



## A Theory-Practice Divide in a Museum Showcase

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**Abstract:** We aim to map the divide between practice and research in the field of knowledge production and diffusion related to museum studies. In doing so, we draw on the domain literature regarding the evolution of museums as institutions and its implications for the development of a dedicated field of studies. The current research focuses on the publishing work undertaken by museum professionals and researchers, as an essential component contributing to the advancement of research as well as to the diffusion of good practices. More precisely, we scrutinized European journals from the domain available on the Web of Science (WoS) as well as journals not included in the “main” scientific flows and generally published in various languages, other than English.

**Keywords:** museum studies journals; academic research; theory-practice gap.

### Introduction

The divide between practice and research, on one hand, and the different perspectives proposed by scholars and museum professionals, on the other hand, are two consistent parts of the same issue; namely how to produce and diffuse knowledge related to the rather shifting and developing domain of museum studies. Not only museums are increasingly more dynamic and diverse in terms of activities and relevance (Janes, & Sandell, 2019), but also museum studies as a domain registered increased attention as an academic field, as well as a focus on practical training and networking (Edson, 2013; MacLeod, 2011; Lorente, 2012).

Not only have museum missions and associated activities changed, but also the way they related and interact with their communities is much different today compared to a few decades ago. Now, museums are participatory, engaging organizations (Simon, 2010). Therefore, museum professionals are not any more simple scientists. They are interpreters, facilitators, entertainers, advocates, etc. They need new sets of knowledge and skills, besides the more traditional, technical ones, related to the understanding and preservation of the museum’s collections.

The current study builds upon the divisions above mentioned and aims to map the main discussions (themes) that are shared both to academic and practitioner communities, via scholarly and professional journals encompassing the larger domain of museum studies. It includes publications focused on research, knowledge production, and diffusion, as well as experience sharing related to museums of all types (art museums, natural history, science museums, and archaeology & history museums) that are located in Europe.

In doing so, we draw on the domain literature regarding the evolution of museum studies as an academic discipline as well as a distinct field of activity, considered in its capacity of being a terrain for knowledge production, diffusion, and transfer. We also take into consideration how the relationship between the academic environment and

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### How to cite

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museums developed over time (in Europe) as various foundational decisions and approaches are producing consequences nowadays. This is the first component undergoing the discussion on a theory-practice divide. The second one explores the narratives build around practice vs. research in museum studies and their practical consequences. A third theoretical component relies on the current discussions about how publishing practices are shaping knowledge diffusion but also its production. The proposed investigation focuses on journals dedicated to museum studies: both journals available on the Web of Science (WoS) as well as journals not included in the “main” scientific flows generally published in various languages, other than English.

### **Theory vs. practice - a gap historically embedded in museum development**

In this section, we will mainly consider museums as institutions, namely instances whose historical development was eventually determined by all sorts of processes aimed at building a (cultural) heritage (Poulot, 1992). When the *curiosity cabinets* fashion ended, museums built around them (especially in continental Europe) have entered a new era, both in terms of scientific organization and mission. Collections and collecting practices were transformed all over Europe and scientific methods of inventory were adopted. It worths remembering that, modern museums (of art, history, archaeology) emerged as a progressive articulation between works of art and items collected by antiquarians, on one hand, and history as constructed by scholarly literature on the other hand (Poulot, 2011).

Nowadays museums (mainly in Western countries) are expected to get more and more involved with current problems of society, eventually seeking to bring about social change. There is an ongoing debate about whether their actions (mainly organizing exhibitions) should focus on addressing inequalities, injustices, and environmental crises, as they might not fall within the limits of fundamental professional values or it might go beyond the mission of museums in general (Janes, & Sandell, 2019). With or without an activist touch, today’s understanding of museum collections and mission is built upon the idea that such an institution proposes an enlightened and critical reading of works and objects, by means of creating a framework for their authentic recognition within a specific historical and formal interpretation system (Poulot, 2011).

But museums walked a long way to arrive at this point. Firstly, activities that are part of working in a museum and for a museum have also been subjected to a process of professionalization that took place concerning similar processes: the professionalization of archaeology, history, art history, and so on. Meanwhile the more “traditional” disciplines, such as archaeology for example - acquired the status of academic discipline and became a profession open to a larger social category (Taylor, 1995) - sometime between the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 1960s, it took longer to build similar networks and to gain (public and academic) acknowledgment for museum studies (Teather, 1991). This longer period of becoming might be one of the root causes of the current division between *uses and practices* as they have been established in museums and the critical thinking any professional discipline needs to really become a professional discipline; in short, one of the main causes that lay at the foundation of **the gap between theory and practice** that is still a relevant topic of discussion within the world of museum studies. One should also bear in mind that, even after a consistent museological work has been developed, it still missed from the mainstream literature of the profession (Teather, 1991). Last, but not least, the interest in museums showed by scholars coming from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and semiotics contributed to the generation of a large body of academic literature on museums. But its impact on museum professionals was minimum, partly because it was loaded with difficulty to master, specific jargon, and partly because it proposed a vision from

„outside”, that did not make much sense in the context of their work. This situation also enhanced the divide between practitioners and theorists.

