

CHAIR REPORT – 2024-2025

Please note that this report covers the period of 2024 and 2025 up until the sending of the report (11 November 2025).

Major Events & Programmes

During 2024-2025 the following events were held – these were either DEMHIST events or collaborations in which DEMHIST was a partner:

DEMHIST Open Talks

Although the Open Talks came about because of the cancelation of our annual conference in Georgia. The DEMHIST board quickly adapted to the circumstances and designed a totally new concept for DEMHIST, creating a successful event that we have already made a fixture in our calendar. It was not a webinar, not an onsite conference, but something to fit our needs. The sessions were very participatory due to short presentations, video tours, open discussion and interactive games. Realtime feedback from participants was turned into video clips, word clouds, etc. This interaction and response between organizers and participants was central to the event. The videos of the presentations will be available on our YouTube channel as an alternative to traditional conference procedures to address contemporary social challenges and foster community engagement.

Open Talks 2024

Historic house Museums and their Communities (25-27 November 2024)

Historic house museums hold a unique position as bridges between the past and present, embodying local histories and cultural narratives within their walls. Beyond preserving artifacts and stories, these institutions play a crucial role in connecting with and serving their communities in meaningful ways. By preserving and showcasing local heritage, historic house museums provide residents with a tangible link to their roots, fostering a sense of pride and continuity. This is often strengthened through community involvement in preservation efforts, historical research, and cultural programming.

SUBTHEME 1 INSPIRE How house museums use collections and storytelling to inspire current and future generations through their commitment communities, cultural heritage, and societal growth preserving and celebrating local history, ethical reflection, and fostering cultural sustainability and development.

SUBTHEME 2 INTERPRET How museums and cultural institutions interpret historical and cultural heritage to resonate with present-day communities bridging the past with

the present, fostering community engagement and addressing contemporary societal issues.

SUBTHEME 3 IMPACT How historic house museums can influence societal transformation within their communities underscoring the importance of innovation, empowerment, and sustainability in museums and heritage sites, demonstrating their potential

The Keynote Address was given by John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Culture and Engagement at National Trust (UK).

PRESENTATIONS Maria Szadkowska, Museum of Prague, Czech Republic *Božena Rotmayerová. Modern Woman versus Domesticity*; Liisa Oikari, The Mannerheim Museum, Finland *The rise of humanitarian values - Museums as platforms for resilience*; Alicja Marika Lubowicka, Nicolaus Copernicus house, Poland; Nirit Shalev Khalifa, Ben Zvi Foundation, Jerusalem, Israel *A hut that is a home, which is a Museum*; Denise Maior-Barron, Claremont Graduate University, California U.S.A. *Communing Locals and Tourists: The multicultural interpretation at the Palace and Botanical Garden of Balchik (Bulgaria), former residence of Queen Marie of Romania (1875–1938)*; Galina Lysyakova, The Leo Tolstoy State Museum, Russia *Nikolskoye-Obolyaninovo Estate*; Verena Perko, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia *How to present the tragic fates of great personalities to the public; the case of the Museum of the poet France Prešeren in Kranj, Slovenia*; Alexander Belousov, The Peterhof State Museum-Reserve, Russia *Is the Peterhof Museum 'ours' or 'theirs'?*; Elena Montanari, Università Politecnica Milano, Italy *Open Atelier. Building new innovative formats for active audience participation and interaction with cultural heritage within European House Museums*; Sara Chafi, University of Salah Boubnider Constantine3, Algeria *Empowering Communities, Preserving Heritage: The Ahmed Bey Museum's Dynamic Role in Social Change and Cultural Conservation*; Ramesh Prasad Dawadi, *Living Traditions Museum, Nepal An experimental story: Opportunity, Threats and Social Change*.

