online until it opens. For now, we operate on a free of charge basis and plan on offering free guided tours.

**Paul Salmona** - At a time when museums have been closed, the entire offering on the Internet has a palliative and useful role, but I don't think it should be considered as an alternative to onsite visits. I would like to touch on a symposium that took place in the auditorium of the Louvre in 1992, "*Nouvelles images et muséographie*" where the question was raised about the impacts of putting databases online. Would it end up deterring onsite visits, or on the contrary, encouraging them? Some thought that the museums of the future would be online. However, we have seen that the more documents about collections are accessible, the more people visit museums. That's how digital technologies should be seen, as an

<sup>1</sup> The entire video of the lecture is available on the Musée de la Poste website, at the following link: <https://www.museedelaposte.fr/fr/lhomme-sur-mars-ou-limpossible-en-preparation>

extension of documentary, educational and outreach aspects that does not replace visits, but encourages them.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - I would like to hear feedback from museums who offered paid videoconference tours. What kinds of technical resources are available to small institutions?

**Paul Salmona** - At the Museum of Art and History of Judaism, we offered paid Facebook Live tours, with a symbolic fee of just a few Euros. To enhance the tour, we set a limit of 30 people, who could see each other and ask the guide questions. The feedback was very positive.

**Pierre Yves Lochon** - Museums are offering this service more and more. When it comes to technical solutions, there are tools such as Facebook Live, Teams and Zoom that reach a wide audience. Startups have also launched ad hoc solutions. The Fondation Louis Vuitton uses a combination of 360° video exploration and direct interaction with a guide in groups of 15 people. Another solution combines a 360° virtual tour with a shared screen on Zoom. There are lots of easy-to-use solutions that are free or paid services. Technology is not a problem today. The museums who have begun offering paid visits are highly successful with full tour sessions, at prices of around 5 or 6 Euros per tour per person, which is very reasonable for these digital alternatives. The Fondation Louis Vuitton has even increased the number of visitors for its *Cindy Sherman* exhibition and extended the virtual tours to meet demand, even though the physical exhibition was closed.

**Yvan Mathevet** - I work at a departmental museum and I would like to talk about the freedom we have to manage our museum's communication ourselves. We had scheduled activities and wanted to record them to broadcast them on the museum's website and the Facebook pages of the museum and the *département*. However, we did not have many visitors because there was very little communication beforehand. There is a real need to raise public awareness, particularly to reach a brand new audience.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - Isn't digital solidarity also about how cultural institutions reach out to visitors and researchers by making digitized heritage and research data available?

**Paul Salmona** - One of the first things I did when I arrived at the museum was to increase the size of the photos of works on the website. It is true that for a number of museums, they rarely have suitable formats.

**Pierre-Yves Lochon** - As far as making images available for academic use goes, I would like to push the idea a little further and mention the open content strategy of French and foreign museums, which has been very successful. The appetite for digital content during the lockdown grew significantly with these open content resources, especially at the Met. It saw a huge surge in downloads of high-resolution images without restrictions on use, which have been available for several years through its open access policy. Fourteen million open content images were viewed on the Smithsonian's website in the last quarter of 2020, up 30%. This is a real boost for disseminating images on social media. Making them openly accessible significantly increases the use, distribution and sharing of these images.

**Ech-Cherki Dahmali** - I would like to talk about another aspect that has not yet been brought up: the issue of cyber security. If we do not protect the security of our IT data, there is a real risk involved in making information available that could then be used to steal collections. Virtual tours show the locations of corridors, doors and cameras. If a museum has collections without proper security, they must not be put online.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - Do some museums use analytical data from social media to adapt their offering and provide a more participatory approach?

**Brigitte Liabeuf** - The museums I contacted did not yet have full feedback. The French Department of Prospective Studies and Statistics (DEPS) is set to launch a qualitative and quantitative study on the use of websites and social media. We should have more information later. For now, we do not yet have the necessary hindsight.

**Paul Salmona** - We should not expect analytical data to offer us information on the sociology of art or audiences. It is still very basic data. However, there are now online tools for conducting and

analysing surveys in a highly systematic way. This provides very accurate data about respondents.

**Musée de la Poste** - When posting content on different platforms, it is easy to see what works well or not. We think in terms of the museum field when it comes to the digital offering online. By analysing the results, we are able to determine whether or not it is effective. We can open up to participatory events and engage people on social media or have the community participate in exhibitions. However, we are not at all at that stage for the museum's onsite offering. And with regards to the question of image accessibility, what you are talking about is only possible when the museum owns the works. In the case of the Musée de la Poste, any stamp from its collection may still be subject to copyright. You have to go back in time to make images from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century available. It would be impossible to open up our image collection.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - How can small museums gain virtual exposure without revealing their collection, in order to encourage people to visit?

**Ech-Cherki Dahmali** - For small museums, there are several solutions. The important thing is to provide support to the staff that handles the content. In a small community, the museum can request funding from the municipality or in an act of solidarity, a larger museum can provide it with a platform. The key thing is to assist the staff so that everything is put in place properly.

**Michel Rouger** - Having experimented with it at the MuséoParc Alésia, consistency and originality are what make it work. You have to find your own style to stand out and make people want to visit your museum. Visitors also like the "homemade" side of things.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - We are going to have to learn how to combine the in-person aspect with the potential of digital technologies. This debate shows that these are tools that we are going to need to use. There are subjects which we could have addressed, such as the question of social media, which can create solidarity, enabling us to communicate, but also be destructive when it comes to "cancel culture". We have an entire range of new skills to acquire.



# Session 5

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**Museums are opening up  
to solidarity economy:  
sustainable exhibitions,  
eco-design, impact analysis,  
end of productivism, etc.**

*Tuesday 16 March 2021*



## Speakers:

**Kimmo Antila**, Director of the Finnish Postal Museum

**Sylvain Beguin**, General Artwork Registrar of the Musée des Confluences

**Lydia Labalette**, Administrator, Château des ducs de Bretagne - Musée d'Histoire de Nantes

**Laukia Merja**, Director of Exhibitions and Collections at the Musée des Confluences

**Térésa Ribeyron**, Project Manager in Charge of MNHN Travelling Exhibitions

**Caitlin Southwick**, Member of the ICOM working group on sustainability and Executive Director of Ki Culture

**Moderation: Estelle Guille des Buttes**, Treasure adjunct of ICOM France.



We have a particularly important discussion on the agenda today. The subject is highly relevant because it concerns sustainable development. Although museum professionals were already well aware of the need to move in this direction, the particular circumstances of the COVID-19 crisis raise new questions, such as the social and solidarity economy that is gradually making its way into museums in some countries.

Estelle Guille des Buttes sets out the key concepts of the discussion: sustainable exhibitions, eco-design, impact analysis and productivism. How can environmental solidarity become part of the day-to-day activities of museums? What is the environmental impact of our museums? What indicators can we identify?

Can sustainable development generate economic benefits over and above the environmental advantages? Or how can we simply develop a sustainable exhibition, and what resources, equipment, budget and internal or outsourced skills are required? This is what we'll be talking about today.

**Kimmo Antila** - As we all know, we are experiencing several crises, with environmental change and a loss of biodiversity. These are part of a larger sustainability crisis. The Finnish government has implemented an ambitious initiative to manage these various crises. An agenda has been put in place to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035. To do this, new decisions need to be made about climate policy in order to produce electricity and heat without carbon emissions. There is also the need to reduce the carbon footprint of various buildings and promote carbon-neutral food policies. We also face this kind of challenge in our museums. Alongside all this, we are working on redefining the museum and its mission in this constantly changing world.

• *A new model for museums working in networks*

We face a great challenge in raising these issues with the public, but at the same time, we have a great opportunity to disseminate scientific information and knowledge to help society come to grips with these issues. The Finnish Postal Museum has been located in Tampere since 2014, when our museum moved all our functions and facilities 175 km north of our capital Helsinki. Tampere region is Finland's second largest urban agglomeration. Our museum has developed its activities around a new network-based model in Tampere. Our exhibitions are situated in a museum centre Vapriikki, which is a former factory, and we collaborate there with other museums on our collections and activities. Vapriikki museum center is also a home to Tampere City Museums, the Finnish Museum of Games, the Museum of Natural History, the Finnish Hockey Hall of Fame and Media museum Rupriikki. The museum centre Vapriikki hosts several international exhibitions each year. This is also a economically and socially sustainable model. Building a network of different museums and finding opportunities to collaborate makes it possible to work more effectively together.

Cooperation between the three museum institutions has enabled us not only to build something that can accommodate different

museums, but also find solutions for collaborating together, in many new ways.

• ***The challenge of sustainable collection storage centres***

When the Finnish Postal museum moved from Helsinki to Tampere our biggest challenges were the suitable storage facilities. In 2017 we made an initiative to develop a collaboration between two special national museums: the Finnish Labour Museum and the Postal Museum. The city of Tampere and the Ministry of Culture and Education have supported us in this endeavour. Our goal was to create the most sustainable storage centre possible. It is not an easy task. We started with the obvious fact that museums consume a lot of energy. They consume electricity for exhibitions, and especially the collections storage rooms with stable conditions. So what can be done? The first thing was to think about building an energy-efficient storage centre. What heating methods should be used for these facilities? What type of ventilation system? We also had to think about the conditions for creating a storage centre with strict preservation constraints. However, with the help of our conservators and collections managers, we have begun looking at the possibilities of working on variable hygrometry in the storage facilities in order to find a solution that is as sustainable as possible.

As far as energy is concerned, it went without saying that we would use solar panels and geothermal power for heating. Winters in Finland are long and dark, so obviously solar panels only cover our energy needs in the summer. During the other months, we needed other energy sources. It also seemed important to set up specific contracts with energy suppliers that were as sustainable as possible. We succeeded in that by buying energy produced by water and wind power.

• ***What kinds of sustainable actions can museums implement?***

For the past year or two, we have also been working on developing our own sustainability initiatives specific to our museum. We have started implementing concrete actions such as recycling, changes to business travel and support for using bicycles. We also encourage reflection on food, catering at the museum, and have gone even further, looking at the way we produce our exhibitions. This year, we opened a new exhibition produced using cardboard made from recycled paper. It was a new experience. However, we were unable to calculate the carbon or environmental footprints. I think we

could talk about other activities or ways of working. There are not any easy solutions for these issues, but our goal is to promote sustainability in our museum activities.

- ***Carbon footprints and impact analysis***

However, we do feel a bit guilty about having built a new storage facility because we know that the carbon footprint for new building using concrete floors is significant. When we began to calculate our carbon footprint, it was quite heavy during the first phase of the building project, due to the use of concrete. However when considering the long-term carbon footprint, energy use is the most important factor, and in that area, I think that we were successful. The building is very dense, and the building materials are otherwise environmentally friendly.

Another subject I would like to touch on is our ability to offset our carbon emissions. The Finnish government has the ambitious project of making Finland carbon neutral by taking into account carbon offsetting programmes. I think that it is great to be able to offset our emissions. This is one way to promote a carbon-free society.

- ***Opening the discussion up to an enthusiastic public***

Young people are worried about climate change and we have a responsibility to take these issues into consideration. Museums could potentially give a greater role in this discussion and to offer more opportunities to people who are concerned about these issues. This could include setting up discussion forums. For young people, Greta Thunberg is a hero because she is taking action. For older generations, which work in well-established institutions, we need to give room for young people who want to talk about these issues within our museums.

**Lydia Labalette** - I would like to talk in rather broad terms and present a few very diverse points. We work in a medieval castle in the centre of Nantes, which houses the city's Museum of History. To enter the museum, you have to cross the castle courtyard, which is a public square.

- ***Local players***

It's the little details that visitors see first as they enter the courtyard. All these small details are part of a larger CSR strategy. Sometimes the small details are important.

For example, the museum makes a book box available to the public, with different themes. For this project, we work with two local players, the municipal library and a non-profit that recycles books. Another aspect is an ice cream shop. The idea is to sell ice cream with locally-sourced products. It is important to offer products that have a short supply chain. In the autumn, we also created the Anne de Bretagne garden. For this project, all the professionals we worked with are also local: the nursery, artisans for the tree pots and the designer.

The idea is to work as much as we can, and wherever possible, with local professionals. We are fortunate to have a lot of highly skilled local professionals from many fields in our area. This aspect strikes us as essential.

• ***Changing equipment: small acts that make a big difference***

Like all of you, we are doing our best to change our equipment, as well as how we manage and operate our institution. It is not always easy, especially since we are a listed historical monument. We sometimes face contradictory requirements between choosing something local, that is not necessarily environmentally friendly, or something that comes from the other side of the world. An example of this is IT or multimedia equipment that consumes less. It is not always easy to make these decisions. And sometimes we might be directed or even required to abide by laws or regulations that can have a positive environmental impact, for example with LED light bulbs. In a museum like ours, with 32 rooms and several hundred light bulbs, changing them makes a big difference. Our video projectors also use LED lights. This decreases our energy use. Also with a view to being more environmentally responsible, we have made changes in the cloakroom and lavatories, with automatic taps, and systems to automatically turn multimedia devices on and off.

Obviously we are all concerned about exhibitions because they involve excessive use of equipment that needs to be changed, display cases and all the design materials that use a lot of resources. That's where we started in 2010.

The thing that can seem the most daunting when you commit to a sustainable or CSR approach is the feeling of not knowing where to begin. In reality, you realise that you already do a lot and that

maybe the first step is to list the things that we already do, promote these actions and encourage our colleagues to add their own contribution. In the end these actions are full of common sense. It's the things that seem like small details, but when combined all together, they have a real impact on operations.

• ***Areas to work on: communication and conservation***

I think that we can do better when it comes to communication. Of course, we work on our use of resources, with paper from PEFC sustainably managed forests and certified inks. However paper is being replaced by digital technologies. Although it might seem like digital technologies are a lot cleaner, in reality that is not necessarily the case. It's an area that we still have to work on because in both the museum itself and our communication strategies, digital technology plays a big role and we could be doing more to be more environmentally friendly. Like many, we still have room for improvement in this area.

We may also need to work on conservation. Our colleagues are being mindful and trying to educate themselves as much as possible. However we know that many practices use lots of materials and resources, such as bubble wrap.

We are working towards sustainability, but while we are conscious of the issue, we are not the best example.

**Laukia Merja** - The Musée des Confluences opened in Lyon in 2014 and includes various natural, human and technical science collections. Since it opened, we have been trying to reduce the environmental impact of our activities, and as we've seen, exhibitions are one of the activities that uses the most materials and energy.

• ***A test contract***

Like other museums, we try to re-use materials from our exhibitions, but we are never entirely successful. With 4 exhibitions per year, we have accumulated quite a quantity of waste. We therefore decided to go further in our sustainable approach to reduce waste. When it came to taking down our *Headdresses from around the World* exhibition in 2020, we decided to take the next step. The exhibition was held in a 710 m<sup>2</sup> room. It was quite suitable for our experiment as no picture rails had been used.

There was just furniture (tables, display cases, etc.) that were potentially reusable.

Like many French museums, we are bound by public contracts. To organise a fully environmentally-friendly take-down service, we launched a special call for tenders prepared by our cultural technical department and finance department. We had to come up with everything on our own. The idea was to start with something very pragmatic. We didn't try to calculate the carbon footprint. The first experiment was more of a test. Fixa won the contract.

• ***A clean local approach to taking down exhibitions***

Like other museums, we tried to reuse materials from exhibitions, and share them with other museums or cultural organisations in the region. This environmentally-friendly exhibition dismantling experiment and our intention to be more sustainable are also a social initiative because it gets us involved in our region and in the local economic and social fabric. The equipment mainly went to a wide range of local social and cultural organisations such as non-profits, schools and businesses.

