



Report on International Museum Expo 2023

18th-20th May 2023

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The International Museum Expo, held at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi from 16th May to 18th May 2023, marked a significant milestone for the Indian museum industry. This global event, the first of its kind in India, aimed to promote the well-being of museums, highlight best practices and showcase the latest technologies and innovations in the field. The Expo was inaugurated by the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Sri Narendra Modi, who emphasized preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage. The Expo focused on sharing and implementing best practices for museums to enhance their operations and ensure the well-being of both artifacts and visitors. Various workshops, panel discussions, fun corners for children, and engaging activities were organized to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration among museum professionals. Experts worldwide shared insights on artifact preservation, museum management, community engagement, and the use of technology in enhancing visitor experiences. One of the key highlights of the Expo was the showcasing of cutting-edge technologies used in museums. Numerous interactive displays, virtual reality experiences, and augmented reality installations were featured, enabling visitors to immerse themselves in historical narratives and artifacts. The event served as a platform to discuss the integration of technology into museums and the benefits

it brings, including improved accessibility, education, and engagement. The Expo featured various workshops, seminars, and panel discussions, providing experts, scholars, and museum enthusiasts a platform to exchange ideas and insights.

The Expo was decorated with a digital conservation lab which acted as a cherry on the cake for the museum expo. This gave a window for the backstage conservation of museum objects and the technologies involved or being introduced in this field. The digital conservation lab led conservationists and experts to conduct workshops on artifact preservation and conservation techniques. Participants learned best practices for maintaining and safeguarding precious artifacts, ensuring their longevity for future generations. There were live demonstrations of the processes. Experts discussed them with the visitors and introduced the various machinery involved. Agencies participating in the conservation lab were the National Museum, National Museum Institute, Archaeological Survey Of India, National Gallery of Modern Art, and Indira Gandhi National Centre of Arts significant attractions.

The importance of community engagement and inclusivity in museums was a prominent theme throughout the Expo. Seminars focused on strategies for museums to actively involve local communities, promote diversity, and create inclusive spaces. Discussions highlighted the role of museums as platforms for dialogue and social change.

As a central pillar of the Museum Expo, Sustainability was an important feature that was decorated. Efficient museum management and sustainability were key topics discussed during the event. Professionals shared insights on effective planning, financial management, and adopting sustainable practices. Emphasis was placed on developing strategies to ensure museums' long-term viability and growth.



The mascot of the International Museum Expo is a contemporized version of the Dancing Girl made of wool in the Chennapatnam art style

Sessions in Conservation Lab

18th May 2023

Session 1: Scanning Monuments and Creating Virtual Reality

The first session delved into the development of technologies such as photogrammetry and LiDAR scanning to assess the condition of monuments and create virtual reality experiences. Photogrammetry involves capturing many images (around 2000 to 3000) to reconstruct a digital monument model. This technique allows users to walk inside the monument and digitally preserve it virtually. Objects can also be scanned using photogrammetry, providing a 360-degree camera view for comprehensive authentication. LiDAR scanning, on the other hand, uses lasers to measure the distance and create detailed three-dimensional representations of monuments. This method enables the accurate assessment of a monument's condition and aids in its preservation.

The session highlighted how these technologies are revolutionizing Conservation by offering immersive experiences and digital preservation of historical sites.

Session 2: Sensing Methods for Heritage Management

The second session focused on contact and non-contact sensing methods used to evaluate and digitize heritage management. Several techniques were discussed, each offering unique insights into preserving cultural heritage.

Thermography, ultrasound, Impact echo, and Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) were discussed in detail.

Advancements in Conservation Technology

The sessions showcased the significant advancements in conservation technology, demonstrating its potential in preserving and digitizing cultural heritage. By employing virtual reality, scanning techniques, and various sensing methods, museums, and heritage sites can enhance visitor experiences, conduct detailed assessments, and digitally preserve artifacts and monuments. These technologies provide a means to explore historical sites remotely and aid in preventive Conservation by identifying potential risks and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, they contribute to the long-term preservation of cultural heritage by creating digital archives that can be accessed by researchers, educators, and future generations.

19th May 2023

Session 3 : Preventive Conservation: Paintings by Dr. Tanushree Gupta

Appropriate measures of preventive Conservation, such as registration, storage, handling, packing and transport, security, environmental management, emergency planning, education of staff, public awareness, legal compliance, etc., were taught to the students

Session 4: Preventive Conservation: Textile/Textile paintings by Ms. Deepshikha Kalsi

Environmental requirements for textile preservation are similar to those for paintings on paper, but neglect of textiles can, in general, cause more damage. Fading is a severe problem, but light weakens the material's fibers. Audience members were also given practical tips on safely storing their old clothes, especially sarees.