VIRTUAL TOURS: Matjaž Koman, Žirovnica Institute for Tourism and Culture, Slovenia *A Video Tour of Slovenia's Iconic House Museums on the Žirovnica Path of Cultural Heritage*; Katarina Povedić and Katarina Marić, *Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria, Croatia The Pula Fort Center – Fortified heritage as a link to the community*; Lana Bede, the Karlovac City Museums, Croatia *Raise your gaze*; Lucija Perko, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia *How can heritage products help contribute to a better awareness of culture and heritage: example of Plečnik House in Ljubljana, Slovenia*; Alexander Bogatyrev, The Muranovo manor museum-reserve, Russia *The most honest manor in the Moscow region*; Verónica Herrera, Colegio de San Ildefonso, México *Enjoy your trip! Guided but independent tours designed for diverse communities*.

The Open Talks 2024 had 125 attendees over the 3 days of the online conference. 75% of the participants that registered were active museum professionals, and 56% were either members of non-DEM HIST IC committees or non-ICOM members, proving the importance of this event for outreach. Though half of the people that registered were from Europe, all continents were represented. Following the conference, we prepared 48 attendance certificates for those with highest attendance ratio, including for speakers.

Videos of the event are available on the DEM HIST YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@DEM HISTICOM>

Open Talks 2025

Parallel Narratives in House Museums (11-12 June 2025).

Over two sessions, we examined how different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives coexist within the same space. How museums balance official and unofficial narratives, reconciling competing historical interpretations, and engage audiences in a way that respects complexity rather than simplifying the past. Topics raised included: How do house museums navigate conflicting histories? How can interpretation acknowledge tension without reinforcing division? How do we balance truth-telling with engagement and accessibility? The presentations addressed the challenges and opportunities of presenting multiple perspectives in ways that are inclusive, thought-provoking, and engaging for diverse audiences. Whether through historical research, exhibition design, digital tools, or community collaboration, by embracing parallel narratives house museums can foster deeper understanding, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement with history. This conversation isn't about finding easy answers—it's about exploring ways to expand storytelling, deepen interpretation, and engage visitors in a more meaningful way. How can house museums navigate these parallel narratives to create richer, more inclusive storytelling?

Franklin "Frankie" Vagnone gave the Keynote address "Allegorical Interpretation: When Houses Roam". It introduced the concept of allegorical interpretation as developed in his forthcoming book "When Houses Roam: Pillow Talk with Historic Sites".

PRESENTATIONS: Gabriela Steinitz, Trude Sojka House Museum, Ecuador *The Trude Sojka House Museum: from the story of three generations, to a story of regeneration*; Paulo de Freitas Costa, Ema Klabin House Museum, Brazil *The multiple memories of a house*; Joanna Sieracka, Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek, Poland *Between National and Local, Public and Private, Universal and Gendered: Parallel Narratives at the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejówek*; Angelica Policeno Fabbri, Casa di Portinari Museum, Brazil *Heritage Education Project of the Casa de Portinari Museum in Brodowski (Brazil) Schools: Strengthening Narratives for Cultural Identity Formation*; Elena Sánchez Cortina, Colegio de San Ignacio de Loyola Vizcaínas, Mexico *The House of Chaplains in the School of Saint Ignatius Loyola Vizcaínas, an Eighteenth century building in Mexico City*; Hillary Walker, Toronto History Museum, Canada *A look at Historic New England's evolving queer interpretation at Beauport, the Sleeper-McCann House*; Jenny Seeman & Jennifer Wise, Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society, Canada *Whose History is it Anyway? The challenge of bringing a Syilx woman's memoirs to life inside a colonial castle*.

VIRTUAL TOURS: Maria Gravovscaia, A. Pushkin House-Museum, Moldova *"Genius loci" in the golden triangle of old Chisinau*; Mario Nascimento, Museu de Lisboa – Palácio Pimenta, Portugal *Casa Veva de Lima: a case study*; Belén Navazo Hourcade & Ingrid Sandell Bull-Njaa, Museum Stavanger, Norway *Contextualizing Stavanger's Past. A New Narrative Approach to the three house museums: Ledaal, Breidablikk and*

Holmeegenes; Matjaž Koman, Institute for Tourism and Culture Žirovnica, Slovenia
Parallel Narratives in Prešeren's Birth House in Vrba.

