



NEWSLETTER 2023

CIDOC **MX**
23

CIDOC NEWSLETTER 2023

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR
DOCUMENTATION ICOM/CIDOC

<https://cidoc.mini.icom.museum>

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A word from the Chair

TRILCE NAVARRETE HERNÁNDEZ

2023 was an eventful year for CIDOC: We opened with a new board, a new museum definition, and a post-pandemic context still visible in every memory institution. To best tackle this, we developed our first written CIDOC board strategy (for 2023-2025). In this strategy, we drafted a revised vision and mission for CIDOC and identified four main goals : (1) communication of our work and philosophy, (2) outreach and networking to gain visibility, increase membership, facilitate knowledge transfer, and stimulate the reuse of our materials, (3) continue our work on document and standard development, and (4) improve our internal processes. At the end of our first year, we are happy to report that the plan has been partially implemented. In the following, I will share how we plan to advance these four main goals.

Regarding communication, we have an updated communication strategy enacted by an active editor working with a team translating the content into English, French,

and Spanish, with the new addition of an Arabic translation that initiates with this newsletter. In this sense, you will soon notice changes to the website and our image; as well as activities to invite our members to participate, such as workshops, webinars, increased presence on social networks and, through the regular newsletter, by email, with an invitation so we can receive information from our community. Our work continues and you can expect more calls to action: **we want to know your needs for documentation information to help guide our efforts.** We continue to explore the best channels for dialogue with all CIDOC members and the museum community at large.

Concerning outreach, we held a documentation workshop with ICOM COSTUME in Costa Rica, and a second workshop in Africa where we are developing a tutorial for the documentation of conservation together with ICOM CC. We are advis-

ing ICOM regarding the revision of the Code of Ethics, the work of the Decolonisation Working Group, and anything that involves documentation. We are collaborating with ICOM Costa Rica, ICOM France, ICOM Georgia, ICOM Guatemala, ICOM Republic of Korea, ICOM Mexico, ICOM Netherlands, and ICOM LAC in our multiple efforts and are open for joining other projects. **We seek to connect with the young documentalists across the globe.**

CIDOC continues to advance document and standards development including the publication of the *CIDOC CRM ISO 21127:2023*, the translation of CIDOC CRM into other languages (Spanish, French, Japanese), the work of the Definition of Museum Documentation Task Force, the development of an Intangible Heritage documentation standard, the launch of the Exhibition Object Data Exchange Model (EODEM) standard, and the publication of the LIDO Primer. We will work with our African colleagues to develop a Documentation for Conservation Toolkit expected at the end of 2024.

Following ICOM's guidelines, we are updating our Bylaws and will evaluate changing our name to become more descriptive, as well as revising our documents considering the new museum definition. We are exploring the best ways to organise our work within our working groups, the newly formed task forces, and through supporting the development of documentation satellite hubs. We are further improving the workflow of our documents towards a sustainable and accessible archive. Most importantly, **we are actively training a new generation of CIDOC members.**

At the CIDOC 2023 Annual Conference, a number of our goals materialised. One success was the broadening of our collaboration with Spanish-language communities. We reached a greater number of documentalists through a series of satellite meetings across Mexico, held prior to our annual conference. And last, CIDOC embodied an inclusive culture of documentation, reconsidering new contexts and perspectives.



CIDOC 2023 MX.

Conference report

PEDRO ÁNGELES JIMÉNEZ
BETSABÉ MIRAMONTES VIDAL
LUCÍA SÁNCHEZ DE BUSTAMANTE
CLAUDIO MOLINA SALINAS
EDURNE URIARTE SANTILLÁN

ICOM's International Documentation Committee (CIDOC) has held international conferences [since 1991](#). Such conferences not only showcase progress on specific projects, but also serve as a meeting point for their members and different working groups to extend professional collaborations. However, in the case of Mexico, contact had been sporadic. The first Mexican to establish links with CIDOC was the prominent museologist Felipe Lacouture Fornelli (1928-2003). In the 2014 conference, held in Dresden, the Mexican community interested in documentation reached out again to establish a new contact.

On the international scene, Mexican museums and their professionals are widely recognized. However, issues related to documentation have little presence. Although we have the *Gaceta de Museos*¹ – an emblematic magazine where documentation has a recurring presence –, an example of the little presence that we point out may be in the study programs of careers related to museums and cultural heritage. Thus, the customary practice is that documentation proposals are formalised individually, from each museum; or, by different recognized institutions of the museums system in Mexico. There, the inventories, registration and cataloguing of its cultural heritage show solid progress, but they present challenges in the face of the emergence of the web with few catalogues or initiatives that do not take advantage of the

¹ Published by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) from 1996 to date.

online dissemination of museum collections.

