

**ICOFOM 48th Annual Symposium
And ICOM Joint ICOFOM, ICTOP and COMCOL Symposium**
for the 27th ICOM General Conference, Dubai 2025, “The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing
Communities” 10-14 November 2025.

**Training the Next Generation of Museum Professionals:
Bridging Gaps, Breaking Barriers**

For decades, ICOM committee members have been at the forefront of both the theoretical and practical sides of training museum professionals. With over 250 master’s and doctoral-level programs offered globally, alongside alternative pathways like internships and apprenticeships, it begs the question: Are today’s Museum Studies programs truly equipping professionals for the rapidly evolving needs of contemporary museums?

This meeting aims to dive deep into the pressing issues surrounding the training of tomorrow’s museum scholars and professionals. What are the ethical and practical implications of the growing number of educational programs? Are we flooding the market with too many graduates for too few positions, or are there still vast gaps in training opportunities, particularly in underserved regions? And most critically, are these programs truly aligning with what the museum sector needs today? How do these trainings connect theories and practices in order to get critical points of view and think what museums are for? This meeting will spark a conversation that bridges the gap between education and real-world museum needs, bringing together voices from across the globe to explore solutions, share strategies, and ultimately, shape the future of museum training.

We encourage participants to focus on one of five key themes:

Theme 1: Museum Studies and the Curriculum

Curricula in Museum Studies vary significantly across the globe. What drives these differences? How do we find the balance between theory and practice, or between broad generalization and deep specialization? Are universities providing too great an emphasis on practical skills, or are they churning out “over-qualified” graduates with little real-world readiness? Are there better models for interactions between museums and museum-training institutions? In emerging museum sectors, what are the greatest needs, and how can curricula adapt to meet them?

Moreover, who is shaping these curricula? How are educators trained, and what roles should international experts and local partners play in this process? Should there be global accreditation for museum studies programs, or would this overlook local needs and perspectives? And how do we ensure emerging theories and practices, particularly those from previously marginalized regions, can access the global stage? How do theories shared in the curriculum represent the wide range of museum perspectives around the world without reproducing power asymmetries through knowledge?

Theme 2: Museology

Museology has developed differently across languages, regions, and cultures. How do these diverse approaches shape the field today? How can we ensure that a plurality of knowledge-making strategies, combining quantitative, qualitative, and philosophical approaches are equally valued? As the field grows increasingly global, is there common ground in the balance between universal and local principles and



practices? How do regions developing newly established museums draw from the practices of other regions to shape their own approaches to museology? What are the different kinds of museologies around the world today, as we conclude the first quarter of the 21st century?

Theme 3: Diversifying Programs and Practices

How can the museum studies community build a workforce that is as diverse as the audiences they serve? What is necessary to foster a truly inclusive environment, and what practices may hinder this goal? What does a decolonial or anticolonial partnership look like in practice, and who holds the power in shaping these partnerships? Political and diplomatic factors also come into play—how do they shape partnerships between institutions across borders, and how can diversity and inclusion become core values embedded in every aspect of museum work? How can we ensure that people from all walks of life—are not only represented but actively shaping the stories museums tell, including actively involved in running museums themselves?

Theme 4: Collecting as an Act of Care

With the arrival of the new museum definition also the balance in the core tasks has been redefined. Where in the past, acquisition played a central role, now the focus is on the act of collecting. Here the ownership is no longer a central key but the way we bring communities and their heritage together. These requires different skills when relation building as practice of care becomes first before the care of the object. How do shifting ideas about ownership and authority affect collecting and exhibiting practices? Collaborative and participatory collecting poses new questions - ethical, legal, social, psychological and museological.

Theme 5: Building Sector Capacity

What strategies can help build long-term capacity in the museum sector? Apprenticeships, internships, and various qualifications are widely available, but do they create lasting change? How do we measure their impact beyond the immediate? Further, how can training initiatives promote leadership and self-advocacy, especially in emerging regions? How do we ensure that as the museum sector grows, it remains sustainable and adaptable to new challenges?

Terms of Submission and the Process to Submit Your Proposal:

The Steering Committee invites proposals for individual or collective paper presentations of 15 minutes. In your proposal we expect to see evidence of original research, and creativity in your approach to the future of museum training for rapidly changing communities.

This Call for Papers is open for the 48th ICOFOM Annual Symposium and for a joint session between ICOFOM, COMCOL and ICTOP, which will be held in Dubai during one of the sessions being held 11-14 November.

Stage 1

A brief abstract of **350 words** for a 15-minute presentation will be submitted by **15 March 2025** via the online form https://bit.ly/dubai_icofom_ictop_comcol. Proposed abstracts must conform to the requirements below to be considered:



- must clearly integrate one of the proposed axes of analysis, and
- must be written in one of the three languages of ICOM (English, French, Spanish).

Notification of whether your abstract proposal has been accepted for the Dubai symposium will be given within two weeks.

Stage 2

Authors with accepted abstract proposals will then need to expand their text into **2000-word** conference papers and submit these to ICOFOM by 1 July 2025. These are collated and published as ICOFOM's *Materials for Discussion* prior to the conference. ***Therefore, conference papers not received by July 1 will not be included in the publication, nor will your presentation be considered for subsequent publication in the ICOFOM Study Series.***

- Papers must follow the [ICOFOM Symposium Submission Guidelines](#).
- While English will be the language of an oral presentation at the symposium, you are strongly encouraged to submit your written paper in one of the ICOM languages (English, French, Spanish) that you know best.

Materials for Discussion will be sent to the authors and symposium participants in electronic format during the month of October.

Stage 3

The **Joint ICOFOM, ICTOP and COMCOL Symposium** and the **ICOFOM Annual Symposium** will be held only in person without online streaming. However, if you cannot attend, you will still have the opportunity to participate remotely with a poster or a pre-recorded video. In both cases, the payment of the registration fee is required via the Registration page that will open later in the year.

Stage 4

After the symposiums, a selected number of presenters will be invited to expand their *Materials* papers into full articles to be considered for publication in the *ICOFOM Study Series*. Selected presenters will be given the opportunity to develop their papers into a longer format of 6000 words, with peer review and revision, for journal publication.

More information:

For more information or if you have any questions, please email icofomconferences@gmail.com.