

**TPTI 2020 RESEARCH  
PROJECT**

**MUSEUMS AND THE WEB AT  
THE TIMES OF COVID-19**

In search of lasting museological  
innovations during the pandemic

A joint project by

Museology and Museography of Industrial Heritage course  
**Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Techniques, Heritage,  
Territories of Industry TPTI**

University of Padova (IT)

Department of Historical and Geographical Sciences  
and the Ancient World – DiSSGeA

and

**EUROPEAN MUSEUM ACADEMY FOUNDATION, The Hague (NL)**

# MUSEUMS AND THE WEB AT THE TIMES OF CORONAVIRUS

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## SOME GUARDED CONCLUSIONS

MASSIMO NEGRI and DIRK HOUTGRAAF

The lock-down – experienced as it happened almost overnight – has ravaged the heritage and culture sector, because the sector was and is dependent on larger number of actual visitors. Most museums were shocked, but soon tried to come up with new initiatives. Though mostly born out of panic, some are innovations and/or worthy extensions and to stay. To put it in a broader perspective: the corona crisis has been and will continue to be an accelerator in the adoption of new practices in most sectors of social and economic life.

What is there to conclude regarding the world of museums? Let's start with the obvious: nothing yet. We are amidst a change we have not seen before. There actually is not something possible like a 'conclusion' when you are in the middle of a storm. Just some preliminary thoughts can be done.

Then, what is there for us to add? Many organizations and universities started to monitor what was going on. There have been many questionnaires around and many articles ready or to come.

However important those inventories are, we think we have an additional perspective to add, which is to zoom in on individual behaviour on the one hand and to zoom out to predict the accumulated effects of those individual choices. And although 'conclusions' is too strong a word, we present some thinking lines.

## The obvious

What are you going to do when your outreach and cash-flow almost stop overnight? After the first panic, you are going to start new initiatives – and most likely those in which you have some experience and are kind of close to what you know. As all actual ‘analogue’ visits stopped and previous visitors are at home, the first thought is to go into the digital, the web world. And to do so with the means and knowledge you have – and as less money as possible.

That is what happened. As documented by the present research and the many inventories, there was an acceleration in internet-based initiatives. Mostly they were extensions of the ‘known’ – digital demonstrations, talks and digital tours. However, the results also showed rather radical new practices.

It also became clear that already existing problems re-emerged very strong, like the delays in digitization in many institutes, a poor digital infrastructure, lack of in-house expertise and even the general access to Wi-Fi. They became instantly strong obstacles.

## From practice to vision – and back

Part of the museum community can be seen working on and presenting new digital products, beyond the traditional use of the Internet as a showcase and a basic information source.

In addition, we found it especially worthwhile to see some new or upcoming partnerships. We assumed these new partnerships to be a sign of existing undercurrents in strategic thinking on cooperation and the social role and position.

Of course, as all is done in a gigantic effort carried out in the timeframe of weeks, if not of days, it is way too early to see what will happen. But we have no doubt it will affect museum philosophies and role-thinking in the long run.

What will remain of all this feverish effort? What will last and to become a stable step forward in the relationship between museums and their audience? The effects will encompass very practical aspects as well as broader questions of vision. Materials compiled in this research has constantly denoted the close link between these two perspectives: practice and vision.

An example of 'close to the traditional practice': At the Technical Museum Nikola in Zagreb the videos produced under the pressure of the lockdown are now available inside the museum building via QR codes, which offers a free audio/sign-language - video museum guide to all visitors. An initiative generated by the Covid-19 pressure has become a permanent development of the informative infrastructure of the galleries.

An example of serious rethinking: The Tsaritsyno State Historic Museum in Russia started to rethink its strategy of coping with society and audiences, based on the new and rather radical VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) World managerial approach. It had the museum to define a very articulated program maximizing the use of resources available (physical and digital, environmental and in the webspace).

## Community museums versus blockbuster museums

There is no simple copy-paste solution. The most visible and known museums - the ones who are a 'must' for tourists as well as of national status, including the status of their collections - have found themselves all of a sudden lost in space and time. The 'crowd' - for which they are important and of which they are dependent - suddenly did not exist anymore. The whole system, including funding, collapsed.

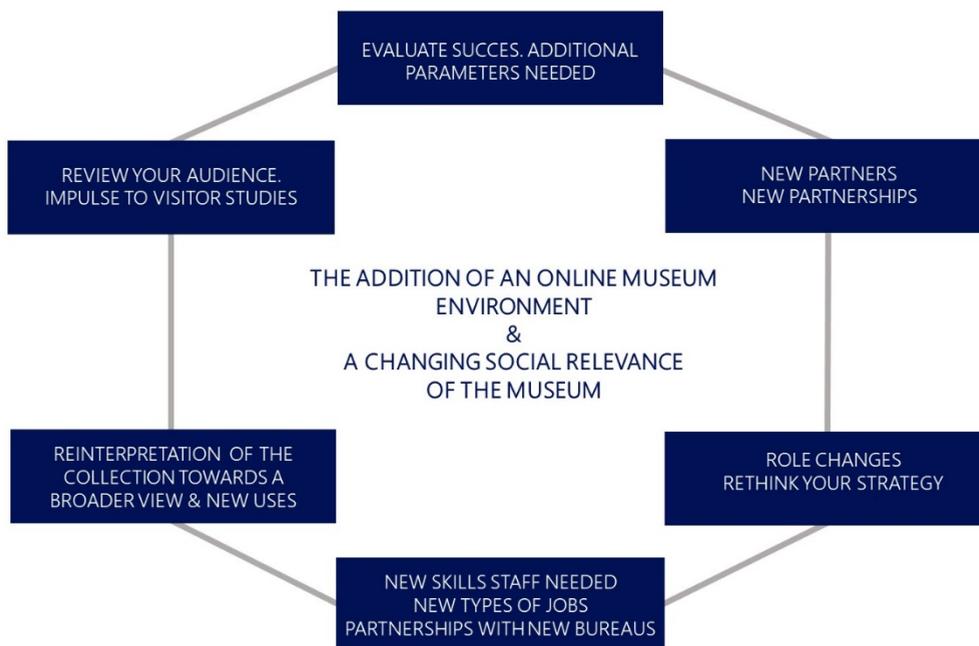
It is interesting to see from our findings that during the (partial) lockdown various local museums – especially those grounded in communities - have been rediscovered by residents in the outskirts. Some of them had even more visitors than before the pandemic.

We also do see successful participatory audience initiatives – like in community building databases and exhibitions. For instance, the one organized by the Museum of Yugoslav History in Belgrade where more than 1,000 citizens sent pictures to the museums in their public quest for photographs of objects from the Yugoslav everyday life which have become now part of the museum collection. The goal was to involve the audience in curatorial work being part of the team that realized the virtual exhibition #YUDOM. The selection criteria were the quality of the photographs, the variety of materials, but also the stories that accompanied the objects.

## No rules – but steppingstones thinking instead

What we encountered is a diversity of initiatives and conditions. There are as yet no new general guidelines into sight. Yes, you can copy some ideas and practices, and yes you can extract some lines of thinking. But no, there is not yet a clear path to digital success in view.

We did find however that museums who stepped beyond their directly known competences and practices, had several things to (re)consider in conjunction. And it is a steppingstone approach too. The first step is a digital copy of the analogue, i.e. a digital tour for example, but then you slowly try new 'stones' in more unknown territories.



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## Some conclusive remarks added to our observations

Role changes. Rethink your strategy	
Increasing role of Museums as producers of digital culture and of disseminators.	<i>What was confined to the exhibition is now made universally available online There is stimulus to a new role in digital storytelling</i>
Changing paradigm: the web is much more than a digital version of the museum-environment.	<i>"There was a week in which we recorded a million contacts. So the affection of the city was not lost, indeed. Perhaps the proximity has even increased because we have reached the people in their homes. Now I am more than ever convinced that online is <b>the other part of the museum</b>" James Bradburne, Director of the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.</i>
Explosion of storytelling in a large variety of ways.	<i>Review the storytelling techniques used in different contexts.</i>
Large adoption of podcasting and in general of sound narratives.	<i>A phenomenon which has been emerging in the last 2-3 years, but that the COVID-19 has greatly accelerated also thanks to the good usability of platforms and the low operational costs.</i>
Increasingly, chatbots are being accepted by the public as something that is not a mere novelty, but which can be genuinely helpful.	<i>In some cases, museums have used chatbots to offer enhanced support to visitors and to provide a similar level of assistance when the museum is closed, Some museums have made use of chatbots to provide an extended visitor experience.</i>

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New parameters to evaluate success	
To be an online user is no longer a minus vs the physical visitor	<i>Advice: make digital visitors (and the time spent) an explicit key performance indicator</i>
Filling the digitization gap. Acceleration of the use of the internet, the update of the infrastructural basis and the increase of digital products in general.	<i>Advice for individual museums as well as for subsidizing governmental agencies: introduce indicators to monitor status &amp; progress of the underlying infrastructure as well as the products</i>

Impulse to visitor studies	
Potential impulse to users' studies thanks to profiling and analytics on the web	<i>The increasingly data technology and web-use leads to new possibilities in visitor studies. Advice: sharing of tooling</i>
Profiling visitors due to mandatory bookings helps to know better your visitors, especially as far as groups are concerned,	<i>this could improve the identifying of new models for group visiting</i>
Being compulsory to book online your visit, there is no longer a fortuitous, or occasional visit. To go to the museums is more and more a deliberate, planned-ahead choice.	<i>This has consequences in terms of expectations and customer's satisfaction plans</i>

New partnership thinking	
New partnerships with tourist industries	<i>This will incentive the capability of museums to be a key element of a "package" and will make more evident the already important role of museums in tourism</i>
New partnerships with cultural industries	<i>To move from the paradigm of client/supplier to a co-creation approach which means also a chance for mutual professional growth.</i>

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New skills. New type of jobs. Partnerships with new bureaus	
Pressure on the staff for acquiring narrative skills	
Pressure on the staff for acquiring visual skills	
Diversification of organizational skills of museum staff	<i>New 'jobs': producing movies, new kinds of vents etc.) One perspective: the Museum as a movie set and its Staff as a group of "performers"</i>
The pre-eminence of usability as a prerequisite for achieving a good quality level in the Internet communication	
Remote control. The relevance of distance control devices and infrastructure (storage rooms and other facilities).	
Empathy & experience to be translated into digital initiatives.	<i>The mood and consequently the effectiveness of the dialogues with visitors are very much influenced by empathy of the museum and its staff and the experienced environment and exhibitions. To 'translate' these to the web has proved to be a serious challenge.</i>
Improving the digital communication	<i>Quote: the first problem was how to connect our departments and to improve the digital communication (a Slovenian museum director said). A change in structuring how to work together in a more digitized setting</i>

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Review the collection	
New opportunities to display paper documents, potential improvement of the MBA network	<i>Reading in a museum has always been a challenge, on screen one have a new opportunity to integrate images and texts at a deeper level and define strategies for promoting reading as a part of the museum experience</i>
Multilingual approach made possible beyond the limits of graphic communication inside the exhibition	
Extend the variety of objects on display: online displaying of materials never accessible to the public before (drawings, fabrics, glass, etc.)	
Re-interpretation of collections: new hierarchies due to the need to offer intriguing online experiences, not only the "masterpieces", but also daily use objects or minor elements of the collections with a strong narrative potential.	
High quality content – online content - is crucial. The use of the web has to go beyond the promotional side and to improve activity and quality of the use of digital resources	

## PROJECT RATIONALE AND PRESENTATION

### Rationale

The COVID19 pandemic has changed the way of being of most organizations, museums included. Due to the closure to visitors, cultural organizations were particularly compelled to reinvent their role in society using web resources and digitized materials that were already available. This also meant changing radically and quickly their way of working with and for a variety of audiences.

This project aimed to carry out, in a relatively short period, an overview of new initiatives and emerging trends in the museum sector – with a specific focus on the use of the web - as online tools are already changing the way museums orient themselves to society and the user's perception of these initiatives. The results have been collected in a database, reviewed, and shared for referential purposes.

What are interesting ideas to be picked up by others? How are we to judge what will happen a few years from now? What are some of reactions from the users that could be helpful to orientate future planning?

We are especially interested in building a structure, a base, to monitor the "reinvention" of the museum in contemporary society and in this unexpected and never experienced before kind of stress.

## Background

So far, the traditional attitude of museums online has been articulated in two aspects:

- using the web as a showroom, especially to share digitized collections
- using it for promotional purposes (to attract 'real-life' visitors)

Both aspects are enriched by tools for a multilingual approach to communication, an element that has always been rather critical in the museum sector.

There are of course museums which had already experimented a lot with new approaches. However, these initiatives were never able to fully give a general framework and a set of tools leading to specific methodology, also due to the rapid and never ending technological changes and the necessary process of adaptation as far as the traditional curatorial side were concerned. They were there though, as many museums were slowly adopting a changing view of their role in society and they might act as a stepping stone which, under the current circumstances, could be a starting point and, sometimes, a source of inspiration.

Thus, the speediness in which the virus 'closed down the world' has determined a special effort to put in action quick changes with the aim to reposition museums and making them most noticeable on the web.

The impact of the virus, that all of a sudden deprived museum of their core business (i.e. the permanent exhibition), is determining, as it often happens in emergency situations, a strong impulse towards the use of the web by all kinds of museums and it is pouring on the web an enormous amount of materials and a great energy in terms of creative use of digital resources.

The theme can be summarized in these terms: museums are obliged by circumstances to move forcibly towards a redefinition of their role as a multichannel communicative organization (which in some sense has always been partially true) in a rapidly changing global communicative universe. Curatorial skills are under pressure as never before.

The necessary evolution is something which will remain as a crucial passage of the history of museums.

## Until now

The movement towards an intensive and well-structured use of the web has been seriously limited - so far - by several factors: inequality in the level of digitization of the collections, lack of professional skills, management complexities (for instance, for small local museums when their websites are integrated into local institutions websites and consequently have less flexibility, autonomy and promptness in response). Also, the use of social media is strongly influenced by the limits in adequate skills in small and medium-sized museums, for instance, a social media manager is a profile frequently hired at very low cost and without a transfer of knowledge to the whole organization. It is not overstated to talk in terms of digital gap existing also in the museum world and this cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless, a lot of work has been done in the last few years and this is part of the strategic shift from the notion of "visitor" to the concept of "user" which has been the substantial part of the general movement from "collection oriented" museums to the "visitor oriented" ones.

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Especially big museums have achieved major improvements, offering their online audience great chances to be involved in the cultural and social programs of individual museums, in addition to the opportunity to discover collections in general and also parts of them that otherwise would have never been accessible (typically drawings, fabrics, photographs, movies, scientific specimen, archaeological small items etc.).

## METHODOLOGY AND PARTNERS

### Methodology

1. The study is based on an exploratory inductive approach. The research strategy consists of a multiple case-study and is divided into two stages. The first one is based on the analysis of primary sources from European and international museums' websites and/or social media that have invested in web communication under the pressure of the Covid-19 crisis. The second one presents some preliminary considerations in the form of analytical texts or storytelling approaches (Persona Method).

Research framework definition: The tool adopted consisted in a simple digital record card used for identifying practices which can be considered useful for the purpose of the project.

2. All subjects involved were asked to investigate on web cases and store them on a shared database. The active participation of students from the TPTI Class of 2019-21 had provided materials based on the point of view of a group of young users from all over the world. It is a specific feature of this project to represent the perception of the audience and not only of curators and directors.

3. EMA Experts analysed compiled materials and wrote an interpretive report of emerging trends, together with a selection of cases relevant for creativity, good use of digital resources, online audience development, and usability.

4. This material will be used for training activities and sharing of good practices by all partners involved; this guarantees a transnational impact on the European museum scene.

## Monitoring “in real time”

To profit from this huge change, it is strategic that these processes are monitored as much as possible “in real time”, that is to say while they are being developed under our eyes in order to interpret them against the most comprehensive background. Furthermore, a variety of points of view on the surveyors’ side in terms of cultural and national background is essential in dealing with such a phenomenon which is global by definition.

## Covid-19 as a factor of acceleration

Deloitte, the business and legal consulting network which counts on 286,000 dedicated professionals all over the world puts the consequences of the Covid-19 on daily organization’s work in these terms:

It is well known that COVID-19 pandemic rapidly sent millions of people to work from home (WFH), which created an immediate challenge for many organizations – providing secure system access to employees. However, the less visible and more challenging transformation that also occurred was the sudden requirements to digitize processes, including previously paper-based transactions, in-person meetings, business travel and other “normal” day-to-day operations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J.H. Caldwell Dilip Krishna “The Acceleration of Digitization as a Result of COVID-19” Deloitte 30 Jul. 2020 <https://www2.deloitte.com/>

Universities have been especially reactive in this new context; the website of the University of Padova states:

The most interesting measure is given by the estimates of use and growth in terms of storage and bandwidth used in the different platforms where it emerges that in 4 months we have used many resources, for example in terms of video products, archived and displayed, how many hypothesized for a period of about 8 years. [...]

Following the provisions for containing the spread of COVID-19, the University has delivered over 2,700 courses electronically.<sup>2</sup>

Impressive figures showing how strong the impact has been and how strong the response. Undeniably, Covid-19 stress is accelerating processes which some cases were incumbent or timidly tested in a variety of organizations.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unipd.it>

## Partners



This project is launched by the **Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Techniques, Heritage, Territories of Industry<sup>3</sup>** – TPTI, one of the most prestigious and long standing post graduate

courses in Europe, gathering several important universities: the Pantheon-Sorbonne University of Paris 1, the University of Padua, the University of Evora - in collaboration with Alicante and Oviedo (Spain), Prague (Czech Republic), Sfax (Tunisia), Parana (Brazil), and Puebla (Mexico).

The 2019-2021 edition counts on students from four continents. The course “Museology and Museography of Industrial Heritage”, involves for three months its students in an online search on relevant experiences as outlined above and has the added value of including “the visitor point of view”, although from a qualified group of visitors.



European Museum Academy

The **European Museum Academy<sup>4</sup> Foundation** (Netherlands), which is a permanent partner of TPTI has also contributed with reports from its

Experts and National Representatives based in almost 50 European Countries (being the Council of Europe’s geopolitical area the declination of the term Europe adopted by EMA).

The Scientific Supervision of the present research is carried out by Massimo Negri, EMA Scientific Director and professor in charge of the course.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dissgea.unipd.it/en/tpti-erasmus-mundus-joint-master>

<sup>4</sup> [www.europeanmuseumacademy.eu](http://www.europeanmuseumacademy.eu)



The **A. G. Leventis Gallery**<sup>5</sup> (Cyprus) represents the fulfillment of a vision. It is the embodiment of Anastasios G. Leventis' wish to create, in his homeland, a public gallery in which the extensive art collection acquired during his lifetime can be enjoyed by his fellow countrymen, women and children. Conceived in its essence over fifty years ago, this vision was realized by the A. G. Leventis Foundation in 2014. Curators from the Leventis Gallery in Nicosia selected cases for the research project.