From this perspective, it was a fundamental task to approach CIDOC and learn more about the issues of documentation. For that end, promoting a conference in Mexico was a priority. As early as 2014, in Dresden, Gordon McKenna had suggested to the Mexican delegates to hold a conference in the country. It took a decade to create the conditions that made it possible; In addition, when we proposed Mexico as the venue in May 2022, the Covid 19 pandemic profoundly influenced the work project. As an immediate background, the conference held in 2020 in Geneva had to be fully virtual while the one in Tallinn was presented as hybrid, being sensitive to the war conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The organising committee of Mexico had to meditate very well on the challenges for the organisation of a CIDOC Conference in post-pandemic times. The meeting in our country was one of the first post-pandemic CIDOC events and its organisation still had uncertainty during the “new normality.” We wondered if we would have face-to-face academic activities again. Would it be possible to solve the problems of technological infrastructure to provide the necessary coverage and accessibility? And, just as the theme of the conference was raised, what would be our borders and our new territories?

The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), host for the Conference, is an educational institution of enormous relevance. Through the Institute of Aesthetic Research, it provided all the facilities for the [CIDOC 2023](#) Conference entitled “Frontiers of Knowledge: Museums, Documentation and Linked Data”. This took place from September 25 to 28, selecting the auditorium of the University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC) and the José María Vigil auditorium of the National Library of Mexico (BNM) as venues.

The extensive program included three keynote speeches, starting with Dominic Oldman; followed by Sol Henaro and Jo Ana Morfin, and finally, held by Renato González Mello. The sixty-three presentations approved by the Scientific Committee of the Conference were divided into eight working groups:

- [Frontiers of knowledge](#)

- Terminologies and software for heritage
- Heritage Standards
- Documentation of collections
- Museum documentation
- Knowledge Base Integration
- Identity, decolonization and decoloniality
- Training for museum documentation

In addition, a special presentation entitled “The Progress of the CIDOC Community” was added, and four panel discussions addressed the following topics:

1. Illicit Trafficking in Cultural Objects
2. The Relationship Between Museum Documentation and Artificial Intelligence
3. Biological Collections at UNAM: From Scientific Heritage Documentation to Online Publication
4. Archaeology and Documentation

Finally, fourteen posters were presented. A total of 158 people from thirty-seven countries met at the CIDOC 2023 annual conference, either in person or following the broadcast of the event.

During four days of intense activity, we had remarkable results in the discussion of documentation in the world and for our region and our country. In addition to English as the main language of this conference, presentations in Spanish stood out. On the other hand, panels such as the one on illicit trafficking renewed the discussion of this thorny issue; or the one dedicated to artificial intelligence opened new horizons of discussion to be contemplated in the coming years.

Prior to the week of the Conference, during the month of August, the Local Organizing Committee promoted four events: three talks and an academic day. Its main objective was to capture the attention of Mexican documentation specialists and address issues relevant to museums in the broad geography of Mexico, as well as to explore the current state of GLAM convergence in Mexican cultural institutions. The talks, under the general title of: “Linking Mexican Museums through Documentation. Dialogues from North to South towards the CIDOC 2023 Conference in Mexico” were held online with specialists in museums in the north, centre and south of the

Mexican Republic. The academic conference was entitled: “Thinking GLAM: the challenges of information in Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums,” a hybrid event held at the National Library of Mexico.

As can be seen, the CIDOC 2023 Conference in Mexico expanded the time limits and conventional formats with the pre-conversations. While there were no meetings of the CIDOC working groups as customary, we held a 2-day workshop entitled the “Introductory Workshop of the CIDOC CRM Ontology” – from September 22 to 24 – by George Bruseker and with the presence of Stephen Stead. Also, the virtual conference attendance reached a modest twenty-four participants which we would have liked to have served better. The face-to-face conference was rich and constant in its participation, signalling the importance of physical meetings to enable knowledge transfer.

Final Thoughts

The conferences in Crete, Geneva, and Tallinn were the source of inspiration for Mexico. On this occasion, we sought to revitalise the event with new perspectives, maintaining the professional and open spirit that has always characterised them. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Mexico took advantage of the opportunity to hold the conference in person, thus marking the beginning of a new post-pandemic stage.

The CIDOC International Conference was revitalised and relevant in the global context. The meeting of specialists from thirty-four countries, in person, allowed a rich and diverse exchange, as well as the exchange of realities with their common elements and their differences, without omitting the challenges that each cultural institution faces.