• ***After experimenting with environmentally-friendly exhibition dismantling, what is the future?***

Following this rather successful experiment, we decided to set up a long-term contract for the environmentally-friendly take-down of our exhibitions. We may not be able to do this for all the exhibitions in the year, but we will start with one or two exhibitions and eventually use this strategy for all of them. It also led us to ask exhibition designers to think about displays and structures that can be more easily taken down and reused.

**Sylvain Beguin** - We wanted to take direct action in 2019 by launching this contract for taking down our exhibition in July 2020. We were thinking about eco-design but we also wanted to have an activity with an immediate impact.

To give you some more specific information on the take-down, there were 19 tables (from 3 to 5 m in diameter), 4 rather complex displays with metal structures, 4 pedestal display cases, and glass panels. In total, this amounted to 14 tonnes of materials, including 9 tonnes of wood, 4 tonnes of glass, 1 tonne of metal, 70 kg of plastic and 110 kg of textiles.

• ***The service provider's approach***

The approach adopted by the service provider was to first take an inventory of all the materials and catalogue them. The company took down the exhibition while packing and weighing the materials. This step was key, because it let the various organisations in the network who had been contacted know exactly what they would be receiving, how much and in what form, from the time the exhibition was being taken down. The actual take-down therefore went very quickly. The service provider contacted an entire network of art, architecture and design schools, cultural and artistic associations, businesses involved in the reuse or resale of materials at fair prices and performing arts companies. In the end, 32 different organisations received materials. The company was also responsible for weighing and taking the materials off site. Rented trucks took them to the main collectors. Some of the materials were not immediately redistributed. It was initially stored in a rented storage unit, and the service provider organised a second round of distribution.

• ***Key figures***

In terms of numbers, 76% of the materials were distributed in the first round, which did not need to be stored. This information is key because storage is generally an obstacle for these types of initiatives. In the second round, 16% more was distributed. Ultimately, 92% of the materials were reused. All the glass, metal, plastic and textiles were reused.

• ***Conclusion?***

First, the cataloguing step during takedown was key because it eliminated the intermediate storage step, which is often a problem. Transport can also be an obstacle. That is why we chose to task the service provider with this aspect, so that small organisations which do not necessarily have transport means were still able to benefit from the initiative.

The service provider had already been involved in this type of work for several years and therefore already had a network of organisations that were potentially interested, which was a great time saver.

Taking down the exhibition, reusing and redistributing the materials cost €19,000 including VAT. Normally, taking down exhibitions in this room costs €10,000 to €12,000. This initiative therefore cost

50 to 70% more. However, it is important to keep in mind that the exhibition was not designed to be dismantled. Of course it was possible, but it was not specifically designed to be taken down. For the long-term contract that we are putting in place this year, we will target a slightly lower rate of reuse, at around 60 to 70%. This corresponds to the first round of distribution from the test contract, so we can try to limit the extra cost a little. However, we hope to apply it to as many exhibitions as possible.

**T r sa Ribeyron** - The French National Museum of Natural History (MNHN) has implemented several initiatives to improve its practices related to temporary exhibitions. Our programming and travelling exhibitions department has been managing the temporary travelling exhibitions produced by the Museum for over 20 years. For a long time, we reconfigured the original exhibitions shown in a 600 to 900 m<sup>2</sup> space by recovering part of the furniture to create travelling exhibitions for 200 or 500 m<sup>2</sup> spaces. These exhibitions, which were the fruit of twenty years of production, were stored in two spaces with a total area of 450 m<sup>2</sup> and were a significant financial burden. In addition, there is the human and environmental burden of maintaining and transporting furniture, audiovisual equipment, partitions and decor elements.

• ***Transitioning from travelling furniture to digital solutions***

Between 2017 and 2018, our department switched to another form of travelling exhibitions using digital solutions. The aim is to be flexible and collaborative rather than to move exhibitions that are fixed in form and content. The idea is to work to adapt the themes presented by the host site among all those of the original exhibition and the site. In France we are fortunate to have many cultural institutions located on heritage sites, but this involves very different access conditions and room organisation. For instance, our exhibition, *Nuit*, was initially shown in a 15th Century ch teau, and then at the Espace des Sciences in Rennes, which is a modern building. These two sites have completely different access conditions, but with the same furniture each time, the logistics issues differ. By transitioning to digital solutions, we only keep the most specific elements of the range of furniture, such as interactive displays and certain objects such as castings and reproductions.

### • *Donating exhibition design elements*

However, what was going to be done with all the furniture and partitions? We were conscious of how fortunate we were to have been able to produce these materials, and that we would not be able to recycle them, while colleagues with fewer resources could use them. The best thing to do was therefore to give them away. Donations have been explicitly authorised for organisations under government jurisdiction since 2016. For this, I would like to acknowledge all the members of the AGREE working group, which is the workshop for responsible management of exhibitions and events. They proposed an article of the Law of July 2016 allowing government organisations to donate exhibition design elements, which they no longer have use for, to non-commercial cultural or sustainable development organisations<sup>1</sup>. Once this law had been passed, we worked with Kinga Grege, Curator at the Musée de l'Homme, and Elsa Boromé, Sustainable Development Advisor at the MNHN, two of my colleagues who had earlier been instrumental in creating an internal working group on responsible exhibitions in 2015, in order to explore our exhibition practices, from the design phase to managing their end of life. We worked with our legal department advisor, Myriam Périgaud, to develop a template agreement for the transfer of furniture, requesting that they be referenced near the displayed furniture. Furniture can include standard elements, but it can also have a much more striking identity, which raises the question of copyright. Some furniture-sharing initiatives are therefore still in the discussion phase.

### • *The approach*

We switched to the digital travelling model in 2017 and 2018. In 2019, with the support of an intern, we established an inventory of our 450 m<sup>2</sup> storage area in order to determine what we actually had in stock since it comprised exhibitions from the past twenty years. We felt it was important to have recent photographs, dimensions and all kinds of detailed information, either to add them to our database, or with the aim of donating or selling the elements with

<sup>(1)</sup> French Act 2016-925 of 7 July 2016 on the Freedom of Creation, Architecture, and Heritage, Article 106 available at: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000032854341>.

as much information as possible for the beneficiaries (for both their use and transport). In late 2019, we selected what we wanted to keep and what we could donate. We were set to donate the materials in March 2020, but due to the pandemic, we postponed the donations to June 2020.

We were quite surprised to have a lot of interest, both internally and externally, despite the fact that it was the beginning of the summer. In just two months, we found takers for the majority of our stock.

In particular, we contacted the exhibition departments that had designed the original exhibitions and the other Museum sites that provide exhibitions (Marinarium de Concarneau, Harmas de Fabre, Abri Pataud, etc.)<sup>2</sup>. For our colleagues at other institutions, we used the Museum List, an email discussion group for French-speaking museums. We also posted an ad on the website of Amcsti, the association of museums and centres for the development of scientific, technical and industrial culture. And finally, we worked with a non-profit that specialises in the collection and recycling of exhibition waste.

#### • *A success?*

Over 20 beneficiaries received materials and furniture from these travelling exhibitions. 12 were internal and 9 were external. However, in terms of volume, the external beneficiaries (outside MNHN) received the most. The majority were museums, but we also donated to a design institute, a botanical garden and a non-profit association. Our data is in square metres because the elements were too fragile or unique to be stacked. It is difficult to estimate in terms of volume, and it is more accurate to calculate the occupied floor space as it is more representative of what it costs us. We gave away or sold over 300 m<sup>2</sup> of partitions, screen furniture, decor elements, display cases, and museum objects, which is our way of referring to interactive activities, castings, sculptures, etc., which are not works of art, but something other than simple furniture. Some of the items did not find any takers. We therefore contacted a non-profit association that recycles exhibition “waste”,

<sup>2</sup> The French National Museum of Natural History (MNHN) is comprised of 13 sites across France.

which they sell at a low cost to artists, set/exhibition designers, etc. We paid for this service but it gave a second life to 100 m<sup>2</sup> of decor elements. In total, 415 m<sup>2</sup> of displays and materials found a second life through this initiative. We only had to discard 8 m<sup>2</sup> of elements, which cost us €650. If we had had to throw away everything that was reused, it would have cost €29,000.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues in the Programming and Travelling Exhibitions Department, as well as my registrar and legal advisor, since administrative and technical support is really crucial with this type of project.

• ***Making a one-off initiative permanent: instituting the reuse of furniture and materials***

This initiative was a one-off project since we will not be doing any more travelling exhibitions with furniture. However, it is an initiative that we could develop further. When exhibitions are adapted for touring, we could have the first host venue recover some of the furniture from the original exhibition when the new one is adapted shortly after the original exhibition is taken down. This was done for the exhibition *Meteorites* held at the Grande Galerie de l'Évolution until 2019 and adapted for the National Museum of Denmark in September 2019. The Danish team acquired a selection of furniture that corresponded to their exhibition area. This operation had two advantages: they saved money since the furniture was sold to them at less than 30% of its manufacturing cost, and we also saved money from not having to throw away as much. It's important to remember that reuse is more environmentally friendly than recycling in terms of sustainable development and the circular economy. We are about to finalise our database with all the materials that we have kept in order to give us a full overview of our stock, with no more storing for the sake of storing. This will also allow us to think about sharing materials from different exhibitions with similar themes. For example, some materials from our exhibition on mammoths will be used for displays in the exhibition *Néandertal*.

To cite other initiatives, my colleagues in the exhibition departments of the Grande Galerie de l'Évolution but also of the Musée de l'Homme have been regularly contacting companies or associations to come and collect furniture, partitions and display cases so that they can be made available to set/exhibition designers or dramatists at least every year since 2015.

Finally, I would like to quickly share the initiative of Kinga Grege, Curator at the Musée de l'Homme, who, with valuable support from Sustainable Development Advisor, Elsa Boromé, and our legal and public procurement departments, is currently drafting a call for tenders for reused materials provided by specialised associations, so as to make them available to the designer of the temporary exhibition she is in charge of. The idea is not just to take action at the end of an exhibition, but also ahead of it, during the design phase.

**Caitlin Southwick** - I would like to talk about my experience as part of the ICOM working group on sustainability and give you some insight into the work of this group created in 2018 to explore the possibility of establishing an international committee on sustainability for ICOM.

- ***“Transforming our World” Resolution***

One of our main actions was the resolution adopted in 2019, “On sustainability and the implementation of Agenda 2030, *Transforming our World*”. Through this resolution, we endorsed the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, established ICOM’s commitment, and provided a definition for sustainability, which can have different meanings around the world. The definition we adopted is the UN definition in the Agenda.

This resolution has not only created benchmarks, but it is also symbolic of ICOM’s commitment to work towards sustainable development.

- ***A roadmap for 2022***

As an international organisation, ICOM has a duty to comply with Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Our working group plans to create an action plan for 2030, but we also need to take action in the short term. We see 2022 as our next milestone.

Our resolution was therefore presented with recommendations on how our network could work to achieve these goals. A roadmap needs to be put in place for ICOM, with a timetable for achieving the goals. It is essential that we think about how we can support our members in this, but also about how the organisation itself can pursue sustainable development.

For example, the organisation of international events. Our working group is looking at how to reduce carbon emissions generated by these events, using the 2019 conference in Kyoto as a basis. Our goal is to reduce these emissions for the next conference in Prague, and apply the same method to all of ICOM. This kind of initiative seems like an obvious step to take.

We also want to develop our communication, particularly with the creation of a website. We would like to use the ICOM newsletter to put sustainability at the heart of all our communication. Our goal is for sustainable development to permeate every aspect of ICOM's activities.

**• *A polysemous and interconnected concept that needs to be integrated everywhere***

When our working group was created, we were tasked with determining whether it could become an international committee. In the end, our recommendation is that it should not. We do not think that this issue should stay in a silo. We feel that if our working group was to become an international committee, it would lead to a separation rather than an integration with our other areas of activity and research. It is essential that this issue be truly integrated into every facet of the work of ICOM, the international and National Committees and the regional members.

Sustainability is approached in many different ways around the world. Henry McGhie offers a guide called *Using the Sustainable Development Goals in Museums*, which offers different ways of looking at sustainability and the interconnected aspect of sustainability for institutions.

In Brazil, sustainable development is mainly associated with social justice and social rights. However in Northern Europe, it relates more to climate change and environmental issues. In Mozambique, the concept has no meaning as the idea is not talked about among the population at large. It is very important to take into account these various international perspectives, but also to recognise that these concepts are interrelated.

We believe that it is essential to find solutions, especially as sustainable development can seem complex and overwhelming, and to understand that its various aspects are connected. This concept calls for interconnectedness in that, as professionals, we are

responsible for our actions, but also for the way we present sustainability to the public.

• ***An individual responsibility to take action and inform***

We have been thinking a lot about individual responsibility. It is important for everyone to play their part, even if it is only a small role. I think that the world of culture has a unique capacity to reach people, due to our ability to create a connection with them. Culture is a unique opportunity to talk about sustainable development with the public. While it is essential to take action in this area, implementing communication is also essential. We need to advocate for sustainable development through our exhibitions and programming. If we are going to reduce the environmental impact of our institutions, we also need to involve people to pass on the message effectively. During a visit to the Netherlands, the curator of the exhibition explained that everything had been done with the circular economy in mind. However there was no communication about it in the exhibition. Visitors had no information about the circular nature of the exhibition.

It's not just about doing the work behind the scenes, but also talking about it with visitors so that the public can also become personally invested. Clearly, hearing a call to action is not just a way of engaging professionals working in culture, but also the individuals that we impact. We need to think about our actions and how we bring the message to the public. As professionals, it is our duty to start the conversation. Raising awareness and initiating discussions are the first step in taking action. As a curator, my job is to protect culture for the future. But if we don't have a future, what is the point of conserving art? It is important for us to realise that we have a unique role in conserving art and our future.

## Discussion

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - There has been a real awakening. We will probably need to create a working group on sustainable development within ICOM France to address all these issues.

More concretely, how can we go about calculating our carbon footprint for each project?

**Térésa Ribeyron** - Carbon footprint assessment is not necessarily the best tool. In 2017-2018, we asked an intern to conduct a life-cycle assessment. This approach is more comprehensive than calculating the carbon footprint because it accounts for and estimates the impact of a material, taking account extraction, manufacture and recycling.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - Is there an eco certification for museums?

**Thierry Renaudin** - I've looked into it, and I don't think there is a certification.

**Térésa Ribeyron** - That was part of the research carried out by our intern at the time. We did find an example of a certification for a museum in the western United States. However in France and Europe, we are not aware of any. It would be an interesting tool to create, though, like Caitlin Southwick said, to inform visitors about our actions.

**Hélène Vassal** - It's true that this type of certification does not exist. By definition, it would be extremely complex to set up because, as we have clearly understood today with this Zoom meeting, sustainable development, eco-design, and "ecology", as Emmanuel Duron calls it, are cross-cutting by nature. It would therefore be very complex to design a certification that covers all the possible fields in this area. I'm not convinced that it would be possible.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - I would like to raise another question: can we measure the impact of digital technology in this area?

**Caitlin Southwick** - That is a very interesting question that is more relevant than ever with COVID-19 and the digitisation of our collections. There is a digital carbon footprint. For example, one line in an email has a higher carbon footprint than if it was printed. It is expected that by 2025, data centres will be consuming 20% of global energy. The problem is that we don't really know how to estimate carbon footprints. As the Director of Ki Culture, we've been working on this, but we do not yet have enough information. When we think about digital technology and online collections, we have to think strategically: how do we put our collections on line? In what way? Does it really make them more accessible? It's not about using digital technologies just for the sake of it. We need to be conscious of why we want to digitise.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - This has an obvious connection with our previous discussion on digital strategy. I also wanted to point out that a lot of resources have been shared in the chat. I would like to thank H  l  ne Vassal, who mentioned the guide posted on [paris.fr](http://paris.fr), as well as the participants for their reactions about the resource systems that already exist, and the diverse initiatives of social museums. A green initiative has been set up between the RMN-GP and the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, with a sustainable development officer assigned to the project.