Special partners for specific consultancies:



Forum of Slavic Cultures <sup>6</sup> International Foundation (Slovenia)



MUSIL Foundation<sup>7</sup> (Italy)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.leventisgallery.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://fsk.si>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.musilbrescia.it/english/ilmusil/fondazione.asp>

## QUOTES

We are presenting here a selection of reflections by the TPTI course students which were compiled during the research process and inspired by cases examined. Quotes are organized on three levels: general themes, specific cases, focus on a further shortlist of cases.

### Level 1: general quotes

ROSE TIMEU GUIAWA (CAMEROON)

Les musées sont représentés comme établissement dans lequel sont rassemblées et classées des collections d'objets d'intérêt historique, technique, scientifique, artistique, en vue de leur conservation et de leur présentation au public. Ces objets ou collections sont des témoins du passage des hommes pour la génération future. Cependant, ce domaine ou secteur d'activité depuis quelques mois connaît des bouleversements tout comme d'autres activités du monde à cause de la pandémie COVID-19. Pour pallier ce problème, plusieurs établissements muséaux ont trouvés des stratégies à l'instar des musées virtuels afin de toujours satisfaire non seulement le grand public mais aussi tous les amoureux de la culture. Dès lors, ce qui me semble évident est que le musée est plus vivant que jamais et est désormais au-delà des frontières et des limites.

### MERRIL ROSTHAND MOUANDE (CONGO)

Les musées sont des institutions culturelles de notre vie quotidienne qui nous accompagneront durant notre passage sur cette planète. Les musées contribuent à l'épanouissement culturel du public et spectateur dans tous les pays où ils se trouvent. En effet, pour faire face à toutes les éventualités liées aux maladies, pandémies (COVID-19) par exemple, les catastrophes naturelles ou autres crises inattendues, les administrateurs des musées doivent anticiper ou projeter les stratégies de fonctionnement futur sur les projet d'expositions et d'animation culturelle de leurs institutions afin de faire face aux surprises de notre société du XXIe siècle.

### CAMILO RAMÓN DARIAS RODRÍGUEZ (CUBA)

The new international environment that is currently being experienced as a result of the pandemic has sparked the interest of heritage institutions to increase the cultural offer of museums by making available to everyone a range of cultural programs online with the intention of bringing cognitive wealth closer to the public through museum collections. Its purpose is to cultivate the mind and stoke historical and artistic interest in order to value heritage in all its aspects.

From virtual tours to social media content, from podcasts to online open access platforms, many museums are creating alternatives for using their heritage adapting to the new times. This has led to the design of strategies for the future, where they face multiple challenges to achieve their maintenance, preservation and financing. It was evidenced, by the absence of visitor income, the need for a change of thinking regarding the management of funds by the benefactors or analysing the government administration in the loosening of subsidies, in order to continue transmitting the legacy that these spaces protect.

### ISELL MARÍA GUERRERO BERMÚDEZ (CUBA)

Faced with the new world scenario for the COVID-19, various museums have taken the initiative for millions of people to connect virtually with the experience they provide. The fact of touring its rooms without leaving home in times of pandemic, allows us all to access a lot of information on unique collections, tour museums from a different perspective and appreciate the value in the content of their spaces.

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In the case of these selected virtual museums, they have the interest and the opportunity to live the experience in a personalized way. They allow you to visit the spaces online as they could physically be done; some are even industrial spaces, interpreters of the history that is shown inside. They are living museums, which makes them highly relevant exponents.

## ANGÉLICA GUZMÁN VÁZQUEZ (MEXICO)

The resources taken by virtual museums become especially attractive in these times of home life, loaded with the visual content offered by current technology, becoming a dynamic means of disseminating culture.

Having the possibility of exploring the virtual spaces suitable for museums to the circumstances of the coronavirus is an interesting experience that allows us to analyse the place that museums are having in the digital world.

## ABDOUL KADER FAYE (SENEGAL)

La période inédite du Coronavirus a eu beaucoup de conséquences surtout dans la vie des gens. Les populations ont été obligées de rester chez-elles. Parallèlement à cela, les musées ont également fermé. Pour donner la possibilité aux public d'avoir toujours accès aux collections des musées, ceux-ci décidèrent l'utiliser pleinement la technologie en mettant en ligne des vidéos où ils proposent des visites virtuelles qui se révèlent très intéressante comme alternative.

## JOVITA ÁLVAREZ ALONSO (SPAIN)

The way we are rethinking museums and its accessibility shouldn't stop once the situation is over. We should take advantage of what we are learning now in order to further the reach and even the social functions of our museums.

## Level 2: from general quotes to specific cases

JUAN PABLO PEKAREK

*Ferrowhite* (Bahía Blanca, ARGENTINA)

The major museums of Europe and North America have managed to adapt to the logic of marketing, franchising and tourism. The gigantic funds that this generates led them to depend especially on their mass public and hyper-consumerism, but currently this successful formula is in deep crisis. On the other hand, in Latin America –region from where I come– very few museums depend on box office sales. Instead, they tend to be sustained by public financing. Faced with the pandemic, which in this part of the world is measured above all by its consequences on public finances, lack of funding has also put museums in an equally deep crisis. Therefore, we could affirm that this problem has reached museums in different ways, but with the same level of severity. Like any crisis, it is a process of transformation with unpredictable results. What about those who have recently stated "museums are dead"? I would say of course not. Actually, the intense and diverse experiences of those institutions that have decided to act and reinvent themselves in these last two months, already give us an important lesson: the importance of museums in societies only depends on who make them and how they make them. Perhaps, whatever happens in the future, the way out of this trance is to stop thinking the museum in economic terms and, on the contrary, it becomes a cultural agent, preserving its particular approaches but with active participation in society and in its needs, conflicts and current concerns. Paradoxically, those institutions that are currently most successful are neither large world-class museums nor medium-sized state-funded museums: on the contrary, they are small museums that, since before the pandemic, had been working at territorial level in direct contact with communities. A simple example is *Ferrowhite*, created by former railroad workers from the city of Bahía Blanca (Argentina), whose online platform already had an assiduous and committed public and a great diversity of shared activities and contents.

ANNA SOFIA MEYER FRANÇA

*Museu WEG de Ciência e Tecnologia* (Jaraguà do Sul, BRAZIL)

During this difficult time of the COVID-19 crisis museums are multiplying artistic and cultural manifestations proving that culture is beyond walls and distance. But unfortunately, almost 90% of museums and museological institutions closed their doors and about 13% are at risk of not returning to activity. In Brazil, these institutions that were already struggling on a daily basis to continue functioning are at risk of not being able to open their doors again. It is important that we continue to support these institutions and not let the distance stop them from communicating and working with the publics. There are many ways museums can be active during this moment, we can give the example of the Brazilian WEG Museum that had the technological means to help the population in different ways, such as in the creation of alcohol in gel and artificial respirators. It is a time for new reflections and attitudes from all people working within cultural sectors, rethink the way these institutions are communicating and placing themselves in the world.

MANON GODEY

*Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris / Musée National de la Marine, Brest*  
(FRANCE)

La pandémie est une opportunité pour les musées de s'adapter aux nouvelles technologies, si présentes dans notre quotidien. De nouvelles voies de sensibilisation sont trouvées afin d'intégrer davantage la culture à notre quotidien. En France le ministère de la Culture lance un programme #CultureChezNous afin de diffuser les nouvelles mesures prises par les musées.

Certains musées s'adaptent en développant leur site internet. Le musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, met en ligne des audios, des vidéos, des ateliers créatifs, des visites interactives ou encore des dossiers thématiques afin de toucher un plus grand nombre de publics.

D'autres comme le musée National de la Marine de Brest améliorent leur visibilité sur les réseaux sociaux. Chaque jour, ils publient des vidéos documentaires, des vidéos d'images animées ou encore des jeux-photos sur Facebook, Instagram, twitter...

## ANDRÉ LE ROI SAKAFOULSOU DANGA

*MUCEM* (Marseille, FRANCE)

Les musées dans le monde sont le reflet de la valorisation et la sauvegarde du patrimoine de l'humanité. Les processus muséographiques des expositions des biens culturels au public sont de plus en plus complexes et codifié. Pourtant, la crise mondiale du COVID-19 à une influence sur toutes les activités humaines et les musées n'en ont pas été épargnés. Les mesure de distanciation sociales et le confinement a permis à plusieurs musées d'adopter de nouvelle stratégie. Si le rapport de transmission du discours *face to face* est rendu impossible, les nouvelles interfaces ont été mises à contribution. C'est le cas des réseaux sociaux ; notamment sur twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, You Tube...s'il est précoce de parler d'un succès mitigé, les musées sont néanmoins restés près du public comme ce fut le cas du MUCEM de Marseille.

## SILVIA ESTEPA GARCÍA

*Museu del Pueblu d'Asturies* (Gijón, SPAIN)

While other sectors have been paralyzed, Museums figured out how to make culture arrive to everybody's home. This acquires a special dimension when we realize that Spain was one of the most affected countries in Europe. The fact that in a crisis of this magnitude people feel the need of culture at their home reveals the importance it has in our lives. In the case I analysed, the Museu del Pueblu d'Asturies, the way they achieved this was through their Facebook page. Facebook is a social network that lots of people open more than once a day, so more and more people are knowing (intentionally or accidentally) the collection of this Museum.

## Level 3: further focus on specific cases

JEANNE AZIOSMANOFF

*Maison Européenne de la Photographie* (Paris, FRANCE)

Le besoin de modifier les pratiques de muséographie durant la crise du COVID-19 a permis à la Maison Européenne de la Photographie d'apporter une dimension inédite à leur exposition temporaire en proposant des textes de la commissaire d'exposition présentant chaque œuvre sur Instagram.

FLORENCIA FERNÁNDEZ BERTOLINI

*La Cinémathèque Française* (Paris, FRANCE)

The website offers a tour of the French film industry through films, interviews, photographs, and digital resources. One of the most innovative proposals is to make available letters written by different artists. This idea is an interesting point of connection and cooperation to support cultural activities and spread messages of hope.

MERRIL ROSTHAND MOUANDA

*Musée d'Orsay and Musée de l'Orangerie* (Paris, FRANCE)

En raison de la situation sanitaire qui traverse le monde, le Musée d'Orsay en partenariat avec le Musée de l'Orangerie ont développé un projet culturel sur la mise en place d'un site internet dédié au public jeune "les petits M'o". Ce site a été élaboré pour permettre aux enfants d'avoir un moment de distraction, de pose à travers les visites virtuelles en ce temps de confinement.

Ce site internet, permet aux enfants de faire des visites virtuelles avec l'aide de leurs parents pour connaître l'environnement culturel français et du monde par le biais des sculptures des artistes, les parcours, les frises chronologiques et autres contenus culturels tels que les œuvres Monet, Derain, Cézanne, Renoir, Matisse Gauguin ou encore Picasso. A travers ce site, les enfants découvrent les collections de ces deux musées sous la forme d'un dessin animés.

## VIRGINIA SCREMIN

### *Triennale* (Milan, ITALY)

The social distancing imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic has started a process of rethinking and reformulation of museums offer, sometimes triggering a strong acceleration in using new forms of digital communication. For instance, Triennale Milano has taken inspiration by Boccaccio's masterpiece launching an everyday meeting called *Decameron: storie in streaming* on Instagram Live. Users may attend artistic or musical performances, talks, circus shows in the spaces of Design Museum, having the chance to interact immediately through comments. The confinement has so been an extraordinary test bench for different experiences, some effective, others less, some even able to be proposed in the long term. Upstream of this reformulation the public can be intended as user or spectator or both.

## VIRGINIA SCREMIN

### *The Beelden aan Zee Museum* (The Hague, NETHERLANDS)

The Beelden aan Zee Museum decided to offer an exceptional preview of the exhibition *Germaine Richier: Mensbeeld – Mensbeest*. In a video the opera singer Francis van Broekhuizen sings Giacomo Puccini's aria *Vissi l'arte* as she walks among the works of the French sculptor contemplating them. In this way the emotional experience of the singer/spectator has been staged in a very delicate way to the viewers favouring self-identification.

The crisis has been a great challenge for museums to meet the strong, urgent need for contents that the new media tools impose as always different, faster, instant; as they say, viral.

## AYAKOZ MEIRAMBEK

### *The Museum of Cosmonautics* (Moscow, RUSSIA)

*Fly to the planet Museum without leaving your home!* The Museum of Cosmonautics organizes various interesting programs for visitors who love space. Despite the emergency, they could keep their audience using modern technology. This means that museums can live and develop in the modern world, showing history.

EMEK YILMAZ

*Panorama 1326 Bursa* (Bursa, TURKEY)

We asked our followers through our social media channels and contacts (as we couldn't approach them through other method like face-to-face) to define what changed in their daily lives and with what object they can match this change that caused by the preventive/precautionary measures taken against coronavirus pandemic by local/central governments.

We wanted to see what other changes people were going through in their lives. Museums usually collect materials but this time we wanted to collect stories and behavioural changes in daily lives.

Majority of the answers came from middle class workers, who mostly stated how time was relative, slow and valuable in these times; then from pensioners, who stated a long for socialization, outing with friends. All participants sent an object or a concept that is related to their story

FLORENCIA FERNÁNDEZ BERTOLINI

*National Museums of Scotland* (Edinburgh, UNITED KINGDOM)

Its most important contribution has been to grant access to the Museum's great content to its users: educators, families, children, curious people, enthusiasts. The site proposes new experiences and varied activities that enrich the virtual side of the museum, offering alternatives to collaborate in this difficult context.

YVENEL JEAN-PIERRE

*The Science Industry Museum* (Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM)

The Science Industry Museum quickly adapted to this new reality by offering online tours and educational games to ensure its survival. This new perspective means that the museum will always be active using new technologies. How beneficial are they for the museum? It is too early for a complete answer, but it must be said that the Science Museum has understood that it is imperative to ensure continuity by adapting with time and generational progress.

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BILEL KHLIFI

*London Museum* (London, UNITED KINGDOM)

Les responsables du London Museum ont invité les gens à donner des articles liés à l'état de quarantaine à travers une sélection basée sur trois fondations pour la collecte des pièces. La première est de savoir comment les espaces publics de la ville ont changé, la deuxième, comment la ville est passée d'une capitale bruyante dans les rues à une capitale vide, comment elle a transformé les citoyens pour un monde numérique ; et enfin comment la situation a affecté également les travailleurs domestiques et la façon dont les enfants et les jeunes interagissent avec les transferts leur vie quotidienne à l'ombre des fermetures des écoles pour s'adapter de ce nouveau style de vie imposé par l'épidémie.

CARMEN DÍAZ ACOSTA

*Museum of Science and Industry* (Chicago, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

The Museum of Science and Industry of Chicago also created a platform for the little ones at home, *Science at Home: Hands-On Science*, where various experiments are proposed that children can perform at home to gain knowledge and at the same time have fun. This is a fun way to encourage the younger audience, the one that most enjoys visiting museums.

CARMEN DÍAZ ACOSTA

*MoMA* (New York, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

An example of good practice is the case of MoMA in New York, which created a platform, *Teach art from Home*, to provide free courses. This is a tool to increase interaction with the audience and the exchange of information, with an open access policy.

## A TERRITORIAL CASE

### Witnesses from Italian local museums

While the research spectrum has been global, although with a special attention to Europe, the research team found useful to dedicate a focus to an Italian region that could be representative of the shock suffered by a major cultural tourism attraction in the world.

As a matter of fact, some Italian areas are emblematic of the crucial role of cultural heritage due to the high density of historic centers, monuments, museums, etc. Tuscany is emblematic of this situation.

During the years EMA has also cooperated with NEMEH, a research center of the State University of Florence which (among other things) organizes every year a one week course titled Musei Emotivi (Emotional Museums), during the lockdown NEMEH has compiled materials from Italian participants to their courses about the impact of COVID-19 on museums. We have selected some passages in the form of quotes; they come from local museums and associations working with museums.

We think this epitomizes a context which could represent a variety of situation all over Europe and other continents.

## CHIARA LACHI

Communication and museum education expert, President of the Imaginary Cultural Association (Florence)

We have tried to develop projects that use online potential or to reconvert projects online that were conceived in person: and, in both cases, the results are very interesting. We have experimented with storytelling through the tool of Digital Storytelling which has proven to be particularly suitable for developing a participatory project, as it promotes mental and emotional interaction with the public. It clearly emerges that the privileged interlocutor becomes or returns to be the local community, declined in all the different meanings and age groups: children, young people, adults, the elderly, fragile people, disabled people, foreign people who have been living in Florence for years. In short, all citizens and towns.

I think it is an important moment to establish a new relationship between museums and schools, a stronger and more synergistic alliance that goes beyond the use of museum environments as physical places of school learning but which also invests a more massive involvement of the potential of museum as a vehicle for learning... experimenting with new ways of using it, rather than re-proposing a top-down hierarchical communication. This dimension of forced stay at home, or in any case of forced distance from the museum context, has highlighted that it still makes sense to work even on the virtual image because what we pay attention to are people, sharing, exchange.

Two projects financed by the Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze Foundation: "Museum is community", a multicultural mediation project on the collections of the Bargello Museums and "Open Studio", a project born as an itinerant and multigenerational art laboratory for District 4 of Municipality of Florence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8bfj0PcDME>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXlq9mX1sTY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB14eYLqurY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAhKqBDs4Os>

EMANUELA GILLI

Curator archaeologist Museum of Natural History Archeology of Montebelluna (Treviso)

- Importance of social communication as a "means" for the enhancement of assets.
- Need to abandon the "improvisation" phase.
- Need for internal staff training with the collaboration of professionals in the sector and activation of other channels.

Resilience is the term that best summarizes them. In practical terms, this has translated into the desire to continue working on the heritage, despite everything... Like many small / medium-sized museums, the work on social media was conducted with makeshift means, from home, without specific skills, improvising, reinventing oneself... but with a lot of commitment and creativity. While the Museum's #laculturaresiste "social campaign" has met with some success, on the other it has revealed how little has been invested so far on this front and the inadequacy of the means available. In addition, being forced to work "remotely" has underlined how irreplaceable is the work "in presence" at the Museum, understood both as work on materials / fittings and as a physical relationship with users.

We have tried to minimize the "museological damage" due to the COVID-19 rules of behavior with the following strategies:

- Elaboration of specific, well-recognizable and very informal signs, in the name of hospitality and clarity.
- Preparation of an examination kit to compensate for the elimination of many interactive and participatory workstations.
- Preparation of a special path to report and enhance the finds / exhibits not to be missed, given the obligation to follow a one-way tour.

Social communication: a path has been undertaken that must be continued, always with the awareness that it is the "means" for the enhancement of heritage and not the "end".

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However, it will be necessary to abandon the "improvisation" phase for a more structured proposal; it will therefore be necessary to provide for the training of internal staff + the collaboration of professionals in the sector + activation of other channels. Set-up: rethink the set-up in order to find participatory and interactive solutions "in safety" by adapting, according to a coherent thought, the technological innovations currently available for museums.