For Mexico, it represented a moment of reflection and learning. Our country has a long history in the management of cultural heritage, oriented towards its legislation, registration, and conservation. Although the importance given to administrative work has been significant, the development of documentation in a broader sense has not achieved the same progress, leading to problems such

as the lack of integration of multiple sources, to the detriment of information access for different audiences.

In this context, the presence of CIDOC, through its annual conference, allowed reflection and actions towards a future of standards and good practices of documentation in our cultural organisations. The event also helped our specialists to discover new frontiers in the digitisation of collections, as well as to conceive documentation from the perspective of the integration of useful heritage data for information technologies.

Some of the key topics discussed at the conference include developing cultural heritage terminologies and standards while ensuring their technological implementation for the benefit of the museum. As the Local Organising Committee, this conference showed us the challenge of applying these topics in our daily practice, for a sustainable culture of documentation. The fatigue of the moment did not prevent us from appreciating and rejoicing in the results obtained.



Scientific Committee

CLAUDIO MOLINA SALINAS

We give a special mention to the curatorial work carried out by the Scientific Committee for the CIDOC Annual Conference hosted in Mexico, which had the vision of ensuring quality and thematic diversity in its 2023 edition. To this end, it implemented a meticulous abstract review procedure, which ensured the selection of relevant and high-quality content. Here are the steps in this process:

1. Constitution of the Scientific Committee

A scientific committee was formed, composed of eight highly qualified professionals with experience in various aspects related to the theme of the conference. Among them were well-known names in the field, such as Adele Barbato, Trilce Navarrete, Sol Henaro, Gordon McKenna, Stephen Stead, Joaquín Giménez, Pedro Ángeles Jiménez, and Claudio Molina Salinas.

2. Distribution of abstracts among the members of the Scientific Committee

The abstracts were distributed among the members of the Committee, considering the lines of research of each reviewer and the choice of topic in which each paper was inscribed.

3. Evaluation by reviewers

The reviewers received a selection of abstracts by email, along with a standardised format that allowed them to express their opinion on

the proposals in a clear and objective manner. This format included four evaluation options, namely: (1) Accept the abstract with the proposed time extension; (2) Reject the abstract; (3) Accept the abstract, but suggest that the presentation be adapted to a shorter format (5 to 10 minutes); and finally, Accept the abstract, but suggest that it be presented as a poster. In addition to selecting one of these options, the reviewers justified decision in a reasoned manner, arguments that were included in a free text space.

4. Integration of Conference Tables

Based on the results of the evaluation, the Conference tables formed considering the proposed themes and ensuring an equitable and balanced distribution of the contents. Broadly speaking, sessions were planned to include two 20-minute presentations and two 10-minute presentations per session, to allow a variety of formats and facilitate the participation of different speakers.

5. Release of the preview version of the program

Once the attendance of the selected speakers was confirmed, a preliminary version of the conference program was published, to inform the participants about the topics to be discussed and the schedules of the sessions. This served to inform the accepted speakers of the days, venues, and times in which they could present their papers.

6. Adjustments and publication of the last version

Two weeks before the opening of the conference, and after confirming the registrations for the event, adjustments were made to the program to ensure its fluidity and coherence. Finally, the last version of the program was published, which included all the details about the conference tables, the speakers, and the times of the presentations.

In sum, this rigorous process of evaluating abstracts ensured that the CIDOC 2023 Conference had a selection of eighty-two high-quality contributions (keynotes, papers, and posters), representative of the diversity and relevance of the field of documentation and museology at an international level.

Keynotes

The social responsibility of documentation: contextualising data

DOMINIC OLDMAN

The Keynote presented an argument using historical background that the reductive indexes that we produce from traditional standards based on database mindsets do not provide the adequate means to represent heritage objects and this is not simply remedied by new technology like Linked Data which currently just publishes the same legacy data. Their reductive and static nature generates 'bad documentation' – just as static laws and rules create bad laws.

Modern documentation continues to be technologically driven using a neoliberal world view increasingly positioning documentation as a simplistic 'product'. This documentation fails to address social and human concerns. It fails to address the issues of a lack of diversity and has created a legacy of bias and discrimination across our records. It is the context of diversity of information that creates interconnection and collaboration, which is a richer form of integration than the poverty of technical 'interoperability', which

defaults to an instrumental view of records, taking life away from cultural objects which should be viewed as processes.

The CIDOC CRM helps us to expand the categories of knowledge and challenge the deep-rooted problems in our documentation. It encourages a dynamic approach and emphasises that we must always refer to evidence and sources to encourage knowledge generation from interested audiences and preferably participation in growing our knowledge which includes knowledge of change. The keynote included a case study of the way in which documentation can be part of a misappropriation and distortion of history, and the demonisation of people (in one case a West African Religion and slaves taken to the Americas).