Secondly, standing at a crossroad between history, high culture, and popular culture, a single discipline is often inadequately narrow for defining the hybrid (Rice, 2003) research activities that are embedded in the construction of a museum theory or on various types of research needed for the museum to fulfill their mission. **Visitor studies** – developed in their actual form since the 80s (Bitgood, & Shettel, 1996) are heavily drawing on sociology, meanwhile, collections management (including inventorying and cataloging, curation, with the new additions of digital preserving and digital curation) that are relying more on empirical approaches and, therefore, on practices rather than theory, are usually considered under the name of **museology**. However, museology is understood today as more than the science or practice of organizing, arranging, and managing museums; with the term “new museology” coined in 1989 and developed around ICOM and various initiatives to take museums into an age of increased democratization of museological tools and heritage processes (Assunção dos Santos, 2010) yet another layer was added to museum practices. Last, but not least, investigating museums from **a historic perspective** (or merely through the lens of the institutional memory) has also built a consistent approach around research focused on museums (Poulot, 2011).

Recently, these different research paths are nurturing one another, and cross-sectorial approaches are to be found under the larger umbrella of **museum studies**. Nevertheless, until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, research about museums was a mix of personal experience, with some additions from predecessors’ experience - elevated at the role of the theoretical model (Teather, 1991). Meanwhile, a historical view of museums was limited to contexts related to foundational celebrations or anniversaries (Poulot, 1992). A lasting result of these approaches is, for sure, the consolidation of the self-consciousness and coherence of the museum as an institution without which, the development of museum studies as they are now would be difficult to imagine.

To sum up, the context in which museums developed as institutions, together with inputs coming from various academic disciplines as well as from the professionalization of the domain (building up professional associations, career paths, codes and guidelines, conferences, professional qualifications, etc.) shaped the lines along which we may discuss today a split between practitioners and theoreticians, between academic researchers interested in museums sometimes staff members) and museum professionals.

To all these considerations we should have added the myriad of exceptions and specificities coming from various national contexts. A unified history of museums in Europe (Ballé, Poulot, 2020) could better inform the reasons why museum studies took their current shape. For now, we will just remind that all over Europe museums as we know them today were constructed either from royal and/or church collections, either from a variety of curiosities cabinets and, in most cases, they owe a lot the national construction that took place during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In each country, there is a “strong” national tradition influencing “how things are done” as well as the influence of international bodies, such as UNESCO, ICOM, and ICOMOS in terms of guidelines for good practices and museological perspective. On top of this “practical” side, the domain literature emerging from France and for a while from the USSR and bearing the philosophy of their specific contexts influenced past generations of professionals, meanwhile, the new generation is prone to Anglophone literature proposing British and respectively American approaches on museum studies. We just briefly mention that the American museums’ traditions are different from those of Europe, which shaped both their philosophy and practical approaches.

### **The dysfunctional divide between practitioners and researchers/theorists**

The split between practitioners and researchers is both a line that we are accustomed to thinking along, as well as a reality that underlies everything related to museums studies. This division is common to many other domains; in the case of museums, its root causes are to be found both in the development of the field of study as well as in the way we, as a society, organize the work that is supposed to take place in a museum. Bearing in mind that much writing on the topic is opinion-heavy and evidence-light (Pinfield, et al., 2020), we will point out several aspects concerning museums.

As part of the larger debate of the research-practice gap, the theory-practice gap could be considered from three different angles: as a knowledge transfer problem, as a philosophical problem, and as a knowledge production problem (Van de Ven, & Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, factors such as knowledge, culture, motivation, relevance, immediacy, publication, reading, terminology, activity, education, and temporal (Haddow & Klobas, 2004) are taken into consideration when assessing what is actually underpinning this gap. Practitioner's involvement with theory is limited by objective realities, such as time, resources, management expectations (Pinfield, et al., 2020); meanwhile, academics involvement with practice is also limited by external factors. Therefore, tensions arising between researchers and practitioners might be best explained if looking at each one main "philosophy": they rely on competing belief systems and methodological rationales and they use different core resources of ideological legitimacy (Reed, 2009).

For this reason, one of the most typical approaches is to examine the differences as being driven by motivations or by professional perspectives exhibition (Pinfield, et al., 2020): researchers and academics value theory and, therefore, prioritize first and foremost a view where the main discourse is about how to theoretically frame any investigation related to museums. Meanwhile, practitioners value pragmatism and, therefore, prioritize action (in the everyday work they do need guidelines about organizing the collections, practical guides for organizing an. In addition, academics and museum practitioners are facing, in their day-to-day activities different types of pressures and work cycles, like any other knowledge-based industries (Murphy, 2018). Another way of looking at the divide between researchers interested in museums and museum professionals (comprising both theory-related, as well as technical aspects) is to consider the entire body of museum professionals as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Museum studies, consisting of a complex web of relationships and working practices have their own history of transformation (Teather, 1991; Greenhill, 1992; Starn, 2005, Poulot, 2009; Lorente, 2015) as have museums. From the "old museology" to the "new museology" and nowadays "critical museology" all kinds of divisions between researchers and practitioners re-surfaced basically every time a holistic view on museums was proposed, or, alternatively, every time the proposed framework was built around differences, change, and rupture. Therefore, any discussion about researchers vs. practitioners, about academics involvement with museum studies as well as about museum professionals relying on theory-informed practices has to take into consideration that, museum studies as a field is actually constructed around the circuit of knowledge production and diffusion circulating both ways: from academia to museums and from museums to academia.