Combined online attendance over the 2 days events reached 95 participants. As with the first edition, OT25 attracted 55% registrations from participants that were non DEMHIST members (members of other IC committees or non ICOM members), establishing the event as an online meeting place through which DEMHIST can extend its visibility.

Following the conference, we prepared 44 attendance certificates for those with highest attendance ratio, including for speakers and moderators.

Videos of the event are available on the DEMHIST YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@DEMHISTICOM>

International House Museum Day 2025

International House Museum Day is the creation of DEMHIST institutional member, Casa della Memoria in together with ICOM International Committee ICLCM. After three Italian editions, the decision was made to expand the event with the collaboration of DEMHIST and other organizations around the world. Approximately 260 institutions from 27 countries all around the world celebrated the International House Museum Days on 5 and 6 of April. Of these, 86 institutions from 24 countries were DEMHIST related! All the DEMHIST participants are on our [website](#), including a google map. Following this success, we are planning International House Museum Day 2026.

Governance & Strategy

The 2024 online General Assembly was held on September 26 2024.

Please see the accompanying document for the minutes of the meeting.

59 voting members and 4 non-voters registered for the meeting. Another 3 registered, but could not be verified to attend so they didn't receive the link to join the assembly.

The final attendance was of 37 voting members and 1 non-voting member.

Changes to board composition

We regretfully accepted the departures of António Ponte (Portugal) and Zhanna Manukyan (Armenia) in late 2024. In accordance with the October 2023 election results, Alexander Belousov (Russia) joined the Board in June 2025 to maintain our requisite number of members.

Strategic Plan

At our 2024 General Assembly, DEMHIST membership ratified our strategic plan for 2024-28. The plan is aligned with the ICOM plan, with focus on areas pertinent to DEMHIST. It is available on our website. The ICOM Strategic Planning Committee has been working on ways to help International Committees implement aspects of the ICOM Strategic Plan in their work, and we were pleased to receive positive feedback

about DEMHIST's programming and work in fields of Outreach, Communications and Digital futures. The DEMHIST Strategic Plan will be used as an example of good practice. Our thanks to vice chair Milja Stijovic for her work on this.

Board Activities

During 2024 and 2025 the members of the board have met several times online: full board meetings, Executive Bureau meetings and working group meetings. In April 2025 the board met in Madrid for a three-day board retreat. During the meeting, graciously hosted and arranged by our secretary Cecilia Casas Desantes and the Cerralbo Museum we held three working sessions as well as professional visits to local palaces and house museums. [Read here our full report.](#)

The Demhist Board continues to do much of its work through its 5 permanent working groups: Grants, Communications, Outreach, Conference, and Governance.

The focus through 2024-5 for the [Conference Working Group](#) was on the Open Talks online symposia and preparation for the ICOM triennial conference that will be opening in Dubai 12 November. During the conference, we will have 3 scientific programme sessions:

Session A: ***Historical House Museums as Witness to the Contemporary World*** 12th November, 13:00-14:30

Session B Joint session with DESIGN: ***Adornment and Identity in Spatial Design and Objects*** 12th November, 14:45-16.00

Session C Joint session with ICOM-CC & ICR: ***Community-Led Training: Establishing a Foundation for Heritage Conservation in Africa (2024) an (ICOM) Solidarity Project*** 13th November, 14.30-16.00

In addition, on 15th November we will hold an offsite day in collaboration with ICLCM visiting the Mohammed bin Rashid Library in the morning and the Al Shindagha museum complex in the afternoon. We will also have the opportunity to hear about the restoration process of the complex from Dr. Eman Assi, leading conservation architect.

The conference team also sent out calls for proposals to host our 2026 annual conference, and we are excited to announce that we will be meeting at Chateau Versailles in October 2026. Stay tuned for details!