<https://www.museomontebelluna.it/it>

## FIORANGELA DI MATTEO

Former socio-educational and cultural officer Municipality of Genoa, Culture Department, Museums and Libraries Sector

- Importance of the positioning of museums on the Web and the presence of communication paths entrusted to specialists.
- Bringing home the museum experience and the selection of works or things seen.
- Using multimedia communication as an in-depth, subsidiary, "entertainment" to the exhibition itinerary.

I find that the positioning of museums on the Web is as essential as it will be essential that the museum display on the Web follows communication paths entrusted to specialists and careful but competent directors. The roles of those who tell about museums should not be taken for granted, that is, better a fine reader than a mega director - therefore an expert connoisseur - who tells things but with dialect inflections. The choice of the works, the display of the same must in any case be filtered by those who have experience of communicating. In the era of Covid we have witnessed a massive presence in the virtual world of our museums, but now is the time to extract good experiences from these presences and eliminate the banal ones. If the virtual has the certain effect of expanding my knowledge comfortably from an armchair, to the virtual one I can certainly leave the role of in-depth analysis of the exhibitions, the development of paths, the discussion of a particular object. However, the visit to the Museum remains a unique experience full of sensations and emotions that are impossible for me to experience in front of a screen.

Use, therefore, of multimedia communication as an in-depth, subsidiary, "entertainment" to the exhibition itinerary. I believe that the need to update museums is increasingly a need, the possibility of making them more participatory, of "taking home" the museum experience just spent and the selection of works or things seen. On the other hand, museum professionals must have solid knowledge of the laws of communication.

<https://smart.comune.genova.it/cultura>

## SAMUEL PIANA

Owner of Landexplorer - territorial marketing agency. Director of the Association that manages the Lake Orta Ecomuseum (Piedmont Region)

- Idea of a "community museum"
- Direct Facebook experiment, with a short story able to excite the citizen of Gravellona, thanks to childhood memories or stories heard by parents or grandparents and also to intrigue the potential visitor of the new "ethnographic collection".
- Storytelling to co-create and share an identity.

Look for a development strategy that knows how to combine the important material heritage and above all "knowledge", which have been painstakingly preserved and catalogued, with an enhancement capable of embracing digital in all its facets, knowing that, at the same costs, it is better able to intercept the interested public. The need to start an analysis that sees the most precious asset at the centre of my participation in the debate: the territory.

I found important support in the "Felice Pattaroni" Archaeological Cultural Association of Gravellona Toce. A first experiment of direct Facebook, in which there was the vision of a movie with a short story able to excite the citizen of Gravellona, thanks to childhood memories or stories heard by parents or grandparents and, which, at the same time, succeeded to intrigue the potential visitor of the new "ethnographic collection" which will be inaugurated as soon as the setting up phase is completed and we will have left this emergency situation behind.

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We relied on storytelling for the ability to co-create and share an identity that can be presented and represented even outside the cultural system.

A small shuttle or "spoletta", the tool that contains the yarn for weaving, has become the protagonist and the starting point of a story about the two cotton mills that existed and gave work and created a certain economic prosperity at the beginning of 1900 in Gravellona Toce. Using some vintage images and the passionate story of the President of the Pattaroni Association, in about 15 minutes we had a first and exciting digital contact with people interested in the subject trying to "engage" them through the small debate born at the end of the film which deliberately left open a big and interesting question. The example I reported was born with zero financial means but with a great desire to "get involved", knowing that we are not expert speakers, but convinced that we can and must do one more step to meet those unfamiliar with small local realities trying to follow an idea of a "community museum" or a museum as a large forum in grad or to make the different souls live together and that expresses the territory is also confirmed by the numbers: from the first 41 people reached and 24 interactions created during the live broadcast to over 1086 people reached and over 170 interactions in less than 7 days. The data reported confirm how much there is a need for a story able to intertwine territory, objects, emotions, bringing the museum into the home of potential users.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/Associazione-Archeologica-Culturale-Felice-Pattaroni-151478511562213/1651170561702698>

LAURA LANARI

Founder and editorial curator of the blog [www.museieducativi.it](http://www.museieducativi.it)  
Coordinator of the Civic Museums of Ancona and, within them, Head of Educational Services. ICOM Marche Councillor, regional coordination (Ancona)

- Importance of museum-person interaction.
- Maison Petit experience, a virtual service of education to creativity for families with children aged 3 to 6, carried out at the children's home.
- Technology as an instrument of mediation and contact for the development of a participatory narration of cultural heritage and to reconstruct the museums of the territory together with citizens.

The main impression I gained during this period is related to the importance of the museum-person interaction. During the quarantine, the *raison d'être* of the museum manifested itself as never before, which is not configured as a container of objects but an infinite set of stories and opportunities for the well-being and growth of the person. It is precisely from the importance of the relationship that the experience conceived and conducted during the online museum management of the Civic Museums of Ancona begins. I am referring to *Maison Petit*, a virtual service of education to creativity for families with children aged 3 to 6. *Maison Petit* represented a great milestone in terms of the museum-person emotional connection in the context of the health emergency. The project has given continuity to the *Petit Museum* service, which has been active for over a year in the same museums.

The intent to set up a program for children through the network channels involved a complex design starting from the context analysis which, as we have said, denied the possibility of meeting and direct contact with people. The analysis of the target audience (children aged 3 to 6 years) saw the essential need to carry out an activity that could be inclusive and interactive. At the same time, it was necessary to propose a program that could respect the main objective, namely that of practicing learning in a non-formal environment to develop affectivity towards museums and creative thinking.

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Starting from these considerations, a virtual service was born, which we called Maison Petit and which, unlike the Petit Museum, took place, not at the museum, but at the children's home. In this case, technology was an instrument of mediation and contact that allowed us to recreate an intangible imaginary place made up of people, images and experiences. The collaboration of the parents has played a fundamental role. Before

Technology has given us the tools and cultural assets have given us many wonderful stories to share and enrich thanks to the imagination of children! Now more than ever I feel the need to experiment, understand and create connections between people through the development of a participatory narration of cultural heritage and to reconstruct the museums of the territory together with the citizens. I believe that the key to this change for us operators of cultural mediation is the exercise of dialogue, listening and the construction of shared narratives. We must open up and open our stories to the public, be ready to integrate languages and messages for a new museum that is even more inclusive and that can enter the lives of people close to us to reach those far away.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gkj5o8p-Jpo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZhK4ums7lg&t>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KARM5B-C3xE>

<http://museieducativi.it/la-fruizionedei-beni-culturali-al-tempodel-coronavirus>

<http://museieducativi.it/museo-petitarte-infanzia>

## VIDEO FORMATS

### 3 Italian cases, 3 different accents

Since the beginning of the pandemic, when first restrictions were introduced, video production has been one of the main concerns of museums. For many of them it was their first experience facing several challenges in terms of organization, technology, concepts (identifying the right format). Hereunder we present three cases exemplifying this search for the right format.

In the public imagination, Italian museums are associated with the arts as well as Greek ones evoke immediately the image of archaeological sites. For once we have deliberately selected three cases not strictly connected with art, of national relevance, largely attended, more or less of the similar physical size and which have renovated their galleries totally or partially in the last decade.

The three of them have reacted to the pandemic producing (among the other things) short videos to be shared on the web via their sites and more intensively on the social media (namely Facebook, Instagram and YouTube). Let's see some meaningful differences which exemplify different possible approaches to a tool largely used by many other museums all over Europe.

## Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo Da Vinci (Milan)

This museum has launched a series of short videos starred in by curators and the director under the title: "Behind Closed Doors". In 4 months, 150 stories have been produced. With the reopening of the museum the program has been stopped, but it has been announced the intention of going on in the next future. From 25 February to 25 June every single day a new video "pill" has been uploaded dealing with the backstage of the museums, individual objects as well as entire Galleries.



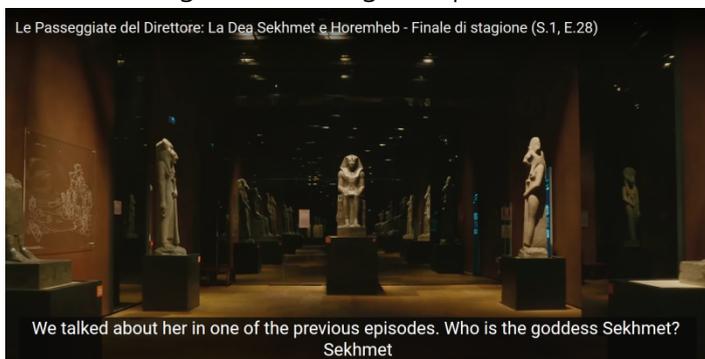
## The Egyptian Museum (Turin)

The widest and oldest Egyptian collection of the world outside Egypt, has started immediately after the closing down a series called: Promenades with the Director, issued twice a week where the Director performed as a guide focusing each time on a room. After the reopening the series has been changed into a program of visit guided by the director and reserved intentionally to a small group of people, in the museum's words:

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“The new proposal aims to create a more intimate relationship with the collections, a greater sharing of experience and knowledge”.



## Galata, the Museum of the Sea (Genoa)

A series called “Stories from the Galata” has started on Facebook shortly after the lockdown. Each story is told by the Director in a video from 2,5 to 4,50 minutes and it is dedicated to single object with a specific attention to its historical background. The series has been stopped after the end of the lockdown.



The 3 formats have similarities and differences: in 2 of them they are one-man-show the protagonist is the director, 2 are in motion, while the Galata one is always standing or sitting only with small movements. The 3 offer a full spectrum of possible declinations:

- an analytical approach with the curators as main actors and single object (or a group of them) in evidence,
- a walk inside a gallery with attention also to the museum environment in general,
- an intentional storytelling approach evocative of the classic situation of a parent reading a story to children.

The length started with very short videos and during the development of the series has generally enlarged the format sometimes reaching 10-minute length; the quality of film shooting is rather different with the Egyptian museum giving the impression of a more sophisticated treatment. The Leonardo Museum denotes from time to time a relevant editing work mounting a variety of materials (animation, special effects, etc.).

The Egyptian Museum video is the only one to have subtitles in English.

## POINTS OF VIEW

### The persona method

Personas are fictional character which a research tem creates in order to represent different user types for certain services or products. Creating personas will help to understand users' needs, background, behaviours and aims. In our case, we have selected texts by professionals playing different roles in the museum world so that our characters are not fictional, but the narrative approach of the Persona Method is equally preserved.

#### The Director

MARJA SAKARI

Director of Ateneum Art Museum (Helsinki, FINLAND)

*The Director of Finland's Ateneum Art Museum on How Institutions Can Inspire the Public, Even While Closed*<sup>8</sup>

Artnet News - April 22, 2020

Unlike many European countries, Finland did not implement a full lockdown in the wake of the spread of the novel coronavirus. The country was recently dubbed by the New York Times as "the prepper nation of the Nordics" because it has been stockpiling food and medical supplies since the Cold War. While temporary travel restrictions were put in place in the hardest-hit capital region, they have now been eased. But institutions such as the Ateneum Art Museum must remain closed until May 13.

<sup>8</sup> <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/letter-from-helsinki-marja-sakari-1841727>

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The Ateneum's director, Marja Sakari, tells us how it prepared for the crisis, and the importance of keeping culture alive—and people inspired—in difficult times.

When the news about the virus came from China, it was a little worrying. At the end of February and the beginning of March, there was already some discussion about it turning into a pandemic. On March 16th, we had a meeting of the National Gallery (consisting of Ateneum, Kiasma, and Sinebrychoff Art Museum) where we discussed whether we should take the initiative to close the museums ourselves. Luckily, our government met on the same evening and decided that the museums would be shut down, which saved us from speculating on the pros and cons of staying open or closing. As a country, Finland was quite well-prepared for this crisis. I think Finnish people in general are quite forward-thinking. We take into consideration all kinds of risks. We are a small country with a small population and we are between two big countries, Sweden and Russia. So in a way we are very cautious about many things. We did have some stocks of various medical equipment, but not everything we would need to cope should we all fall ill at the same time. In terms of Ateneum, for many years now we have had a detailed risk analysis, preparing us for all sorts of catastrophes. So we were prepared, but of course when the worst comes to be realized, it's a shock for the whole community, and the museum is no different. We closed the museum to the public starting on the March 17, and everyone who could continue with their duties began working from home. It is a sad thing that we don't have enough work for our front-of-house staff because of the lack of visitors.

Thankfully, we have been able to continue to pay all staff up until mid-April. However, as our income is reliant upon visitors and ticket sales, we have been forced to make cuts that will amount to all staff taking approximately one unpaid week off a month. Of course, it is of the highest priority to protect our staff and their incomes, but thankfully in Finland we have quite a robust social system. The loss of the one week's salary will be partially compensated, by about 60 percent, by either social unions or trade unions. The Ministry of Education and Culture recently announced that it would compensate cultural institutions for the loss of income experienced at this time.

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For the moment, we don't know exactly how much will come to the National Gallery, but of course we hope that it will ease the situation so that we can cancel some of these staffing furloughs. Very soon after the closure, we started to think about how we could maintain our relationship with our public. We had been thinking about the possibilities that the digital world presents before the pandemic, but of course this digital leap only came to be realized under pressure. At the moment, we have a guided tour with the curator of our beautiful Natalia Goncharova exhibition, available on our website and social media.

The Finnish broadcasting company YLE has also made some programs documenting our exhibition of our permanent collection, which is really important because it enables everyone to stay connected to the museum space virtually. Some of our staff cannot work from home, so the museum is not completely empty. We still have full-time security, and staff including technicians, conservators, and registrars are allowed to come to the museum from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Of course we have to think about the future as well. So now we are slowly dismantling the Goncharova exhibition, which will not, unfortunately, reopen to the public. After that we will begin installing the next exhibition, titled "Inspiration – Contemporary Art & Classics," due to open on June 18. I think everybody needs a little bit of inspiration right now. We are being very cautious with all employees; the workers are advised to wear masks. But Finland is not such a populated country, and in Helsinki, we don't have so many people in the streets, so I think it's quite safe to come to work. The main thing I would advise other museums to do is to maintain their relationships with the public and try to do things online that bring the collection to life in a meaningful way. The public and museum visitors have quite a lot of imagination. There are so many people all over the world who are now engaging with artworks in their own homes in new and creative ways and it is something that really keeps the museum alive. I think during these tragic times when everybody is stuck inside, the meaning of culture becomes even more important than ever before. It is a question of connecting.

When you are closed inside your home and you don't have contact with your friends or relatives it is important that you can still have contact with art. Even though this is an awful situation, and nobody would have wanted it to happen, I think it creates a lot of solidarity. It creates empathy. It creates compassion. Art plays an important part in bringing humanistic ways of thinking to the fore. This is something we all need right now." as told to Naomi Rea.

## The curator

ILARIA ABBONDANDOLO and FRANCESCO MARCORIN

Senior curators at International Center for Architectural Studies Andrea

Palladio Palladio Museum (Vicenza, ITALY)

- Development of the museum "immaterial".
- Experience of strengthening the online presence of the museum with more articulated content.
- Promotion of video playlists on Youtube and activation of an Igtv channel.
- Opportunities to show the "behind the scenes" and disseminate archival materials with interventions of curators, directors of educational programs, archivists, interns...

In this period the museums decided to tell each other, effectively showing the "behind the scenes" and divulging very interesting archive materials: curators, directors of educational programs, archivists, interns took the floor... and an unusually vivid and stimulating picture came out of it.

In our experience, it was very useful to **strengthen the online presence of the museum** with a more articulated offer of contents ... We continued to use the communication channels that we already used (newsletter, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube) but we have greatly increased the use of video revitalizing our playlists on Youtube and activating an Igtv channel that we did not have before. In general, distance communication, greater and more diverse than before, allows you to reach a wider audience and ensures a circulation of information more extensive... We are convinced that much more space will have to be devoted to the **museum**

"immaterial" and much more attention to the public: it will no longer be a matter of showing objects, but of sharing experiences and creating wider connections.

<https://www.palladiomuseum.org>

## The Architect-Scenographer

LORENZO GREPPI

Freelance Architect and Scenographer

*Réinventer le musée, espace du réel et de l'imaginaire*<sup>9</sup>

Ocim – April 16, 2020

Je tente de transformer cette période de confinement forcé en opportunité de réflexion sur les perspectives de mon métier de scénographe : une tentative liée à l'épouvantable dilatation/contraction du temps et de l'espace que m'impose la pratique aliénante du télétravail, dans son absence de visages, écoutes, rencontres, échanges, déplacements, qui habituellement accompagnent ma dimension professionnelle ; une tentative qui devient d'autant plus vitale et urgente face à l'*horror vacui* qui se profile à l'horizon et qui me pousse à aiguïser mes sens, m'interroger, provoquer, voire même remettre en question des acquis.

Il est assez paradoxal de constater que, partout en Europe, il n'y a jamais eu autant de discussions autour des musées comme dans cette période, où justement les musées sont fermés, dépourvus de leur propre public en chair et en os. Et si cette anomalie souligne l'importance de leur présence institutionnelle comme biens patrimoniaux, refuges identitaires et instruments de loisirs virtuels, il apparaît encore plus urgent de redéfinir leur rôle dans la société du post-Covid-19. Un défi énorme qui conditionne leur destinée : où il s'agit de transformer les contraintes en opportunités vers une meilleure qualité de l'offre muséale dans son ensemble.

Parce que quand tout cela sera terminé, rien ne pourra retourner comme avant (ou du moins pas dans l'immédiat). A ce propos : quelle sera la nouvelle place du public dans les musées ? Partant de l'hypothèse, malheureusement assez vraisemblable, que la peur de maladies, les normes restrictives sur la libre

<sup>9</sup> <https://ocim.fr/2020/04/2020-04-16-reinventer-le-musee-espace-du-reel-et-de-limaginaire-lorenzo-greppi/>

circulation et la forte crise économique, limiteront forcément nos déplacements au strict nécessaire : nous voyagerons beaucoup moins et notre mobilité sera très réduite.

Dans ce scénario, les musées du post-Covid-19 devront prendre en compte deux grandes typologies de public potentiel : d'une part, le public virtuel, global, multilinguistique, multiculturel, groupé en larges *communities* et *networks*, qui devra se contenter de formes de tourisme virtuel et de visites en ligne ; et, de l'autre, le public réel, essentiellement local, plus « domestique » et « de proximité », issu de communautés et de réseaux d'utilisateurs à l'échelle territoriale, qui aura plus facilement la possibilité de visiter le musée in situ. Deux publics assez différents, que les musées seront contraints à cibler dans le contexte d'une même stratégie intégrée : varier et adapter les formes et les objectifs du marketing culturel ; décliner les deux échelles de la proximité et de la distance ; humaniser la visite en ligne et rendre plus imaginaire l'expérience de visite réelle ; etc.