Finally, he highlighted two projects which are part of a new contextualising documentation. The first «Pharos», a project bringing together photo archives for collaborative

internal research, and a core institutional knowledge base at The National Archive UK based on a practitioner researcher approach - both based on the ResearchSpace system.

The Two Documentations:

Easy access	Ability to represent complexity
Physically scale	Intellectually scale
Packaged product	Cognitive tool
Interoperability	Interconnected
Homogenous	Heterogeneity
Standards	Expanding knowledge
Secondary Instrumentation	primary abstraction
Thing	Process
Static	Dynamic
Cartesian	Dialectic
Division of labour	Collaborative knowledge process

[Access to the Keynote](#)

[Keynote Video](#)

[Keynote Text](#)

Is everything you do precarious? Archive, documentation and access to contemporary artistic practices

SOL HENARO

CENTRO DE DOCUMENTACIÓN ARKHEIA,

MUSEO UNIVERSITARIO DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO, UNAM

JO ANA MORFÍN

ARCHIVO GENERAL DE LA NACIÓN

In Mexico, interest in documenting contemporary artistic practices has grown significantly. This has led to an increase in the professionalisation and multiplication of archives and documentation centres, especially in the field of museums. It is important to note that many documentary collections related to contemporary art were initially driven by individuals, rather than institutions, in addition to private archive projects concerned with exhaustively collecting information on various contemporary cultural processes, filling a void that official institutions were slow to address.

In this panorama, the figure of Oliver Debroise stands out, a key figure in the conceptualization of the University Museum of Contemporary Art (MUAC). His innovative approach integrated the MUAC Collection as a single entity, composed of the artistic and documentary collections, giving them equal institutional importance. Debroise also proposed the creation of the Arkheia Documentation Centre as a core component of the museum, which has contributed to the professionalisation of archival work in relation to contemporary art.

Despite some progress, the documentation of contemporary artistic practices,

especially in the field of the moving image, remains a pending challenge. The lack of a solid memory of video art in Mexico is aggravated by the gradual loss of records and works related to digital technologies and the internet. Institutions like Arkheia are faced with the challenge of preserving and documenting these practices, which are often born and developed online.

Migration to digital formats raises technical, ethical, and societal questions about digital preservation. In addition, it is crucial to renew conservation practices and theories to adequately address digital collections. Progress in this field depends on collaboration, dialogue and co-responsibility between institutions, professionals, and academics, because only through a collective and continuous approach will we be able to improve the documentation of contemporary artistic practices and ensure their preservation for future generations. In this panorama, the Arkheia MUAC Documentation Center promotes a theoretical, inclusive, and innovative way to formulate good documentation, especially for contemporary artistic manifestations.

[Access to the Keynote](#)

[Keynote Video](#)

[Keynote Text](#)

The collection and the tianguis (flea market)

RENATO GONZÁLEZ MELLO

INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGACIONES ESTÉTICAS, UNAM

The presentation addressed issues related to the limits and difficulties for cataloguing systems in three aspects. First, the registration of objects of different popular devotions; subsequently, the difficulty of standards and their aspiration to analyse, in the same system, time and space. Finally, the street market as a model to think about the limits of digitalization. The latter, a complementary model to the museum, which has been difficult to replicate even with the most modern instruments of virtual reality. For other reasons, the street market is also a challenge to categorise.

There are cases that remind us that conceptual instruments for cataloguing open new needs for theoretical reflection. The names of cultural objects, their typology and description are far from being a routine or merely administrative problem. The question of what is done with the nuances of institutional religions in their relationship with the devotion and faith of different social groups could not be solved with an instrument of authority.

In museums and collections of cultural artefacts, bibliography increases on the difficulties in the process of digital registration, which has forced curators and specialists to systematise traditional knowledge derived, to a certain extent, from antiquarian knowledge. This process has led to a change, as we move from spatial

systems to paradigms around events in time, such as the CIDOC-CRM standard, to which many information systems and catalogues are very quickly adapting.

In the field of visual arts where systematic cataloguing methods date back to the end of the 20th century inventories. Today we have the RDA standards, the CRM standard, and its extensions, the FRBR standards and their derivatives, and a wide range of methodological tools to solve problems that go beyond the shelf, or the wall in the showroom and the picture ID.

The system of knowledge built around the collection of a flea market is not going to have the strident voices or the linguistic, popular and very heterodox plurality, which is linked to that floating world of flea markets where the artist bought little keys in the shape of cookies, toy cars, strange monstrous dolls and remedies for different ailments. Identity cards, registers, lists and other artefacts are not going to replace shouters, 'merolicos' (peddlers) and other dealers.