The [Grants Working Group](#) updated and edited all the forms and requirements for the DEMHIST Grants as well as selecting and maintaining contact with grantees for special projects and travel grants.

The [Communications Working Group](#) continues to provide materials and posts across all platforms for all DEMHIST activities, in coordination with the various working groups. If you want your institution's activities shared with DEMHIST members, please let us know!

Gianluca Kannès is working with DEMHIST member Hilary Walker on creating a selected bibliography on house museums for the Demhist website.

The Outreach Working Group maintains contact with the various DEMHIST national groups and works to extend our network, with an emphasis in increasing our presence in the Latin American countries. Roberto Andreu traveled extensively with the LATAM area promoting DEMHIST in Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru.

Activities of the Board Members

DEMIST board members generally work with their NCs, ICOM-Israel, ICOM-Netherlands, ICOM-Spain, ICOM-Serbia, ICOM-France, ICOM-Italy, ICOM-Mexico, ICOM-Guatemala, ICOM-Russia.

Timna Seligman, DEMHIST Chair has been working to maintain DEMHIST contacts and collaborations with other ICs. She recently gave a lecture on contemporary art installations in historic houses, using the Ticho House as a case study. The lecture will soon be available on YouTube.

Cecilia Casas Desantes was Visiting Professor at the Complutense University of Madrid with the lecture "House Museums: Management and International Overview" in the subject "Monographic Museums: House Museums and Thematic Museums" of the Master's Degree in Advanced Studies of Museums and Historical and Artistic Heritage. April 3, 2025 (2024-2025 academic year).

Gianluca Kannès presented a paper at a conference on National Variations of Art Nouveau, organized by a Demhist partner museum, the Jugendstil Museum in Riga, Latvia. He helped organize an educational seminar for the Demhist Italian National Group, which aimed to provide house museum curators with materials on the history and evolution of a specific room in the home: the bedroom.

Past DEMHIST chair Yvonne Ploum is IC spokesperson, working with NC spokesperson Muthoni Thangwa (Kenya).

Vice chair Roberto Andreu attended a number of meetings and symposia of the Mexican National Group and ICOM-Guatemala. In September and October of this year, he attended a conference about antique silver studies of Iberoamerica in Lima and Cusco, Peru. During this trip he contacted the Board of ICOM Peru on behalf of DEMHIST and ICOM Guatemala and asked for a meeting focused on House Museums in Lima. I was greeted by Amalia Castelli, ICOM Peru Vice Chair who showed him some projects of Historical Residences turned into museums and cultural centers.

Board Member Caroline Gaillard attended ICMEMOHRI Symposium "Fakes and False Histories", held in Paris from 1 to 5 June 2025 and ICOM France Conference 2025 «Face à la crise Des musées investis et innovants » held in Versailles on October 3, 2025

Membership, Partnerships, and Training

Our membership numbers tend to fluctuate throughout the year due to issues of membership reporting on the ICOM database. That said, these are the updated numbers:

Number of Members in 2023:

- 2023 Individual Members: 574
- 2023 Institutional Members: 149
- TOTAL: 723

Number of Members in 2024:

- 2024 Individual Members: 654
- 2024 Institutional Members: 158
- **TOTAL: 812**

Number of Members in 2025 (as of November 3):

- 2025 Individual Members: 963
- 2023 Institutional Members: 212
- **TOTAL: 1175**

Training

During 2024, DEMHIST was part of a consortium of committees and alliances led by ICOM-CC working on "2024 ICOM Solidarity Project: Community-Led Training: Establishing a Foundation for Heritage Conservation in Africa". The first part of the project – online learning – was completed by the end of 2024. During 2025, the study material has been turned into a toolkit for downloading (PDFs) and a series of video that will be available on the DEMHIST YouTube Channel from November 13, 2025 (to coincide with the expert panel session during the Dubai conference that is the summation of the project).