Partant de mon point de vue disciplinaire, je me limite à tenter de prendre en examen la part réelle du public, d'autant plus qu'à mon avis, elle répond au mieux à la vocation première du musée défini, selon l'Icom, comme une « institution ouverte au public » (et non simplement accessible) : la part du public en chair et en os qui continuera de fait à payer son ticket, rentrer dans les salles, stationner physiquement devant les œuvres, se prendre en selfie et acheter des gadgets in situ. Un public de provenance locale, formé de personnes potentiellement connues, identifiables, qui ont un nom et un visage, habitent sur place et sont susceptibles de revenir, qui partagent avec le musée la même langue, la même topographie, le même ciel reflétant le même milieu sociétal : un public trop souvent oublié, ou du moins délaissé, surtout par les grandes institutions, que tous les musées devront donc essayer d'intéresser, motiver, conquérir, fidéliser, dans la perspective de rapports réels, concrets, plus personnalisés et durables.

Dans ce cadre, il ne s'agira aucunement de transformer les musées en musées locaux et/ou du territoire mais de les appuyer sur de solides bases territoriales, de les ancrer avant tout à leur propre géographie de référence, d'établir prioritairement de nouveaux liens identitaires et des formats de dialogue ouverts vers et depuis les milieux sociétaux locaux, de rechercher une attention nouvelle envers les différentes échelles et les réalités d'expressions plus spécifiques du

territoire, d'inventer des formes privilégiées de fidélisation, d'écoute et de communication continue et constructive, etc. : et ceci dans le double objectif, d'une part, de connecter davantage chaque visiteur à sa communauté d'appartenance, et, de l'autre, de lui offrir les instruments et les outils qui lui permettront de s'approprier « son » musée et d'en devenir part active. Où il s'agit en fin de compte d'accueillir chaque visiteur dans le musée comme dans un grand « chez-soi » communautaire.

La question qui suit implicitement est : quelle sera en ce cas la nouvelle place des musées ? Partant du déluge d'images virtuelles que les musées mêmes déversent en ligne tout au long de cette période, les visiteurs réels du post-Covid-19 auront-ils envie de passer de la visite en ligne à la visite in situ ? Ne seront-ils pas déçus par toutes les attentes et les promesses affichées sur le net ? Car sur le digital les musées sont plus propres, ont de bien meilleurs services et sont (pour l'instant) gratuits : on peut les voir depuis la maison confortablement assis sur le canapé, il n'y a pas de files d'attente, il suffit de suivre le flux des images sans devoir prendre de décisions (si ce n'est celle d'un clic), l'attention est habilement canalisée sur les œuvres et quelques histoires créées ad hoc, effaçant ainsi le problème des mauvais éclairages, des scénographies inexistantes, des narrations manquantes et des innombrables détails incongrus qui en perturbent la perception.

Après tous ces abus d'images virtuelles (voire irréelles ou surréelles), les musées seront appelés au double défi d'exploiter l'envie de personnes de reconquérir le plan du réel et de profiter de certains impacts positifs du virus – tels que la raréfaction du public, l'échelonnage des visites, l'espacement des visiteurs, le silence, etc. – pour mettre au point des expériences de visite innovantes capables d'exalter la dimension muséale « en vrai » et « à la vraie échelle » : capables de les qualifier, d'une part, comme moments spatio-temporels réels de socialisation, partage et rencontre sur site et, de l'autre, comme l'une des rares expériences et occasions concrètes de « déplacement » et de « voyage » encore praticables et parcourables. Pour un voyage à la fois physique, mental et émotionnel entre images, imaginations et imaginaire.

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Où le travail du scénographe devra partir de la mise en scène des images à disposition, des œuvres, des biens du patrimoine matériel et immatériel et des collections muséales, pour stimuler le visiteur à utiliser son imagination, provoquer ses émotions, sa fantaisie, ses rêves, ses mémoires, s'appuyant sur l'énorme potentiel de son imaginaire, sa soif accrue de paysages, géographies, histoires, chants, poésies, le vide des rencontres, des altérités et des diversités frustrées par le virus.

Pour un musée du réel et de l'imaginaire, qui ne se renferme pas sur lui-même à l'intérieur de ses limites physiques mais se projette au contraire vers sa quatrième dimension extra-murale, marquant la trace et la trame d'une série d'ouvertures vers et depuis l'extérieur, l'altérité, le territoire, le temps, pour explorer – à partir de son point de vue spécifique – les contradictions et les défis de notre société contemporaine : un point de vue privilégié qui impose toutefois – et plus que jamais en cette période d'incertitudes, de nouvelles virtuelles et de *fake news* – un pacte de confiance et de vérité partagées entre le visiteur et son musée qui ne pourra être trahi, à partir de la mise en scène d'un aménagement cohérent au service des contenus et de la poétique des émotions.

Où le grand défi sera, en définitive, celui de repositionner le visiteur « à l'intérieur » du musée : non pas en son centre, mais au cœur de ses complexes dynamiques entre contenu, contenant, œuvres, patrimoine, histoires, public, scénographies, images, imaginations. Pour un musée « inévitable », nécessaire, à la fois domestique et public, d'un seul et de tous, d'appropriation et de partage, du réel et de l'imaginaire : un lieu unique, irremplaçable, non reproductible ailleurs ou d'autres manières, lieu de vérité et d'identités, lieu de complexités et de connaissance, lieu d'émotions...

## The Museum Assistant

MARCELLA DE PAOLI

Museo Archeologico Nazionale (Venice, ITALY)

*What will last after the crisis?*

*Italian museums and the pandemic* - As both ICOM's and NEMO's surveys on COVID-19 pandemic and museums have pointed out, the Coronavirus crisis has had and will have a heavy impact on museums all over the world, disrupting their activities and threatening their financial survival. Many museums had a considerable loss of income, especially the larger ones and the museums in tourist areas, directly impacted by the global decrease of tourism (1). Today some museums and monuments of the Italian art cities are in this situation.

The pandemic has been a shock for their tourist economy, beyond the immediate crisis, and has highlighted the fragility of a certain model of cultural heritage management. I hope that quality can count more than quantity in the future: less fascination for large numbers, more attention to authentic visiting experiences. I also hope that the crisis will lead to a positive change, eventually finding effective solutions to the problem of over-tourism and stimulating museums to find strategies (e.g. limited numbers, systems of booking etc.) that really put people at the centre of their activity, not as an indistinct mass of customers who are buying tickets and standardised services but as individuals who are looking for leisure and informal learning. Less people in museum rooms can give them back an atmosphere, restoring their function as places for strolling, meditation and imagination. Less tourist crowds in museums can focus their attention on the local audience, fostering museums' role as places of meaning-making and identity.

During the pandemic museums already tried to address needs within their communities. They contributed to the reduction of loneliness by increasing their digital services to engage people staying at home. And they maintained their informal education role online by providing educational materials, offering guided tours with curators or, with a more playful approach, organising contests and quiz events. Also the Italian school had to face the restrictions due to the pandemic, being forced to invent new ways of teaching. In the next future the distance learning can become increasingly important (provided that the digital divide of

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poor families is closed) and there will be room for museums to play their part. If we let us be inspired by this shock, I believe that in the years ahead the social relevance of our museums can be measured with regard to these two points: a better care of the relationship with local communities also through digital means, a close cooperation between schools and museums based on digital learning.

*Museums and digital technologies* – During the COVID-19 lockdown Italian museums saw a significant rise in their online activity. Social media platforms (especially Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) became favourite means to reach their audience, often by shifting staff time from onsite tasks to online ones. Museums kept telling themselves and broadcasting their contents, experimenting new media and styles to reach different groups of users (e.g. the platform Tik Tok by Uffizi and, in Europe, by Prado and Rijksmuseum). It was also a way to tell the public that they were still alive and vital.

However, as the crisis has revealed some fragility of Italian museums in the sense of their daily work, so the great activity on the web has stressed an existing technological gap. Museums already equipped with staff and means for digital communication has had a better performance, whereas the web presence of other museums has been rather improvised. This has underlined a necessity of more investments on technological tools and staff training (as otherwise recommended by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Tourism in its Three-Year Plan for a Digital and Innovative Museum). Besides, many museums need to reflect on policy objectives with regard to their activity on the web: they were tactical during the pandemic, but now they must be strategic by using both imagination and organisation.

Maria Elena Colombo describes the physical museum and the digital museum as a single ecosystem (2). It is true: the Coronavirus crisis has proved that the online museum and the onsite museum are intertwined. In these days I am trying to figure out how all this may change my job and that of my colleagues at the National Archaeological Museum of Venice in St. Mark's square. Our core duties as museum assistants are to develop and perform guided tours and educational activities with adults, teenagers and children. In the last three years I have been also part of the professional team that is planning a new museum layout, changing its concept, storyboard and narrative.

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I believe that there will be more initiatives online in the future. For months, perhaps for years, they will be the only way we have to reach great part of our international public. What is more, we cannot lose the new virtual visitors that we managed to attract during the pandemic. Some of them will also become onsite visitors, some others will not. It does not matter, because the online visit will already be a worthwhile experience if we can offer valuable contents and build meaningful interactions. On the other hand, the vast use of internet, experimented during the lockdown, will help us in shaping new-style onsite visits. So, what will last after the crisis?

*Online* – As indicated by a research of the Politecnico di Milano, before the crisis many museums used websites and social media platforms mainly for information and communication purposes, to support an upcoming visit or to collect reviews about the museum and its services after it. During the crisis social media evolved from tools complementary to an onsite visit into tools for spreading knowledge and engaging the audience online (3). They also proved to be powerful means to connect users and museums. As a result, museum websites and social media pages cannot be static anymore.

For this reason, museums need to organise their web presence: strategic planning, professional staff, IT tools (e.g. Augmented Reality to reconstruct contexts and explore materials, 3Ds to handle virtual objects making the untouchable touchable). They can use different platforms to reach different audiences and deploy different contents in different languages and styles according to the targets. And it will be crucial not only to adapt the communication to the interests of the people met virtually, locally and globally, but also to develop a two-way communication with them.

Museums also need to imagine new initiatives for the web, as many of them did during the pandemic. Let me give some examples: virtual visits that are not simple translations of the physical visit into the digital one but are innovative experiences (e.g. in terms of accessibility for people with disabilities), virtual exhibitions created only for the web that put on display unusual or too fragile objects, live streaming activities with students that are the result of the cooperation between teachers and museum professionals for distance learning and flipped classroom.

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*Onsite* – During the Coronavirus crisis there was a boom in cultural offerings provided online by museums. And virtual visitors got used to having a wide range of choices. Now a single narrative of museum layouts might no longer be enough. Moreover, it can no longer just communicate information. I agree with those who think that museums' massive activity on the web during the pandemic may have transformed the cultural appreciation model of their users. This is an issue that can be addressed with a "hybrid use of online applications blended with the physical world" (4).

Museums can create multiple choice visits, for example through digital storytelling and gaming, revealing unknown stories or aspects about museum objects, stimulating interaction between people and artefacts, emotionally engaging onsite users and allowing them to spend their visiting time differently focusing on few works of art, as they did on the online platforms during the lockdown period. The constraints imposed by the recent pandemic encourage choosing visitors' personal smart devices as platform of deployment and, consequently, strongly recommending the installation of Wi-Fi networks, which, for different reasons, are still a rare commodity in many Italian museums.

The local communities can be involved in the production of contents, starting from the groups of loyal users that museums have. They can share online their personal point of view and stories about some favourite museum objects. The same can be arranged with the students who take part in the programmes of distance learning, inviting them to perform virtual guided tours for their peers.

"Crisis test us. We either fall apart or we grow up fast" (5). Something seems to have definitely changed and we cannot just wait to go back to normal. It is time for museums to evolve.

Notes and sources

(1) ICOM, *Report Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19*, 2020, <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Report-Museums-and-COVID-19.pdf> (accessed: 07.08.2020)

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- (2) M. E. Colombo, *Musei e cultura digitale. Tra narrativa, pratiche e testimonianze*, Editrice Bibliografica, Milano, 2020
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## The Consultants

### INVISIBLESTUDIO (UNITED KINGDOM)

#### *InvisibLetter*

“For pure chance we were among the first in Italy to organize a virtual visit to a museum in lockdown. On 9 March Italy became a red zone and on 11 March we had a scheduled guided tour of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum for the RCS Academy master's degree in cultural heritage. Quickly, together with Stefania Rossi, museum communication and promotion manager, we had to invent a format.

We did this by combining the tools we had: Zoom for the visit and Google Arts & Culture for the immersive experience in the museum, with the possibility of enlarging the works at the highest level of detail. Although completely new, the format proved immediately functional, to the point of being then carried on by the Museum's Young Group, up to reaching important numbers in terms of organized visits and people served. The real reason for success was the human element: the virtual spaces were transformed from a solitary experience to a social experience led by a guide. We also wrote about it on Artribune.

And at the end of the lockdown, what will remain?

Museums have two roads in front of them: either slowly return to "Business as usual", leaving behind this period of virtual visits as a bad memory, or trying to

understand if some aspects of virtual visits can be saved, perhaps going to integrate the offer of traditional "live" visits.

We are definitely for this second hypothesis. We have experienced a lot in these two months: virtual visits with puzzles to Poldi Pezzoli, virtual workshops of creative writing at the Bora Museum and the Dolom.it Museum and a series of virtual tours in London museums for the Leonardo Da Vinci middle school of Bergamo. All these experiments have confirmed it: there is a future for virtual visits, both as a preview of the real visit and for all those who however cannot physically visit the museum.

Takeaway: only the human element makes the virtual an emotion."

## The marketing man

MICHAEL ALEXIS

Director of Marketing, Museum Hack

*People Don't Want Virtual Museum Tours; Do This Instead*<sup>10</sup>

Museum Hack - April 30, 2020

"For a few days in March 2020, the world focused its attention on virtual museum tours.

This attention was driven by museum closures, major media coverage, and a mighty social media effort by museums to offer an online experience to audiences.

And then, just as quickly, the attention disappeared, and museums were left in what might be the greatest struggle for short-term relevancy they have ever faced.

The data shows that we are past peak interest in virtual museum tours. The mainstream market isn't interested in seeing these world class institutions in virtual 3D spaces or photo galleries. As the Director of the Rubin Museum of Art, Jorrit Britschgi, said, *there is nothing that can replace in-person encounters with art.*

<sup>10</sup> <https://museumhack.com/virtual-museum-tour-trends/>

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However, just as interest peaked for virtual museum tours, it is now starting to peak in other areas that museums can serve. In this article, I'll share the data I mentioned and also the areas of opportunity.

Let's get to it.

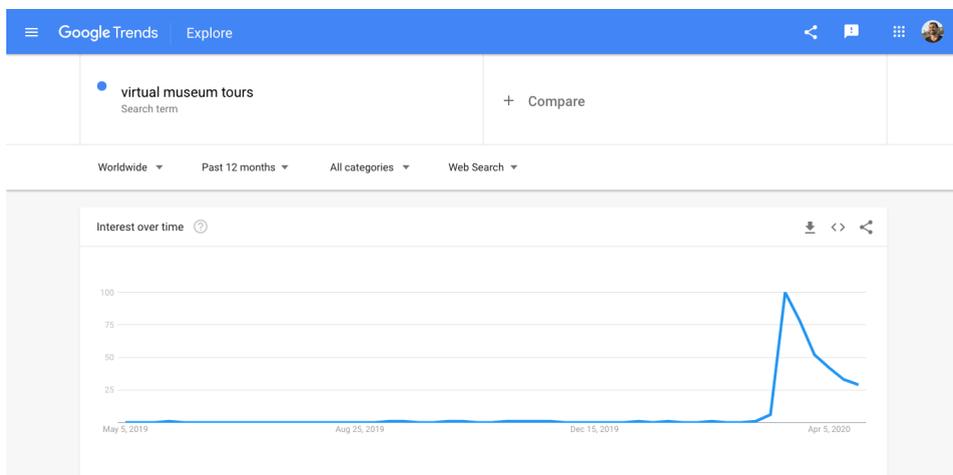
## Virtual Museum Tours Were Popular for 4 Days

Google is one of the most data rich organizations ever to exist and makes a portion of this data available to the public. Anyone can go to [Google Trends](#), type in a query, and see search interest on Google's platform for the last 16 years. However, this data has several technical limitations.

- The data is limited to Google's platform, which is popular but not quite ubiquitous.
- The site does not provide number of searches and instead graphs on normalized and relative data.
- Google provides related trends, but to a degree you still need to pinpoint an accurate search. It is possible, for example, that *online museum tours* could be a more relevant search than *virtual museum tours*.

Still, the data is accurate enough that we use it to make decisions on product development, marketing, staffing and other important aspects of our business.

Here is the last 12 months of Google's search data for *virtual museum tours*.



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The data shows that interest in virtual museum tours started to surge on March 14, peaked on March 17 and has been on decline ever since. [...]

Related searches, such as *free virtual museum tours*, *virtual museum tours for kids*, and *online museum tours*, show a similar trend. One notable exception is *best virtual museum tours* which continues to fluctuate. Data from other sources shows that the search volume with the “best” modifier is much lower than the other keywords.

## Museum-Relevant Searches that are Surging Now

There are two ways I navigate Google Trends:

1. Type in a relevant keyword like “museum tours”, and then scroll down for related topics and queries that may show which keywords have a recent increase in search volume.
2. Keyword searches based on intuition and other sources.

This approach is hardly comprehensive but is valuable for quickly finding actionable insights. In March, we [redirected our entire operational capacity](#) with only hours of forward looking data to work with.

Exploring the available data shows that at least three potential audiences for museums are surging right now. Supporting data shows these searches have meaningful search volume and market interest as well.

The three areas are:

1. virtual field trips for kids
2. quarantine date ideas
3. things to read

### #1 Virtual Field Trips for Kids

With many schools around the world closed through the end of the year, teachers and schools are working to build a digital curriculum for students. This curriculum includes virtual field trip experiences. Museums, already known as important field trip destinations, are well positioned to serve this market. [...]

### #2 Quarantine Date Ideas

[...] Similar to field trips, museums already exist as a place that people go on dates. You can reach this interest online by offering digital experiences that match the market’s interests. Data shows that people are looking for fun, cheap and romantic dates, in that order. Fun leads the other two by a factor of 2x, so I would

recommend focusing on that. [...]

## #3 Things to Read

[...] Even though I expect podcasts are here to stay, I believe written content holds its value longer and will have a greater return for you. Every month, hundreds of thousands of people find Museum Hack via our written content. [...]

## The Volunteer

SABILA DUHITA DRIJONO

GEM Evaluation & Digital Support Volunteer

*MuseumFromHome*<sup>11</sup>

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, museums are temporarily forced to shut their doors to the public. The unprecedented situation is pushing museums to find alternative ways to engage with their audiences – one of the ways is by shifting their activities to digital platforms.

