

UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS & COLLECTIONS AS NETWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD: SHAPING NARRATIVES OF KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

UNIVERSEUM is concerned with academic heritage in its broadest sense, including university collections, museums, archives, libraries, botanical gardens, astronomical observatories, and university buildings of historical, artistic and scientific significance.

This year the conference is hosted by the Mendel Museum of the Masaryk university in Brno, Charles university in Prague and Comenius University Bratislava and it is going to take place in Brno. Its main theme focuses on how the university perceives the role of university museums and how new interpretative approaches in sociology, museology, heritage management studies, history and the sciences etc., define and shape the relationship between universities and their museums.

Universities have always been generators of new knowledge, constant innovators for re-discovering the world with new eyes through multiple prisms shaped by research and independent critical thinking. Objects, both artificialia and naturalia, have been key factors in this quest for understanding and interpreting our cosmos (and beyond). The long history of university museums and collections around Europe represents a very important part of the development of the sciences and humanities themselves, clearly illustrating through time how European societies understood the world and constructed knowledge. They have also been an important part of the history of museology as the science that studies the function and roles of museums in society.

In this long span, universities and their museums have shaped and followed different disciplinary traditions. Some approached the world as a machine and others saw the world as a network for the creation of knowledge. Could/should we thus rethink, under such prisms, university museum collections and their objects that highlight these processes in the creation of knowledge?

Under the main theme of "University Museums & collections as Networks for Understanding the World", we invite proposals for a 5 or 15-minute talk on one of the following two sub-themes or for a poster session addressing the overall theme:

Subtheme 1: Difference makes the difference: University museums, Museology and the value of interdisciplinary interpretation of museum collections

Museology, with its different disciplinary theories and practices in Europe, helps us re-discover and re-assess the role of university museums as constant gardeners of new seeds of knowledge that nourish new social needs. The conference will try to address several questions that deal with how the changing contours of Museology or other academic disciplines affect the making of university museums and collections across time.

The following questions can trigger constructive conversations:

- Are the epistemological contours and classifications of university museums rigidly defined or should/could they be more flexible and porous, allowing interdisciplinary approaches to the interpretation and management of academic heritage?
- Are university museums and collections approached primarily as knowledge repositories of past achievements and as showcases of academic histories and past cultures? Or can they also be perceived as prolific grounds to test experimental processes and projects for pushing innovation forward? Furthermore, can they involve different social players as co-designers in this process of innovation and experimentation?
- How can the shifting metaphors of "the world as machine" or "the world as network" be perceived and materialized in the museum and the way of organising its collections as well as serve as interpretation strategies for different university museums? Can/ should university museum collections act more explicitly as the material traces of pendulum swings and idea

movements in the history of sciences and be more manifestly approached from this interpretation angle?

- How many university museums are nowadays going through a paradigm shift threshold or have already passed through it? Can we map and assess such trends through a systematic analysis of new museological and epistemological patterns? Can this mapping reveal an emerging new era for the identity and role of university museums in contemporary societies?

Subtheme 2: New media and their role in the participatory curation and interpretation of academic heritage

Last year during our annual conference we focused on the value of co-curating academic collections **within and beyond the Campus. Extending that dialogue and taking it further, this year we would like to take it further and reflect on the key role of new media in the co-curation process. The following questions can provide some starting points for discussion:**

- Are there any particular characteristics or trends in how university museums are employing digital tools to organise and communicate their collections?
- Has the nature of the technology and the recent shift to more participatory co-creation and co-curation approaches affected university museum practice and thinking?
- How effectively do university museums employ new media to facilitate the recording of different academic voices and expertise (for instance the application of oral history recordings from old professors/curators in order to archive important cognitive work, or create smart digital databases with multiple layers of information about museum collections.../...) upon museum collections and their multiple meanings?
- Are there good practices and examples we can draw new knowledge and experiences from?
- In search of the holy grail? Do we expect too much from new media? We have been experimenting with the virtual in and outside museums for over a decade now. Could we draw some conclusions about its effectiveness? Is it only suitable for well-resourced museums? Or can simple applications add something to the experience that written text and real objects cannot?

Abstracts for sub-theme session 1 and 2 need to include:

- i) introduction / problematisation / context
- ii) main arguments / methods
- iii) results or discussion

Poster session

For Universeum 2019 Poster Session, we encourage the presentation of posters on any projects (collection management, exhibition, web design, social media, etc.) that relate to any of the above themes. Abstracts for posters need to focus on the context and process of the selected projects and their outcomes.

Please send abstract proposals (max. 200 words), with an indication of the session you are submitting to (sub-theme 1, sub-theme 2, or poster session), plus a short biographical note highlighting main research interests and/or field of professional experience (max. 50 words) to the following email address **Using the abstract template** by **Friday 1 February 2019**:

universeum2019@muni.cz

At this year's meeting, we want to explore different ways of encouraging discussion and debate around the main themes outlined above, as well as allow as many voices from the community to be heard as possible. We want to combine short papers, with longer in-depth contributions that reflect more broadly on these themes rather than present specific projects, as well as invite dialogue and discussions from all participants. When submitting your abstract, please indicate if you would prefer to give a poster, a 5 minute, or a 15-minute presentation.

The conference language is English. We welcome contributions from cultural heritage professionals and academics, but also post-graduate students who are encouraged to present.

Programme Committee

Ondřej Dostál, Mendel Museum, Masaryk University (CZK), Chair
Lucie Vychodilová, Mendel Museum, Masaryk University (CZK), Vice-Chair

Martina Galetová, Hrdličkovo muzeum, Univerzita Karlova (CZK)
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Frédérique Andry-Cazin, Sorbonne University (F)
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Maria Economou, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow (UK)
Marlen Mouliou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece)
Sébastien Soubiran, Jardin des sciences, University of Strasbourg (France)
Michal Štehlík, Národní museum (CZK)
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