**RMN-GP** - We have started collaborating with the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille on two exhibitions, and working on exhibition eco-design and other areas, including communication, in order to be more environmentally responsible. Val  rie Bonnard has joined RMN to help us develop an overall sustainable approach to all our activities, including publications, marketing, human resources and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). We are undertaking a major initiative, which also involves reviewing what we have done so far. As mentioned earlier, every little bit helps, and we sometimes feel that we are not doing enough. We're trying to identify where we're working internally in an isolated manner and missing a cross-cutting approach, to learn what we can to develop a real strategy that goes further.

**H  l  ne Vassal** - I think that a key point that we did not have the time to cover today is the importance of applied research in

sustainable development and the eco-design of these projects. My students are working on frames of reference for different exhibition types in order to facilitate eco-design, and on new green materials to be tested that are not derived from petroleum products. Artwork crates are 80% plastic. It is important that we support our young researchers on these subjects.

**Estelle Guille des Buttes** - I would like to thank our speakers once again for their important insights. It's clear that this discussion will lead to further exchanges. I also wanted to highlight the work being done with scientific and cultural projects in French museums. Our colleagues are increasingly integrating sustainable development issues into their thinking with their teams, and with the public when they develop participatory scientific and cultural projects. We are seeing an awakening and a clear desire to make a difference, helped by younger generations entering our workplaces.

Biographical references published in the chat:

Livret de la ville de Paris : <https://www.paris.fr/pages/une-boite-a-outils-pour-developper-l-economie-circulaire-dans-la-culture-16702>

In Limbo is a platform that aims to facilitate the donation and reuse of materials within the socio-cultural sector in Brussels : <https://www.inlimbobxl.org/>

*L'œuvre d'art à l'heure des pratiques durables* in replay : <https://www.mucem.org/programme/oeuvre-dart-lheure-des-pratiques-durables>

Résolution de l'ICOM sur le développement durable : <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Resolution-sustainability-FR.pdf>

Agenda 2030 : <https://www.agenda-2030.fr/17-objectifs-de-developpement-durable/>

Ki Culture's Ki Books - step by step guides on sustainability in culture:  
<https://www.kiculture.org/ki-books/>

Gallery Climate Coalition Carbon Calculator: <https://galleryclimatecoalition.org/carbon-calculator/>

[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/ecolabel/whats\\_eco/ov\\_concept\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/ecolabel/whats_eco/ov_concept_en.htm)

Digital carbon footprint : <https://www.myclimate.org/information/faq/faq-detail/what-is-a-digital-carbon-footprint/>

Brainstorming report of Voices of Culture focused on Culture and The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals : <https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/VoC-Brainstorming-Report-Culture-and-SDGs.pdf>



# Session 6

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**Are professional networks  
instruments of solidarity?**

*Tuesday 20 April 2021*



## Speakers:

**Pierre-Yves Lochon**, Associate Director of Sinapses Conseils and Director of Clic France (Innovation and culture club)

**Bruno Maquart**, Vice-President of the European network, Ecsite, President of Universcience (Palais de la découverte, Cité des sciences et de l'industrie)

**Emma Nardi**, Chair of the Strategic Allocation Review Committee (SAREC) - ICOM standing committee

**Kirsi Pulkkinen**, Secretary General of the Finnish Science Centre Association

**Sergio Servellón**, Member of the Executive Board of NEMO - Network of European Museum Organisations, President of ICOM Belgium-Flanders

**Emilie Vanhaesebroucke**, Executive Director of FRAME France - French American Museum Exchange

**Moderation: Penelope Theologi-Gouti**, President of ICOM Greece.



The subject of today's discussion is professional networks as instruments of solidarity, which has become particularly important during the pandemic. The need for museum professionals to connect through networks has been accentuated by several factors, including the lockdown, museum closures, remote working, financial insecurity, the need to share ideas and communicate, and the need for other perspectives.

Penelope Theologi-Gouti introduced the issue: what is a professional network for museums? Can it give museums more visibility

and make them stronger? Can it be an agent of change and solidarity? Networks are organisations that act as catalysts and provide unique levels of expertise with goals shared over the long term. Networks provide information and experience, have the power to raise awareness about new challenges, and work together with the museum community to develop solutions. Do networks provide a model for long-term cooperation? Have existing networks given hope to professionals? Have they supported dialogue and sharing? What networks have museums created? What kinds of actions have they carried out? How have museums been used to create more solidarity, especially during the pandemic?

**Emma Nardi** - At the ICOM general conference in Kyoto, our NGO's balance sheet showed a €500,000 profit. ICOM decided that a portion of this would be used to promote major national and international projects. This idea was proposed by the SAREC, which is the standing committee for the allocation of resources. The SAREC therefore has a big responsibility. The committee has 12 members, who each review the projects that are submitted before discussing them in order to ensure that the proposals receiving funding are treated equally.

- ***Funds allocated to projects that fit the new reality of ICOM***

Normally, our job is to finance regular projects and support International Committees or Regional Alliances. However, these are generally small-scale projects with budgets of €4000 to €5000. Today, we have the means to allocate €30,000 to each project, provided that it represents 90% of the sum requested.

With the health crisis, we saved money from cancelled trips, but we have also committed money to develop new forms of action. Thus was born the idea of supporting international solidarity projects.

The idea of calling them solidarity projects arose when it became clear that everything was going to change. We had to give committees more resources to develop their activities.

- ***Solidarity projects***

Solidarity comes from the Latin *solidus* (Roman coin) which reflects something concrete. We wanted to fulfil 3 objectives with these projects: finance larger projects, involve several geographic realities and find applications for other situations.

For example, today's discussion organised by ICOM France met all these criteria. It was presented by a network of committees, could be applied to other situations, and leaves a legacy for the future as the presentations are being recorded and posted on YouTube. These are the types of projects that we're looking for.

We received 24 proposals and selected 21. We rejected three projects for formal reasons and financed 17. We did not use the full amount allocated to this activity (i.e. €200,000) so we have launched a second call for proposals.

- ***The pitfalls***

We have also encountered some problems:

1°- The project database: we need to invest in a more modern database that lets us work in a more agile way.

2°- Africa: the real problem of equality is not that we need to finance projects that are not good, but that we need to help places where this project culture, which is very European, does not exist. Since our organisation is already very "Euro-centric" we risk making the problem worse rather than better.

3°- Communication: perhaps we need to improve the communication of calls for proposals by also making it more agile. I don't know if we will be able to launch more calls for proposals focused on solidarity, but the solidarity demonstrated in museum professional networks should be shared with the public. The post-COVID-19 period is going to be difficult. We need to be thinking about projects that draw in ever larger audiences.

**Bruno Maquart** - The Ecsite network was established in 1989 and includes European science centres, museums and festivals. It brings together over 300 organisations committed to promoting science, including around twenty members in France.

- ***Quick information***

During the pandemic, networks have been instrumental in helping people communicate and support each other. Through Ecsite, we had access to information more quickly than the media, with institutions communicating with each other in real time. At a time of total uncertainty, knowing what was happening elsewhere was extremely valuable and helped us feel less isolated. The network has been a

vehicle for disseminating information, but also for supporting each other and sharing.

• ***A network that enables new solutions to be emulated***

Networks have proven to be a useful platform for working together to find solutions. We've all had to deal with new problems that required new solutions. Networks have been an incredible collective brainstorming tool for sharing ideas and best practices. As a science-based cultural institution, we were faced with a daunting problem: our museums rely on sensory activities where visitors have to touch our displays to have the best possible interactive experience. So, how could we offer non-tactile experiences to our visitors during COVID-19? We all got together virtually to find solutions. This was a much more efficient way of working, because we were able to share ideas and know-how.

Ecsite also organised six webinars on various subjects, which attracted over 500 people from 51 countries, which had never been done before. This is an incredible achievement.

When we reopened, we created a database of reopening protocols. This meant they could be compared to help us be more relevant in our dialogue with the public authorities in our various countries.

• ***The pandemic: a factor in network-driven change***

The pandemic was also a factor in seeing institutions changed through networks. These networks have helped us evolve. Have major museums helped small museums or is it the opposite? If I take the subject of digital technologies, where certain institutions were ahead of others, their ideas were disseminated widely, and institutions that were a bit behind were helped considerably. We all learned from each other and developed mutual support and dialogue. Resource lending has also grown considerably, and we have distributed royalty-free content.

Within the network, the crisis has also disrupted the usual hierarchies by reducing the distances between members. The physical and financial constraints of travel are gone, which is a huge advantage when it comes to international travel.

Another important factor of change has been the increased use of platforms to communicate. We came up with intelligent ways to go digital. Logically, formats have also had to evolve. We had meetings

that were shorter but more frequent, and organised differently, for instance with the integration of coffee & chat sessions that helped us keep things fun despite the distance.

**Sergio Servellón** - NEMO, the Network of European Museum Organisations, has been active since 1992 and includes over 30,000 museums in 40 different countries. Our head office is in Berlin.

• ***A proactive network***

NEMO works to ensure museums are an integral part of European life and to lobby policy-makers. We also offer training to museums and work to provide information and networking opportunities.

We have various working groups, including the “Advocacy” group which has been very active since the beginning of this health crisis.

NEMO has been gathering information on museum closures and reopenings. We have a database that lists information on reopenings and health measures.

We created an interactive map of museum closures/reopenings, which is updated on our website in real time. This allows different institutions to make their case in their own country based on what is happening elsewhere.

All the reports of our activities are available on our website.

We try to be proactive by finding new approaches to connect with the public and provide access to collections.

• ***NEMO, a voice for European museums during the health crisis***

We conducted 2 surveys. The first in May 2020 and a second one in early 2021 in order to follow up on the first survey and to help other museum associations implement better practices. We developed communication to remind people that museums are safe places. The other part of our communication promoted the important role museums play in mental health.

Over 600 museums from 19 countries, mainly in Europe, responded to our second survey. It focused on three areas: the impacts of revenue loss, the growing importance of digital offerings for museums, and crisis and post-crisis management. This study therefore provides a roadmap for building our resilience to crises as museums.

This is why we see ourselves as the voice of museums in Europe.

- ***Cross-border solidarity***

Yes, networks are tools of solidarity, especially when it comes to cross-border solidarity. Since the start of the health crisis and thanks to our initiatives, our members have been contacting us more than ever and we are seeing how our website is being used. The information we have needs to be shared in order to make it available for our members and other professionals. It is easier to contact an existing network than to create a new network.

A last example of our activities is not related to the health situation, but more to post-COVID-19 life. We try to share information about cross-border cooperation and European funding. This is another example of our network activities that create solidarity. The report we wrote on various European funding instruments (*Cross-Border Cooperation for Museums*<sup>1)</sup> is designed as a toolbox. This work consists in monitoring the allocation of different European grants. Finally, we can say that museum associations offer an important networking opportunity.

**Emilie Vanhaesebroucke** - The FRAME network is an American non-profit organization similar to an association under the French law of 1901. The organisation was co-founded at the American Embassy in France in 1999, with the support of the French Ministry of Culture. It is therefore a bilateral organisation that is unique in that it was not created by museums, but FOR museums in the spirit of cultural diplomacy between two countries. This explains the international scope of our exchanges and programmes. Its other particularity is that although it is a private organisation, its French office is based in the Department of the Musées de France.

We are an exchange platform for around thirty museums, whose members are local and regional museums in France, and private museums in the United States. Today, our network has around 400 professional members.

- ***How is solidarity expressed within the FRAME network?***

Our programmes are based on the complementarity of the museum collections in the network. Our main mission is to foster cultural

<sup>(1)</sup><https://culture360.asef.org/resources/cross-border-cooperation-museums-nemo-toolkit/>

cooperation through exhibitions, cultural outreach programmes, intellectual exchanges or best practice, and more recently, due to the pandemic, through the creation of virtual programmes between the network's museum members.

The first principle of FRAME is the exchange of expertise and advice between members based on a policy of non-competition between museums working in similar fields but in regions that are a long way away from each other.

The second fundamental principle is the role that FRAME plays directly in optimising solidarity. While serving the professionals in the FRAME network, we need to be aware of what's happening on the ground, identify the needs of our members to implement actions, support and coordination, and advise them without creating a greater workload that fails to meet their expectations.

These are the two main principles that make solidarity work in our network.

• ***Principles during the pandemic***

During the first lockdown, we had to identify the needs of our members. Museums are the interface between collections and the public, both of which rely on each other. We had to help set up special programmes, increase remote accessibility with inventive online programmes to enrich the offering, and provide a new form of interaction between our collections and the public.

Using these general principles as our basis, we developed concrete actions in line with FRAME's identity. To do so, we had three goals in mind. First, to sustain the spirit of solidarity that defines the network. Secondly, to maintain the cooperative dynamics and dialogue between our members, and finally, to improve access to the network's secondary collections, and their local and international visibility.

• ***What was actually put in place during the health crisis?***

These three goals were pursued through two main projects. First, increased internal communication with a series of weekly newsletters to identify best practices implemented during this unprecedented period, which were communicated to our members. We realised that beyond our own initiatives, which created dialogue between the

network's museums, they also created their own micro groups to work on best practices during the lockdown and when it came time to reopen.

The second project was an emergency grant programme. In response to the health crisis, the board of directors decided to create an emergency fund to grant funding to member museums wanting to optimise their offering on the Internet in order to continue their cultural programming, remain accessible and expand their audiences. We created an emergency support committee (made up of representatives from the network's museums and the board of trustees) to assess the relevance of the proposals from museums and allocate funds. It was all put in place very quickly. On 24 April 2020 we were able to announce the programme's recipients, with eight projects involving seventeen institutions, which is of course a testament to the collaborative spirit that already existed. Only one proposal was not selected, because it did not fulfill the transatlantic mission of FRAME.

The goal was not just to talk about the museum's collections, but to maintain cooperation through things like virtual exhibitions.

**Kirsi Pulkkinen** - I work for the Finnish Science Centre Association, a new network in early 2019 and officially founded during the health crisis, in spring 2020. We currently have 9 members. We represent various regions and types of science centres and museums from the South to the North and East to West, but we don't cover the central part of the country. We are pleased to have such a broad coverage in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding of what it means to be a science centre.

• *Collaborative efforts*

We are still a very young association. Our goal is to inspire a wider and more diverse group of people in order to improve their access to science and technology. It is important to underline that in Finland, "sciences" include hard sciences as well as the arts and humanities, so all disciplines. We are working to open access to knowledge and create bridges between different types of partners, both within our network and with colleagues from other fields in Finland and other countries.

Our aim is to create a stronger impact on society through these collaborative efforts. To do this, we share the work with people who have expertise from different fields of research and societal sectors. We also

work with a wide audience. We need to work to combine all our skills to develop successful and effective collaboration that makes the special role and value of science centres more visible and understood in society.

- ***Science capital: co-creation with the public***

Science capital is a concept that represents the sum of all science and technology-related knowledge, skills, attitudes and resources that an individual builds up through their entire life. This includes formal education (schools, universities), as well as capital acquired in our free time and leisure activities and during our work life, i.e. all the different ways we develop our knowledge. This concept enables us to focus on the value science adds to individuals and society. We are talking about a change in perspective and the concept of science capital is part of the paradigm shift.

