

Looking for the future ? AI and museums

November 13, 2023 - 6pm-8:30pm (CEST)

About the meeting :

Nowadays, every sphere of our society is shaken by a common issue: how can or will artificial intelligence change our way of life? A few clicks on the net is sufficient to grasp the scope of the phenomenon: "When artificial intelligence supplants jobs"; " How can artificial intelligence help us dispense justice? "; "Artificial intelligence would be as accurate as doctors in detecting a very common cancer"; "Artificial intelligence and poetry: rich rhyme"; "Art and design schools shaken up by generative artificial intelligence". Between the promises of a better, easier and enriched future, and the risk of alienation, misinformation and dehumanization, or even submersion and overtaking, the public debate is navigating between two worlds : a mythology of artificial intelligence is being built.

What about our museums? They are, of course, concerned by this revolution, and, as a reflection of society, are very differently engaged in thinking about the subject, or even integrating what AI can bring to our missions. It therefore seemed appropriate to discuss this topic. How can AI help us to carry out our tasks? What can we expect from it? How can it be a reliable and useful resource? What are the limits and even the risks? What impact will it have on our jobs? How can our professions contribute to nurturing and enriching these artificial intelligences?

The range of applications is very broad, covering many areas of museum expertise: producing labels, texts, exhibition proposals, assisting with collections management, documentation, content development, communication, financial and administrative management...

We will first of all explore what is really artificial intelligence and how it is possible to define it, given our varying degrees of knowledge on the matter. We will then outline a general panorama of actions and experiments carried out by museums in recent months, before giving the floor to professionals whose past or current experience will enable us to discuss both practical and substantive issues relating to this new tool.

One of the aims of this conference, supported by the expertise and experiences of colleagues in the museum sector, is also to deconstruct a form of mythology that has rapidly been created, in order to better define the scope, possibilities and limits of artificial intelligence, but also to see how its irruption into our daily lives can lead to new ethical issues. Museums are among the most credible institutions in the world. The irruption of AI into our daily lives can be seen either as an asset to reinforce this credibility, or as a major risk. The position of museums and their use of this new tool must therefore be expressed clearly and responsibly. In fact, this may be the fundamental question: how can we make artificial intelligence a tool that serves museums and their responsibilities? We hope that this conference will provide some useful answers, especially now that ICOM is reviewing and updating its code of ethics.

Emilie Girard, ICOM France president, October 2023