

EDITORIAL

THE POTENTIAL OF INCLUSIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN MUSEUM SETTINGS

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This volume of the *Journal of Inclusive Methodology and Technology in Learning and Teaching* is a *Special issue* covering the topic of *the potential of inclusive technologies in museum settings*. This open call received responses from a group comprising of professors, researchers, Ph.D. students, and museum directors, whose contributions facilitated a significant linkage between universities and organizations tasked with safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage. Notably, the papers from Italy, Switzerland, and Cyprus present reflections that highlight the significant relevance of the subject matter, which extends beyond the boundaries of the Italian peninsula to encompass diverse regions such as Switzerland, a central geographic hub of Europe, and Cyprus, a bordering island of Asia.

This special issue centers on the topic of museums. What is a museum? How can it be defined in contemporary times? In order to establish an up-to-date and accurate definition, the International Council of Museums' International Committee for Museology (ICOM) has stipulated that a museum is an enduring, non-commercial establishment that is accessible to the general public and prioritizes research (this definition can be accessed at icom.museum/en).

Museums collect and preserve tangible and intangible evidence of human activity, including artistic creativity, scientific and technological advancements, as well as cultural traditions and music. Additionally, certain museums pay homage to celebrated historical figures, exemplified by the Mozart House in Vienna and De Chirico's House in Rome's Piazza di Spagna. Despite their unique focuses, museums share the common characteristic of serving as a distinguished setting for non-formal education.

The incorporation of innovative technologies, including virtual reality and online platforms, has enhanced the capacities of contemporary museums. This development has enabled the creation of virtual museums. It is therefore imperative to delve into the precise definition of a museum, and the historical circumstances that have contributed to its present understanding. Particularly, this notion is subject to perpetual evolution, due to the continual reconfiguration of exhibition practices in both physical and virtual domains, as well as the objects themselves. These alterations are informed by societal customs and practices, and determine the objects that are deemed worthy of preservation as "museum pieces" for future generations. The term museum is frequently linked with a tangible space wherein individuals can navigate and examine a delimited setting characterized by impassable perimeters, wherein rare and valuable objects are safeguarded. Such an understanding raises a preliminary consideration, namely, that museums ought not to function as repositories for asset concealment, but rather as forums for their promotion. Therefore, there is a need for an appropriate balance to be struck between preserving assets and promoting them. Several observations can be derived from the aforementioned statement. Firstly, it is evident that the contemporary era is marked by the prevalence of virtual experiences, wherein individuals can

engage with digital replications of tangible objects without compromising on their physicality. Virtual artefacts can be effortlessly maneuvered and navigated. Secondly, it can be inferred that museums are intrinsically tied to the concept of time, in addition to space. The museum, akin to a vast library, is a location that facilitates thorough exploration and consultation. Consequently, individuals often visit museums to conduct in-depth research and study the primary works displayed within the institution. This JIMTLT special issue aims to provide the reader with an array of informative and insightful considerations regarding the current state of the art in various areas of non-formal education. These include teaching methodology, operational considerations for educational activities in museum or outdoor environments, technologies for 3D scanning and printing, the analysis and creative remodeling of reality in virtual environments, serious and edugames, digital assets, digital storytelling, digital educational tools, and the role of emotions and empathy in non-formal learning environments. This Special Issue acknowledges the significance of museums in conjunction with academic establishments in preserving and disseminating both the tangible heritage of humanity and the intangible cultural heritage, which encompasses performing arts, oral traditions, and social practices. The authors contributing to this volume contend that museums surpass their role as mere repositories of valuable and historically significant works of art, objects, and artifacts, and instead, are beloved cultural institutions that serve as the crowning jewels of our cities. *Enjoy the reading.*