A more traditional perspective would make science centres and experts the focus, in a top-down approach. However, our aim is to shift to an approach that starts with the interests of the public, i.e. a bottom-up perspective that responds to the needs of a more diverse public. This requires a shift in the way we work and utilise our skills as science centres and museums. With the science capital approach, we work with our various audiences in mind, especially the most underprivileged (ethnic minorities, low-income or less educated communities), which are currently under-served. We aim to work together with these audiences, especially those that are marginalised, in order to identify topics and approaches that they consider inspiring. Instead of a top-down approach, we have opted for another approach that starts at the bottom and works its way up and finishes back down at the bottom, utilising co-creative practices throughout the process.

This requires increased participation and co-development with the public. It also requires co-development with our network's members and our various development communities. For the public, it means involving them as active players and participants, rather than objects of action.

Co-development needs to be thought of as a tool and model, which requires professional skills development within our network as well.

- ***Audience equality and equity***

The issue of equality or equity is very important since we are talking about audiences that do not have enough (social) access to science

centres or museums. It's about jointly identifying obstacles to inclusion issues that reflect the interests of those currently outside the reach of science centres and museums. We think that also they should be able to experience the joy of discovering new things and perhaps be inspired in their career and recreational choices. As a professional network, we try to identify the various barriers encountered by these audiences, in hopes of working with them to find ways to reach an even wider audience. This approach creates a kind of platform that enables us to be creative within our network. Solidarity can take on different forms. During the crisis, we did not have the chance to meet together in person. However, we still managed to carry out our work, with everyone making their own contribution to try to relieve the stress and pressure created by the pandemic and find innovative solutions.

Through digital platforms and emails, we created a virtual place where we can continue to be creative and share our ideas, which alleviates stress. We envisioned a place that does not yet exist and that could be created in the future.

### **Pierre-Yves Lochon**

- ***CLIC: an active community***

Since its creation in 2018, CLIC France has developed around 3 functions and services for its members: monitoring heritage innovation in France and the rest of the world, particularly through its website; sharing positive experiences through meetings, workshops, webinars and in-person visits, and finally, sharing and jointly developing innovative collective projects involving several members.

Over the past 13 years, CLIC has become a strong, active community with 140 member institutions who collectively manage over 700 cultural sites. What makes CLIC unique is that it also has around thirty members that are businesses. In total, it has over 2,600 French and French-speaking professionals, 30,000 followers across all our social media, over 3,000 articles published since the creation of the website and 150 events organised since our inception, including 6 webinars that each attracted 500 members. We have also initiated around ten collective projects.

In 2020, website traffic and the number of followers increased by 20%.

• ***How have we changed our missions and actions for our communities? Collective projects.***

2020 pushed us to change our actions for our community in order to meet their changing needs.

We re-focused our initiatives on the community by providing increased and more diverse content and activities for our members. In April and May we offered a weekly guided digital tour at different sites to enable our members to test different technology tools. We also offer them a thematic webinar.

We want to grow our community, especially in the French-speaking world. We felt that there was strong demand from our French-speaking friends to share with museums in France, and vice-versa. Helping the French-speaking world to develop is very important to us. The association of Belgian museums of Wallonia has joined CLIC, and for the first time ever, we are going to organize French-speaking meetings with Swiss, Belgian, Quebecois and Monegasque partners with the conference “Innovation and heritage in training” (*Innovation et patrimoine en formation*). The goal is to collectively identify what we’ve learned from the crisis in terms of content, interaction with visitors and the organisation of jobs and cooperation.

In 2020, CLIC launched some very successful collective projects to offer support during this unprecedented period of lockdowns and museum closures. We also organised a video tour of France’s locked down cultural sites, which attracted over 2 million Facebook followers. We co-produced a virtual tour featuring 160 French collections which attracted over 500,000 unique visitors, and launched the “Art in quarantine” (*Art en quarantaine*) competition and a podcast series.

• ***Meeting our members’ new needs and requirements***

After the success of these joint initiatives (in response to members wanting to work together on concrete projects), we are currently working on several collective projects around open content and virtual tours.

Finally, we are also going to try to meet our members’ growing need for training for themselves and their teams.

Beyond sharing experience, as we are currently doing with our webinars and website content, CLIC plans to offer practical training

in small groups, in partnership with business members, to provide assistance with the new jobs or new organisational structures that museums have had to put in place during the lockdown, and to help with capacity-building for our member institutions.

For the coming months, we are preparing a soft transition with a hybrid approach. We are going to continue with the webinars, but we also need real events because in a community you need real, and not just virtual interactions.

## Discussion

**Penelope Theologi-Gouti** - We have heard about a lot of networks during this session, but we have not talked about ICOM. What has ICOM done during the pandemic?

**Peter Keller** - From the very beginning of the pandemic, ICOM immediately published recommendations and guidelines on safety and digital communication. The network also organised a series of webinars on the development of new future strategies for seeking out audiences and financial resources in the post-pandemic world. In addition, we organised several projects in Africa to support museums in conflict zones, train staff, and set up inventory and security systems for their collections. We also conducted several surveys to gain a better overview of the situation of museums around the world.

**Penelope Theologi-Gouti** - With regard to the networks set up to deal with the pandemic and the inability to work on site, has this way of working caught the attention of other levels of the organisation (marketing, conservation, outreach, etc.)?

**Sergio Servellón** - There is a network for conservation and restoration which is working on issues related to the pandemic, but I am not aware of their specific activities.

**Bruno Maquart** - Ecsite set up working sessions open to all and many employees from different departments participated in them. This enabled us to discuss a range of issues and was a fun opportunity to motivate everyone. Beyond the usual hierarchy, digital technologies create less formal and more direct discussions than in-person meetings where job titles still have a strong impact.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - We have not actually talked much about social media networks and their use during the pandemic. Have they been tools for solidarity or rather tools for self-interest?

**Pierre-Yves Lochon** - I don't know if they have been tools for solidarity, but they have definitely been tools for sharing. Bruno Maquart talked about it when he spoke. There was such demand for

information on the part of institutions around the world that were all closed, but needed to respond and quickly come up with solutions to survive and stay in contact with visitors. It made the need for information vital, whether it was information gleaned from institutions' websites or exchanged through social media networks. These network contributed to supplying this need for information and for sharing it. In that sense, they played an important role, like they generally do, but even more so during the lockdown.

**Bruno Maquart** - I would like to add that we don't share things the same way with the whole world and with a limited group of people we know. Social media networks are for everyone and are used to communicate, but not to bring members together. I think that closed networks, which are more intimate, have a much more important role to play. The group chat we created for the members of the Ecsite board of directors is an example of this. We communicate every day, sometimes just to wish each other a good day. It is one of the things that I was most touched by during the first lockdown, when we were all really worried. Feeling that your colleagues were just on the other side of the screen was really useful, but you don't get that with social media networks.

**Ech Cherki Dahmali** - I would like to share a statistic regarding digital progress and the development of networks during this period. Morocco has seen the equivalent of 5 years of digital development during the COVID-19 period. Curators in the Arab region who were behind, have made up the equivalent of roughly 2 years of digital progress in the management of their museums, collections and inventory systems.

**Emilie Vanhaesebroucke** - I would like to point out that we also introduced other types of online projects that FRAME had not had the opportunity to implement before with its members. Since the beginning of the crisis, we have had to adapt. Besides virtual exhibitions, we have tried to promote less scientific programmes that focus more on wellness and art therapy practices which the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is used to doing, by creating exchanges between the museums of Dallas, Lille and Montreal. They worked together on a protocol for receiving autistic visitors, which we will be publishing. Their collaboration led to the creation of a concrete digital project which showed how it was possible to use a collection

on nature to create a sensory experience while quarantined at home, in particular by working with therapists from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The FRAME network has tried out lots of things, such as podcasts with professionals from Cleveland, Los Angeles and the Petit Palais in Paris so that registrars could share how they perceive their profession and how they see it developing in the future.

All this was also a way to fuel discussions about the current situation remotely in a constructive way, exchanging knowledge and know-how across the Atlantic. These are initial trials, because networks are ultimately creative and somewhat experimental spaces, compared to the institutions where we all work. They enable us to make progress together. That is why they are places of solidarity, because there is strength in numbers.

**Emma Nardi** - I would just like to add that my participation in this session has reinforced my belief in the value of SAREC funding.



# Session 7

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**Building solidarities between  
museums around the world**

*Tuesday 18 May 2021*



## Speakers:

**Stéphane Chagnon**, Executive Director of Société des musées du Québec

**Nava Kessler**, President of ICOM Israel

**Areti Leopoulous**, Curator of MOMus - Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki Museum of Photography

**Michèle Rivet**, Vice-Chair, Board of Trustees of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, board member, ICOM Canada and ICOFOM

**Syrago Tsiara**, Interim Director of the MOMus - Museum of modern art

**Tuuli Uusikukka**, Chair of the Finnish Association for Museum Education (Pedaali) and Educational Curator at the Finnish Toy Museum Hevosenkentä in Espoo

**Dr. Lior Zalmanson**, Head of the digital forum for ICOM Israel, senior lecturer at Tel Aviv University with a focus on digital transformation processes.

**Moderation: Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France.



The aim of today's discussion is to build solidarity around the world. As the session's moderator, Juliette Raoul-Duval, underlines in her introduction, this vast topic is being discussed on a special day, International Museum Day, which ICOM created 44 years ago. It is also the day before museums in France are set to open after 200 days of closure. What better symbol of building solidarity between museums around the world than this 70-year-old non-governmental

organisation which brings together 50,000 members from 140 countries? Let's appreciate our unity today and do our best to keep it alive for a long time to come.

We will undoubtedly see that this crisis has created new forms of solidarity between museums which have been working together brilliantly since the outset of the pandemic. We've seen this within ICOM, between national and International Committees, between museums and members of the network. ICOM, Unesco and Nemo surveys quickly provided us with information about the extent of the closures and their impacts. We have shared our experiences and solutions through new tools, reinforcing our sense of belonging to a professional community in which we all have the same job to do, regardless of our geographic location. We have connected to each other through digital technologies, which has created new solidarities.

However, Juliette Raoul-Duval notes that when it comes to digital technologies, surveys such as the one conducted by UNESCO, are highlighting that there are still terrible inequalities that are perhaps even growing worse. Only 5% of museums in Africa and in small island states have access to digital technologies. The divide has probably been accentuated by the progress made in the rest of the world. This needs to be part of our commitment to solidarity in the years to come.

For now, this discussion is the opportunity for our guests to share successful experiences of solidarity. It will also give members a chance to clarify their expectations from ICOM.

**Stéphane Chagnon** - Collaboration, networking and mutual support are the basis of museum engagement. We need solidarity between museums, but also between individuals, communities and countries to overcome this health crisis.

Quebec is a predominantly French-speaking province with a population of 8.5 million people, in an area four times the size of Germany, with a network of 400 institutions and 15 million annual museum visitors.

• ***What lessons can be learned from the management of this crisis?***

If the pandemic revealed one thing, it is that networks that are structured, coordinated and able to speak with one voice to

government bodies are more likely to be heard and listened to, and even consulted. When the Quebec government declared the health emergency, the *Société des musées du Québec* team began working remotely and quickly went into crisis management mode.

Since then, information from government and public health organisations has been monitored to disseminate all relevant information via a new tab on our website. Four weeks after the start of the crisis, an emergency health plan, showing the capacity of museums to implement strict health protocols to protect public and staff safety, was presented to Quebec's Minister of Culture.

- ***A support role***

Acting as true first responders, we distributed over 500 protective visors for staff and designed pictograms to help museums comply with health standards and prepare for a safe reopening. We have demonstrated our capacity to fulfil our duty to provide support at each stage of the crisis, from its onset until the recovery.

To help museums connect with each other, we organised virtual discussion forums for managers to share their opinions.

Staff showed their resilience, inventiveness and creativity in the face of the closure, evidenced by the 120 digital projects we have compiled on a web page dedicated to virtual experiences. After 14 months of the pandemic, 2 lockdowns, 3 waves of coronavirus and 8 months of museum closures, staff have worked through these disruptions with the support and assistance of the *Société des musées du Québec*. To support managers and professionals dealing with issues related to transforming museum offerings (organisational transformation and change in practices), we offered 43 distance learning activities to the Quebec museum community on a diverse range of topics, such as museum outreach, eco-responsibility, accommodating visitors with disabilities and maintaining a respectful environment in museums.

- ***Networks: a powerful force in dealing with government authorities***

The museum ecosystem has been hit hard. First and foremost, museums have seen their revenue decline. This is an ongoing situation, in particular, due to the absence of international tourists, the ban on group activities and health restrictions that limit visitor numbers.

In order to measure the human and financial impacts of the pandemic for museums, the *Société des musées du Québec* has conducted 2 surveys with its members. These surveys showed a loss of CA\$34 million for the 120 museums that responded between April and September 2020. During our numerous exchanges with the representatives of the Minister of Culture of Quebec and the Minister of Canadian Heritage, we requested emergency assistance and financial support to help museums overcome this crisis. The Canadian and Quebec governments responded to the call for help by allocating CA\$53 million to the museums of Canada and CA\$400 million for cultural organisations in Quebec.

• ***How should we be preparing for another crisis?***

I think that museums need to continue to show political bodies and society that they are relevant. They need to be positioned as an essential service, just like the food sector or psychological support services. We have repeatedly explained the role and importance of museums as safe havens that can help struggling communities return to normal after weeks of being quarantined.

I'll end with the words of Albert Jacquard: "Today, the most necessary solidarity is that of everyone on Earth" (translated from the French - *Désormais, la solidarité la plus nécessaire est celle de l'ensemble des habitants de la Terre*).

**Syrago Tsiara** - New tools and methods are needed to strengthen solidarity between cultural institutions, but also between museums and the community.

• ***MOMus: collaboration to survive and move forward***

The Metropolitan Organisation of Museums of Visual Arts of Thessaloniki has made solidarity and collaboration its main tools to survive and move forward.

Two years ago, 5 museums and arts centres in Greece (the State Museum of Contemporary Art, the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography and the Contemporary Art Center of Thessaloniki and the Athens-based Museum Alex Mylona) came together to create the MOMus platform. These institutions work together by sharing their material and human resources, and coordinating their activities while each managing their own programming.

We focus on principles and issues that are important to us and discuss questions such as: What audience do we want to create or reach out to? What types of exhibitions and social programmes should we offer? What production and communication channels should we use? How do we finance our activities? And finally, how do we make them effective during these critical times?

• ***A pandemic combined with a financial crisis***

Keep in mind that the pandemic hit 10 years after a long financial crisis in Greece that we are still trying to overcome.

During the crisis, the public cultural sector suffered from numerous budget cuts. We had to reinvent ourselves to find new tools to secure our future and prosper. We did this by developing networks and increasing collaboration by sharing our joint capital, such as collections, infrastructure, experience and work. Over the past ten years, we have learned to appreciate the advantages of collaboration and solidarity, even more so than before.

With the health crisis and ensuing museum closures and lockdowns, the purpose of art took on a whole new level of importance, with fresh implications.

• ***MOMus and digital technologies: communicating and imparting values***

Digital technologies obviously became the immediate response. They are still a poor substitute for physical contact but are nevertheless a “makeshift tool” that enable some form of sharing, through online collections, virtual tours, discussion forums and other initiatives.

In another step towards mutual support and direct interaction, MOMus also created a new project called the MOMus Resilience Project. This platform was open to artists and non-artists alike in order to collect and share images of individuals in their daily life during the lockdown.

