



Call for Papers **International Symposium - *Defining the Museum of the 21st Century***

25 November 2017 St Andrews, Scotland
in collaboration with ICOFOM

Deadline:

Please send a proposal for a Round Table discussion of maximum 300 words, together with a list of proposed core participants and short biographies of maximum 100 words each to: eulacmuseums@st-andrews.ac.uk by **14 July 2017**.

Alternatively, please send proposals of maximum 300 words for papers of 20 minutes, together with a short biography of maximum 100 words to: eulacmuseums@st-andrews.ac.uk by **14 July 2017**.

Defining the Museum of the 21st Century is organised by Museum and Galleries Studies staff at St Andrews, Jamie Brown, Dr Karen Brown, Ann Gunn, Nicôle Meehan and Dr Ulrike Weiss. It is supported by the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews, and has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 693669.



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“A building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are stored and exhibited.”

(Oxford English Dictionary definition of the museum)

Today, the definition of a museum provided by the Oxford English Dictionary appears rather outdated. So-called ecomuseums and community museums, for example, may contain neither a building, nor even objects. Over the past two and a half centuries the institution that we think of as a museum has developed considerably and many new forms continue to emerge at the beginning of this millennium. Internationally, the definition of a museum has evolved in line with developments in society, and the one most commonly referred to was created by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Since its creation in 1946 and especially since 2004, ICOM has updated its definition in accordance with the realities of the global museum community. According to the ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria on 24th August, 2007 and adopted by UNESCO:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.

However, other definitions of the museum have existed, such as those offered by the OED, by the UK Museums Association, or by the American Alliance of Museums. Each has its own priorities and issues for example in relation to the role of museums in society. Moreover, other hot topics such as the “non-profit” role of the museum, developments in ICT and in governmental policy are challenging the very possibility of one, rigid definition for use globally.

This conference, open to all informed researchers within and outwith ICOM, is hosted by the University of St Andrews Museums, Galleries and Collections Institute (MGCI), and is being promoted under the umbrella of the EU-LAC-MUSEUMS project, funded by the European Commission Horizon2020 programme (<http://www.eulacmuseums.net>). It will form part of an international debate on the definition of the museum taking place under the auspices of ICOFOM – ICOM’s forum for Museology. The multi-lingual discussion will begin in Paris Sorbonne nouvelle in June 2017, and the results of the St Andrews conference will contribute to findings of further meetings being held in Rio de Janeiro, Japan, Iran, China, Malaysia and other venues in 2017-18.

“Defining the Museum of the 21st Century” therefore invites papers questioning the ICOM Definition of a Museum on a number of fronts, including but not limited to:

- What is the value of a concrete definition which is subject to perpetual challenge and change?
- Should we imagine many definitions?
- Should all museums contain collections?

- Should a typology of museums be designed to better define the role of each institution?
- What institutions lie on the borders of the museum definition?
- In what conditions do institutions opt in and out of the category of “museum”, and why?
- Who does the current ICOM definition serve? For example, what museum professionals are included or excluded from ICOM membership by the current definition? Do the general public refer to it?
- Should the focus of a new definition focus on the technical functions of a museum (such as preservation, research, communication), or should it rather focus on its values? If the latter, is the phrase “in the service of society” enough? What words should be removed or added from the definition?
- What are the terms that should be added to or removed from the current definition to better reflect the current situation of museums? For example, technological developments led to major changes for museum preservation and communications; what are their repercussions?
- The term “non-profit” as used in the ICOM definition is sometimes misunderstood. What should ICOM’s position be in relation to the economic stakes of the museum? How do we foresee the role of external companies managing educators, or organising exhibitions?
- What differentiates museums from other tourism actors or cultural industries?
- Should some museums be excluded in the name of the values (individual or collective) that they defend or promote?
- Do all museums need research? If so, should they conduct research themselves?

We envisage the conference consisting of Round Table discussions covering the above points, as well as individual papers.

Therefore, please send a proposal for a Round Table discussion of maximum 300 words, together with a list of proposed core participants and short biographies of maximum 100 words each to: eulacmuseums@st-andrews.ac.uk by 14 July 2017.

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