In addition to maximising their digital database and social media presence, several museums are opening up their collections to the public through virtual tours, such as the VR 360° tour by the National Gallery or Royal Academy of Arts, and digital commission programmes such as the ones completed by the British Museum and Serpentine Galleries. ArtFund has also come with a list of digital exhibitions that museum lovers can enjoy from the comforts of their home. Other exciting opportunities to engaged include Instagram Live workshops and free online courses, such as the ones offered by MoMA, are becoming more popular due to the high demand for cultural activities that do not require travelling.

While these efforts were done at an institutional level, what can we do as museum educators on an individual basis?

An interesting example of an engaging digital activity can be seen with #MuseumFromHome, a Twitter project initiated by a group of museum professionals currently working from home including Dan Vo, Sacha Coward, and Sheldon Goodman. The project encourages people who work in museums to

<sup>11</sup> <https://gem.org.uk/>

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share their favourite object from museum archives or their personal artefacts in a 60-second video on social media platforms, using the hashtag #MuseumFromHome. From its launch in March, the project has featured many contributions, which were created not only by museum professionals, but everyone who shares the love in museums, galleries, and heritage.

Working in partnership with the Museums Association, Art Fund, and National Museum Directors' Council, #MuseumFromHome will be featured by BBC Culture's 'Culture in Quarantine' section on Thursday, April 30, 2020. The programme will highlight and promote contents under the same hashtag from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms.

Building up to the big day, a lineup of guests is going live every 12.30 pm on co-founder Dan Vo's personal Twitter from Friday, April 24. The list includes Joe Galliano from Queer Britain, V&A's LGBTQ Tour, Professor Sue Sanders from LGBT+ History Month, Barnaby Edwards, Jessica Turtle from Museum of Homelessness, and Thanh Sinden from Museum Detox.

Have you come across any interesting artefacts or museums, gallery, and heritage-related projects on social media during the lockdown?

Now is the best time to share them!

GEM.The Voice for Heritage Learning is a UK based Trust supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund

## The Global player

The following text is not specifically related to museums or cultural heritage, but it can be appropriate as a broader view about the social impact of the pandemic putting in a wider context museums problem and the emerging trends after the reopening

YAN XIAO and ZIYANG FAN

World Economic Forum

*World Economic Forum COVID Action Platform*<sup>12</sup>

April 27, 2020

"10 technology trends to watch in the COVID-19 pandemic

- The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated 10 key technology trends, including digital payments, telehealth and robotics.
- These technologies can help reduce the spread of the coronavirus while helping businesses stay open.
- Technology can help make society more resilient in the face of pandemic and other threats.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, technologies are playing a crucial role in keeping our society functional in a time of lockdowns and quarantines. And these technologies may have a long-lasting impact beyond COVID-19.

Here are 10 technology trends that can help build a resilient society, as well as considerations about their effects on how we do business, how we trade, how we work, how we produce goods, how we learn, how we seek medical services and how we entertain ourselves.

### 1. Online Shopping and Robot Deliveries

In late 2002, the SARS outbreak led to a tremendous growth of both business-to-business and business-to-consumer online marketplace platforms in China.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/10-technology-trends-coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-robotics-telehealth/>

Similarly, COVID-19 has transformed online shopping from a nice-to-have to a must-have around the world. Some bars in Beijing have even continued to offer happy hours through online orders and delivery.

Online shopping needs to be supported by a robust logistics system. In-person delivery is not virus-proof. Many delivery companies and restaurants in the US and China are launching contactless delivery services where goods are picked up and dropped off at a designated location instead of from or into the hands of a person. Chinese e-commerce giants are also ramping up their development of robot deliveries. However, before robot delivery services become prevalent, delivery companies need to establish clear protocols to safeguard the sanitary condition of delivered goods.

### 2. Digital and Contactless Payments

Cash might carry the virus, so central banks in China, US and South Korea have implemented various measures to ensure banknotes are clean before they go into circulation. Now, contactless digital payments, either in the form of cards or e-wallets, are the recommended payment method to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Digital payments enable people to make online purchases and payments of goods, services and even utility payments, as well as to receive stimulus funds faster.

However, according to the World Bank, there are more than 1.7 billion unbanked people, who may not have easy access to digital payments. The availability of digital payments also relies on internet availability, devices and a network to convert cash into a digitalized format.

### 3. Remote Work

Many companies have asked employees to work from home. Remote work is enabled by technologies including virtual private networks (VPNs), voice over internet protocols (VoIPs), virtual meetings, cloud technology, work collaboration tools and even facial recognition technologies that enable a person to appear before a virtual background to preserve the privacy of the home. In addition to preventing the spread of viruses, remote work also saves commute time and provides more flexibility.

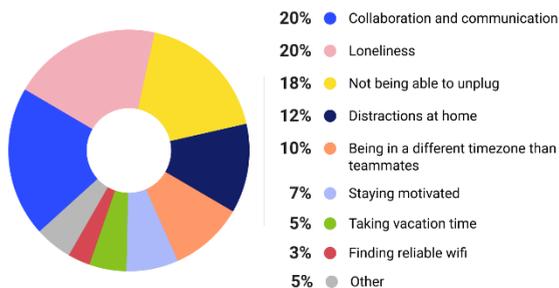
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Yet remote work also imposes challenges to employers and employees. Information security, privacy and timely tech support can be big issues, as revealed by recent class actions filed against Zoom. Remote work can also complicate labour law issues, such as those associated with providing a safe work environment and income tax issues. Employees may experience loneliness and lack of work-life balance. If remote work becomes more common after the COVID-19 pandemic, employers may decide to reduce lease costs and hire people from regions with cheaper labour costs.

Laws and regulations must be updated to accommodate remote work – and further psychological studies need to be conducted to understand the effect of remote work on people.

## What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?



State of Remote Report 2020  
[buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020](https://buffer.com/state-of-remote-2020)



*Employees rank collaboration and communication, loneliness and not being able to unplug their top struggles when working from home. Image: Buffer State of Remote Report 2020*

Further, not all jobs can be done from home, which creates disparity. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 25% of wage and salary workers worked from home at least occasionally from 2017 to 2018. Workers with college educations are at least five times more likely to have jobs that allow them to work from home compared with people with high school diplomas. Some professions, such as medical services and manufacturing, may not have the option at all. Policies with respect to data flows and taxation would need to be adjusted should the volume of cross-border digital services rise significantly.

## 4. Distance Learning

As of mid-April, 191 countries announced or implemented school or university closures, impacting 1.57 billion students. Many educational institutions started offering courses online to ensure education was not disrupted by quarantine measures. Technologies involved in distant learning are similar to those for remote work and also include virtual reality, augmented reality, 3D printing and artificial-intelligence-enabled robot teachers.

Concerns about distance learning include the possibility the technologies could create a wider divide in terms of digital readiness and income level. Distance learning could also create economic pressure on parents – more often women – who need to stay home to watch their children and may face decreased productivity at work.

## 5. Telehealth

Telehealth can be an effective way to contain the spread of COVID-19 while still providing essential primary care. Wearable personal IoT devices can track vital signs. Chatbots can make initial diagnoses based on symptoms identified by patients.

However, in countries where medical costs are high, it's important to ensure telehealth will be covered by insurance. Telehealth also requires a certain level of tech literacy to operate, as well as a good internet connection. And as medical services are one of the most heavily regulated businesses, doctors typically can only provide medical care to patients who live in the same jurisdiction. Regulations, at the time they were written, may not have envisioned a world where telehealth would be available.

## 6. Online Entertainment

Although quarantine measures have reduced in-person interactions significantly, human creativity has brought the party online. Cloud raves and online streaming of concerts have gain traction around the world. Chinese film production companies also released films online. Museums and international heritage sites offer virtual tours. There has also been a surge of online gaming traffic since the outbreak.

### 7. Supply Chain 4.0

The COVID-19 pandemic has created disruptions to the global supply chain. With distancing and quarantine orders, some factories are completely shut down. While demand for food and personal protective equipment soar, some countries have implemented different levels of export bans on those items. Heavy reliance on paper-based records, a lack of visibility on data and lack of diversity and flexibility have made existing supply chain system vulnerable to any pandemic.

Core technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, such as Big Data, cloud computing, Internet-of-Things (“IoT”) and blockchain are building a more resilient supply chain management system for the future by enhancing the accuracy of data and encouraging data sharing.

### 8. 3D Printing

3D printing technology has been deployed to mitigate shocks to the supply chain and export bans on personal protective equipment. 3D printing offers flexibility in production: the same printer can produce different products based on different design files and materials, and simple parts can be made onsite quickly without requiring a lengthy procurement process and a long wait for the shipment to arrive.

However, massive production using 3D printing faces a few obstacles. First, there may be intellectual property issues involved in producing parts that are protected by patent. Second, production of certain goods, such as surgical masks, is subject to regulatory approvals, which can take a long time to obtain. Other unsolved issues include how design files should be protected under patent regimes, the place of origin and impact on trade volumes and product liability associated with 3D printed products.

### 9. Robotics and Drones

COVID-19 makes the world realize how heavily we rely on human interactions to make things work. Labor intensive businesses, such as retail, food, manufacturing and logistics are the worst hit.

COVID-19 provided a strong push to rollout the usage of robots and research on robotics. In recent weeks, robots have been used to disinfect areas and to deliver food to those in quarantine. Drones have walked dogs and delivered items.

While there are some reports that predict many manufacturing jobs will be replaced by robots in the future, at the same time, new jobs will be created in the process. Policies must be in place to provide sufficient training and social welfare to the labour force to embrace the change.

### 10. 5G and Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

All the aforementioned technology trends rely on a stable, high-speed and affordable internet. While 5G has demonstrated its importance in remote monitoring and healthcare consultation, the rollout of 5G is delayed in Europe at the time when the technology may be needed the most. The adoption of 5G will increase the cost of compatible devices and the cost of data plans. Addressing these issues to ensure inclusive access to internet will continue to be a challenge as the 5G network expands globally.

#### The importance of digital readiness

COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of digital readiness, which allows business and life to continue as usual – as much as possible – during pandemics. Building the necessary infrastructure to support a digitized world and stay current in the latest technology will be essential for any business or country to remain competitive in a post-COVID-19 world, as well as take a human-centred and inclusive approach to technology governance.

As the BBC points out, an estimated 200 million people will lose their jobs due to COVID-19. And the financial burden often falls on the most vulnerable in society. Digitization and pandemics have accelerated changes to jobs available to humans. How to mitigate the impact on the larger workforce and the most vulnerable is the issue across all industries and countries that deserves not only attention but also a timely and human-centred solution.

## REFLECTIONS BY EMA AND OTHER EXPERTS

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### *The Challenge of Live Access and Distance Experiences in Museums*

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted museums and galleries detrimentally as it did other organizations and institutions traditionally associated with a more physical, experiential model of engagement. Museum closures have been witnessed on a global scale since the onset of the Covid grip in early 2020. The closure of these museums has created significant challenges for the employment of museum professionals and the financing of the museums on an operational level but museums have also suffered from a sense of public estrangement borne out of enforced physical disengagement with museum visitors. After all, it is for the people that museums exist. As observed by Kuzelewska and Tomaszuk (2020), 'access to culture (understood also as access to cultural heritage) is one of the human rights'. Kuzelewska and Tomaszuk cite European legislation spanning 70 plus years from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the 2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights in the European Union to support their stance on cultural access (2020). Sustaining this 'human right' to cultural access has presented a significant challenge to museums since the Covid pandemic began. Together with colleagues at University of Padua and University of Glasgow, the European Museum Academy has been monitoring how museums are responding to the Covid-19 situation by using digital means. We have especially been interested in developments which may point to the interesting use of technologies for encouraging virtual engagement in the future.

In the last two decades, museums have initiated and increased the use of digital engagement via their home websites and social media but the current pandemic has created a rapid surge in museums' development and use of digital programmes to reach the public. The scale of this surge is notable and it may be claimed that the Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for accelerating museums' digital development further than we have seen in the last 20 years. Covid-19

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propelled museums to make collections available and accessible online using a variety of digital initiatives. If the museum is to remain relevant for the public at large and not simply for a limited elite, the digital initiatives developed must address the demand for interactivity and participatory governance which are as important as ever. This paper will explore possible features of digital engagement that might encourage virtual visitor accessibility and will illustrate these features using digital programming and initiatives designed and implemented by museums between March and August 2020.

In response to the Covid-induced temporary closure of the Design Museum in Denmark, Copenhagen, the Museum Director, Anne-Louise Sommer, identified a use for technology in facilitating public engagement with the museums' collections. Anne-Louise captured the classical atmosphere and collections of the museum using film and audio then posted the recordings on YouTube. In one film ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRSztH\\_n-sY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRSztH_n-sY)), Anne-Louise visits the museum's archive and shares a selection of drawings and water colour paintings by the artist Finn Juhl. The film introduces the viewer to Juhl's work and in so doing, demonstrates the value of using modern technology and social media to transport the world of museum artefacts to an otherwise inaccessible audience. Anne-Louise's talk is focussed on a particular aspect of the museum's collection and her carefully structured session conveys a welcoming and relaxed tone. The Design Museum has produced a number of guided digital tours to showcase specific objects in the collections. Specialists tell the stories of objects' and re-create virtual contexts similar to that in which objects would traditionally be viewed thus creating a classical museum experience. No doubt, the frequent, committed museum visitor will readily engage with the Design Museum's collections through the virtual offer. For the public this opportunity to view collections virtually presents an offer similar to that presented via other media platforms where the viewing offer is available remotely and immediately, if desired. While remote, immediate access may be attractive to some, the viewer has no influence on the content. They are not part of the production and questions may be left unanswered. The visitor is an observer, the recipient of a museum experience rather than an active participant, involved in an exchange or interchange.

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In contrast to the experience offered by the Danish Design Museum, the 360 degrees museum experience at Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam produced by Q42 (<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/from-home>) offers the viewer the opportunity to view objects from the museum's collection in a more participatory manner. The virtual visitor can move around the museum's galleries, experiencing an enhanced viewing through the lens of a robotic camera. Paintings can be viewed at an individualised, leisurely pace and the viewer can manage the visit with increased autonomy. This enhanced viewing may appeal to the visitor who is already passionate about what can be experienced in and through the museum but it may also entice the novice virtual visitor to engage with a sample of the Rijksmuseum's collections. While the Rijksmuseum's digital offer encourages the visitor to navigate their own tour, this is done so within the limitations of what has been pre-determined for filming by the museum. Then again, any visit to a physical museum offers the potential for engagement with a collection or collections pre-determined and organised by the museum staff. What the Rijksmuseum have done is to create the opportunity for a virtual museum visit that is reflective of a visit in person.

Another example of effective use of technologies to encourage the virtual museum visitor is available at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Here, they have chosen an approach where the digital visitor visits the collection, piece by piece (Watson, 2020). This digital visit is technically impressive in many ways, encouraging the virtual visitor to engage with multiple narratives associated with Van Gogh ranging from narratives conveying the emotions of the artist to narratives associated with his artistic technique and style (<https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/07/29/how-dept-brushed-up-van-gogh-museums-virtual-experience-remote-covid-19-world>) While the experience offered by the Van Gogh Museum is a visually and intellectually stimulating one, the sense that the visitor remains somehow physically distanced from the museum's collection persists.

Generally, despite the intended interactive character of the virtual visit, it remains close to the encyclopaedic experience where knowledge and information govern the territory leaving little room for the exploration of social skills, feelings and values.

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In the pre-Covid days when physical public visits to museums were the norm, museums aimed to attract a broad range of visitors, varying in gender, age, cultural identity, education, and social background. Digital engagement for these groups often appeared in the form of digital interactives and an exhibition could come alive with the press of a button or operating a 'scroll and search' screen. These interactives usually presented information and questions of varying comprehensive levels, connected to exhibitions which in turn could provide an inclusive dimension. In other museums, interactivity was facilitated by real people, sometimes dressed in costumes, providing performances to inspire a sense of living history. Living history has grown steadily as a popular method in museums throughout the world, not least in the popular open-air museums and archaeological parks such as Jamtli Open Air Museum in Ostersund, Sweden (<https://www.jamtli.com/en/>) and the Museum of Island Life on the Scottish Island of Skye (<http://www.skyemuseum.co.uk>). But how might we emulate and possibly enhance this kind of immersive interactive museum experience using technologies? Virtual Reality (VR) where the user is placed inside the experience may seem an obvious way of recreating the immersive museum, gallery or heritage experience but creating a suitable application can be costly. VR *is* becoming increasingly accessible but it remains the domain of large, well-funded museums for now. For approaches to be utilised more widely, they need to be financially viable in the short term.

To date, we have mostly seen a quantitative explosion in museums' use of digital outreach, but the Covid-19 pandemic has also inspired a few interesting ways to include the public more on a more intensely personal level. An interesting example is the Museum of Childhood Ireland initiative where children are invited to produce and share illustrations based on a theme that changes every week. The children's illustrations are then presented in a digital exhibition on the museum website (<http://museumofchildhood.ie/project2020/>). The approach used by the Museum of Childhood Ireland promotes co-production of the exhibition by museum staff and the young visitors. Most probably the children are as proud to participate in the exhibition as their parents and carers are to have their children's work exhibited. While the children may require support to upload their work (or

possibly not!), restricting artistic contributions to the children is one way to inspire museum engagement with the younger generation.

Another interesting example at Randers Regnshov in Denmark moves further towards merging the best of an analogue museum experience with the digital means. At Randers Regnshov (Randers Rain Forest) they have offered biology lessons through Facebook (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9SQmccKxd0>) to school classes in Denmark. The initiative has enjoyed a hugely positive response. At their most effective, lessons are combined with the use of text messages which, during a lesson are sent by the pupils or their teacher to the museum educator who then answers in real time. At the same time, the museum educator can ask for reactions from the pupils in school, also in real time. This gives the museum visit the features which are otherwise missed: it is really live; it is interactive, and it provides the opportunity for the museum to make direct contact with the individual, creating a sense of immediacy and intimacy. This is clearly a breakthrough in the use of digital means, and it will be interesting to see how this approach to digital engagement can be further developed in the future. This way of providing educational offers does not need to be the exclusive domain for formal education or one target group. A group visit with adults learning informally could be executed in a similar way and the museum could offer similar non-formal or informal educational experiences to promote inclusivity for groups who might otherwise feel physically or socially excluded.

### Digital Heaven and Hell?

The above examples of museums using technologies to encourage interaction and engagement have their pros and cons depending on perspective. To get a better understanding of the challenges it is important to critically consider the factors associated with digital online engagement. To begin with, there is the perspective we could call the blessing of digital collections as opium for the people. What is meant by that is the tendency to see digitalization as the answer to everything about access but forgetting that the digital mass production does not in itself serve the needed contextualized access and indeed not for everybody. The digital revolution now has a few decades of history in its own right. There are indeed many fascinating developments coming from the combination of digitalisation

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and the internet. You can sit at home or anywhere in the world where you have internet access and with a few clicks see digitalised traces of the past.

This offers a fascinating prospect for endless opportunities to digitise the museum experience for the older generation, often more familiar with analogue access but also for young people for whom digital access is a natural and taken-for-granted part of their daily lives.