In addition, we developed an original entirely digital exhibition in 3 chapters called Visualizing Humanity, based on the permanent collections of the National Gallery-Museum of Alexandros Soutsos, the National Museum of Contemporary Art and MOMus. Inspired by the unprecedented challenges humanity has had to face in recent

years, the exhibition seeks to highlight and share the values found in the European Declaration of Human Rights. Incidentally, it took place while Greece held the presidency of the Council of EU.

## **Areti Leopoulous**

### **• *Developing an exhibition under unique circumstances***

Creating the exhibition *Visualising Humanity* was a real challenge<sup>1</sup>.

Mainly initiated by the Network of Contemporary Culture Museums (Ministry of Culture’s Directorate of Visual Arts, Architecture, Photography and Museums of Contemporary Culture), it was created and curated by the curatorial teams of three major Greek state museum organizations: the National Gallery-Museum of Alexandros Soutsos, the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the Metropolitan Organisation of Museums of Fine Arts of Thessaloniki altogether. Each institution involved was responsible for one part of the exhibition, using their own permanent collections.

It focused on three themes related to the challenges of today’s world:

- 1°- The value and dignity of human life (“Animus Immortalis Est” by the curatorial team of the National Gallery).
- 2°- The concept of “home” in the literal and figurative sense (“Feels Like Home” by the curatorial team of EMST).
- 3°- The climate crisis (“Climate Crisis”, by the curatorial team of MOMus).

The staff from the museums demonstrated extraordinary resilience as the collaboration took place entirely remotely. Developing a project of this size solely through digital tools requires a very different type of management and budget.

### **• *A digital exhibition: the relationship with the works and the public***

Although experiencing works of art via digital technology is not at all the same as the real thing, this approach makes them visible, even to people who aren’t used to visiting museums. Because of this, the works took on a slightly different role, as artistic content

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://res.momus.gr/en/network-of-contemporary-culture-museums>.

with an educational aspect. Furthermore, because it is a digital exhibition, it did not have the same time and spatial constraints. It has been accessible for a long time, to a much wider audience than if it had been a physical exhibition.

• ***Digital collaboration: differences in management and curating***

We learned a lot through this experience and exchanged with our colleagues about the different ways we work at our respective institutions.

Digital management and the perception of works of art differ from one institution to another. The National Gallery-Museum therefore does not present works with content related to modern challenges such as the environment. The curators also had different perspectives about digital technologies since working mainly with 19th Century paintings and sculptures (as is the case with the National Gallery-Museum) is not the same thing as managing the performances of a young contemporary artist.

However this collaboration was a great success based on mutual respect and our common desire to share works of art and their various narratives. We also wanted to make sure that the identity of each institution was preserved.

In the end, we have survived by modernising our tools and collaborating.

**Michèle Rivet**

• ***ICOM Canada: what we did***

We continued to try to reach out to our members and offer them a way to connect. ICOM Canada therefore geared its activities towards this.

We took the opportunity to create a webinar on the definition of museum with the President of ICOM, Alberto Garlandini and Bruno Brulon Soares, Chair of ICOFOM. This created a climate of dialogue between the members and us, which had not really been the case before the pandemic.

We also consulted our members about strategy. We realised that virtual dialogue helped develop solidarity with our members and made them more open to answering our surveys.

• ***Digital technologies: a way to bring the public together***

It is important to highlight that with the pandemic, virtual technology has taken on a whole new dimension, enabling a much broader audience to participate. We even reached full capacity with 1000 participants for our symposium on decolonisation organised by ICOFOM. We had never seen such a strong response.

In a country as big as Canada, the pandemic ultimately helped bring together an audience that never would have otherwise taken an interest in museums.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights also brought its visitors together through various virtual techniques (museum tours, exhibitions, interactive participation) and was able to reach a lot more visitors out of the small city of Winnipeg, by creating more interaction with the public.

**Tuuli Uusikukka**

• ***The transition to digital technologies***

Our members include 300 educators. We wanted to provide them with a platform for cooperating and sharing best practices, and to offer our support.

It was initially a shock for everyone when the pandemic hit Finland in March 2020. We had to cancel everything that had been programmed for the year. We only had our first Zoom meeting in May. Before that, we had no virtual meetings.

Our online activities took on different forms, including exhibition tours, talks, workshops and especially a discussion forum for our members, which was really important for them.

The situation became an opportunity to be in contact with personalities and professionals from other countries, and many international speakers took part in our Zoom sessions.

• ***Digital activities connected to current events***

Our choice of speakers and subjects were of course influenced by our members and current events. Our sessions covered topics such as digital teaching tools, decolonisation, the Black Lives Matter movement and climate change.

The environment is a very important issue in Finland, so we developed talks and workshops to brainstorm with our members about new ways for museums to focus on climate and to share the various initiatives of museums around the country.

In May we invited English art historian, Alice Procter. In June we had artist Pablo Helguera, who is also an educator at the MoMA. He told us about how the MoMA experienced the pandemic. We usually organise our annual trip to a European city, but this time we opted for a virtual trip to New Zealand where we visited the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

The pandemic has had some positive impacts. The forced digital transition prompted museums to make great strides and enabled us to reach a more distant audience in other countries. We also increased our membership.

**Dr. Lior Zalmanson** - I would like to talk about how museums, particularly in Israel, and probably elsewhere around the world, have changed their perception of the role of websites.

• ***The fear of losing ownership to Big Tech***

Museum websites are currently designed to help people prepare for their visit to the physical location. The majority of the content focuses mainly on information regarding the visit and the building. However the relationship between the Internet and museums has changed through COVID-19. Today, for many, museums are first and foremost virtual spaces, and the cultural heritage world now feels that it is losing ownership of its assets to Big Tech, in particular Google Arts and Culture, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, which in many ways control the information we receive and the information for museums. These platforms are doing incredible projects, but they are taking over much of museums' intellectual property and the context in which it is displayed. We need to be discussing this now that the cultural world is entering the digital world because when we integrate these platforms and give them control of our websites and the appearance of our online museums, they do our job for us. Facebook has the power to decide what will be promoted and what will be moderated. It is important for museums to think about this and to invest resources in making them independent and experimental.

• *Towards more inclusive digital technologies*

Physical museums closed last year and websites have taken on a whole new dimension. Many institutions have focused on digitising their museums. However, I believe this is not enough. Websites should not only strive to provide a replica of real-life experiences.

The digital world offers so many opportunities for museum professionals to explore new ideas, particularly around solidarity. Museum websites should not focus so much on information or the building as they should on the way we use digital technologies to make museums more open and inclusive so that everyone feels welcome. We need to think about how to create communities and new forms of intimacy through digital tools. It's about flexibility. Exhibitions take years to develop, but virtual exhibitions take less time. Museums entering the digital world could be a catalyst for transforming and revitalising museums, but also for connecting the private and public sectors.

Here are a few examples.

Firstly, we have created a network with around 10,000 culture professionals from across Israel to share knowledge, communicate and create communities. We started with Zoom sessions and created talks about how we can approach museums differently. One of the proposals that came out of them was to develop a festival. In April 2020, we held the Viral Festival, bringing together several artists we approached to create new digital works designed specifically for screens and the Internet.

As for ICOM Israel, we offered activities via Zoom and Facebook, which increased the number of discussions, exchanges and participants. This made meetings much more open and inclusive. People from across the country, even those with less resources for travel, can take part in these sessions, learn and share their practices

Digital tools also let us do away with opening hours. They are always on, and we have seen a lot of online streaming. Protective Edgen, an art collective, has come up with a fun project called ArtBnb, where a group of artists broadcast their lives from the closed Tel Aviv Museum of Art or other cultural institutes. People could see them sleeping by a Jeff Koons sculpture.

- ***Designing websites to increase solidarity***

We have also seen the creation of virtual museums in virtual spaces that inspire new ideas about museum spaces. Virtual museums morph, change, become dynamic and can host a relatively unlimited number of exhibitions.

I think that ICOM should think about how to help museum websites offer experiences and increase solidarity. How do we do that? How do we make websites vehicles of emotion and not just functional tools?

We need to focus on the narration, the narrative of the website and create surprises for the visitors/users. Museums need to offer websites that evolve, that are dynamic and personalised, that provide a place for community and to co-create with collections. Websites can also be the vehicle used to consult the community to ask what it needs and wants.

- ***Challenges***

Obviously there are lots of challenges that need to be overcome. However, we need to keep the digital divide in mind. Not everyone has access to digital technologies or digital knowledge.

These kinds of changes also require different funding sources. In addition, we need to find solutions to copyright issues. Of course we have to change the way we think about visitors or viewers because the people who use today's devices do not have the same attention span and we do not have the same control as in physical museums.

We need to change our perspective, see opportunities and overcome challenges. If we work together to overcome them, I think we could create a lot more knowledge. I'll end by adding that the European Union is currently conducting a study on participatory management in museums and it's a great step in the right direction.

## Discussion

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - The future of museums obviously involves a hybrid approach. This may be obvious, but we still need concrete examples of this. The first thing that comes to mind is the organisation of in-person and remote experiences. However, we need to think about the challenges of tomorrow's museums to be inclusive and attract visitors who have encountered us on digital platforms. Perhaps you could talk about these experiences.

**Johan Van Roy** - I used to be a museum professional and worked for the Museums of Fine Art of Brussels. Today I work for TicketMaster, which is a digital ticket marketplace. My experience during the pandemic has been that we were very lucky in Belgium because the government decided that museums were the only way for people to be in contact with art. It worked out really well. Museums in Brussels were full and had new online reservation systems with reserved time slots. This provided more information about the visitors. The institutions therefore got a digital upgrade, new visitors and better knowledge of them.

Dr. Zalmanson's presentation was very interesting and I agree with him that collections can become a real platform and not just be a presentation. That way you can connect with your audience and that is the key for any collection. How do you keep them alive? How do you promote them? How do you get the public to contribute in order to make them more accessible?

As for how to increase solidarity between museum workers, I think it would be interesting to invite professionals from other sectors to share their experience as they might have other perspectives.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - In France, professional federations that had long been aware of each other but that were not used to working together began collaborating. At the invitation of our Ministry of Culture, we had the opportunity to exchange and cooperate in order to provide a better understanding of what was happening in our museums. We have gained a better sense of our diversity, but also of the unity of museums in our country. We have also had opportunities to collaborate with other professionals in the cultural sector, such as CIPAC, the French federation of contemporary art professionals. We worked together to request that museums quickly reopen.

## Conclusion

**Nava Kessler** - A lot has been done, with lots of creativity in different countries. Digital technologies have connected members and the public and it has been greatly inspiring to hear from all of you.

However, there are still things we can learn from the pandemic. I think the topic of this meeting is very important for making museums stronger and more resilient. Museums work for society, with and within communities, and if museums are strong, we make society and our community stronger. They are therefore a social benefit for humanity. Making museums better in a way makes humanity across the world better.

Things are happening very quickly, but I think it is essential to learn and draw conclusions from this COVID-19 crisis. It has revealed the strengths, but also the weaknesses of relationships between museums.

We are talking about solidarity. Solidarity is all about connections. Within our own country, we connected very well with our members and the public and were extremely creative. However there was little interaction between countries. We don't know enough about each other, but information is essential, especially in a time of crisis. We need channels to share knowledge and information effectively.

I think that as an organisation, ICOM can provide this information, put museum directors and ICOM country presidents in contact with each other, collect all the information and share it. That is the responsibility and role of an international organisation. This unity is what solidarity is all about. Solidarity can be a great strength. It must not be wasted. It must be used to make our museums stronger.



# Session 8

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**Documenting the impacts  
of COVID-19: how will museums  
bear witness to this page  
in world history?**

*Tuesday 15 June 2021*



## Speakers:

**Foteini Aravani**, Curator of Digital Collections at the Museum of London

**Emilie Girard**, Scientific and Collections Director at Mucem

**Elisabeth Ioannides**, Education Curator at the National Museum of Contemporary Art Athens (EMST) & Art therapist

**Jacob Thorek Jensen**, CIMUSET board member & Curator at the Danish Museum of Science & Technology

**Maria Ollila**, Curator at the National Museum of Finland (Helsinki) & Secretary of the Finnish TAKO Network for Collection Management and Contemporary Documenting

**Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset**, President of the ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Costume, Fashion and Textiles (ICOM Costume)

**Moderation: Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France.



For today, we chose a topic that is connected to current events and that shows that museums never lost their importance and uniqueness during the pandemic. Museums have begun collecting objects, information and documents that will become tomorrow's memories of this COVID-19 pandemic. Juliette Raoul-Duval introduces the issues surrounding the session. What kinds of materials are we collecting? Is this a subject related to solidarity?

It is one of our most interesting topics because we will be exploring the notion of collecting together. How do we keep a record of this event once we get over the shock of it? Estelle Guille des Buttes, offers a reminder of the origin of the word "solidarity", which comes from the Latin *solidus*, and the bond unifying people with shared

interests. We have all had to make our own contribution during this unpredictable and difficult crisis, but we must admit (and in doing so acknowledge the commitment of cultural professionals), that after the initial shock, we have seen an awareness and desire to organise and respond in the knowledge that this is a historic time.

**Emilie Girard** - I am thrilled to be with you to share our experience and the initial analysis from our work. Following the early initiative of the Centres d'archives in France, we launched a collecting campaign on 20 April 2020 called "Life under lockdown", calling for donations of objects that could be considered symbolic of this period in time.

• ***The collecting method***

Mucem is accustomed to enriching its collections using the same method as the former Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, through field work. Usually, when we want to enrich our collections around a modern social theme, we send out investigators and/or curators into the field to bring back material evidence and document it with photographs, interviews, etc.

During the first lockdown, we were unable to use these traditional investigative methods and used a participatory approach to overcome the problem and collect the reactions of our fellow citizens.

Using the Mucem website and social media networks, we launched a written call for donations, asking people wanting to participate, to donate objects that they felt were symbolic of the period.

As soon as the idea was born, we began discussing it with our team and a lot of questions were raised. At that point we didn't have all the answers, so we decided to launch the campaign and resolve any problems as they arose.

The end date for the call for donations was 31 May, one month after the start date.

• ***Results of the collecting campaign***

When we launched the campaign, we didn't know what to expect. We had no idea how much response we would get or what kinds of donations we would receive.

We ended up receiving a lot of feedback (80 responses in the first week) and extremely diverse and personal materials. Through media advertising, we received over 600 proposals, mainly from France, with some from Spain, Italy, the UK, Egypt, Dubai, Mexico, and even China. However, we quickly saw that the proposals showed a strong sociological bias, with responses mainly from Mucem's usual visitors, from relatively privileged social categories that are not representative of everyone's experience.

Among the categories of objects proposed, it quickly became clear that some would be central: protective items and administrative documents (makeshift masks or masks showing a particular aesthetic and creativity, authorisations for leaving home, some of which were humoristic or reflected a creative intent), which we received in large numbers, but not to an overwhelming extent, which was a first lesson. We also received a lot of objects related to supporting healthcare and other workers that were seen as essential (posters, banners, letters of support for cashiers and waste collectors, and objects used to make noise during the evening applause for front-line medical staff). We also received objects used to mark the passing time (crossed off calendars, activity books, to do lists, etc.), inventions (shorts made from shower curtains, home-made board games) and artistic productions.

The most surprising thing was to see how much people revealed about themselves. Not only did they propose an object, but they also provided a written explanation of their feelings and why the object was important to them. These materials documenting the proposal were immediately very interesting. The "Social Role" of the museum became clear. For some participants, responding to the call for donations was a way for them to express themselves and perhaps get some things off their chest. Of the 600 proposals we received, we decided to acquire 200 of them for research and additional documentation.