[Access to the Keynote](#)

[Keynote Video](#)

[Keynote Text](#)

Developing a Definition for ‘Museum Documentation’

ADELE BARBATO

1 The Taskforce is led by Adele Barbato (CIDOC board member; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, United States) and including Paula Casajús (CIDOC board member; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Argentina), Kaie Jeesser (Tartu City Museum, Estonia), Gordon McKenna (Information Centres Working Group; SPECTRUM, United Kingdom), Trilce Navarrete (CIDOC Board Chair; Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands), Dominic Oldman (CIDOC-CRM SIG; Kartography CIC, United Kingdom), and Jonathan Ward (CIDOC Board Vice Chair; Getty Research Institute, United States).

2 See <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>

3 CIDOC Documentation Standards Working Group, “Statement of Principles of Museum Documentation”, version 6.2, 6 June 2012, https://cidoc.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/03/principles6_2.pdf

In May 2023, the CIDOC board launched a task force to develop an official CIDOC definition for ‘Museum Documentation’ – a short statement that aims to encapsulate the scope, boundaries, and applications of documentation activities in museums.

At the annual conference in Mexico City later that same year, the Museum Documentation Definition Taskforce¹ presented publicly for the first time on the aims, outputs, and progress of that work.

The goals of developing an official CIDOC definition of ‘museum documentation’ are three-fold: 1) draft Version 1 (v.1) of the definition as a succinct statement to be used in CIDOC communications and resource materials; 2) provide an avenue through which CIDOC can ensure alignment with ICOM’s adoption of a new ‘Museum’ definition²; and 3) provide an avenue through which CIDOC can inspire and support how museums respond and adapt to the fast-moving social and technological changes that have occurred since the last update of “Statement of Principles of Museum Documentation” (2012)³.

The expected outputs and applications of the new ‘museum documentation’ definition aim to clarify and underscore CIDOC’s vision as “the recognised expert and core resource on documentation of museums”, and its mission, in part, to “advocat[e] for

4 “CIDOC Strategy 2023-2025”, <https://cidoc.mini.icom.museum/organisation/who-we-are/>

the adoption of documentation standards, [and] develop tools to support documentation (including standards)⁴.” It is the intention of the Taskforce that the definition be revised at regular intervals, as determined by the CIDOC board, to both respond to and innovate on the role of museum documentation as future social and technological changes emerge. In that way, it can act as a key reference source when creating or revising existing CIDOC standards and guidelines, such as all public communication materials including the CIDOC website, slide deck presentations, and ICOM communications, the Statement of Principles of Museum Documentation (2012), and the CIDOC International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories (1995).

More immediate intended outputs for the definition include: 1) to be published in a prominent place on the [CIDOC website](#); 2) to inform the revision and update of the “Statement of Principles of Museum Documentation”; and 3) to act as the cornerstone from which a longer paper is published, discussing in greater depth how social and technological shifts over the past twelve years have affected the role of museum documentation and collection knowledge.

Through this re-definition process, CIDOC hopes to inspire a culture shift in how museums themselves understand their responsibility to the documentation they create and steward. Issues such as repatriation, illicit trafficking, decolonisation, and new generative digital technologies herald ongoing social and technological changes that affect the workflows and outputs of information about museum collections. This reality underscores the necessity for that information to be accurate, vetted, and inclusively generated. In short, museum documentation is increasingly being understood as an important source of knowledge, and thus reliable knowledge generation is being understood as an inherent part of a museum’s contribution to society. Since documentation is among the more under-resourced activities of a museum’s operations, with this new definition CIDOC advocates for the adoption of a ‘culture of documentation’ within museums, and a broader understanding of the significance of its impact and role within humanities and inter-cultural collaboration.

[Access to the presentation](#)

CIDOC CRM Ontology

V.7.1.1. Spanish translation

EDURNE URIARTE SANTILLÁN
PEDRO ÁNGELES JIMÉNEZ

The CIDOC 2023 International Conference was the ideal time to present to the Spanish-speaking community of ICOM's International Documentation Committee, the CIDOC CRM translation initiative into Spanish. We started this effort in 2021 and, as we discussed during the conference, it arose as a personal desire to understand the ontology in our language and, in addition, with the intention of having a first version in Spanish (very neutral and almost literal) that would serve to convene the cultural heritage community in Mexico to talk about several documentation issues and the use of standards.

Why translate this model and why invite other colleagues to be part of this effort? These questions have been the axis of our objectives since they also allow us to resolve who we are addressing and with whom we want to build this community. Although we believe that an English translation of the CIDOC CRM is not required to carry out any technological implementation, we

agree on the objective of using this model as a common language for experts in the domain of heritage and developers of information technologies.