ICOM Academy – DEMHIST as a Pilot Committee

DEMHIST is proud to be one of the four inaugural International Committees selected to participate in the pilot phase of the **ICOM Academy**. This major new initiative is a comprehensive online learning platform designed to provide high-quality, flexible professional development for museum professionals worldwide. Our involvement ensures that the unique perspectives and challenges of the historic house museum sector are embedded in the foundation of this strategic venture. DEMHIST will contribute specialized content and participate in the Scientific Committee, with the pilot launching at the ICOM General Conference in Dubai.

Student placement

Our student placement from 2024, Giusy Guerriero stayed with us into 2025, following

up her contribution to Open Talks 2024 by taking on the role of moderator for interactive games for Open Talks 2025.

Under the guidance of DEMHIST board member, Caroline Guillard two additional students worked with our online programming and website updates – Nicoleta Slavinschi and Flora Chardon.

Partnerships and collaboration

As mentioned in the “training” section, during 2024, DEMHIST was part of a consortium of committees and alliances led by ICOM-CC working on "2024 ICOM Solidarity Project: Community-Led Training: Establishing a Foundation for Heritage Conservation in Africa". The first part of the project – online learning – was completed by the end of 2024. During 2025, the study material has been turned into a toolkit for downloading (PDFs) and a series of video that will be available on the DEMHIST YouTube Channel from November 13 2025 (to coincide with the expert panel session during the Dubai conference that is the summation of the project).

The International House Museum Day was a good example of professional networks and partnerships. The event was the first international iteration of an annual event held in Italy and run the DEMHIST member “Casa della Memoria” along with ICOM International committee ICLCM.

Grants & Member Support

Travel Grants

As the 2024 annual conference was canceled, there were no DEMHIST travel grants for that year.

The DEMHIST board took the special requirements of the **27th Triennial ICOM General Conference: The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities** to be held in Dubai 11-17 November **2025** into consideration and offered a unique range of grants to aid attendance of members and board members at the conference.

- The Jeanne Watson Bursary supports young professionals of Historic House Museums to attend DEMHIST Conferences and Courses. This year €750 was awarded to Faizza Bhatti (Pakistan)
- DEMHIST Member Travel Grant of € 1,000 was awarded to Andrea Elias (Argentina)
- DEMHIST board member travel grant of € 1,000 was awarded to DEMHIST Chair Timna Seligman to make her attendance at the conference possible
- Conference registration support for members (in person and online) was provided to presenter David Kojo Derban (Ghana), student member Guissy Guerriero, board members Cecilia Casas Desantes, Caroline Guillard, and Alexander Belousov.

Special Project Grants

Every year, we offer **Special Project Grants** to DEMHIST members; we are usually able to offer 3-5 grants of up to € 1,000 each. In **2024** we awarded 3 grants:

1. Walaa Eldin Badawy, Director of Zafaran Palace Museum, Ain Sham University, Egypt. Virtual tour of Zafaran museum and an archival documentary film about the Zafaran Palace (€ 400)
2. Ruggero Ranieri, Fondazione Ranieri di Sorbello, Italy. Contribution to conference costs on "The bedroom and Its History as an Essential Living Space". To be held in Venice in November 2024. (€ 800)
3. Rodolfo M. Dela Cruz, De la Cruz Ancestral House Museum, Cavite City, Philippines. Contribution to symposium "Museum Matters Matter: Discussion on Museum Practices in Research and Education". Following typhoon damage to the House Museum, the grant was commuted to an emergency repair grant (€ 450)

For the year 2025, we received 7 applications, and we have awarded 5 grants:

1. Bala Datu Ranga, Indonesia Research Proposal: Preserving the Legacy of Datu Ranga (Prime Minister) Abdul Majid Daeng Matutu, The Last Prime Minister Of Sumbawa Sultanate in Indonesia (research/symposium/ publication) (€ 750)
2. Musee Charles Combes, Cote d'Ivoire, Exhibition for the artist - Charles Combes (€ 500)
3. Casa de Yrurtia, Argentina, Workshop/booklet access for deaf community ASL (€ 500)
4. Ema Klabin House, Brasil, XVII Brazilian Meeting of Historic House Museums (€ 500)
5. Rundale Palace, Latvia, Symposium. Funeral rituals of rulers (€ 500)

Communication & Outreach

Website

We continue to regularly update our website with all of our activities and announcements. Work on developing and expanding our DEMHIST Houses world map continues under the professional hands of Caroline Guillard.

