

Universeum Board Elections 2024: Nomination of Candidate Team

Candidate Team

- President: Esther Boeles, University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
- Vice President: Neil Curtis, University of Aberdeen (Scotland)
- Vice President: Laila Zwisler, Danish Technical University (Denmark)
- Secretary: Martin Stricker, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Germany)
- Treasurer: Delphine Issenmann, University of Strasbourg (France)

Programme for 2024 – 2027

Universeum draws together people working with university collections across Europe. University collections have deep roots in European higher education, being the result of centuries of research and teaching, and supporting universities in their continuing three missions of research, teaching and benefitting society. The Universeum network provides a community for people to learn from and support each other in delivering these missions. Members have varied roles, including curators, conservators, outreach staff, students and directors, many of whom work in very small teams in their host institutions.

Previous executives have built Universeum into a strong and valued network of Academic Heritage professionals across Europe. The yearly conferences have seen a growing number of participants, joining others who have attended regularly since the very beginning. During the difficult COVID years when meeting in person was not possible, the community moved online, providing online connection and support which continues with monthly online meetings. As Europe faces difficult times, maintaining this community is more important than ever.

Our main goal for the next three years is therefore to support and nurture the Universeum network as a tolerant and inclusive forum to share expertise and experiences across Europe. As a candidate board, we represent a variety of different institutions and countries, bringing a continuity with the past and fresh thinking for the future. Our priorities for the coming years will be:

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to the traditions of inclusiveness that Universeum has fostered since its foundation, ensuring that involvement is open to all. We will continue to provide a

platform for sharing experiences of widening access and challenging historic legacies of inequality. We will ensure that we are open to new ideas and that decision-making is open and democratic.

Annual Meetings

Universeum has built a tradition of annual meetings where the network comes alive and where people who face similar challenges are able to get to know each other. We are committed to maintaining that tradition, aiming to hold meetings in locations across the continent, and drawing in new people alongside ensuring that there is strong continuity. We aim for meetings to be interesting, enjoyable and inspirational, with a variety of forms of presentation and engagement. We will strive to keep costs as low as possible to ensure that we are inclusive, including supporting participation with travel grants.

Working Groups

Working Groups have become a strong feature of Universeum. They give the network the opportunity to discuss and address specific issues and debates, dive deeper into the matter, and for a wide range of members to be closely involved in the organisation. We plan to develop an improved governance structure for Working Groups, including improved criteria and processes for proposing, initiating and establishing a Group.

Collaboration with other networks

Universeum is one of a network of other networks, including ICOM-UMAC, national networks, university grouping like the Coimbra Group, the League of European Research Universities and the Civis network, and subject organisations like the Scientific Instrument Commission. Alongside developing our relationship with UMAC, we intend to map this network to increase opportunities for Universeum members to connect and identify funding and other opportunities for collaboration.

Communication and engagement

The effectiveness of Universeum depends on good communication. We will develop a plan to improve communication among members, focusing on the website, social media, newsletter and mailing list. We will also ensure that working groups become a way for fresh ideas to be highlighted and for more people to become involved in the running of Universeum.

Developing the membership

Universeum is entirely dependent on its members to run the organisation and to generate its income, which is mainly used to provide travel grants to students and early

career professionals to enable them to attend annual meetings and workshops. We therefore aim to grow the membership and simplify the membership process and payments to ensure that we can continue and enhance this support, and to ensure a healthy future for Universeum.

The candidate Board

Esther Boeles (University of Amsterdam)

Candidate for Universeum President

Esther Boeles is head of a team of curators and works as curator herself at the Allard Pierson, the heritage department of the University of Amsterdam. Her field of expertise is a combination of collection policy and public history. Her main professional interests are in university history, colonial history, women's history and the history of science, with an emphasis on the late 19th century until 1960.

Esther chairs a national working group on 'University collections from a colonial context', commissioned by the Dutch academic heritage network (SAE). In June 2023 this working group published policy guidelines regarding university collections from a colonial context, titled "Collected in the Name of Science".