To achieve this meeting and contribute to a community of documentation in Spanish, we need a translation as the means to trigger different processes that lead us to the development of information modelling projects, design of training and training programs, as well as the analysis of their potential and institutional results for the medium and long term. Presenting our project and progress at CIDOC 2023 MX undoubtedly favoured us to take these first steps.

[Access to the presentation](#)



Academic activities pre-conference

PEDRO ÁNGELES JIMÉNEZ

Mexico prides itself on having an extensive registry of around 1640 museums and 990 galleries spread over its vast territory. However, the discussion about the importance of documentation is still in its infancy. Therefore, in preparation for the CIDOC 2023 conference, the Organizing Committee set out to address the current state of documentation in Mexico and foster dialogue between the diverse voices of our museum and cultural institutions.

The topics proposed were as follows:

- Why documentation in the museum is important
- Problems of documentation in Mexican museums
- Experiences and state of play
- Documentation issues and agents in Mexico
- Information Technology
- Importance of standards
- Opacity and transparency in information
- Relationship between archive and documentation
- Where we're going: Opportunities, issues to resolve

In this way, a series of regional conversations were held to bring together museum professionals from the north, centre and south of the extensive Mexican Republic and give the CIDOC 2023 Conference itself a national character. The three virtual meetings

were entitled “Linking Mexican Museums through Documentation. North-south dialogues towards the CIDOC 2023 Conference”. The discussion Museums of Northern Mexico was led by Adriana Gallegos Carrión and was held on August 22, 2023. The discussion Museums of the South, Yucatan, was led by Ana Méndez Pettersson and was held on August 29. Finally, the one entitled Museums of Central Mexico. Mexico City oversaw Gabriela Gil Verenzuela and was held on August 29.

On August 31 we had the hybrid conference “Thinking GLAM: the challenges of information in Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums”, in the auditorium of the National Library of Mexico, UNAM. Two working groups were held: the first on the challenges of documenting cultural heritage in Mexico; the second on the challenges, advances and convergences of digital preservation in cultural heritage institutions”, highlighting the magnificent keynote lectures by Pat Riva “Main features of the LRMoo model”, and that of Juan Voutssas, “GLAM information under a transdisciplinary approach”.

These activities provided a frame of reference for the CIDOC 2023 Conference in our country, highlighting the splendid work currently done across the country, and served as an indicator of the effort that remains to face the challenges of cultural heritage documentation in Mexico.

All three sessions can be accessed [online](#) (only Spanish).



Panels

The illicit trafficking of cultural objects - from where and back again?

PEDRO ÁNGELES JIMÉNEZ

The panel on illicit trafficking of cultural objects was coordinated by Naomi Oosterman (Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands) and included the participation of María Luz Endere, Marcelo Daniel El Haibe, Sophie Delepierre, and Wesam Mohamed. The first question discussed was: Why address the issue of illicit trafficking at the CIDOC Conference in Mexico? Since the 1960s, Latin American artefacts have been popular in international art markets, which has led to the development of specialised auction sales to meet this demand. However, most Latin American countries claim ownership of all heritage objects within their borders, effectively prohibiting their extraction, transfer, and export. This has led to the search for material looted or stolen from their countries of origin and sold through non-transparent market practices.

The discussion addressed how South American countries have implemented various policies and regulations over time to protect their cultural heritage, each with its own regional variations and nuances in its development. Specific challenges in Argentina, where the looting of archaeological artefacts has been a concern, especially in areas such as the northwest of the country, were highlighted, mentioning how recent legislation and policies have contributed to reducing looting, even as challenges persist due to the difficulty of patrolling large areas and coordination problems between national and provincial administrations.

Other topics were discussed, such as the regulation of the art market in Europe and North America, the perspective of antiquities traffickers, repatriation in post-colonial contexts, and the tools used by international non-governmental organisations in the fight against illicit trafficking. The importance of proper documentation for repatriation and the challenges linked to archaeological discoveries and illegal excavation were also discussed.

The panel reflected the complexity of the problem of illicit trafficking of cultural objects and highlighted the need for comprehensive policies, dialogue between actors and international cooperation to effectively address this challenge, such as the role of museums and organisations such as ICOM in the fight against this problem, highlighting the importance of tools such as the Red List, by ICOM, which identifies vulnerable objects and assists in investigations. He also mentioned collaboration with Interpol and the World Customs Organization. As for Latin America, several regional Red Lists have been developed, with a focus on countries such as Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Colombia, and Central America. Overall, the panel highlighted the importance of international cooperation and the critical role of museums in the protection of cultural heritage.

