

ICOM MUSIC ANNUAL MEETING 2026 – CALL FOR PAPERS

Dear ICOM MUSIC Community,

The ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Instruments and Music welcomes abstracts for the 2026 meeting, which will take place on 3-5 September 2026 on the topic:

Musical Instrument Collections in Digital Transformation: Research, Access, and Museum Ethics

ICOM Music Annual Meeting 2026
St Cecilia's Hall, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
3-5 September 2026
Preliminary programme is forthcoming

Call for papers

Music museums and collections are located at the most critical point of an enormous digital transformation. This new scenario, characterized by the swift progression of technology and the global perspective of ICOM MUSIC on 'Digital Futures,' requires the new paradigms and practices of stewardship, engagement, and scholarship. The omnipresence of digital instruments—such as AI, Big Data, VR, and 3D modeling—brings about both tremendous opportunities and intricate challenges to the conservation, interpretation, and accessibility of both tangible and intangible musical heritage across the globe.

Music museums not only act as primary keepers of cultural memory, but also as repositories of digital tools and thus potentially have the power to influence the longevity of collections through digital infrastructures. By the acceptance of a socially responsible and digitally informed role, they can further develop how they gather, preserve and interpret the material and immaterial culture of music thus fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing globally. However, this digital change also brings about a need for the reassessment of the institutional identity and ethical responsibilities regarding digital ownership, data integrity, sustainability, and equitable access. In the light of this, a central question is how digital transformation is reshaping the way musical instrument collections are researched, preserved, and shared with global audiences.

Aligning with [ICOM Resolution #3 \(2025\): Positioning Museums for an Equitable, Ethical, and Sustainable Digital Future Through Technologies](#) and [ICOM's Strategic Plan 2022–2028](#), this conference will highlight both the positive and challenging circumstances, issues, and initiatives in relation to digital responsibilities and changing identities of contemporary music museums.

The Scientific Committee invites submissions of papers and other contribution formats, including panels, workshops, posters, and related formats, addressing topics that cover the core themes of **Research, Access, and Ethics in the digital world**, including but not limited to:

- **Digital Research and Documentation:** Utilizing AI and machine learning in various aspects like provenance research, historical analysis, and instrument dating; applying Big Data analytics to tracking the patterns of global art collecting; making use of 3D and multispectral scanning in material science and conservation research, among others.
- **Access and Presentation:** Creating multi-layered digital ontologies and uniform metadata for the sake of global interoperability; novel techniques for the online display of musical instruments (e.g., Digital Twins, VR/AR dreams); the part played by digital media in the promotion of multiple cultural narratives and the tackling of decolonization issues.

- **Digital Ethics:** Looking into copyright, intellectual property rights, AI, and open access policies for the digital assets of the cultural sector; the impact of digital inclusion and the digital divide in global knowledge sharing.
- **Sustainability:** the environmental and practical sustainability of the maintenance of big digital archives and platforms; changed policies on digital-first collecting and preservation.
- **Equity:** Examining how limited resources and the lack of digital technology may impact the museum experience and exploring what museums can do for solutions in a technology-driven world, e.g., in a context of low-cost digitization approaches, open-source tools, and collaborative platforms.
- **Professional Training and Capacity Building:** Developing new skills and professional training opportunities for museum staff (conservation, curating, management) in a digital environment very much saturated with technology, especially in capacity building for staff in underrepresented areas.
- **Aural, Visual, and Material Modalities:** The use of digital instruments to make a connection between the tangible artifact and its auditory and cultural context, and thus to change the interaction between people and objects, as well as between people.

Practical Matters

Proposals are welcomed that present the selected theme in its larger historical and current contexts, and future implications with innovative solutions to the global museum community through theoretical, critical, practical and strategic viewpoints, along with detailed case studies and high-level research projects.

The call is inclusive of all geographies, museological issues, viewpoints, and topics. We encourage a variety of consideration of underrepresented areas, e.g., the LAC countries and the MEASA region, as well as novel approaches, rethinking, and expanded knowledge of commonly covered topics to reflect the diversity of musical heritage and museum practices worldwide.

It is desirable that you join us in-person at the meeting, but virtual contributions will also be accepted as the conference will be hybrid.

Submitting a Proposal

Please send your abstract (max. 300 words) and short biography (max. 150 words) via email to Sarah.Deters@ed.ac.uk. In your submission, please include your full name, your ICOM number and country (if applicable) and if you plan to present online or in-person.

Please note: submissions may be edited by the Scientific Committee for the programme booklet.

Timeline

- Extended deadline for paper proposal submissions: **Sunday, 31 May 2026 (23:59 CEST)**. Late entries will not be considered.
- Notification of acceptance: by mid-June 2026

The Scientific Committee

Christian Breternitz (Musikinstrumenten-Museum SIMPK, Berlin, Germany),

Sabari Christian Dao (Musée National du Burkina Faso),

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Conference publication

Proceedings of the conference will be published by ICOM MUSIC, following the conference, in digital format. Further information is forthcoming.

Grants

Conference grants will be made available to support travel, or to cover other costs related to attending the conference. A call for travel grant applications is forthcoming.

Thank you and best wishes,

The ICOM MUSIC 2026 Conference Committee