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Session 5: Preventive Conservation of paper by Mr. Sunil Bhirud and Dr. Kirti Srivastav

Preventive and curative conservation methods were discussed, as the Conservation of manuscripts, maps, documents, etc., is significant in prolonging the object's life cycle. It is one of the most popular types of Conservation.

Session 6: Preventive Conservation of Taxidermy by Mr. M Manikandan

Taxidermy is the art of preserving an animal's body via mounting or stuffing for display or study. Students were taught how to portray animals in a life-like state.

Rountable on Art Conservation

The Expo highlight was the first roundtable discussion on the theme of 'Development of conservation labs and conservation profession in the country.' This was attended by Professors,

Curators, directors of Museum and Museum Institutes, and Private Practitioners. Headed by Ms. Mugdha Sinha, Joint Secretary of Culture, the discussion coalesced into a call for action to improve the field of Conservation in India. Sixteen agenda points, such as indigenous and modern conservation knowledge, educational qualification for the conservator, career opportunities, and conservation capacity building, among others, were discussed. Dr. Shalini Awasthi began the discussion by suggesting introducing conservation at the undergraduate and school levels. Mr. Anupam Shah moderated the session. The roundtable was a part of the International Museum Expo's ongoing efforts to support scholarship and advance the dialogue around contemporary conservation practices.



Roundtable Discussion on Conservation held in Conservation Lab

18th May 2023 (Day 1)

The Expo witnessed several significant product launches and celebrations during the inauguration ceremony. All these launches were done by our Honourable Prime Minister, Shri

Narendra Modi, further enhancing the overall experience for attendees. There was the unveiling of the Mascot for the International Museum Expo, inspired by the iconic figure of the Dancing Girl from Mohenjodaro. The Mascot adopted her form but was entirely suitable, dressed as an Adivasi girl, like today's usual people. Then there was a Graphic book launch of Kalanajali and Book Launch: "A Day in the Museum" published by Amar Chittrakatha. This unique publication aimed to make museum experiences more accessible and engaging for a wider audience. The book combined captivating illustrations with informative content, This unique publication aimed to make museum experiences more accessible and engaging for a wider audience. The book combined captivating illustrations with informative content, offering readers a glimpse into the fascinating world of museums. After the book launched, the audience was enthralled to experience a documentary of a visioned Museum celebrating India's 5000 years old history. Some achievements were discussed, such as making 145 museums under this tenor and connecting technology with history, whose best example is reflected through the Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya, New Delhi. The Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya in New Delhi is a remarkable example of history meeting technology. This state-of-the-art museum integrated advanced digital displays, interactive exhibits, and multimedia presentations to bring India's rich history to life. Visitors were treated to an immersive experience showcasing the country's diverse cultural heritage. The success of this museum demonstrated the potential of blending traditional artifacts with modern technologies.

The first session of the Expo was a panel discussion titled Breaking Silos: Experience sharing session of Government of India Secretaries held between 12:00- 1:00 pm. Secretaries and the Registrar of the Supreme Court shared the stage to speak about the challenges of smuggling and appropriation of artifacts. They acknowledged that efforts are being made to recover and repatriate stolen artifacts, resulting in the retrieval of over 240 ancient items in the past nine years. A Masterclass followed it on Making of a Museum held between 2:00-3:00 pm, led by Rahul Gore, an architect who delved into the physical structure of a museum. The subsequent panel discussion, Transcending Boundaries, held between 3:30-5:00 pm, further challenged the notions of traditional museums and physically delimited the museum space. This was followed by a Conversation on Museum for LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) held between 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm, a significant discussion as panelists spoke about the commitment towards sustainability goals on behalf of the museum sector. The last session of the day was a masterclass on Gaming

in museums, held between 6:00-7:00 pm, which focused on the emerging role of augmented reality and evolving need for interactive technology to make museums centers for infotainment.

The first day ended with Dastangoi Museum's performance at 7 pm, which featured a show on "dastaan-e-ajayab" or "kahani museum ki."

The second half of the Museum Expo focused on integrating technology and new conservation modes in the museum industry. The digital conservation lab became a hub of exciting sessions where professors and experts shared their research and experiences related to technological advancements in conservation. This report highlights two sessions that explored the use of virtual reality, scanning techniques, and various sensing methods to preserve and digitize cultural heritage.