Remote digital access can help to increase awareness of and political engagement with one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time; climate change. With millions of people in Europe owning a mobile phone, digital access to museum collections is now possible for vast numbers of the population. Digital access is a positive, climate-kind means by which museums can engage the public with collections without the need to transport people or collections. This is good for the climate. It is even good for the collections and it makes access possible beyond local, regional and national borders. However, while accessibility might be a reality for many, it does need to be remembered that access is restricted to those with access to technology and the right kind of technology at that. Facilitating digital engagement is only partially accommodated by museums offering digital programmes online. As highlighted by the Covid pandemic, not all members of the public own technological equipment that is compatible with all online platforms. In political circles, questioning the positive effects of digitalisation is difficult as there is a very strong tendency for these matters to be discussed politically as though the challenge is only on the part of the users. Repeatedly, it is said that ICT development must go hand in hand with digital skills which are not evenly acquired by or accessible to all ages and social groups (Pasikowska-Schnass, June 2020). This is undoubtedly the case but to focus on the user side detracts from the much needed discussions on the quality development of innovative technologies on the part of suppliers. Museums need to consider how digital online programmes will translate to different types of technological equipment if they truly wish their online programmes to be widely accessible and for this to happen, they must work closely with platform designers.

While positive that technology can provide access to museum collections, access to information without any guidance does not comprise learning provision in itself. When the museum adds a layer of guidance, the information becomes something

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else. The meeting with information becomes a learning experience in a deeper sense.

The layer of guidance and facilitation is key to what defines the potential of the learning experience. The above examples of three-dimensional robot digital visits and short films found at the Design Museum, Denmark and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam with expert guidance are ways to provide a facilitating layer to collections. The third example, Randers Regnshov's use of text messaging with real time performance and possible interaction stands out from the others. It is that difference which makes it exceptionally popular with the virtual visitor. The primary difference is the opportunity to explore feelings for the learner and to have the attention of a real person and not just any other person, but an expert.

That element is crucial to the success of the museum learning situation and has historical roots dating back over 200 years. In Denmark, the first director of the royal antiquity collections was the archaeologist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788-1865). Thomsen is not only famous for introducing the three-age system of stone, bronze and iron based on the material of archaeological findings, he is also known as the father of museum education in the country. That great posthumous title was founded on his willingness to meet visitors to his museum in person and to guide them through the museum, explaining the exhibits and answering questions from all members of the public. It is said that Thomsen made no distinction between social standing or age. He understood that what was on show to the public needed to be explained (Adriansen & Hyllested, 2011 and Boritz 2012). The important lesson from Jürgensen Thomsen, not a trained educationalist by any means, is that the visitor, the learner, became almost spellbound by the knowledge of the curator – the museum educator and as Vygotsky would suggest, the more knowledgeable other (Jaramillo, 2020). Visitor engagement was encouraged by an openness to listen and react to all questions and observations. We can imagine the same dynamics when reading about schoolteachers who are recognised for excellence in teaching. The words used by the nominating bodies are always the same: it is about the teacher's ability to communicate, to show empathy and to relate. In the best situations in the museums this is what constitutes successful learning experiences in analogue circumstances.

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In the same vein, a virtual visit to the museum in real time can offer an intensity and immediacy of experience. Progressive museum professionals in Spain recently used the term *museum language* to capture the incredibly special experience which a successful museum visit can be:

The museum language is the fundamental base of a Transforming Museum. The activities carried out in the museum must take this into account so as not to fall into the trap of becoming informative but not museum-based, which may be better targeted by other types of establishments with a more local scope, such as civic or cultural centres. (El Museo Transformator, 2020).

It is not sufficient to use virtual museum tours to simply attract interest. Interest needs to be sustained if visitors are to be encouraged to return, be that virtually or physically. Michael Alexis' Museum Hack 2020 study of the first wave of post-Covid-19 digital museum 'try-outs' presented a less than favourable view of virtual or photographic representations of museum spaces and collections:

The data shows that we are past peak interest in virtual museum tours. The mainstream market isn't interested in seeing these world class institutions in virtual 3D spaces or photo galleries. (Alexis, 2020).

While Alexis' conclusion seems rather negative towards virtual museum access, it is now widely recognised that "metadata-enriched open collections are not enough to foster a broader engagement with cultural heritage." The expansion of museum digital engagement caused by the pandemic has not changed that (Zuanni, 2020).

This is possibly the key to understanding why the example above with real live internet experience combined with real live dialogue is a success. It raises however important questions. As suggested by Jordi Baltà Portolés, we can ask if museums are really ready for such a methodological and organizational challenge in their use of technology? (Balta Portoles, 2019). Another question is about the limitations to learning when a particular digital learning method is adopted. Pedagogically, the method selected may not best facilitate quality learning and impact.

### Are we ready? Where are the challenges?

There are several challenges for museums in offering digital live experiences with dialogue options. Technical challenges and even financial challenges may be overcome if the determination is there but there are other challenges which may be trickier to overcome.

One such challenge is the traditional thinking in many museums. Museums want to provide the best and may very well consider digital live offers as just a second-best substitute for the physical analogue experience. It may also have to do with the traditional way museum professionals think about a museum education program. Items from collections are most often the central tool in much museum education and the authenticity is used to create the seriousness of the learning situation. The aspect is difficult for the museum to uphold as the experience for the learner is based on a two-dimensional image.

The problem which museums meet here is the traditional empirical perspective on collections as basis of knowledge and therefore the starting point of museum education activities. If museums instead allow themselves to use the wanted learning outcome as the perspective around which they organize the experience it will be a different story (Bamford & Wimmer, 2012 & Cultural Learning Alliance, 2011). To do so effectively requires an understanding of the relationship between learning outcomes and planned learning experiences.

Even current museum thinkers consider that the uniqueness and the authenticity may be experienced by the museum *netizens* – the digital visitor, by adopting transmedia thinking at the concept stage, rather than as an adjunct or a complementary addition to a bigger project (Debono, 2020). The idea is that using a variety of multiple ways of communication through internet, phone, radio, etc. it should be possible to shape and provide a unique experience. On the other hand, based on experience from, for example, visitors' feedback in open air museums it can be strongly argued that cultural experience is, if not solely, then at least amplified when done together with others. Culture becomes social. At the same time, the experience can be lively and sensual as the visitors together share and interact so that the total visitor experience in fact is only to some degree controlled by the museum (Bloch Ravn, 2020).

The possibilities and limitations are many in what can and cannot be offered through digital means. If we revisit the different approaches presented in the beginning of this short paper, we may structure them the following way:

1. With digital access to collections and information about the individual items where the tour and depth is in the hands of the digital visitor – for example through a robot camera – we have a *collection driven encyclopaedic* approach. The museum can provide huge opportunities to knowledge and glimpses. A key feature is that it is visitor controlled (even though never governed) when it is best.
2. The pre-made movie where the expert in the museum tells one or more stories can naturally be multiplied and the museum can offer numerous such in depth searching and exploratory stories. The *collection driven story telling* approach primarily keeps the control of the stories told in the hands of the museum but when it is best it can be of high artistic and scholarly quality.
3. Providing live experiences with interactive dialogue opportunity is the third way. The visitors meet the museum staff in the museum synchronously for an experience on the pre-advertised and pre-defined topic. The successful museum staff use the museum around her as much as possible – collections, colleagues, scenography, buildings, or something else. This together with interaction with the visitors shapes the uniqueness. *The interactive live driven experience* approach provides the advantage of imagined shared visitor and museum governance and the risk of less control of the situation for the staff.

The three different approaches have their different pros and cons. The interactive synchronous experience does provide qualities which tend to make it attractive beyond comparison. The approach makes live experiences realistic and accessible within the time zone. The museum goes from local or regional outreach to a much bigger area. It therefore is natural to ask why this approach is not more popular among museums in quite the same way as the other two approaches have been during the period of pandemic. One might observe that the approach is resource intensive and is perhaps more demanding on the technological knowledge and skills of museum staff. To use the third approach, a museum needs staff with the appropriate technical competences and the time to facilitate such initiatives. Both requirements have financial implications.

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During the pandemic it has been reported that Netflix, HBO and other streaming providers have sold better than ever. If the individual museum is as good as those of us who are passionate about museums believe, then it should be possible for a museum to provide an interactive synchronous experience which digital visitors will pay for. Most experimental approaches to digital provision include the use of crowdsourcing and open challenges, as well as the creation of living labs, to find novel solutions to pressing challenges and promote co-creation (OECD digital innovation, 2019).

Getting started and producing the basic experience may be possible for the museums to finance through original funding. Museums are usually innovative when it is about financing. The interactive synchronous experience may well be further developed. One approach might be to utilise online platforms such as Future Learn (<https://www.futurelearn.com/>) to provide access to online material as a supplement for self-study in support of deeper academic engagement. Museums need to be careful and aware that using online platforms raises issues of safety and security that are especially sensitive when children are involved. As materials are created and exchanged, the issue of authorship and ownership of intellectual property rights can become contentious, especially when higher education institutions are involved (Chircop, June 2020). These issues associated with online engagement require serious consideration, but they are resolvable.

For museums, it may be better to keep the interactive synchronous experiences simple and draw on the knowledge and skills that come naturally to the museum staff, i.e. the narrative and visualisation shaped authenticity based on knowledge. The level and quality of digital accessibility continues to vary considerably, internationally. Approximately, only half the students in Poland and Japan in 2015 reportedly used desktop computers, laptop, or tablets in their studies even though they had access to them. In countries like the Netherlands and United Kingdom the same percentage was close to 100 percent (OECD skills outlook, 2019). This has to be weighed against the potential for the museum to invest in interactive synchronous experiences far beyond the normal physical limitations if museums wish to be inclusive of the needs of international virtual visitors.

If museums truly wish to design digital online platforms for internationally inclusive and accessible engagement, museums need to address practical limitations such as different time zones and languages not to mention the capacity to connect with multiple technology devices and types. Perhaps the rapid response demanded of museums by the Covid pandemic to move collections and programmes online will spark increased commitment to investment in effective online digital engagement. After all, Covid-19 and its implications for physical distancing seems here to stay for some time.

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## A radical strategy

ANNE-LOUISE SOMMER

EMA Pool of experts; University of Copenhagen (DENMARK)

*Designmuseum Danmark: Why Designmuseum Danmark intends to postpone reopening until late 2021?*

Since Designmuseum Danmark announced on Wednesday 13.05 that we, due to the effects of the coronavirus, intend to remain closed for visitors until the end of 2021 and much worse, probably have to lay off 50 employees, we have received many reactions. Shock, sadness, anger and wonder. Thank you. It is nice to feel that we mean something to so many. And I understand the reactions well. Not least because many were based on the media headlines, where only few could read behind the paywall. And therefore, didn't get the full explanation. So here it comes - in brief, but enough to make you understand that it's not just a matter of

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asking for more money. The problem lies far deeper and concerns the foundation on how we operate museums.

The decision is a response to two simultaneous occurrences. One has a short perspective, reacting on what has happened and the other is more long-term, looking forward. Firstly, along with the rest of the country, we were forced to close down on March 12th due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In retrospect, our immediate response, was to focus on mitigating a financial loss in a time of zero income, where Designmuseum Danmark must be kept 'afloat' and where the employees were secured as best as possible - the vast majority of them were sent home with full pay. It has been a time of treading water while thinking different and acting fast with a much-reduced staff. This has included, strengthening collaborations and boosting digital platforms.

Looking ahead, we are facing a post-COVID-19 scenario, where the vital functions of society, including the cultural institutions, can slowly re-open. And this post-corona perspective is a main concern for us now. We are convinced that we need to go through a complete transformation, to rethink our business model. Forecasts show that it will be a very lengthy process and of course we don't expect to bounce right back to pre-corona times. We are looking at a radically changed and critical situation, when it comes to international visitors, which will affect the museum, businesses and institutions operating within the experience industry, for a long period in the future. The decline in major international tourism flows makes our visitor base, and thus economy, extremely uncertain.

Some museums are different, but we are based on an economy, where at least 2/3 is own-generated income, "money on the door" so to speak, generated by income from entrance, shop, tours, learning programs and events. Secondly, we generate income from private funding and project grants. And normally 80 percent of our visitors are international guests. A large part of the year, we have between 1000 and 2000 visitors every day. In 2019, we had 310,000 visitors. It will be absurdly expensive for us to stay open for very few visitors.

All in all, it is a very unfortunate combination of conditions that in good times is the strength of the museum, but in the light of COVID-19 and its inferred consequences, becomes our Achilles heel and paints a particularly bleak picture for the near future, where we for the next couple of years primarily have keep the wheels running on our government grants, totalling a third of our normal income.

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If we go through with our plans, we will close Designmuseum Danmark for a longer period, until the end of 2021. We will balance expenses with revenue, and this will mean we have to say goodbye to valued employees. It is necessary, that we prevent accumulating a large deficit when the museum opens again, but we will still have the opportunity to develop and operate the museum on a profitable basis with room for growth and development. In every respect. That way, we also have the opportunity to give something back to society through all our non-profit initiatives that you know from recent years. We will continue to share design and keep our position as Denmark's epicenter for design.

There is a lot of talk about 'New Normal' right now. And yes ... We have all lost our innocence and must look into a radically changed future. We have no idea what awaits us. I imagine that managing a museum will take a new direction, where we all need to reinvent ourselves. This is the next step Designmuseum Danmark will take now. For some time to come, this may be very painful. And I can think of at least 50 reasons for that.

However, there will also come a day when we will realize, that we made the right decision, because we have shown due diligence. We have stopped while we still had time - and acknowledged that now we need to change course. Our business model must be geared in a way that fits a changed reality, with new behaviour patterns for many, so that we can also look into a future where the museum, together with other museums and cultural institutions, can thrive, grow and enrich as much as possible. Along with all that, we will complete a much-needed renovation of our listed building from the 1750s. We have funding to go through with this from the very generous private funds that have supported our project in recent years.

I am convinced that Designmuseum Danmark will step out of this historical crisis, which has turned everything upside down, even though our intended actions are drastic. I believe it is necessary because the museum, along with other cultural institutions, is an essential part of our cohesion as humans and as societies. We have to fight, to continue fulfilling our important role and offer perspectives on existence, simply and rightly. All that is more necessary than ever.

## Reflections and practices

SANDRO DEBONO

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*Renaissance Thoughts for the Empty Museum*

The plight and humongous challenges that museums are and have been facing at this point in time has been making the headlines across the globe. Indeed, a microscopic virus has coerced the vast majority of long-standing and well established museum institutions into closure, leaving them practically reliable on nothing other than their online presence. The museum landscape has, perhaps, never felt so fragile, as it comes to terms with its inherent institutional fragility. It is, indeed, a painful process as the vast majority of museums deal with a state of liminality, as they have moved into the new normal as they strive to function behind closed doors to contemplate or envisage leaving doors ajar for their publics to visit once again in the immediate future. It is at this very moment, at this unprecedented point in time, that the museum's very own existence comes under discussion. Perhaps, the question to ask is the one suggested by Mami Kataoka, Director of the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo and President of the International Committee for Museum and Collections of Modern Art, informed by the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami: *"What are the essential reasons for the museum, art communities and art itself to exist?"*

The point certainly holds true for any museum typology. With the prospect of an indefinite closure now slowly fading, the need for museums to re-open continues to be underpinned by many on social media platforms. Re-opening is being mooted, at least in part, in response to the need of museums living up to their mission and ethos as spaces of solace. There is a perceived ambition to restart again, as many seek to regain their lost normality which might not be anywhere close in the next twelve to twenty-four months.

As the transition unfolds, and a new reality slowly emerges, museums might be hopefully becoming much more aware of the potential to reinvent themselves in new and creative ways. I live in the hope that looking back in a couple of years' time, armed and informed with the benefit of hindsight, museums might be living the golden opportunity to engage with meaningful change. Much of this thinking

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is already there, published in books and presented in conferences. It might have been labelled radical or inspired by utopia before COVID-19 struck, but as the unthinkable is now the new reality, labels of utopia and dreams have faded leaving the space, relatively overnight, for this thinking to gain much more relevance and importance. Just as Forbes speaks about the ways and means how the coronavirus pandemic is accelerating the future of work in a recently published article (1), the same is true for museums.

I choose to focus on three key elements of this change process out of many more to consider. The first concerns the ways and means how museums tend to forget the answer to a very simple question - what do we stand for? By questioning their very own existence, and identify the reasons why institutions should continue to exist in the first place, would help identify what they really stand for today as the immediate past slowly fades away. This would be the point of departure where to seed meaningful change. The second question is equally relevant - for whom? It might be the case that your institution was reckoned to be more of an exclusive place, detached from your neighbourhood, their needs and ambitions. A clear understanding for which publics and communities your museum stands could be the beginning of a soul searching journey leading museums to become truly relevant, perhaps to a much bigger audience base too. There are stories to be told, ideas to be explored, languages to be learnt and information to be provided... that go beyond what you might have always been considered to be the right and only way forward. The third equally simple question follows on the previous two - how do we then engage? It is about how, then, to engage with publics and how to empower them, reach out to them, welcome them and create meaningful conversations. This is where the current impasse, with museums relying much more on the virtual as the physical is at a standstill, comes into the picture. There is no question that museum futures shall rely much more on the online but there is potential for this improved presence to be much more far-reaching to include not just a broader cache of lectures, live streams and interactive experiences that are public-centred and useful to the now. This brings me to the immediate future museums are now facing or close to which can also be summarised in a simple question - What relevance will the digital have when the physical recovers?

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The news from Chinese museums, and a handful of Northern European museums that have kept their doors open, is indicative of this immediate future. In the immediate, the museum can only aspire to be a solitary place, welcoming a restricted number of visitors booked in advance via a QR code system, wearing a face mask, and with a health certificate of sorts. The number of visitors is also kept under control by limiting numbers to 50 per cent of total capacity. Going by the Chinese experience, the post-COVID19 visit shall be beyond comparison to the previous normal as museums deal with services and spaces that were not designed and conceived with the risks of a pandemic in mind.

At the other end of the landscape, museum netizens are on the increase albeit not with perceived rate that the first few days might have suggested. The new museum netizen has the luxury to access museum content at any time of the day from anywhere on the planet. The choice was always there, but the time to do so was not. Indeed, the latest findings suggest that virtual audiences would like to hear from museums even though they might not be searching museums. With a new museum netizen slowly emerging, museums run the real risks of forgetting that this new netizen is also beyond time zones and geographies. The risk in forgetting that this may also be one and the same visitor who might be coming through the main door in a few weeks' time may also be overlooked.