The conference in Padua (2011) was the first Universeum meeting Esther attended. She became more involved when she started a Working Group with Delphine Issenmann, that grew out to be the Working Group on Digital Initiatives. In 2017 she joined the Universeum board. Due to her experience in the Dutch academic heritage network and in Universeum, she has developed a broad view on university collections and -museums in Europe.

The Universeum Network is close to her heart, and she would be honored to serve another term as part of the Board.

Neil Curtis (University of Aberdeen)

Candidate for Universeum Vice President

Neil Curtis is Head of Museums and Special Collections at the University of Aberdeen. His background is in archaeology, education and museum studies, but he has increasingly become involved with re-thinking the role of museums, critically appraising their histories and being involved in attempts to address legacies that can sometimes

be challenging. This has included helping to curate exhibitions about slavery and colonial histories, arranging repatriations from the collections, and publishing on such topics. He also teaches on a variety of university programmes, including Museum Studies, Archaeology, Law, Art History and Medical Humanities. He has served on the UK Museum's Association's Ethics Committee and Decolonisation Working Group and has convened the University Museums in Scotland network. He has been an active participant in Universeum conferences and working groups for over ten years and has benefitted from getting to know so many inspirational people and university museums across Europe.

Laila Zwisler (Technical University of Denmark)

Candidate for Universeum Vice President

Laila Zwisler has been the Head of the History of Technology group at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) since 2010. She holds a Master of Science History with a minor in Physics from Aarhus University. Her main research and interpretation interests are university history, technical academia, university heritage, shared memory, hidden curriculum and identity as well as knowledge history and history of technology. She teaches History of Technology and Knowledge History at DTU. Before starting work at DTU, she worked at science museums in Denmark and England in various roles. She serves on the boards of three national historical societies. The History of Technology group is responsible for the central historical collection of DTU and collects artefacts and archival materials connected to the university. The group creates exhibitions on DTU campuses and outreach products based on the history and the historical collection of DTU. The group offers open access content on the website www.history.dtu.dk, which also gives direct access to the collections database. Currently, the group is developing the two permanent exhibitions at DTU.

Martin Stricker (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Candidate for Universeum Secretary

Martin Stricker has been active since 2003 with and for academic heritage and university collections in Germany and worldwide. He is a founding member of the Coordination Centre for Scientific University Collections in Germany (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin). At the centre, he is since 2012 responsible for supporting university collections and museums in digitising, documenting and networking their collections and objects for research, teaching, public access and

participation. For UMAC (ICOM Committee for University Museums and Collections) he is the technical lead of the Worldwide Database of University Museums and Collections. He is co-chair of the Universeum Working Group Digital Initiatives and proudly one of the inventors of the virtual monthly Monday Morning Coffee.

Delphine Issenmann (University of Strasbourg)

Candidate for Universeum Treasurer

Delphine Issenmann is head of the heritage, museums and collections department of the Jardin des sciences, University of Strasbourg. She studied history and art history and holds an MA in cultural heritage management as well as an MA in science studies. Since 2004, she has been coordinating the study, preservation and promotion of academic heritage. She has also coordinated for several years courses in history of science and in museology, intended for master students, mobilizing objects from the university collections for Object-based teaching (OBTL) activities.

Together with Esther Boeles, Universeum secretary, Delphine Issenmann initiated in 2015 the Working Group on databases and portals for university collections (now "Digital Initiatives"). She still co-chairs the working group, with Martin Stricker, Universeum vice-president, and Frank Meijer, coordinator of the Dutch Foundation for Academic Heritage. As such, she is involved in the organization of a workshop during Universeum annual Meeting and since June 2020, in the moderation of the monthly Monday Morning Coffee sessions.

Her links with Universeum and her experience in OBTL led her to successfully submit an application for European funds (Erasmus + program) with five other partners. She is now in charge of managing the project entitled "Teaching with objects" (2022-2025).