• ***Post-collecting: research and presentation projects***

We then launched a research phase, co-hiring a sociology post-doctoral researcher with Aix-Marseille University and the Institute of Mediterranean Societies in Transition (SOMUM) in order to study the material, conduct interviews with the donors and broaden the social scope of the collecting campaign.

Today we are exploring ways to present the collection, which we think is important for the public in general, but also for our donors. First, some of the objects will be exhibited as part of a project being led in conjunction with the European programme, Taking Care, of which Mucem is a partner. We invited photographer Antoine d'Agata to exhibit the work he produced during the lockdown and review the donation proposals together.

We are also participating in a project led by ICOM Costume to promote the materials collected by various institutions around the health crisis, through the example of the facemask.

**Foteini Aravani** - As Émilie said, we are living through a moment in history that needs to be documented. In the light of this, the Museum of London launched the Guardians of Sleep project very early on.

• *Collecting an inclusive and emotional object*

We wanted to create a modern collection that could recount the COVID-19 crisis for future generations. We didn't have a specific plan but the collection was meant to represent the experience of Londoners during the pandemic. It was intended to be inclusive and representative of individual experiences.

Guardians of Sleep is one of the first projects we worked on. During the lockdown, many of us experienced a change in our sleeping patterns, which obviously impacted our dreams. This crisis, and the fact that so much was unknown, affected our dreams and our subconscious. Life was more boring, and our brains began to compensate for the lack of usual stimulation. We started dreaming more and remembering more about details and colours.

We wanted to capture that by looking at everyday objects, creating a more emotional collection that would let people connect with each other and create their own story and interpretation.

We believe that dreams are an inclusive "object" that we can explore collectively. Traditionally, objects about dreams in museum collections are painted representations of dreams. However, we wanted dreams to be captured in the words of the dreamers themselves, for them to tell their own story. What's more, we have a strong collection of oral stories at the museum.

- ***A partnership with a research centre***

However, we are not psychotherapists. We therefore developed a partnership with the University of Western Ontario, in Canada, which has a dream research centre, and set up a team of experts.

Of 500 dream proposals we received, we selected 21. The experts carried out the interviews according to an ethical procedure, sometimes only via audio, and sometimes via Zoom.

- ***Expanding the boundaries of the collection and a new approach to the public***

The project was a real experiment for us. We expanded the boundaries of our collection. Collecting dreams as an object was a great opportunity to work differently and broaden the notion of museum objects.

We do not yet have any plans to exhibit this collection because the Museum of London will be moving in 3 years.

However, we have been very happy to have had this opportunity to work with new objects, new processes and connect with the public in a new way. Instead of providing them with content, we are integrating their content into our collections.

**Maria Ollila** - The National Museum of Finland documents contemporary phenomena and the turning points of society as well as the government's actions and interactions with the public. We regularly carry out collecting campaigns and we use different methods, including interviews, photography, observation and the collection of objects. We have numerous partners and collaborate with the Finnish Heritage Agency Picture Collections.

- ***Methodological documentation from the beginning of the crisis***

From the very start of the crisis, we realised that we are living in a historic time. We therefore began to document this period in mid-March 2020. We already had our collecting methodology, we just had to adapt it to comply with health protocols and social distancing measures. We spoke with different museums in Finland via the TAKO network and contacted memory organisations.

We began a documentation project initiated by the museum, which is still ongoing.

- ***Documenting society***

We documented the crisis from different perspectives, but we focused especially on society and the critical sectors involved in making it work. These include the healthcare sector, parliament and commerce.

The following are some examples of our documentation work.

The Uusimaa region closed in March 2020 with numerous restrictions and curtailed freedoms. I interviewed two Finnish members of parliament about the issue. Restrictions on movement are a civil rights restriction. However, a compromise was needed to allow life to continue.

We also documented the work of the police and healthcare professionals. We visited a temporary COVID-19 ward at the Surgical Hospital in Helsinki and interviewed two nurses there. We collected their coronavirus protective and detection equipment. Our most recent project focuses on the June 2021 municipal elections, the first to take place during the pandemic. They were set to take place in April but were postponed. New voting methods were put in place, including outdoor polling stations. We documented the election through interviews, observation and photographs. We will continue to explore and document the effects of COVID-19 on our society in the months and years to come.

**Elisabeth Ioannides** - The COVID-19 crisis interrupted everything that seemed normal. Our personal equilibrium has been turned upside down. What are people's attitudes towards limitations and restrictions? These questions are the start of a journey of self-discovery and enable us to understand how we respond to change.

- ***Creativity for self-discovery during a time of change***

During the first lockdown, we decided to use our art therapy platform to put in place a creative project that would bring people together during the crisis. The project was also designed as a form of solidarity. We decided to launch a creative diary to help people learn more about themselves in a changing world and help them cope with change. We also offered tips to learn how to handle anxiety, isolation and fear.

- ***Art can help healthcare workers***

We also wanted to set up a project to honour healthcare workers.

Art can help us and bring us together.

We created the *EMST for Health* programme, which set out to alleviate the anxiety and fatigue of healthcare professionals by providing an outlet to dream and express themselves creatively.

Healthcare workers wanting to participate received an email of a work of art from our collection in the form of an e-card. We had a total of 25 participants. They conversed with the work, thought about it and drew inspiration from it, all on their own personal time. They then sent us their response in a format of their choice as a written text, a poem, a sentence, a painting, or a video.

The participants could then ask to receive another work.

The programme took place from December 2020 to February 2021. The responses from the participants are now on our website (some anonymous, others not).

We are proud of this programme created for our healthcare workers. *EMST for Health* was nominated for the Art against Covid award.

- ***Art for self-expression***

We all experience traumatic situations differently. Art has the power to touch everyone, although our personal experiences are all different. Museums can be a safe place to express ourselves.

**Jacob Thorek Jensen** - I wanted to talk about how we can use the pandemic to experiment with the way we work as museum professionals and how we develop our practices.

The Danish Museum of Science & Technology is located in a former industrial plant north of Copenhagen. At the moment, we are working on creating a new museum in an old power plant which is located in the capital. We are trying to experiment with how to develop a new type of science museum.

- ***A collecting campaign based on the rapid transformation of society***

During the first lockdown, we saw that ingenuity made a lot of things happen to adapt to the new reality. As a museum, we wanted to document this rapid transformation of society. We collected

objects so that we could come up with an exhibition that the public could see when they returned to the museum after the reopening.

We created a new format of exhibitions that we called “rapid relevance exhibition” and worked with our NGO and non-profit partners to document what was happening and develop an exhibition called *Corona, Crisis and Creativity*. We identified several initiatives.

For example, during the first lockdown, there was a lack of face masks and face shields for frontline workers. We saw a lot of initiatives to create them. Major companies changed their production processes to begin producing them. Distilleries produced hand sanitiser and one Danish company created a ventilator with the help of a university.

• ***Putting the crisis into perspective***

We didn’t just want to document what was happening at the time, but we also wanted to highlight the crisis.

Within our collection of objects from WWII, we have replacement products developed during the war where there was a lack of tools and raw materials (e.g. bicycle tyres). We wanted to highlight the current crisis in relation to another historic crisis: the German occupation of Denmark.

We were able to re-open the museum with the exhibition in May 2020. We first collected objects very quickly and then added them to our collections. When visitors came to the museum in the spring, they were able to see a record of the crisis we are experiencing.

• ***What can museums do?***

We can highlight current events to provide perspective and hindsight, and compare the crisis to others in the past.

We need to manage and experience these events and rethink our ways of working in our institutions. It is important to prioritise our internal resources in order to document and collect these objects, so that we can quickly develop exhibitions for our visitors.

**Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset** - I was very eager to participate in this session because it is a pressing topic. Collections are the heart

of museums and collecting in times of crisis is something we need to pay particular attention to.

ICOM Costume replied to the Solidarity call for projects launched by SAREC last autumn.

• ***Birth of “Clothing the Pandemic”***

I felt it was important for the committee to work around facemasks, which, in the beginning, were the focus of the crisis (problem of availability, manufacturing, etc.). ICOM Costume had a role to play in talking about the crisis through a COVID-19 protection object: the facemask. The aim of the Clothing the Pandemic project is to identify museum projects focused on collecting COVID-19 masks and share experiences.

ICOM Costume won the SAREC call for projects in partnership with ICME, ICOM-CC and ICOM Canada (with around 200 masks, the Royal Ontario Museum has the largest collection).

• ***Various collecting initiatives***

We directly contacted different colleagues in charge of costume collections (costume should be understood in the broad sense, as clothing, historical costumes, performance costumes, fashion, etc.). Very few projects on COVID-19 facemasks were identified at the very beginning of the pandemic, in April 2020. One of them started at the University of Westminster in London, focusing on changes in the production chain, from garment making to mask production. In Toronto, thanks to the work of three curators, the Royal Ontario Museum began collecting in very specific areas. The call for donations launched by Mucem brought in another of mask proposals. Over the months, we drew on our network of museum professionals to document other temporary museum initiatives around the world that emerged during the pandemic.

Objects were collected very differently from one museum and one country to another. There were very broad calls for donations, like at Mucem, as well as collecting campaigns with specific interests and targeted perspectives, such as the museum in New Zealand, which focused on indigenous peoples and how they handled the pandemic, the Royal Ontario Museum, which focused on First Nations peoples and community action work, and revealed some

very interesting initiatives, or country-wide collection campaigns in Hungary and the Czech Republic.

• **3 project outcomes for “*Clothing the Pandemic*”**

The project has 3 outcomes.

A two-part workshop (in the spring and autumn of 2021).

The first part will focus on sharing know-how and the various projects identified. In the autumn, the workshop will focus on conserving and presenting materials.

The project’s second activity will be a virtual exhibition of around one hundred COVID-19 facemasks, which will open in December 2021, bringing together the first collections of COVID-19 facemasks. The masks exhibited will cover all the issues related to the subject: masks that make a political statement, offer social commentary or are used to protest, homemade masks, community masks, the works of artists and fashion designers, etc. The aim is both stylistic and critical.

The final project activity will be an online conference in December 2021 inviting linguists, sociologists, art historians and museum curators to participate.

The project also has a final aspect which, we hope, will continue in the long term: a project to identify these collections on the ICOM website with an e-map showing the different places where the materials were collected and the institutions that created temporary exhibitions on facemasks and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Discussion

**Agnès Mirambet** - The Musée de la Poste launched a collecting campaign during the first lockdown in collaboration with the archives department of the La Poste Group. Since it is a corporate museum, its purpose is to recount the contemporary activities and history of the French postal service. We wanted to collect both stories that could join the museum's collections and archives that could be added to the group's official archives. We took advantage of the first lockdown to contact representatives from all of the group's subsidiaries, photographers and communication officers and little by little, we succeeded in generating interest. Items began being collected last summer and the campaign is still ongoing. To date, we have collected 4,000 photographs and 120 videos, as well as some rarer objects: facemasks made specifically by certain departments of the group when people returned to work at the office, or a little welcome kit for staff returning to work. We are waiting for samples of visor prototypes and door handles made using 3D printers usually used by the company to make spare parts for mail sorting centres.

**Emmanuelle Macaigne** - Our museum (the Musée national de l'éducation) launched a collecting campaign which is still ongoing, organised in collaboration with Mucem, the National Archives and the Ministry's heritage and archives department. We are collecting objects from the academic sector but also anything related to education in the family sense. We are still receiving proposals from families, which is enabling them to talk about their feelings, discuss remote learning and education during the lockdown. So far, we have received nearly 100 proposals. As expected, anything related to education is in digital format. We have a lot of digital outputs from the work of students.

Finally, I would like to ask Emilie Girard how people who sent in their objects reacted afterwards. Have they asked for their objects back? How will you handle that?

**Emilie Girard** - We only had one case of a woman who realised that she did not want to give up the sculpture she created during the lockdown. Otherwise, people understood that as soon as they proposed something, it would potentially become part of the

museum's collection, and that there was no return option. In the donation release forms, we also asked for permission to reuse photographs sent to us for communication purposes, without being very specific. We therefore regularly get back to our donors for various uses or specific needs (publication in the press, reuse by an artist). We have developed a real connection with them so they respond very quickly. A form of interaction was created between the museum and the donors.

**Eric Dokkwada** - How do we promote our museums these days given the pandemic, and what policies need to be implemented to preserve their visibility?

**Jacob Thorek Jensen** - Museums are open but visitor numbers have not returned to their pre-lockdown levels. I also think we need to rethink our social role. Museums display the present, and maybe even the future, as well as the past. We not only have old objects, but we are also interested in what is happening right now. In Denmark, we need to rethink our role and the value we offer society in order to stay relevant.

**Elisabeth Ioannides** - I would like to add that the change is permanent. It is important to keep in mind that museums are open places. We need to be welcoming places. Cultural spaces should have stayed open during this entire period and we need to emphasise that museums are safe places. We also need to rethink our programming, perhaps moving towards blended learning while taking into account both digital and in-person approaches. We also need to talk about health and safety aspects.

**Corinne Thépaut-Cabasset** - Collections are essential to the definition of museums, but so is the notion of intangible heritage. We have talked a lot about that during the discussion. I am thinking in particular of artists who have worked around the idea of breathing (the breath of others which could prove to be dangerous). First Nations artists also explored it by producing COVID-19 masks. During today's presentations, we have heard a lot about different aspects of collecting, such as collecting dreams and interpreting them, psychotherapy, and political and sociological perspectives. ICOM Costume's project also tried to investigate what raises questions in a museum in times of crisis. The idea behind the

project has been to find out what makes museums resilient in the troubled times of human history.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - We have been thinking about the definition of museum throughout this period. These fundamental questions about what museums are, how we can define them, and what our core function is, are still with us. The lines between the tangible and intangible and the material and immaterial have been blurred and I think it is something we will see in the records museums keep of the COVID-19 crisis.



# Session 9

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**Does the COVID-19 crisis bring  
museums closer to remote  
audiences... or the way around?**

*Tuesday 6 July 2021*



## Speakers:

**Marie-Laure Estignard**, Director of the Musée des Arts et Métiers

**Aurélie Jourde**, Head of Marketing at the Centre Georges Pompidou

**Beate Reifenscheid**, Director of the Ludwig Museum (Koblenz) & President of ICOM Germany

**Leena Sipponen**, Intendant of Photograph Collections, Espoo City Museum, Finland

**Selma Toprak-Denis**, Assistant Director of visitor services Centre Georges Pompidou

**Tania Veliskou**, Curator of the Museum of the History of the Greek Costume in Athens, Greece

**Moderation: Juliette Raoul-Duval**, President of ICOM France.



We are in a period of remission. Our museums have re-opened and life is slowly getting back to normal. It is interesting to try to understand and measure what has changed in these long months of closure, reflection and loss of contact with the public. How have museums organised themselves to overcome the crisis?

With the recent publication of ICOM International's report on museums and COVID-19, Juliette Raoul-Duval opens the session by presenting the results of the section on new practices aimed at improving public accessibility. It is clear that museums have considerably strengthened their digital offerings without any additional resources. Many museums have made it a principle to be active during the pandemic and increase their accessibility through digital technologies.

Has this radical transformation in the relationship between museums and their visitors (through the development of an enriched digital offering) changed the structure of audiences? Museums have reached out to their audiences and removed the physical barrier. Does reaching out to our visitors have a positive effect? How do we consolidate this?

**Selma Toprak-Denis** - Our staff have had a real desire to come up with ways of maintaining a strong connection with our visitors, which reflected our intention to continue working and to each do our part in this health crisis as part of our public service mission. We continue to provide a cultural and artistic offering and demonstrate solidarity towards our visitors even though they have been far away.