First panel discussion of the International Museum Expo

19th May 2023 (Day 2)

The second day of the museum expo began with Ministerial Discussion on Vision 2047 for Museums at 10 am. Ten ministers attended it, and each gave an account of the development of the museum sector under the leadership of their respective ministries and shared plans for achieving museum sustainability by 2047. Particular demands were made by Ms. S Chandira

Priyanga, Minister of Art and Culture, Government of Puducherry, to the Union ministry to appoint a state curator and archaeologist in Puducherry. They invited international collaboration from Paris, France, to establish a digital museum with historical documents held by the French Government. Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi, Union Minister of State for External Affairs & Culture, also pointed out how microbeads are being stolen from the coast of Arikamedu, a rich archaeological site requiring further research. The following panel discussion was on Curating for everyone, held between 2-3:30 pm. Eight panelists nationwide came together to share their vision for curating and collection and discussed the industry's future. The third-panel discussion of the day was on Archaeological Site Museums, held between 3:00-4:00 pm. Moderated by Ratish Nanda, the panelists included stalwarts of archaeology - Prof Vasant Shinde of Deccan College, RS Bisht of IIT Gandhinagar, BR Mani, Former Director-General National Museum, SK Manjul and M Nambiranjana of Archaeological Survey of India on the growing importance of in situ site museums and shared their personal experiences.

A masterclass on Light Installation in Museum was held between 12-1:00 pm. Partners of ERCO, a lighting brand, helmed the class. Through an interactive session, they traced the journey of illumination. They explained the fundamental meaning of light, how to decipher the language of light, and finally, how light is used in museums and art galleries. Another Masterclass of the day was held between 3:30-4:30 pm, led by Dr. Himanshu Kumar, who has earned himself the sobriquet of an Acoustic Design Genius. He spoke at length about creating a noise-safe environment, not only in museum settings but also in day-to-day life. The next session was on selected State Museums, highlighting the role of social accountability of museums. It also included persons for upcoming museums. The last masterclass of the day was on the topic of Museums in Metaverse, between 6:00-7:00 pm. Saurav Raaj, a technologist, delivered an exciting lecture on the future of business aspects of NFTs and innovative blockchain solutions and discussed NFT Artwork Market opportunities. He gave a live demonstration on the use of Non-Fungible Tokens. The second day ended with a networking dinner where invited participants got a chance to interact with each other informally.

20th May 2023 (Day 3)

The last day of the session featured a panel discussion by Manuel Rabate of Louvre Abu, Sachichidanand Joshi of Indira Gandhi National Center of Arts, and Rajeev Sethi, an independent curator, between 10-11:30 am on their respective fields of expertise. Shobha Chaturvedi of the American Institute of Indian Studies led a Masterclass on Audio-Visual archiving from 12:00-1:00 pm, giving students and experts hands-on experience on database applications and research archives. The next Masterclass on Scientific Storage held between 3:00-4:00 pm was led by Tim Reeve of Victoria and Albert Museum, UK, who introduced the audience to Western practices of storing artifacts.

The next session, Keeping Afloat: Panel Discussion on Financial Sustainability, held between 2:00-3:00 pm, was one of the most important sessions of the Expo. Panelists from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalay, Resident Commission of Rajasthan, Cultech Wave, India Vision Institute, and Science City Kolkata, moderated by Shruti Verma Singh, came together to tackle the issue of unsteady financial viability of museums. They suggested innovative revenue-generating models ensure the longevity of the museum sector.

The next session, titled Discussion on Publishing & Programming in Museums, held between 4:30-5:30 pm, was moderated by Priyanshi Saxena. The panelists were representatives of famous names in the publishing industry like Niyogi, DAG Publications, City Palace Jaipur, Mapin Publishing House, Museum 22, and the Indian Cultural Portal. They discussed the changing nature of platforms to disseminate information about the cultural heritage of India and the world and the need to create an immersive experience.

Conversation with Ecosystem Enablers, held between 5:30-6:30 pm, was the most diverse session of the Expo as it was characterized by discussions between filmmakers, curators, architects, industrial designers, museum advisors, and leaders of tech-experimental companies. It was moderated by Richa Chaddha, known for her long career at NDTV, who brought her years of experience as a journalist to the table. They compared the museum industry with the hospitality and retail industry. They concluded that the museums could only reach their full potential and improve their ecosystem if they did not have to worry about meeting their next quarter.

The Expo came to a dazzling end with a Cultural Programme beginning from 6:30 onwards.

Conclusion

The second half of the Museum Expo at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, focused on integrating technology and conservation in the museum industry. The sessions on scanning monuments, creating virtual reality experiences, and exploring various sensing methods showcased significant advancements in this field. By leveraging these technologies, museums can enhance their conservation efforts, improve visitor engagement, and digitally preserve cultural heritage to benefit present and future generations.



Students of School of Heritage Research and Management with Dr. Alok Tripathi, Assistant Director-General of Archaeological Survey of India