The solution may lie, at least in part, in transmedia thinking defined as a process whereby *"... integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story."*

Henry Jenkins first wrote about transmedia way back in 2003 and this thinking is certainly not entirely new to the museum world. It is perhaps the ways and means how this has been applied until now that has limited its impact and the full exploitation of its potential. Adopting transmedia thinking at concept stage, rather than as an adjunct or a complementary addition to a bigger project, can guide the project team's thinking mode in shaping content in a broad range of media. This would empower museums to reach out to a much more stratified audience base and make inroads with audience categories that were generally considered secondary to the physical museum publics. But transmedia is not just about the

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digital, social media or some other hi-tech platform that requires extensive and costly digitisation. Going by empathy it might also be a radio communication, a telephone call or a traditional letter. What matters is not the technology used but the ways and means how to reach your public. Each experience can certainly be a standalone. The sum total of experiences originating in a broader choice of media can make for a richer and much more engaging experience.

With museums facing the prospect of increased expenses for much lower visitor numbers in return, it is perhaps the right time to sow the seeds of a human centred museum experience in answer to the fundamental question that the American educator, media theorist and social critic Neil Postman raised way back *"As I see it, a museum is an answer to a fundamental question: What does it mean to be a human being?"*

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SANNE BERBERS

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*A short Report from Holland*

Only 5% of museums worldwide are still open, 1 out of 10 museums expect to be closed indefinitely.

This mayor impact on local development, museums are agents of economic growth and change. The most affected museums are the local and regional museums, these have less buffers and it is expected that after the crisis it takes longer for them to recover as tourism will take time to reach substantial levels again.

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Some plus sides, there is a lot of attention and recognition for the role of culture in wellbeing, society and education. Online activities by museums are getting a lot more attention, making them able to reach demographics they normally would not. However, this is only the case for large museums with good online infrastructure to start with and the continued staff to create content.

The economic consequences for museum personnel is very different per country and per type of museum (public/semi-public/private). What must be remembered when discussing emergency funding is that museums support whole 'economic ecosystems'. Over the years more and more work has been outsourced, so it is not just directly the museums but also everything around the museum that is essential in its working that needs to be supported. This also makes museums very vulnerable to a collapse of such an ecosystem. And let's not forget the artists themselves in this.

Decreased resources will be available, hopefully more international cooperation.

For the future. In recent years there has been a lot of innovation within the museum world, where museums are redefining their role in the modern society. This crisis will put more emphasis on those changes and accelerate them. It was called a paradigm shift, where museums must find their new role and function. The changes in our interaction can have lasting consequences to which the museum has to adjust. It may be possible that a museum visit will never be the same after this, how do we respond to this.

There is a lot of opportunity to respond with innovative solutions and adjust to the possible new role of museums in the post-covid19 society. Rethink how museums are managed and how they deliver to the public, and rethink their role in society. Less emphasis on blockbuster programming and as many visitors as possible. A move into the more digital, supported by a physical museum. But all of this requires innovation and thus money + time + people. As highlighted before this is not something the museums most in danger have at the moment.

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*Digital responses from locked-down museums*

Cultural Practice – June 29, 2020

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, museums increased their digital activities. This Insight summarises trajectories of this sudden digital transformation, reflects on its consequences, and presents a project aimed at mapping museums' digital responses to the pandemic.

In the last four months, almost all museums around the world have been temporarily closed (90% of them, UNESCO 2020). The long-term impact, as in many other areas of our society, is going to emerge only gradually and is going to be multifaceted. On the one hand, it is clear that the sector will suffer a significant financial impact, following months without revenue and a likely reduced number of tourists over the summer. On the other hand, these months have seen the cultural sector rushing to offer audiences a variety of online ways to engage with heritage content and participate remotely in arts events. Museums, in particular, increased their digital activities by 15% (ICOM 2020): this Insight focuses on this sudden, and arguably forced, growth in the online activities of museums.

### Moving online

[...] Helen Rees Leahy pointed out how a 'digital stampede' to produce online content is both one of the most visible contributions of museums to our lockdown life and a revealing element of the inequalities in access to cultural heritage (Rees Leahy 2020). Furthermore, if it is true that museums worldwide have increased their online presence, this increase is also unevenly distributed: NEMO (2020a) noticed that '4 out of 5' respondents to its survey (which included, by large, European museums) have increased their digital activities, and UNESCO (2020) pointed out how just 5% of museums in the developing world have been able to do so. Besides, access to these online resources – requiring a device (with computers and smartphones, laptops and tablets, all offering different modes of experiencing this digital content) and a good Internet connection – is equally unfairly and unjustly distributed across the world.

[...] Since early March 2020, I have been observing the range of digital activities proposed by museums during the lockdowns. I have been particularly interested in two aspects: sustainability and engagement of these initiatives. While I have previously researched public (digital) engagement with cultural heritage, my current work focuses also on digital preservation and curation. Coming from this background, it has been interesting to observe how museums have quickly adapted existing resources or have, instead, chosen to develop new ones – in both cases, raising questions about the long-term sustainability of these approaches to produce digital gateways to cultural heritage.

Firstly, the digitisation and online availability of museum collections is still a major challenge for museums. [...] Edward Fry noted that one of the potentials of new technologies “within this general area of cataloguing is the linking of the data bank from within any single museum to an intermuseum computer network, thus joining many separate data banks into one overall index or repertory of works of art.” (Fry 1970). With some inevitable changes, this ‘intermuseum computer network’ might not be too different from the aims of current Linked Open Data projects. However, current surveys on digitisation in the sector also emphasise how we are still a long way from such ‘intermuseum’: for example, the Enumerate survey from 2017 highlighted how currently only 33% of European museums have descriptive metadata for their collections available online (Nauta et al. 2017). Therefore, while quickly trying to make available part of their collections, museums might have chosen less digitally-robust and sustainable solutions.

Secondly, metadata-enriched open collections are not enough to foster a broader engagement with cultural heritage. Museums have both reused and created resources, promoting different views and engagement modes with collections and their stories. From educational and fun activities for children to the streaming of curatorial talks, from craft resources to social media challenges, there has been a wide range of options to choose from. The outcomes of such initiatives are, however, less clear. For example, a popular blog post suggested that virtual tours enjoyed an early short-lived success (Alexis 2020), but – as it has been pointed out by Chris Unitt (2020) – this conclusion relied on a misunderstanding of the functioning of Google Trends and the uses of keywords in Google searches. Fundamentally, the interest raised by these posts is a further proof of the current

lack of clear methods and benchmarks for researching online audiences and evaluating their engagement. As the *Digital Culture Report 2019* stated, “understanding how to gather, analyse and interpret audience data is therefore becoming essential” (NESTA & ACE 2019: 9). Indeed, the first part of 2020 has confirmed the urgency of going beyond analytics in order to develop a more granular and in-depth understanding of how cultural audiences experience museum online projects. Given my interest in researching social media engagement (Zuanni 2017a; 2017b), I have begun to collect social media posts of popular hashtags launched during the pandemic (e.g. #MuseumsFromHome, for which I have collected over 160,000 tweets; and #MuseumsUnlocked, with over 105,000 tweets). I have also been documenting the diffusion of more geographically-bounded hashtags: for example, German-speaking institutions have been promoting their activities using #closedbutactive, while Italian museums – as mentioned also by Chiara Bartolini (2020) – have been using, among others, #ArTyYouReady.

Thirdly, there has been an impressive surge of contemporary collecting projects (see also Arvanitis 2020). [...] In this regard, it will be interesting to follow how this content will be catalogued, managed, and curated in the future – and indeed the inclusion of contemporary collections in collection management systems and policies is one of the big challenges for the sector, increasingly of interest to both the archival and museum sector. It is a challenge already being investigated and I have myself organised a workshop on the topic in 2019<sup>13</sup>.

More recently, valuable guidelines and reports have been published just before the lockdown (Kavanagh 2019; Miles et al. 2020; Alberti et al. 2020).

### Documenting museums’ digital responses to the lockdowns

There are a few different portals trying to document the situation of museums during the pandemic. With regard to digital projects, NEMO’s map focused on tracking museum re-openings (NEMO 2020b), but it also included national overviews on digital approaches. Various national ICOM committees and museum associations have also curated lists of resources and initiatives, as well as

<sup>13</sup> <https://informationsmodellierung.uni-graz.at/de/institut/veranstaltungen/archiv/workshop-curating-digital-data-in-museums/>

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conducted national surveys (e.g. ICOM Italia 2020; Museumspraxis 2020). Similarly, newspapers, blogs, and professional mailing lists have presented and discussed various aspects of this shift to 'the digital' in museums. Following the example of many colleagues, I also wanted to share my insights and data with the community – and I have developed a map to start visualising the dataset I collected, including some social media posts. It is available at this link<sup>14</sup>.

The dataset has been collected with the help of Sabrina Melcher, student assistant at ZIM, who has also helped design the website. At the moment, I have chosen to keep a simpler backend: instead of a proper database, we are using a series of Google Sheet documents. This allows me to crowdsource more information about museum projects through Google Forms and to directly map the Twitter datasets (since we are using TAGS, which is also Google-based). I wrote a Google Script to automatically geocode the data in these spreadsheets, and a JavaScript to pull the data from these spreadsheets, convert them to GeoJSON, and visualise them in a Leaflet map. This solution has allowed us to publish more quickly our datasets, and it enable us to have a faster workflow for publishing new information. In the long-term, we hope to be able to transform this small website in a proper archive – with a more robust database on the backend and a more developed categorisation of museum initiatives.

At the moment, we chose to sort our data in eight different categories: contemporary collecting; social media; streaming content; virtual tours (which might have been conceived in very different ways); online exhibitions; games; educational content (whether targeted at children or more broadly for life-long learning); and activities that do not fall in any of these categories. I am aware that museums might have developed activities in more than one area, and we have been discussing the level of granularity with which to categorise them. At the moment, we are adding each museum project separately, so to enable better tagging and filtering by type of activity. Finally, since the most popular social media hashtags included too many data-points that were slowing down and overcrowding the map, I have chosen to currently enable a visualisation only of the #closedbutactive Twitter dataset.

<sup>14</sup> <https://digitalmuseums.at/index.html>

## Conclusion

It would be easy to say that the pandemic has transformed our cultural heritage institutions. The situation is, as always, much more complex, with lots of dramatic consequences and glimpses of different future possibilities. Will museums be transformed, and if so, in what ways? Will our access to cultural heritage become more digital and open? How many of the digital projects launched in the last months will survive and develop further? How many ideas will be deprecated for lack of funding, lack of technological resources, or lack of interest? How many people discovered a cultural heritage institution online and will keep on cultivating this interest and relationship once the lockdowns will be lifted?

I don't have an answer to these questions, of course. But I am certainly interested in following the situation and documenting this particular moment in the history of digital museums. [...] Everyone can add further museum projects by answering a short Google Form: aiming for a broader representation, we have prepared the survey not only in English, but also in French, German, Greek, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. [...]

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## EXPERIENCES

### The Museum of Childhood (IRELAND)

Museum of Childhood Ireland Press Release – 2020

*The Museum of Childhood Ireland is set to make a major mark on linking children's worldwide experiences during Covid-19.*

In this strange and unsettling time of pandemic, the well-being and mental health of all our children is of paramount importance to us. "Project 2020/Together, Le Chéile" from the Museum of Childhood Ireland is providing a platform for children of all ages to express their hopes and fears, thoughts and observations, whilst providing a sense of community and togetherness as work and art received is highlighted through a virtual exhibition on [www.museumofchildhood.ie](http://www.museumofchildhood.ie) and on Social Media.

"Project 2020/TOGETHER" allows us to hear our children, and in doing so to learn, and to understand their perspective" says Majella McAllister, Director of the Museum, who designed and curated the children's voices project. We hope to provide children here in Ireland and all over the world with tools to help them make some sort of sense of this pandemic from their perspective."

The project begun on St Patrick's Day 2020 (March 17th), focuses on common themes and asks children to develop their thoughts using art, drawing, poems, short stories – and at the same time - gives them a platform to look at other children's work. Arts becomes a channel to communicate during this time of isolation, inspiring children and their families and allows them view how other children and other communities around the world are experiencing this moment of emergency. "We hope that through each other's art, and theme interpretations, they will have and communicate a sense of 'togetherness' and 'closeness'."

Each week we ask children to submit their work related to a particular theme – and on an ongoing basis we showcase the work being received online:

<https://museumofchildhood.ie/project2020/> and on social media. Themes change each week, but there are no deadlines and children are invited to develop work on any of the themes given at any time throughout the initiative. Entries are open to children up to 18 years of age.

"We will launch the official online exhibition on June 4th using Zoom"

<https://museumofchildhood.ie/project2020-exhibition/>

"We will keep adapting to the ongoing situation and plan to host physical exhibitions of the children's work received when it is safe to do so. The exhibitions will take place in Ireland and at different locations throughout the world" continues McAllister.

## More About video productions lasting after the pandemic

KATARINA IVANIŠIN KARDUM

Senior Museum Educator at the Technical Museum Nikola Tesla (Zagreb, CROATIA)

*#7minutamuzeja (7 minutes of the museum)*

#7minutamuzeja is series of short guided tours of different museum departments. The speakers are museum curators who run the department that is being filmed. Also, the videos are simultaneously translated to the sign language, which makes them appropriate to the people with hearing disabilities as well. This is why I think this programme falls under category Sounds of Museums. The videos are now available on the museum Youtube channel and inside the museum building via QR codes, which offers a free audio/sign-language - video museum guide to all our visitors. By now we have completed three out of twelve Museum Departments (Transformation of Energy, Renewable Sources of Energy and Means of Transportation).

For each Department there is a short version (7 minutes) and extended version (15 minutes – more appropriate for on line schooling or as additional material for different school subjects).

I am pasting here links on our videos if you need more of an understanding what I am talking about...

#7minutamuzeja (shorter and longer version)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gd6kjCNIT3E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4c6Hd9kC3zw>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6jdt\\_mYpxg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6jdt_mYpxg)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqXDzQe\\_oll](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqXDzQe_oll)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYZ-FJzct8M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-usTbAgfnJo>

## Tsaritsyno Museum (Moscow, RUSSIA)

### Stages of quarantine in Moscow

Tsaritsyno is a part of Moscow cultural sphere and reacts to mayor's decrees and Moscow department of culture regulations.

According to the decree of the mayor of Moscow from the 5th of March the museum bought gloves and hygienic masks for the employees. Each entrance was furnished with the sanitizer disposer.

The next decree from the 10th of April prohibited all sport, public and other mass activities in Moscow. Tsaritsyno was included in the list of public territories of high priority, so 26th of March Tsaritsyno park was closed for the visitors. The remote work began for the most part of employees. All activities were transferred from the museum and park to online.

On the 1st of June Moscow authorities allowed the opening of all city parks. Tsaritsyno park welcomed its guests, asking them to keep social distance.

After one week, the sequence of measures was finally announced:

- The passing system was cancelled on the 8th of June,
- Museums and summer terraces in the restaurants restarted their work on the 16th of June,
- Buffets, cafes and park restaurants were allowed to start their work on 23th of June. Children playgrounds, sport facilities and the rent started working too. The museum-reserve started working in "the new normal" conditions.

### The VUCA world

2020 is the year we all felt what VUCA world means – our lives are full of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

So what does “Tsaritsyno” sound like in this new reality? The VUCA world challenges us to find our own way. What helped the Tsaritsyno State Museum-Reserve overcome all these obstacles is discovering and re-discovering two principles of transformation which touched all our activities – synergy and networking.

We will dive into the management tools which embodied those principles and boosted our activities in the past six months and announce the results of our work.

### Flexibility and creativity of the crew

Unexpected pause in common museum duties motivated museum workers to cooperate in solving mutual problems, be flexible in their actions and finding new creative ways of fulfilling their duties. Those ways should have been inspiring, easy to follow and leading to sincere, genuine communication with the audience in the harsh times.

It helped us make the big start to such projects as online studio, sports classes and creative workshops, family reading sessions, as well as lectures and excursions by the museum employees.

### New rules of communication with the guests

We widened the amount of our contactless services for the visitors willing to get personal, unique experience in feeling and hearing the Tsaritsyno park and museum.

- First of all, new trekking routes were made for those who wanted to discover the park alone or with closest friends and family members. All treks are free. One can try different kinds of treks – routes for the family with children, for those who are new in Tsaritsyno, for ecology and sport lovers. Posters with QR codes were placed near the main entrances to the park, QRs led to the pages with maps and brief descriptions of the routes. They appeared to be popular among our guests on the first months after self-isolation regime.
- Audioguides and check lists remain useful. All of them are free, they can be downloaded from izi.Travel website. One of these guides is voiced by the CEO of the museum.

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- "Tsaritsyno for Kids" switched to online. Traditional Summer programs for children were organized the same way as usual – inspiring lecturers led classes, described the "homework", let children have their time and then discussed the results altogether. These programs were available both from Moscow and from every place on Earth with internet connection.

- Performances with the "Golden Mask" theater project. There were two branches of this project. The first, immersive excursion "The Witness", took place in the greenhouses. It was based on the cooperation of museum workers and professional actors in the process of active listening, developed by the rebel composer Pauline Oliveros and led by the producer Julie Beauvais. Site-specific art explored Tsaritsyno acoustic environment. Next day the second one, "Five Songs with Lyrics by Mathilde Wesendonck", took place in the Tsaritsyno Opera House. The complicated love story of the famous musician Richard Wagner and his muse was told by means of the opera, instrumental music and visual art. Valentin Schwarz, the producer, worked with actors and musicians by Zoom. The registration for both projects was closed in 10 minutes.

- "The Attraction" public art project by Marina Zvyagitseva. Zvyagitseva is an important figure in modern Russian site-specific art. Her art is focused on human relations, intimacy, distance and different ways of following through. "The Attraction" is a part of the bigger project named "Locked Feelings". This multi-media project was conceived months before the new coronavirus epidemic became news. It combines the artist's signature medium based on monotyping with video projections and a theater performance. They resonate as the public art in Tsaritsyno landscape. Zvyagitseva placed two 3 meters high chairs standing in front of each other right on the dam, with the running water between them. The installation will be available from the 5th of September till the 12th of October. The object will host the performance available online, on Tsaritsyno's social networks, and offline, in the park.

We are concerned that the lessons from this volatile and uncertain period were learnt, we became better, stronger and more creative.

## Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam, NETHERLANDS)

IMOGEN WATSON

*The Drum* reporter

*How Dept brushed up Van Gogh Museum's virtual experience for a remote Covid-19 world<sup>15</sup>*

29 July 2020

Normally open 365 days a year, Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum welcomed 2.1 million visitors from 110 different countries in 2019. These numbers have plummeted in pandemic-hit 2020, but by a stroke of luck, one year ago the museum invited Dept to brush up its website for those unable to physically step foot inside. Its completion couldn't be more timely.

Given art is often a visceral experience that demands the viewer be in-situ, when that option is no longer available, how close can a website get to the real deal? This was the challenge Amsterdam-based agency Dept took on when it won the brief to redesign the Van Gogh Museum website.

"The core proposition was 'Van Gogh is for everyone,'" explains Franklin Schamhart, UX lead and head of design at Dept on the brief the museum delivered. "It wanted to make sure everyone had access to his work."

The museum in Amsterdam is normally open all year round, with visitors queuing up in droves to stare intently at Vincent Van Gogh's brushstrokes, with the aim of gaining a glimmer of his psychological state at the moment his brush smacked the canvas.