With hindsight, we realise that the development of initiatives, whether they are remote or not, allows us to think about new formats.

**Aurélie Jourde** - I would like to talk to you about the initiatives we developed.

• ***Amplification***

Firstly, we had an amplification and industrialisation approach, which involved ramping up some things that we already did on a small scale, especially workshops.

This led to an online product we called “Pompidou in Class” (*“Pompidou en classe”*) which can be accessed from our ticket office, and is fully integrated into the conventional system. With “Pompidou in Class”, our educators travel around the Paris region (Ile-de-France) and go into classrooms to make presentations directly to students. We developed it during the second lockdown. It is fun to see that the initiative has continued even though we’ve been seeing a good number of school trips again since May. Some institutions like the idea and are still reluctant to return to the museum in person. However the initiative is set to end in September. We have become more professional with this type of project.

• ***Innovation systems***

We also set up an innovation system to continue to reach out to the public. The most successful initiative is called “Art call” (*“Appel d’art”*). Our educators made calls to certain priority groups to tell them about work. It provided something very accessible since

not everyone is necessarily comfortable with computers. It helped develop a connection and provided a remote service.

We also carried out two tests during this time involving remote tours. One was a live stream in the rooms with a stabiliser, which focused on offering a live experience for school children. The other was a semi-live tour with a stationary guide who presented a PowerPoint using Zoom, which was broadcast in the classroom. These test initiatives will not be continued.

- ***Creation of hybrid initiatives***

**Selma Toprak-Denis** - We were able to test initiatives, and the challenge now is to get the public back into the museum and reach out to audiences further away who have not yet visited us. All our reflection is focused on hybrid initiatives.

We are currently working on redeveloping our teaching kit. First, the idea is for teachers to work on educational materials based on works in the collection that can be used in the classroom, and for art workshops. However, the kit also focuses on the connection with the institution and the possibility of being invited to the museum and visiting it. The idea is for the tool to be used by classes that are geographically too far away or that have difficulty accessing the museum, as well as those that are closer and with whom we can develop a relationship.

The challenge for us is to work on this hybrid approach involving remote connections and the development of a physical relationship with schools.

**Tania Veliskou** - Our institution is a small museum in Athens which has a collection of Greek costumes from the 19th and 20th Century. I'd like to talk about the practices we implemented during the 2021 digital exhibition *1821-2021. A thousand stories stitched on a piece of cloth*. The exhibition -available at <https://1821.lykeion-nellinidon.com/>- was organised for the 200th anniversary of Greek Independence and structured into 12 units, with the first starting on February 5<sup>th</sup> 2021.

- ***A “phygital” exhibition***

The exhibition was one of the museum's initiatives during the pandemic. We were trying to make the museum more accessible to a

remote audience, combine the physical space and the digital world, support access to cultural heritage and build new relationships between contemporary artists and our folk museum.

The exhibition was prepared before the lockdown and was supposed to be presented at the museum in March 2021, coinciding with the celebration of 200 years of the Greek War Independence. In the end, we were locked down. With this situation, we had the choice of waiting for the museum to reopen, or to start making online exhibitions. We opted for the second solution and chose to convert all our content and put it online so that it could be accessed by the public.

• ***Going beyond traditional exhibitions***

A number of questions were raised. How would we conceptualise our digital content? We had never done digital exhibitions. We conducted in-depth analysis of the content to be digitised, how to present it and how to engage online visitors.

We wanted to go beyond traditional exhibitions. Our online exhibition used new approaches with contemporary artists and a new way of presenting visual content.

We made around twelve videos streamed via our website. A video was posted every Friday at 18:21, as 1821 was the key year of the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence. We created new video works and encouraged artists to play an active role in designing the exhibition. The process therefore developed into a collaboration with all the stakeholders.

Visitors could explore the photography section to find out more about the different costumes.

There were three complementary components in each unit: the material, visual and textual.

• ***A wider audience***

One extremely positive aspect of the online exhibition has been the easier access for people who would not have been able to attend the exhibition otherwise. This allowed us to reach a wider audience, as we came into contact with the UK Costume Society and other embassies around the world. We were able to reach other audiences via the Internet and social media.

The challenge was to create interaction without having a physical space. To do this, all the content posted on our website was also published on the museum's Facebook page to take full advantage of social media.

• ***A hybrid exhibition today***

Before the lockdown, we focused on *in situ* exhibitions. Today we have tried to create hybrid spaces that are both physical and digital. The physical exhibition has QR codes that offer information provided on the website or images of the digital exhibition.

This exhibition was ambitious, and sought to provide an alternative to traditional formats. Not only did it enable the museum to continue to share with its visitors during the pandemic, but it also allowed us to reach a new audience.

**Beate Reifenscheid** - With the closure of museums, I think that it was the first time that we really asked ourselves what our fundamental mission was towards the public. How do you reach an audience without opening your doors?

• ***Public policy in support of a digital strategy***

The first avenue to be considered was to broaden our access via digital technologies. However, the majority of museums were not well prepared.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the government in helping German museums develop a digital strategy.

The Ministry of Culture enabled all museums in Germany to improve their digital tools by allocating funding. Many have benefited from this support and have been able to establish programmes, virtual tours, audio guides or new databases. This kind of digital development gave museums the chance to extend their reach and explore what can be done with the public.

• ***Reaching a hybrid audience***

A lot of positive things were done, and museums took full advantage of the resources placed at their disposal. The impacts were positive. I wouldn't say that digital technologies are the only solution for gaining a new audience because it is difficult to reach an audience

with whom we didn't have contact before. It is not easy to engage an audience from scratch.

Improving our digital tools, even from when we reopened makes it easier to reach a physical audience as well as a hybrid audience.

- ***What is the role of museums?***

We also need to think about the role of museums in our society. How can we overcome the crisis? The key challenge will be to use the right tools to attract both young people and older people, who have fewer computer skills. They need to be easy to access.

The focus needs to be on attracting our regular visitors, which has been difficult. I believe that the issue of the relevance of museums is essential. I am convinced that museums are more important than ever. They are places where we can talk with communities, and digital tools give us a global reach.

**Leena Sipponen** - We have five museums, a lot of collections and therefore a unique cultural environment. Espoo is Finland's second largest city, with 5 city centres, natural areas, forests and archipelagos. The city is identified by districts. As a city museum, we have to make sure we are serving all populations equally and telling the stories of each neighbourhood. Talking about the history of the city of Espoo needs to involve interaction with the local population.

- ***A digital collection***

I'll be showing you our digital collection, how we managed it during the lockdown and our efforts to reach audiences keen on learning more about the history of the city.

At the beginning of the crisis, we decided to invest in online services. We produced digital collections with audio guides. We were able to open virtual collections through a grant from the Finnish government.

In Finland there is a portal which museums and archives can use to publish their collections, using an open data approach. We therefore used it to publish images and documents from archives. In the spring of 2020, we decided which entities we would showcase on the homepage. We published 10 units about the cultural environment of different neighbourhoods in the city of Espoo.

• *Creating virtual interactions*

We wanted to create virtual interactions with the public during the lockdown.

Each time we published a new image on the website, we communicated about it on social media and sometimes in our newsletter. We mainly use Facebook, but we're also on Instagram and Twitter.

The content on the portal helped create interactions between the museum and the public. Our publications receive a lot of comments and the photographs are widely shared on social media networks. Visitors can also give their opinion and even revise the explanatory texts.

We were excited to see that in 2019, we had over 66,000 visitors to the page, and that number doubled in 2020.

We have also been working on our audience engagement policy to take our virtual audience into account better. We wanted to have more interaction with our online public. We have been thinking about new ways to do that.

• *A desire to reach the local public*

According to feedback from the public, photos of each neighbourhood were the most popular thing we published.

A lot of neighbourhoods have their own Facebook page. These groups have added to our archives. People posted publications about our photos, with lots of memories.

Historical photos have a lot of meaning for people, and these different online collections can reach audiences all around the world. But with this service, we have been able to reach a local audience and increase our interactions with them.

The content on the portal helped create interactions between the museum and the public, and especially with local neighbourhoods.

Our collections helped add joy to the lives of local residents during the pandemic.

**Marie-Laure Estignard** - I would like to talk about what we did at the museum during the lockdowns. We were lucky enough to have had a dozen educators who found themselves with time to imagine and innovate.

• ***Towards digitalised objects and new ways of doing things***

Not being able to open forced us to gain new perspectives on our collections and their physical and digital possibilities. We wanted to work on the visitor's relationship with objects, outside of the intimate setting created by the museum, which is not easy.

We therefore had to reinvent our exhibits with a website called "The Museum at Home" ("*Le musée chez vous*") which contained virtual exhibitions. We were supposed to open an exhibition which was set to be inaugurated when the lockdown began. We therefore had to produce it virtually, putting in everything we could, including games for children. We transformed the exhibition's interactive displays into augmented reality experiences. We came up with a tour guide system where everything could be explained by telephone. We worked a lot on augmented reality.

We also developed treasure hunts in the museum using Google Streetview. You can walk around the museum with different stops along the way and riddles to solve. The same principle was then applied to give a behind the scenes look at the museum with do-it-yourself activities.

During the second lockdown, we developed a different approach. We created a virtual tour of the *Top modèle* exhibition with a tour guide. We later began charging a fee for the tour.

We also changed our ways of doing things. Scientific education is very serious. However, we acquired new skills that allowed us to come up with new forms of outreach, and decided to adopt a very different tone, moving away from a strict focus on knowledge, in order to make things more fun, which isn't easy.

We invented 15-minute non-scientific sessions during which we explained scientific objects with humour. For example, Lavoisier's famous quote "Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed" became "why do socks always disappear in the washing machine?"

We also changed real projects into virtual projects. Our project called "Budding Engineer" ("*Ingénieur en herbe*") was done completely virtually. Only the jury deliberations took place in class.

We also conducted in-class workshops with instructors.

Finally, we managed to develop projects with classes abroad, which we would never have been able to do, thanks to the Mission Laïque Française, which approached us. We therefore developed artistic and cultural education projects with artist residencies in Africa and Asia.

• *Contacting new players for distant audiences*

We were also contacted by new players, such as the influencer My Better Self, who expressed a desire to spend a night at the museum. We gave her a tour of the museum at night and she got to sleep there. We adopted an off-beat tone and reached an audience of young women who were completely new to the museum. We got 50,000 views in one week. The experience raised the question of working with influencers, who are not from the museum world but who are able to draw in new audiences because they have expertise that we might not necessarily have.

In the same spirit, but with another type of audience, we worked with Robin Jamet on the myriagon. Once again, we brought together a more informed lay audience with a high number of views on Youtube. We also had the chance to host Arte concerts from the Paris Music Festival, which were broadcast on TV. Once again, these offered ways to promote the museum.

We realised that we had received a lot of feedback. We don't know what the outcome will be, but we have seen that seeking out new players lets us reach a new audience that is far away from the museum. We have developed initiatives to maintain a connection with these audiences. But can we consider them to be "our audiences"? I'm not really sure.

How do we work with influencers? I think this is something we really need to develop. We know that there are people who are able to talk about us and attract new audiences to us.

We are now working to identify who these distant audiences are. We have divided them into 3 categories: people who are isolated from us due to the pandemic, but who are familiar with the museum and will find their way back to it, people who are geographically far away who came to the museum for the first time because it was closed, and non-museum goers who discovered the museum randomly.

A lot of questions are still up in the air. How do we build the loyalty of these remote audiences? And won't they hop from one institution

to another? How can we get to know them better since we don't know them and we are not able to talk to them, and they remain anonymous?

• *A “phygital” future*

There are questions about the future, and particularly about the business model we should apply to new offerings. We charged for workshops and tours, but should we continue to charge for virtual experiences? And how do we transform virtual experiences into real tours? For me, transformation is the most important issue. If in the future, doing digital means distancing our audiences and telling them to stay home, I think we will have missed the boat.

What is the role of objects in these new exhibits? What will the role of museums be in society? We have seen the development of a cultural channel, and people have watched lots of stories and documentaries on art and museums. How do we keep our place in a world with more resources than us? What is the role of museums in a society that is becoming digitised?

We are now planning for a “phygital” approach. We are working on developing a new digital tour guide with augmented reality tools which help visitors understand the objects. I don't think this tool would have come together so quickly if it had not been for the lockdown. We have developed projects outside the museum such as the “*Ingénieur en herbe*” project, along with international projects. We are able to do projects outside the museum because “phygital” opportunities exist. Artistic and cultural education projects in other countries have been made possible because we work with artists who can work in a hybrid way.

To conclude, there is one thing I am sure about. We were locked down and were able to stay relevant with the public because human outreach is the only way to support digital outreach.

We developed a lot of things but we have a lot of questions about our audiences and the future of our museums in a digital world.

## Discussion

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - We have all benefited from the digital wave in Europe. It didn't take long to find the keys to digital technologies and mutual support systems worked very quickly. Marie-Laure Estignard raised the question of human outreach. I think this issue is fundamental. Will digital technologies encourage visitors to come to museums? What is the role of human outreach?

**Aurélie Jourde** - Human outreach has been essential. The initiatives put in place at the Centre Pompidou are human initiatives. Of course we used technology, but humans were at the heart of things, especially when it came to audiences not exposed to culture or with disabilities. We cannot allow ourselves to create a digital initiative without putting anything behind it. During the lockdown, we also developed a number of tools, such as an experience around Kandinsky and a virtual tour of Miró which worked very well, but they were for the Centre's visitors, meaning people who were already familiar with the institution or an informed public. When you want to keep a connection with people that don't go to museums often, human outreach is essential.

**Tania Veliskou** - Human outreach is very important because not all visitors are able to use Internet tools. Interaction with visitors is essential to us. That is why we are trying to develop tools that are both digital and physical. It is important to offer a sense of physicality through the exhibition in order to interact with the public. However we also tried to share our content online via social media networks, which lets people share their reactions, comments and responses to the collections.

**Leena Sipponen** - I'm not sure I'm the best person to talk about it. My colleagues at the meeting are perhaps better placed to respond.

**Photograph Collections, Espoo City Museum** - We haven't thought about this very much. We were faced with the survival of our museums. Creating digital services was the only way to reach the public. Now is the time to think about the balance between the human connection and these digital tools. I don't think the gap between these two concepts is so big that it would be difficult to combine them.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Have digital technologies attracted distant audiences? Have we found new audiences different from those we had when we were open in the traditional sense? Do you think that you have attracted people that didn't come before?

**Tania Veliskou** - Personally, I think that we have achieved this goal. We used Google Analytics, which showed that our online exhibition reached a large number of visitors, especially foreign visitors. It was also the first time that we observed so many visits and shares of our content abroad. I think that digital tools enabled us to reach a new audience, and in our case, especially people who did not have the ability to visit physical spaces.

**Emilie Girard** - Knowing who we reached additionally or differently is not easy to analyse. It is all the more difficult at museums like Mucem, where things are broken down into different departments (conservation, visitor and communication departments). We are having a hard time identifying who we reached out to in addition to our traditional audience. Mucem has not explored the data so the question remains.

**Marie-Laure Estignard** - We all attracted new audiences. The difficult thing is that we don't know them. We don't know how to communicate with them. We don't know if they came by chance or because our network has been well built. How do you study an anonymous online audience?

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Does this make you want to put in place systems to track these audiences? Should we use surveys? The future will involve developing the loyalty of these new audiences.

**Marie-Laure Estignard** - This raises questions about our concept of audiences. We used to know who came to museums and who we were reaching out to outside the museum. Who is our audience now? This will force us to think about our extremely diverse types of visitors. We will need to redefine the concept of audiences.