[Access to the panel](#)

Concerns and Commitments Regarding the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) for Museum Documentation

JONATHAN WARD

During the CIDOC conference in Mexico City, we held an open panel discussion titled “The Relation Between AI and Museum Documentation”. The panel was moderated by CIDOC Chair Trilce Navarrete, with panellists Jonathan Ward and Domenic Oldman, and its goal was to create a space for group discussion with a heterogeneous audience on this relevant and ever-present topic.

Jonathan began with a short paper that first outlined the primary criticisms of AI in the media, namely those criticisms that AI platforms are a hegemonic Western-centered technology geared toward profit with energy demands, that could both strain global infrastructure as well as cause environmental damage, and those criticisms of AI that directly have to do with the quality of information generated by AI technologies – namely those having to do with the presence of inaccuracy and visible bias.

From there, we began to think more broadly and beyond these media criticisms which allowed the discussion to begin. The questions that loomed over the discussion were: how might we as museum employees in a largely non-profit world – whether cataloguers, technologists, or collections managers – be able to both harness AI in our workplaces to use to an advantage, and how may we as a community actuate change in AI behaviour?

Responses from some museums were positive, as AI might offer a solution to help, for example, process thousands of object records that are unavailable to the public at large, especially in institutions that are chronically underfunded and understaffed. The “human in the loop” was discussed, and a leading technologist asked why they would, in their position, ask a computer to do something a human should do. Much of this discussion was speculative and philosophical, but it was important to air ideas about how we in this profession should be involved in this discussion as technology begins to take hold in the production of knowledge.

[Access to the panel](#)

Biological collections at UNAM: from documentation of scientific heritage to online publication

| TILA MARÍA PÉREZ

| EDURNE URIARTE SANTILLÁN

The panel was an opportunity for researchers from university collections to discuss databases as part of the documentation of scientific heritage, as well as their value in being online. The round table was attended by four curators and researchers who shared experiences on the online placement of their collections in the UNAM Open Data Portal, University Collections. The moderator was Tila María Pérez Ortiz, general director of the General Directorate of University Repositories, the entity responsible for the Portal.

The cases represented in the papers are academic experiences of institutes and faculties of the UNAM, both biological collections and research projects that require preserved specimens. The first presentation, by Gerardo A. Salazar, head of the National Herbarium of Mexico, of the Institute of Biology, highlighted that, in the documentation of biodiversity, the main 'document' is each specimen or sample obtained and that it is preserved for long-term conservation. These provide biological and biocultural knowledge, as they can provide information about the knowledge, customs, and traditions of different societies.

In the same vein, Adolfo Gerardo Navarro Sigüenza, responsible for the integration of collections of the Faculty of Sciences and curator of Birds at the Alfonso L. Herrera Museum of Zoology, explained the value of scientific documentation and its contribution to nature studies. Faculties are places for the safeguarding of collections; efforts that generate an important primary, collective source, and that make possible the documentation of nature. Their participation reinforced the contribution of the specimens at various levels: information on the specimen itself; your geographic location; associated species; the ecosystem in which it was collected; as well as their human relationships.

On the other hand, Yazmín Alcalá Canto, curator of the Digital Slides Collection of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Zootechnics, showed us a case of how a digitised collection has

allowed progress in parasitology laboratories. With one project, he managed to digitise 117 specimens, but they spent 12 years guarded due to their weight, until they were published on the UNAM Open Data Portal. In the face of the pandemic, students did not have access to the laboratory and this effort allowed them to continue studying.

Finally, María del Socorro Lozano García, co-responsible for the Hydrogeochemistry of Lagos de México and Tekia Modern Pollen Database projects, with Dr. Margarita Caballero Miranda, from the Institutes of Geology and Geophysics, presented the importance of the interconnection of information from various sources. Their research requires pollen samples, as well as diatoms and amoebas tested and their distribution in different lakes in Mexico. The information in the present is compared with the fossil record; In this way, paleoenvironmental reconstructions are developed to study the biodiversity of the past and make estimates of climate changes over time.

