

House Museums at the Crossroads: How Do We Empower Social Change?

**A joint conference from DEMHIST, ICOM MPR,
Tbilisi Museums Union, and ICOM Georgia.
25-29 September 2024, Tbilisi, Georgia**

Main theme:

Historic House Museums around the globe are guardians of historical and cultural legacies, local stories, and memories. However, we envision such institutions evolving to also play a vital role in catalyzing social change in our rapidly changing world.

How can house museums respond to the task of engaging with their communities? How do we partner and collaborate to drive transformative progress? What opportunities and threats do we face in forging common bonds and interests to empower social change? We define social change as the transformation of cultural and social institutions through shifts in human interactions and relationships. As these alterations unfold, they frequently yield profound and enduring impacts on society. Social change involves modifying elements within the social structure, marked by changes in cultural symbols, behavioral norms, social organizations, or value systems. What does this mean in practice? This is what we plan to explore within the context of historic house museums.

Communication skills and tools are critical to facing this challenge by opening a dialog with local communities through storytelling, community engagement, social media, educational programs, branding, fundraising, and membership.

That is why ICOM's International Committee for Historic House Museums is teaming up with the International Committee for Marketing and Public Relations in the conference **House Museums at the Crossroads: How Do We Empower Social Change?** Hosted by the Tbilisi Museums Union and ICOM Georgia, this event will present an exciting series of keynote speeches, presentations, panels, roundtable discussions, workshops, expert sessions, off-site visits, and posters focusing on best practice strategies to promote outreach and generate relevance and public value.

Show your work: Open call for presentations and participation

We invite museum professionals, scholars, policymakers, consultants, and contractors to join us in Georgia for this unique opportunity from all world regions to share best practices, learn from one another, and explore how house museums worldwide can play a central role in empowering positive social change in their communities and beyond.

This inclusive conference welcomes your experience, no matter the size of your museum. Submit a proposal featuring your projects, a work-in-progress, or an inspirational vision for the sector. You can submit a proposal for a paper, a workshop, a poster, a roundtable discussion, an experimental accessibility session, or even suggest a keynote speech – all exploring works related to house museums and the conference themes:

Conference subthemes:

1. From House to Community: House museums at the service of society

We encourage you to share projects and ideas for community outreach and engagement. Examples could include work done in the environs of the house museum with underserved communities, accessibility, education and interpretation, inclusivity projects, and more:

- Examining the role of museums as agents of social change and potential implications
- Learning to listen to your local community and address the diverse needs of residents, staff, and volunteers
- Strategies for house museums to reimagine collections and exhibitions to encourage community engagement
- Exploring the relevance of the [Faro Convention](#) for signatories and non-European nations alike and its emphasis on values over collections in the historic house context
- Examining the role of house museums as Learning Centers for Social Change: educational hubs addressing contemporary social challenges

2. The Activist Museum: house museums advocating for social causes

Learning how to master tools that foster awareness and action on current social and environmental issues is critical for inspiring social change. Examples of house museums successfully integrating inclusive narratives into their programming include

- Examining how house museums navigate and interpret social change issues within diverse cultural contexts. Exploring the representation of women's rights, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and religious freedom in house museum narratives and exhibits. Discussing challenges and successful approaches in presenting diverse voices and perspectives.
- Showcasing effective strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion in house-museum narratives and exhibits.
- Connecting ecological efforts to the ICOM's strategic plan and its alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Exploring the intersections between environmental initiatives and the overall sustainability goals of house museums.
- Exploring the role of house museums in addressing climate action: collections, programs and innovative approaches to curating exhibits that highlight environmental issues and sustainable practices.
- Research on how initiatives within house museums can contribute to broader discussions on democracy, decolonization, climate action, and related social challenges.

3. Welcome to Our House: Leadership and management accessibility in house museums

You want to make your museum available to everyone. How do you build your values and attitudes?

- Public vs. Private Museums: Differences in addressing theme elements and social challenges
- Negotiation: Influencing boards, councils, and policymakers to embrace social causes
- Impact of governance on decision-making and responsiveness.
- Influence of ticket pricing on visitor demographics.

- Inclusive visits: How can historic sites be made accessible to all? From physical adaptations to digital solutions.
- Technology now: Strategies for ensuring accessibility and promoting social change.

Call for Papers Opens: February 12, 2024

Deadline: April 15, 2024 (Paris time, CET)

Key Dates:

April 15: Submission deadline, midnight (Paris time, GMT +1)

May 31: Submission deadline for conference grants (see important notes)

May 15: Acceptance notification of proposals

May 31: Early Bird bookings open

June 30: Acceptance notice of grant applications

July 15: Early Bird booking ends

July 15: Ordinary booking rate opens

September 15: Registration for in-person attendance ends

25-29 September, 2024: ICOM Georgia, DEMIST, ICOM MPR 2024 Conference

- 24 September, 2024 - Daytime: Pre-conference visits and workshop. Evening: Meet & greet (optional)
- 25-29 September, 2024 - Opening ceremony, Conference sessions, DEMIST General Assembly and off-site visits
- 29 September, 2024: Post-conference tours (optional)

Presentation Formats:

We will be accepting submissions for participation in a number of formats: papers and presentations, posters, workshops, and roundtables.

Proposals should comprise the following:

- A **description** (400 words) for reviewers, providing information about the topic and justifying the proposal's significance for inclusion in the program.
- An **abstract** (150 words) to be featured in the conference program and online if the presentation is accepted.
- A brief **biography** (100 words) for each speaker.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Relevance to the conference themes.
- Feasibility within the specified format and time allocation.

Important Notes:

- We can accommodate a limited number of live-streamed or recorded video presentations for speakers unable to travel. However, preference will be given to in-person presentations to foster active participation.
- All proposals must be submitted in English. While the primary language is English, we may consider presentations in other languages, such as pre-recorded videos with English subtitles, if explicitly requested by speakers in their proposals.
- **Proposers selected for the conference program are expected to attend the entire conference, whether virtual or in person, ensuring active participation in the full spectrum of conversations sparked by other presentations.**
- **The decision of the program committee is final.**

Application Process:

To submit your proposal: Please fill in the PDF form on the DEMHIST website [conference 2024 application form](#)

Registration Information:

- The conference will take place in a hybrid format to accommodate all participants. There is no separate registration fee for either in-person or virtual attendance.
- Registration for the conference will open on May 31, 2024. Please follow announcements on the conference website <https://icom-georgia.mini.icom.museum/en/demhist-2024/> and the DEMHIST and ICOM MPR websites and social media for further information

Important notes:

- All presenters are required to register for the conference; unfortunately, we cannot provide financial compensation or waive the registration fee.

- Speakers have the opportunity to apply for a limited number of travel grants: Both DEMHIST and ICOM-MPR offer the ICOM Young Professional Travel Grant; DEMHIST offers the Jeanne Watson Bursary for its members; and MPR has a Travel Grant for its members (please, note that a person getting the ICOM Young Professional Travel Grant will not be able to apply for the Jeanne Watson Bursary or the MPR Travel Grant). Calls for applications will be sent during the paper selection process.
- Suggested hotels and general information will be updated on the conference website

Any related questions can be sent to ICOM DEMHIST International Committee at:
Cecilia Casas Desantes, **DEMHIST secretary**, Email: secretary@demhist.icom.museum