Newsletter

The DEMHIST newsletter is distributed to our mailing list via MailChimp and also published on the DEMHIST website and links posted on social media. In it we share news, including recent and upcoming DEMHIST activities and important ICOM events. Since 2024, the newsletter was mailed with more frequency with communications being sent to all members almost monthly – some as newsletters with a number of items and some as reminders on specific topics. It is one of the board's aims to communicate in a better, more frequent, and more comprehensive manner with our members. The newsletter includes as needed information about upcoming grant

opportunities, upcoming conferences, and events of DEMHIST members, etc...
The opening rate of our mailings through the MailChimp platform has increased from 25% to 50% of the recipients since April 2024 and 59% through 2025.

Instagram

Over the past year, our Instagram account (@icom.demhist) has increased from 328 followers 685; and we are now following 298 accounts compare to 90 last year. These are mainly accounts of other International and National ICOM committees, House Museums and Persons of Interest. The social media team, led by Vice Chair Roberto Andreu actively posts and re-posts stories and items from ICOM and affiliate accounts as well as posts from DEMHIST members.

Facebook

In last year's chair report, our Facebook account (@Icom-Demhist) we remain with around 2000 followers and had 2006 followers and 298 followed pages.

YouTube

With the launch of our Open Talks events in December 2024, we also launched the DEMHIST YouTube channel. We will use this page to post videos from our online events, as well as collaborative projects such as the 2024 Solidarity Project tutorials. You are invited to subscribe to it at @DEMHISTICOM.

Publications

DEMHIST is grateful to the Fondazione Ranieri di Sorbello and our colleagues from Italy for providing the service of digitizing three of our early and very important publications. The uploads to the files are on our website at this link <https://demhist.mini.icom.museum/publications/our-publications/>.

Historic House Museums Speak to the Public: Spectacular Exhibits vs. a Philological Interpretation of History: Acts of the International Conference of DEMHIST ICOM's International Committee for Historic Houses Genova, 1-4 November, 2000.

New Forms of Management for Historic House Museums? Acts of the 2nd Annual DEMHIST Conference, Barcelona July 2001.

Historic House Museums as Witnesses of National and Local Identities: Acts of the 3rd Annual DEMHIST Conference, Amsterdam, 14-16 October 2002.

DEMHIST National Groups

Mexican national group

The annual meeting of *Red Casas Museum Mexico* for 2024 was held on 11th November 2024 at Museum Casa De La Bola. The theme was "Museums for Education Research (ICOM International Museum Day topic for 2024). Board member Ximena Jordan represented DEMHIST on the opening panel. During the meeting, Lourdes Monjes was presented with an award of recognition and gratitude for her work in the field.

The annual meeting of *Red Casas Museum Mexico* for 2025 will be held on 10th November at Museo Casa Rivas Mercado, after the completion of this report.

Brazilian national group

The Brazilian national group held the *17th Brazilian Meeting on Palaces and Historic House Museums* at the Ema Klabin House Museum on 27-29 August. The theme, House Museums: Multiple Narratives, connected to the theme of our Open talks as well as the upcoming ICOM General conference "The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities". The meeting was supported by a DEMHIST Special project Grant.

Argentinian national group

We are happy to announce that a new Group is in the process of being formed in Argentina. Leading the initiative are museum directors Andrea Elias, Carolina Carman, and María Laura Mendoza all new DEMHIST members who visited Cecilia Casas Desantes, DEMHIST Secretary in Madrid in September 2025. We hope that this group continues to grow and impact our outreach in LAC.