[Access to the panel](#)

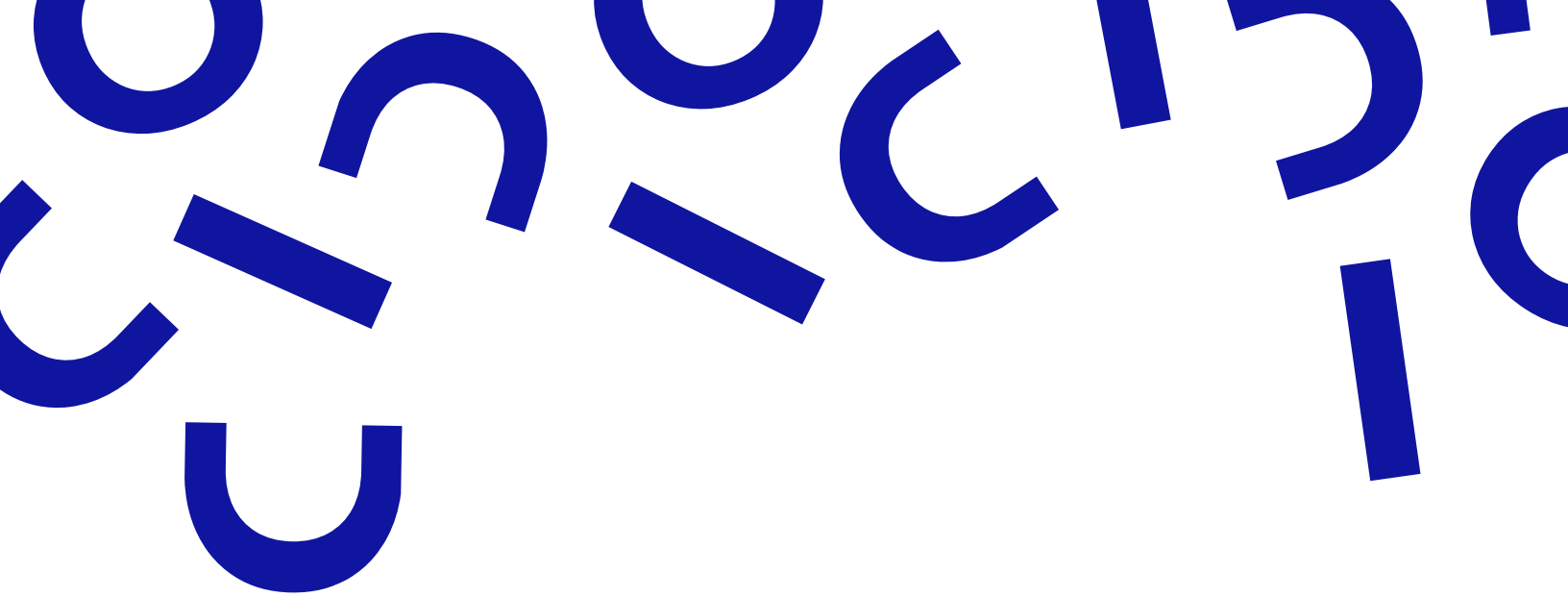
Archaeology is a discipline focused on the recovery of data and information about material culture, its contexts and evidence of human activity in the past, from field research to the investigation of objects or buildings, as well as the application of archaeometric analysis. This corpus, which constitutes an important part of the cultural heritage of each country, not only goes through technical and scientific registration processes, but is also integrated into the world of museums and the administrative management of sites and collections, so that a large amount of documentation is generated around it and an endless number of processes are carried out.

However, the practice of this documentation follows different paths in each context, and this can limit both the possibilities of professional, national, and international dialogue, and access to information for all audiences. To discuss these practices in countries with a long and complex history in archaeology, Mustafa Alsaghir and Wesam Mohamed from Egypt, María Cecilia Huamán and César Huiza from Peru, Lorenza López Mestas, Ixchel Fuentes Reyes and Lucía Sánchez de Bustamante from Mexico, who were joined by Christian Emil Ore from Norway and Stephen Stead from the United Kingdom (from the perspective of the development of the CIDOC CRM model and the CRMarchaeo extension).

Although the premise is that the application of international documentation standards in the different fields of archaeological practice and heritage management, such as CIDOC CRM, constitute a possibility to correct the problems of generation and management of information in each country, the first step was to generate a diagnosis of the situation. Therefore, the axes of this first meeting were: how is the institutional and inter-institutional management of information derived from archaeological research organised? What are the data management standards and strategies in the different areas of competence (research, management, and museums)? How are the processes of managing archaeological objects, collections, sites, and museums conducted from the perspective of documentation?

As a result, new questions raised, mainly around the representation of research techniques, with which it is proposed to broaden and enrich the discussion: Should the CRMarchaeo extension be extended to represent all archaeological research techniques – at the moment it only addresses stratigraphic excavation – or should other extensions or links be proposed that put it in dialogue with different extensions? If so, how can we work to ensure that archaeological practice is represented worldwide? And how can we overcome the technological and training barriers in the various countries in terms of documentation? The table left new reflections on the methodological and technical aspect, as well as thinking about the implementation of training strategies, and a change of perspective for registration and documentation, expanding its purposes of administrative management, with those of consultation, research, and international dialogue.

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