Arguably the most famous artist in the world, for centuries Van Gogh's paintings have transfixed people, and this allure has inspired many to usher his work into the digital age, including the animation *Loving Vincent*, a fully painted film done in his style, alongside sites like Google Arts & Culture that offers a database of his work. With the knowledge that it alone holds the widest and finest examples of his work (more than 1000), the Van Gogh Museum recognised that it needed to up its digital game in the aim of broadening its overseas audience.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/07/29/how-dept-brushed-up-van-gogh-museums-virtual-experience-remote-covid-19-world>

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Part of this digitalisation strategy saw the Van Gogh museum open its doors across the globe early this year, in the form of an experiential pop-up. The exhibition was designed to gain new audiences, offering an audio tour of the artist's life as told through his letters and three-dimensional reproductions of his masterpieces.

A year ago, in a world where Covid-19 did not exist, the museum asked Dept to pitch its ideas for a new website that would recreate the experience of the exhibition, online. This journey had, in fact, began two years prior, when Studio Dumbar (part of Dept) developed a new identity for the museum that focused on the combination of colour within the work of Van Gogh.

"The pitch focused on accessibility that was lacking on the website because it was not optimised. So we pitched story formats to work with stories about Van Gogh's life," Schamhart recalls. "We also pitched right to left text for Arabic speakers and WeChat integrations for its Chinese visitors."

After winning the brief, Dept set about making the website more accessible alongside tech agency Q42, leading the concept and creative direction of the project while the latter did the development. However, at this point, no one was working under the assumption that the museum, that has not had a day off in years, would have to endure a long hiatus.

Schamhart says one of the first things the team uncovered was the museum's strong social presence that drove a lot of traffic to the website. "So we decided to not just focus on the website, but to look across the whole of the digital experience," he says, detailing how the team took inspiration from Instagram's story experiences to provide website users with an interactive storytelling format.

With a colossal amount of content available, the team set about converting all the paintings in the collection into digital formats. It developed a feature titled 'Vincent for Scale' to demonstrate the size of his masterpieces using the artist as a measuring tool. To give viewers an in-depth look at his seminal brushstrokes, the team worked with the ultra-res storytelling tool Micrio, which enables visitors to zoom into the smallest details of the painting.

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The agency also introduced a new structure that allows for richer stories, with interactive images and videos, as well as shorter stories enabling the museum to quickly respond to current events.

"When the museum closed, it immediately stopped 100% of its income stream. One of the funny things about the original brief was the museum didn't even think to ask us to help sell more tickets because it's usually filled up all year round," Schamhart explains. Taking a locked-down not locked out approach to Covid-19, the pandemic accelerated the project, to ensure any art-sick fans could enjoy Van Gogh's work from the comfort of their homes.

Prior to the revamp, the website that only hosted visitor information received more than 8.5 million visits annually, which was more than four times the actual amount of museum visitors. Now, the museum hopes its digital showcase of Van Gogh's work will engage new audiences.

Despite reopening its doors in June, the museum is currently dealing with 90% fewer visitors, with the ongoing pandemic getting in the way of numbers returning to normal this year. Although no technology could ever truly recreate the pondering experience of an art gallery visit, thankfully this fortuitous project will help quench the thirst of many an art lover across the globe.

## A turn in marketing

FRANCESCA BONAZZOLI

*Corriere della Sera* journalist

*The Pinacoteca di Brera Revolution*

20 September 2020

"From tomorrow there will be no more tickets or visitors, only cards and members". With a «subversive» press conference already stolen from Giorgio Gaber's title «Freedom is participation», yesterday the director of the Pinacoteca di Brera James Bradburne announced the new entrance policy. Which is first of all a philosophy: «This museum was born as a consequence of the French Revolution and is our big house, where we keep the treasures of the community. It has to be accessible like a park or a hospital and avoid being elitist," he explained.

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"With the passage from the ticket to the card and from the visitor to the member - said the director - the public will also have the right to be heard and I hope, in the future, even to join the Council". The program of the "new museum for a new world" (Bradburne dixit) is simple: admission by reservation will continue to be free until December, that is, until the ministry should nominate the winner of the tender for ticketing and additional services. Instead of the traditional ticket, you will be entitled to a membership card valid for unlimited entry for a duration of three months and access to the online content catalogue called "Brera plus".

## SURVEYS

Several online surveys have been carried out during the lockdown period and afterwards in all countries thanks to the initiatives of research centres, universities, national ICOM Committees, Associations and other organizations. It is a body of data which is destined to grow as long as the pandemic goes on and probably also when (hopefully soon) the emergency will be over. It is impossible at the moment to make a comprehensive overview of this projects which anyway go beyond the spectrum of the present Research. Staying close to the museum field, we have selected two cases which can be seen as complementary: NEMO and ICOM-UNESCO. Altogether these reports offer a wide view of the phenomenon. NEMO is also going in this direction with further investigations and ICOM, as said, is doing something similar also at the level of its Committees. Europa Nostra, on its side, is also developing such an investigation but focusing on cultural heritage in general and not specifically on museums. We reproduce here below an abridged version of the Conclusions of both NEMO and ICOM-UNESCO reports.

## NEMO<sup>16</sup>

6 April 2020

The impacts of the corona crisis have been severe on museums all over Europe. In the past two weeks, NEMO has carried out a survey to look at how the situation has impacted museum budgets and operations, how museums cope in these times, how they re-organise their structures and offer new services to their audiences.

Over 650 museums from 41 countries have so far responded to the survey. A first analysis of the survey is published<sup>17</sup>, including data on weekly budget losses, strategies to cope with the situation internally and an overview of how museums increase their digital presence.

Along with the survey, NEMO has prepared an overview of encouraging, proactive and inspiring initiatives of museums globally during the corona situation<sup>18</sup>. [...]

NEMO urges governments at all levels to invest in Europe's museums now and in the future, to mitigate the losses and to support what binds us together, while so many other things drive us apart.

### Initiatives and actions of the museums in the corona crisis

This study provides an overview of initiatives of museums in Europe and worldwide during the corona crisis. More than 90% of the museums are closed—and will be for the coming time. However, they have been incredibly active, both online and physically, in helping their communities to cope with the special situation we all are in. In general, almost all museums offer their exhibitions in a digital format.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ne-mo.org/news/article/nemo/nemo-publishes-results-of-survey-on-the-impact-of-the-corona-crisis-on-museums-in-europe.html>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO\\_documents/NEMO\\_Corona\\_Survey\\_Results\\_6\\_4\\_20.pdf](https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO_documents/NEMO_Corona_Survey_Results_6_4_20.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO\\_documents/Initiatives\\_of\\_museums\\_in\\_times\\_of\\_corona\\_4\\_20.pdf](https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO_documents/Initiatives_of_museums_in_times_of_corona_4_20.pdf)

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In order to give an overview of the different activities, NEMO, the Network of European Museum Organisations, has looked at:

- Digital Initiatives:
  - ~ Digital exhibitions
  - ~ Online tours
  - ~ Blogs, stories posted on Instagram and Facebook
  - ~ Tours via live stream
  - ~ Art education apps
  - ~ YouTube channels with artist talks and lectures, short, fun videos of the freelancers' favorite objects/ artefacts

[...]

## ICOM

*Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19: ICOM and UNESCO release their full reports*<sup>19</sup>

26 May 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the activities of museums all over the world, threatening their financial survival and the livelihood of thousands of museum professionals.

To gather information on how the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak is affecting and will affect the cultural sector in the short and long term, ICOM launched a global survey to analyse the impact of lockdowns. The survey covered 5 themes: the current situation for museums and staff, predicted economic impact, digital and communication, museum security and conservation of collections, freelancer museum professionals.

The report<sup>20</sup> has analysed almost 1,600 responses from museums and museum professionals, in 107 countries and across continents, which were collected between 7 April and 7 May 2020.

<sup>19</sup> <https://icom.museum/en/news/museums-museum-professionals-and-covid-19-survey-results/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Report-Museums-and-COVID-19.pdf>

In parallel, UNESCO Report “Museums Around the World in the Face of COVID-19” (May 2020)<sup>21</sup> contains the results of UNESCO’s world-wide survey conducted on the impact of COVID-19 on museums. The report provides new insights into the numbers and key trends of museums around the world, the measures museums have taken in response to the pandemic and actions proposed for the aftermath of the crisis. The report underscores the resilience of museums, as well as the challenges they face in their efforts to continue to promote access to culture.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- In April, almost all museums around the world were closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to 94,7 % of respondents.
- During the lockdown, many museums enhanced their digital activities. Although almost half of the respondents replied that their museum already had a presence on social media or shared its collections online before the lockdowns, digital communication activities analysed by the survey increased for at least 15 % of the museums, and in particular social media activities increased for more than half of the museums that participated.
- Most museum professionals worked remotely: in 84% of the museums that responded, at least part of the staff worked remotely during the lockdowns.
- The situation for permanent employees seems comparatively stable. Still, in 6% of cases contracts were not renewed or terminated.
- However, the situation for freelance museum professionals is alarming: 16,1 % of the respondents said they were temporarily laid off, and 22,6 % did not have their contracts renewed. The freelance sector is very fragile: 56,4 % of the respondents stated that they will have to suspend the payment of their own salary as a result of the crisis, 39,4 % said their firms will reduce staff.
- Similarly, almost all museums around the world will reduce their activities because of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly one third of them will reduce staff, and more than one tenth may be forced to close permanently. 82,6 % of the respondents anticipate that museum programmes will have to be reduced and 29,8 % expect that the number of staff will have to be reduced. 12,8 % of participants fear that their museum might close.

<sup>21</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373530>

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- The closures will particularly affect those regions where museums are recent and few and where structures are still fragile: in African, Asian and the Arab countries 24, 27 and 39 % respectively fear that museums may close, compared to only in 12% Latin America and the Caribbean, 10% North America and 8% Europe.

- In general, security and conservation of heritage in museums continued throughout the lockdown: about 80 % of the respondents said that security and conservation measures were maintained or increased to cope with the lack of staff members onsite. However, in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean these measures were considered to be insufficient by almost 20 % of the respondents.

Once again, ICOM, representing the international museum community, calls on policy and decision-makers to urgently allocate relief funds to assist museums and their professionals, so that they can survive the crisis and continue their vital public service mission. The recovery of our economies and the healing process for our societies after the COVID-19 crisis will be long and complex. Museums, as key protagonists in local development and as incomparable places for people to meet and learn, will have an important role to play in rebuilding the local economy and repairing the social fabric of affected communities.

## COLLECTING ABOUT COVID-19

So far, we have examined experiences and reflections about the use of the internet and of digital resources by museums on occasion of the pandemic. But tangible collections have not disappeared from museums' focus. It has to be noted that several museums have felt the need for implementing their collections with physical/tangible items directly related to the Covid-19 social experience. We have here put together eight examples from different countries as well as from museums different in subject and in size. This denotes an emerging trend that probably is destined to last at least for the current and next years confirming the role of museums in preserving the collective memory in a comprehensive way, from physical to digital heritage.

### **MUSIL Brescia (ITALY)**

The museum continues to make collections and activities accessible through its digital channels, giving space in this case to the Museum of hydroelectric energy in Cedegolo.

Before moving on to the presentation of the contents made available, we remind you that the collection of materials on the work done by many men and women in these days of epidemic, starting from the work done in hospitals, is ongoing. If you want to share your experience or send us addresses or stories, you can write to: [info@musilbrescia.it](mailto:info@musilbrescia.it)

## Museum of London (UNITED KINGDOM)<sup>22</sup>

The Museum of London is seeking to collect both objects and first-hand experiences to reflect Londoners' lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow us to keep a record and ensure future generations of Londoners will be able to learn about and understand this extraordinary period.

*Wed 29 Apr Update:* We want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has already been in contact with both their objects and first-hand experiences that they'd like to donate to the collecting COVID project. We really appreciate people taking the time to share with us their stories during this unique time, and we'll be getting back to everyone individually who's contacted us as soon as we can. In the meantime, please do continue to contact us about any physical or digital objects you'd like to contribute to the project.

COVID-19 is affecting the lives of the global population in unprecedented ways. London saw its first cases of the virus appear in January 2020, swiftly followed by a huge shift in our social and working lives in March; organisations began to close down and restrictions were made on people's movement across the city.

As a major urban centre, London has faced several epidemics, including smallpox and the 1889 -1893 and 1918 flu pandemics. The museum holds collections relating to these outbreaks, such as the dress Queen Victoria wore to mourn the loss of her grandson to influenza in 1892, serving not only as a reminder of the suffering during that time, but also of the effects on society and culture, changing the way people dressed and interacted.

The Museum of London is seeking to collect both objects and first-hand experiences to reflect Londoners' lives during this time, in order to keep a record and to ensure future generations of Londoners will be able to learn about and understand this extraordinary period.

<sup>22</sup> [www.museumoflondon.org.uk](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk)

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The museum is keen to focus on three strands of collecting: how the physical spaces in the city have been transformed – from a bustling metropolis to hushed streets - while the social and working lives of many have moved digital; the effects on key and home workers, and how children and young people are reacting to and coping with the changes now that many schools are closed.

We are hoping to collect both physical and digital objects, reflecting the voices and experiences of a broad range of Londoners. From those working on the front line to those quietly working in the background, from parents turned home-school support to young people online gaming, the museum wants to collect objects from those that can tell the story of London in lockdown.

Toilet paper becomes a symbol of public panic, a forehead thermometer a tool for social control, convention centres become hospitals, while parks become contested public commodities. By compiling these objects and reflecting on their changing purpose and meaning, this space aims to paint a unique picture of the pandemic and the pivotal role objects play within it," writes the Victoria & Albert Museum of London concerning their new project, Pandemic Objects.

## Science Museum (London, UNITED KINGDOM)

### *Science Museum in London begins Covid-19 collection*<sup>23</sup>

The Science Museum in London is reopening on 19 August after being closed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In 2019, an exhibition opened at the site that told the stories of previous pandemics.

The museum says it has started collecting objects from this latest one - such as signage and medical technology - to tell the story of the outbreak for future generations.

<sup>23</sup> [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)

## Senator John Heinz History Center (Pittsburgh, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)<sup>24</sup>

The Heinz History Center is collecting materials that document the response of our community to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

As Western Pennsylvania residents like you react to new policies and recommendations aimed to restrict the virus' spread, we wish to document and preserve the materials and stories that demonstrate how you are continuing to communicate, work, commute, learn, teach, create, pray, celebrate, mourn, and give aid to others. Tell us your story or consider what objects or recordings best represent the experiences and observations that have stood out to you most. How are you and your family members spending your time? What do you regard as your biggest challenges? Was there a moment when you realized a historic event was taking place?

The stories and materials we collect will allow all of us to study and share these experiences in the future. You can help us by donating physical materials or by using the form below to submit digital content.

## The Smithsonian Institution (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

TYRONE TURNER

WAMU

*The Smithsonian is collecting coronavirus 'artifacts' to document the pandemic*

If you were designing a museum exhibit that would explain the coronavirus pandemic to future generations, what would you put in it?

Smithsonian curators in Washington, D.C., are trying to answer that question, even as the virus continues to spread in some states. The National Museum of American History and the Anacostia Community Museum have recently launched coronavirus collection projects. A third effort from the National Museum of African American History and Culture will kick off in June.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/>

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Each collection will have its own particular focus. The American History Museum is taking a broad approach: Curators on its COVID-19 task force are putting together lists of objects they want to collect, ranging from handwritten grocery lists and letters from patients to personal protective equipment, test kits and ventilators. Some of the objects will be put on display in an exhibit on disease planned for late next year.

"Obviously those are objects we will not collect until the pandemic has really wound down," said Alexandra Lord, the chair of the American History Museum's medicine and science division. "We don't want to put pressure on supplies."

Object collection is on hold for another reason: The District of Columbia's stay-at-home order is still in effect and the Smithsonian museums and offices are all closed.

"There's a whole set of protocol around artifacts that we can't follow right now," Lord said.

In the meantime, Smithsonian curators are soliciting digital items and oral histories for their online collections.

### Auckland Museum (AUSTRALIA)<sup>25</sup>

History is created every day. One of our jobs at Auckland Museum is to look at what is happening around us in the present day and to collect and preserve objects, photographs and documents that will help us tell the story of "now" in the future.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which has changed all our lives, is a defining moment of our time. Auckland Museum has collected material to document this event and its impact. Our focus was to collect stories of this pandemic from Auckland and the surrounding regions, including photographs objects, arts and crafts, and material like posters and signs.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/>

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We were interested in objects, photographs and documents that reflect life in lockdown; how we connected and created community while in a state of quarantine; issues we were debating; personal protective equipment and how we were protecting ourselves; creativity while in lockdown.

Some examples of the kinds of things submitted for consideration include:

Objects - signs, household items that reflect life under lockdown and social distancing measures, items created by Auckland businesses, artwork and crafts, Anzac Day and Easter at home, and objects that represent community projects and initiatives.

Documents - Personal documents such as diaries (digitally recorded or analogue) that document adaptation and "the new normal" of daily life during this time; and postcards, letters, or emails that reflect how people are communicating and connecting with others while in this time of forced separation.

Ephemera - items like posters, signs, flyers that reflect public communication regarding COVID-19. We are interested in everything from handmade signs/messages placed in windows to official communication received in the letterbox.

Pictorial - photography, painting, drawing. Works that convey a response to life in a bubble. What images have you created whilst staying safe in your bubble and why? We are looking for images that tell us about the unusual everyday life we have been living in our bubbles during this time.

## Wien Museum (AUSTRIA)

*Museums collect coronavirus pandemic 'artifacts'*<sup>26</sup>

DW September 2020

The Wien Museum in Vienna, Austria, was one of the first museums to realize that these testimonies have great significance for the future.

More than 1,300 people have already responded since March 25, and have sent the museum their impressions of the coronavirus pandemic by e-mail using the tag "Corona memory."

"One of my favorite objects is a crocheted coronavirus," says museum director Matti Bunzl. "It is not only cute; it shows that objects are ambassadors of their time."

Bunzl points out that this pandemic cannot be compared with epidemics in earlier times. "We live in an age in which most people know about biological structures," he argues, adding that this becomes clear when you look at the crocheted virus: it is red and yellow. "A representation like this is something completely new in the history of medicine," says Bunzl.

Drawings of the plague often demonized the disease because people simply didn't understand it, the director says. "Today, popular medical knowledge is quite different."

In addition, it has never been so easy to document everyday life. Smart phones create possibilities that other eras lacked. People did not have balcony concerts during past epidemics — and even if they did, there were no digital means to record them. The documents and objects on the Vienna museum's website also show that the coronavirus pandemic, despite all the uncertainties, has triggered creativity. People have been seen walking through a park holding wooden slats to keep the right distance from others, DIY spit guards are set up in front of shops, and everywhere, people wear facemasks cobbled together from leftover scraps of cloth.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/museums-collect-coronavirus-pandemic-artifacts/a-53189713>