# Session 10

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**ICOM's challenge in times  
of crisis: accompanying,  
supporting, redistributing...**

*Tuesday 5 October 2021*



## Speakers:

**Lauran Bonilla-Merchav and Bruno Brulon Soares,**  
Co-Chairs of DeFine - Committee for the museum definition

**Emma Nardi,** Chair of SAREC - Strategic Allocation Review  
Committee

**Gabriele Pieke,** Chair of the ICWG - Working Group on the  
future of International Committees

**Morien Rees,** Chair of the WGS - ICOM Working Group on  
Sustainability

**Muthoni Thangwa,** Spokesperson for the National Committees

**Sally Yerkovich,** Chair of ETHCOM - Ethics Committee.

**Moderation: Juliette Raoul-Duval,** President of ICOM  
France



This is the last session in this series of ten conferences. Throughout this series, we have heard from around sixty people whom we selected, as much as possible, from ICOM members located in different regions around the world. Over the past year, the expectations of our participants with regard to ICOM have changed significantly. Today, we have invited all the ICOM members responsible for the most important issues, such as the museum definition, revising the code of ethics and matters associated with sustainable development. They will be with us to discuss what they have understood from their roles in their working groups about the expectations of ICOM members and its strategy. We need to work today to build the ICOM of tomorrow.

## **Emma Nardi**

### **• *Need for change***

I would like to thank Juliette Raoul-Duval for this session. SAREC is a very useful observatory for understanding what ICOM members want. I think that members are looking for innovation. To this end, if ICOM wants to survive, it has to change radically. We have new technologies but we need to find new methods of building content. For example, the Prague International Symposium in late August 2021, where small working groups were meant to review what is going on, was not a successful experience. We rolled out a model that had already been used at previous conferences, when we needed a change. Kyoto showed us that people want to debate.

### **• *SAREC grants***

Last year, ICOM allocated a budget of €540,000 to SAREC, which was split across three funding sectors: €200,000 to support the activity of International Committees and Regional Alliances; €60,000 for regular projects; €298,000 for solidarity projects. SAREC did not fully spend the €60,000 allocated to regular projects, but used all funding dedicated to solidarity projects. This clearly demonstrates that the new proposal was a success while the previous solution received fewer applications. The total sum of €540,000 allocated to SAREC by ICOM may seem remarkable, but, in reality, this is the very sum of member contributions paid only by ICOM France to ICOM. This budget is therefore clearly insufficient, when compared to the whole fees paid by National Committees.

### **• *Creating an ICOM school***

I believe that ICOM has the capacity and expertise to create a remote learning school for museum professionals. The International Committees have the expertise required to achieve this objective, with the support of the National Committees in order to share ideas and skills between members at all levels. This school could be very important for ICOM and I hope that all members will support this idea as it offers a major opportunity.

### **• *Support for emerging artists***

Another opportunity would be the creation of a competition for unknown artists. Our contemporary art experts could form the

competition jury. This would allow ICOM to expand its cultural role and create a collection of contemporary artwork that would represent a future legacy.

## **Morien Rees**

### **• *Where are we at with regard to sustainable development?***

This presentation is based on the report I recently submitted to the ICOM Executive Board. The report presented the collective studies of working groups with regard to the sustainability resolutions made at the Kyoto Conference, and it also considered application of the 2030 Agenda. I used the Talanoa Dialogue method, which seeks to build consensus around three questions, to structure the report: Where are we? Where do we want to go? How do we get there? In answer to the first question, the pandemic has taught us that we need to adapt to reality and keep attuned to current events. We have achieved limited results so far with regard to the Kyoto Conference and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Our success is fragmented and linked to the interests of the National Committees. The 2030 Agenda has given us what we need to face the current crisis. For example, to avoid the effects of the climate crisis, we need to define the concept of sustainability.

### **• *Where do we want to go?***

The second issue is about the end point for this process. We need to create an organisation that is deliberately focused on applying the Kyoto Conference resolution. We also need to be mindful of the relationship between climate degradation and the biodiversity crisis. The programme needs to serve as a model of action for members so that all of them can contribute to the application of the 2030 Agenda.

### **• *How do we get there?***

ICOM needs to show unity when implementing the precepts of the 2030 Agenda. The executive board should base its decisions on these precepts and the secretariat should apply them or we risk the Agenda becoming pointless. The working group recommends being replaced at the end of its second term in 2022 so that the replacement body can play a key role in the ICOM organisation, taking into account urgent matters in society, museums around the world and ICOM members, in particular.

## **Bruno Brulon Soares and Lauran Bonilla-Merchav**

### **• *A definition linked to museum transformations***

This invitation gives us the opportunity to consider how the museum definition discussion relates to a broader process of museum transformation in this century and ICOM's role in shaping it. ICOM Define comprises 20 museum professionals of varying cultural backgrounds, expertise and perspectives who are actively working on a new museum definition that represents the diversity within ICOM and complies with its system of representation. Given our desire to be as inclusive as possible, we have designed a participatory methodology. The various consultations have given ICOM committees the opportunity to question what a museum means to their members. Throughout this process we have looked to find the commonalities that unite us as museum professionals, despite our varying contexts. Our approach is based on solidarity, a true listening to what others have to say and an understanding that we have to come together with respect for one another's world views.

### **• *An inspiring process***

This process of finding common ground has given us the chance to review how museums and museum professionals across the planet consider their role in the world today. This exchange has been fruitful and extremely valuable for motivating museums professionals internationally to critically think about the present and the future of museums and we feel that the process in itself is much bigger than the definition. It reflects a real need to have these discussions and reconceive our priorities and values in the contemporary landscape. We also hope the proposed definition might contribute to the revalorization of heritage and knowledge, making museums more accessible for different communities within civil society and expanding their right to preserve what has value for them. We believe this work can help the museum sector and society as a whole to heal and to find a path forward in this time of crisis, which is also a time of great transformation.

## **Sally Yerkovich**

### **• *The duties of museums***

As Chair of ETHCOM, it is probably no surprise that I believe that it is important to maintain professional standards during these

difficult times, even if this is one of our toughest challenges. The public has high expectations of museums because they represent a model of honesty and authenticity with regard to the objects held in their collections. We have a duty to disseminate correct information. Museums are not just facing the impact of the pandemic, but also difficulties concerning their independence. Moreover, we need to overcome the challenges of climate change which is threatening our sustainable development. To this end, we need to work collectively and promote social equality. In Kyoto, the executive board agreed on the fact that we needed to change the code of ethics and develop a new version to help us face current challenges.

• ***A new code of ethics to support museums***

In 1980, ICOM was working to create the first code of ethics and asked National Committees to discuss the ethical aspects associated with museum professionals. Now, ETHCOM is working on a new version of this code. The first consultation with National Committees showed that we needed to review certain aspects. We are therefore planning a second consultation. We have understood that a new museum definition is profoundly linked to the ethical values and principles specific to our profession. The first consultation showed us that there are priorities such as sustainable development, but also economic and social support. We need to be mindful of the social role of museums, linked to open access to cultural heritage, while also taking into account the importance of social media and new technologies for the public. We have put in place a participatory methodology for the second consultation in order to inform all members of decisions for the future.

**Gabriele Pieke**

• ***The role of International Committees in international collaboration within ICOM***

ICOM as a leading organisation in the cultural sector always needs to be growing and creating, and cannot remain a static institution. Today, 50% of members, representing around 25,000 people, are part of an international committee (IC) and substantially contribute to ICOM's work at an international level.

• ***Difficulties of remote working***

Due to the pandemic, participation in IC's events has been reduced

and committees have encountered difficulties communicating exclusively online, as it is much easier to interact and understand the concerns of members when speaking to them in person. An ICOM member is not a name on a screen, but an individual with whom ideas can be shared. In the past decade, most of IC's annual conferences were held in Europe and North America and it seems overdue that outreach to other continents is improved in order to foster collaboration with other National Committees. However, this is for several reasons a major challenge, since among others the ICs need more funding from ICOM to achieve this. Currently ICs receive not enough annual subsidy for organising events in countries farther away.

• ***Promoting multilingualism***

Another problem to tackle is the difficulties associated with mutual understanding with first and foremost concerns languages. Three official languages in ICOM seem not enough for global outreach and National committees and ICs often lack the resources to hire interpreters. Another objective for the coming years is motivating younger members and better linking them to the work of the different committees. Furthermore, greater collaboration is needed between the bodies in ICOM respectively the ICs, National Committees, Regional alliances and of course the members themselves. At glance it's the ICs which can provide the greatest impact for ICOM at a global level.

**Muthoni Thangwa**

• ***African National Committees: specific problems***

I would like to focus on the problems encountered by National Committees in Africa. One of their greatest difficulties is linked to the destruction of cultural heritage, which is endangered for political reasons that often result in the looting of invaluable objects. There is also a social problem. We need to find a way of attracting young people into museums in Africa. Young people represent around 60-70% of the population in almost all African countries, and especially in Kenya. Another threat is mass tourism on small sites once global tourism recovers. Most cultural programmes target a foreign audience rather than local communities who cannot create cultural exchange. We need a balance between external and internal communication but economic resources are very limited.

- ***Example of the National Museums of Kenya***

Another urgent question relates to African heritage held in Western museums. At the National Museums of Kenya, we are opening an exhibition entitled “*Invisible Inventories*” in collaboration with various German museums, including the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt. For the first time, 3D reproductions of the exhibition will be shown in Kenya. Kenyans will be able to discover their origins and history through objects that current generations have never been able to admire because the works left the country over a century ago to be held in Western museum collections.

- ***The challenges of ICOM***

Museum visitors are now much more aware of social issues, which are also of interest to museums and their collections held around the world. There are also national and international solidarity programmes that are very important as they help us to understand how museums work. We are also interested in sustainable development.

## Discussion

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - Ech-Cherki Dahmali, how do you explain the low level of participation in these debates from countries under ICOM Arab? What suggestions do you have to help us connect better with Arab countries?

**Ech-Cherki Dahmali** - The lack of participation from colleagues in the Arab world is primarily due to language. We are fighting for Arabic to be added to the official ICOM languages. Most Arab museum professionals do not know many languages, in part because the documents they work with are in Arabic. Moreover, ICOM does not currently provide funding to Arab National Committees for translating texts. Another reason is that not many people are members of National Committees. To tackle this problem, we require all individual members to choose an international committee so that professionals from the Arab world are included in all ICOM discussions. To come back to the proposal of creating a remote learning school for museum professionals, I think that we first need feedback on how the ITC (International Training Centre) in China and the IMREC (International Museum Research and Exchange Centre) in Shanghai are working. My final point is that 850,000,000 people are without Internet access in Africa. When decisions are made online, these individuals will not be able to participate. We need to think about these issues before proposing new projects.

**Juliette Raoul-Duval** - The matter of Internet connection in some countries is a major issue that absolutely needs to be considered. SAREC will be addressing this soon. With regard to language, I think that we need to pay a great deal of attention to multilingualism and multiculturalism.

**Muthoni Thangwa** - The Arabic language issue is crucial. Around 12 African National Committees exclusively speak Arabic. With regard to Internet connection problems, I can cite the example of Kenya, which has a good Internet connection, but the main issue is electricity distribution. This is the real problem that needs to be resolved. Translating texts into other languages is a crucial point of debate in ICOM. Thanks to support from SAREC, we translated

the code of ethics into Swahili for the first time and museum professionals were amazed.

**Teti Hadjinicolaou** - During this time of crisis, we need to continue to pursue the notion of solidarity that we have developed. The National Committees need to be supported by ICOM, as they are the ones that coordinate professionals in each country. ICOM Greece shares the dream of a remote learning school.

**Emma Nardi** - I think that the efforts of International Committees should be grouped under a common denominator. This is why I proposed the idea of a remote learning school. We already have the content for a massive remote education programme. What we need to do now is to put this into a framework that better promotes the work of the International Committees, and give National Committees the opportunity to disseminate it in their countries. We cannot give a better Internet connection to countries that don't have it, but we can create simpler content that does not require excessive data use.

**Gabriele Pieke** - I do not think that just adding another official language will help us, but I believe that we need to find solutions so that the members of national and International Committees can meet and get to know one another. We do not know each other well, and consolidating relationships between members is key.



**List of  
publications  
of ICOM France**

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**Collection *Rencontre***



### **Les musées font équipe.**

Actes de la journée professionnelle 2021 d'ICOM France du 24 septembre 2021 à Nice, musée national du Sport. Paris : ICOM France, décembre 2021.

### **L'intelligence des musées a-t-elle un prix ? La nouvelle donne de l'ingénierie culturelle.**

Synthèse de la soirée débat déontologie du 3 juin 2021 sur plateforme numérique. Paris : ICOM France, septembre 2021.

### **Recherche et musées.**

Synthèse de la soirée débat déontologie du 9 mars 2021 sur plateforme numérique. Paris : ICOM France, juillet 2021.

### **De quoi musée est-il le nom ?**

Synthèse de la soirée-débat déontologie du 26 novembre 2020 sur plateforme numérique. Paris : ICOM France, mars 2021.

### **Et maintenant... Reconstruire. Penser le musée « d'après ».**

Actes de la journée professionnelle 2020 d'ICOM France du 25 septembre 2020 à Paris, Institut national du patrimoine, et sur plateforme numérique. Paris : ICOM France, décembre 2020.

### **De quelle définition les musées ont-ils besoin ? Actes de la journée des comités de l'ICOM.**

Actes de la journée professionnelle 2020 d'ICOM France du 10 mars 2020 à Paris, Grande Galerie de l'Evolution (MNHN). Parution aussi en anglais. Volume d'annexes. Paris : ICOM France, juin 2020.

### **Le sens de l'objet.**

Synthèse de la soirée-débat déontologie du 29 janvier 2020 à Paris, Auditorium Colbert – Galerie Colbert. Paris : ICOM France, avril 2020.

## **Dons, legs, donations... Comment intégrer les « libéralités » dans les projets scientifiques et culturels ?**

Actes de la journée professionnelle 2019 d'ICOM France du 4 octobre 2019 à Paris, Institut du Monde Arabe. Paris : ICOM France, janvier 2020.

## **Musées et droits culturels.**

Synthèse de la rencontre du 8 février 2019 à Rennes – Les Champs Libres – Musée de Bretagne. Paris : ICOM France, novembre 2019.

## **Les réserves sont-elles le cœur des musées ?**

Synthèse de la soirée-débat déontologie du 18 avril 2019 à Paris, Auditorium Colbert – Galerie Colbert. Paris : ICOM France, juillet 2019.

## **Les paradoxes du musée du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle.**

Actes des journées professionnelles 2018 d'ICOM France des 28 et 29 septembre 2018 à Nantes, Musée d'Arts. Paris : ICOM France, juin 2019.

## **Restituer ? Les musées parlent aux musées.**

Synthèse de la soirée-débat du 20 février 2019 à Paris, Musée des Arts et Métiers. Paris : ICOM France, avril 2019.

## **Comment valoriser l'engouement des publics pour le patrimoine ?**

Synthèse de la rencontre du 23 mai 2018 à Dijon, Palais des ducs de Bourgogne. Paris : ICOM France, janvier 2019.

## **Qu'est-ce qu'être, aujourd'hui, un « professionnel de musée » en Europe ?**

Synthèse de la soirée-débat déontologie du 5 juin 2018 à Paris, Auditorium Colbert – Galerie Colbert. Paris : ICOM France, janvier 2019.

## **Face aux « risques », comment les musées peuvent-ils améliorer leur organisation ?**

Synthèse de la soirée-débat déontologie du 8 novembre 2018 à Paris, Auditorium Colbert – Galerie Colbert. Paris : ICOM France, janvier 2019.

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