Although more and more studies are pointing to the limits of knowledge production and diffusion that the current *publish or perish* model adopted in academia (Sá, Ferreira, Santos, & Serpa, 2020) the publication and circulation of academic and professional

journals is an important milestone for the activity of museum professionals as well as for researchers. Therefore, before exploring how these journals are shaping the field of museum studies in Europe, we will briefly comment upon the larger framework in which they operate.

### **Academic networks / professional networks**

As recent studies are pointing out, significant parts of the research ecosystem, such as the journal databases are structurally designed to discourage research from the arts, humanities, and social sciences. When it comes to research diffusion within a scholarly environment, journal databases such as Web of Science and Scopus are contributing to reinforcing a narrower perspective of knowledge in general, that is not globally representative (Tennant, 2020). Furthermore, the global knowledge production system, as it is shaped by today's main publishers seems to overlook research produced in other languages than English or from non-Western countries, such as Russia and the ex-Soviet area (Alimova, & Brumshteyn, 2020).

Looking at economic data, another disturbing perspective on how science and research are built nowadays unveils the fact that, at least within the OECD countries, research and development expenditures are reported mainly by the business sector meanwhile the same type of expenditures are at lower rates in higher education (Vincent-Lancrin, 2006). Some notable exceptions come from European countries belonging to the Southern and the Eastern part of the continent but, as we have already seen, these regions are already under-represented in the publishing system build around trusted or authoritative sources of bibliometric data across different disciplines.

Despite the chronic underfunding, universities are more and more often called to co-design new avenues to knowledge creation, on top of their other type of involvement with the community or the creation of creating benefits for firms, communities, economies, and students alike (Guenther, 2020). Long- and middle-term publishing strategy is also determined by the availability, or the lack of funds intended to cover publishing costs (language review, publication fees) in open access journals. Whether those funds are coming from public institutions (Guenther, 2020) or other types of grants is paramount in shaping knowledge production and diffusion. On the other hand, there is also a lot of unpaid work to be acknowledged in the reviewing process, with direct consequences on the length of a reviewing cycle; simultaneously, as recent studies that finding peer reviewers is becoming harder, even as the overall volume of publications rises globally (Vesper, 2018).

On the other hand, academics are less inclined to take part in outreach activities - such as publishing outside the circle of journals that are reflected in the metrics relevant for career advancement - as this is considered time-consuming (Kassab, 2019). Reasons for this approach might range from objective ones to subjective ones (relevance for academic advancement, personal involvement in a certain field of investigation, the fit with organizational research lines, and lack of time associated with a lot of academic and research responsibilities - to mention only a few).

There is growing evidence arguing that the social value of science is not confined only to the research publication and dissemination process but belongs to a complex and iterative process of social interactions with research users, beneficiaries, and other intended and unintended stakeholders (McLean, & Sen, 2019). Professional publications in museums might fall within this category, as they are intentionally designed to disseminate information and to circulate at the periphery of the „central” academic research structures (universities, research centers, and institutes).

## Methodology

The present investigation is two-folded – part of it is concentrated on the so-called „main academic research”, part of it focuses on the professional research networks. The first direction investigates the studies published in the journals indexed in the most prestigious database Clarivate Analytics. The indexation process is debatable, some researchers considering it a marketing tool, an instrument through which the company manipulates publishers and researchers, characterized by lack of transparency and accountability (da Silva, & Bernès, 2018). Despite that the ranking offered by prestigious academic indexes, and the associated Hirsch indexes, are the target of various critical evaluations (Popa, 2021), the indexing/ranking of journals they propose is relevant, since research institutes, universities, and educational systems around the world use the scientometrics to boost research and the indexes associated to Clarivate Analytics are the most important ones in many countries (Cantu-Ortiz, 2017). We also stress that among professionals in museums being highly indexed seems to be less important. For them, the professional research networks, including journals published by museums and museum organizations, seem to be more relevant.

Having this double standard in mind, we proceeded to the first investigation, of museum studies journals available on the Web of Science (WoS). We had in mind several steps. Browsing WoS we aimed to design a database comprising journals and articles dedicated to museum studies. Even if some of the journals published by museums around the world might include contributions in the field of museum studies, because their main aims are related to the advancement of research of the scientific fields and collections to which they are dedicated, we excluded them from our database. The second step consisted of analyzing the database having in mind several dimensions: the topics addressed, the field of knowledge, the geographic distribution, and the main organizations involved. The database was analyzed both by using the facilities offered by WoS and VosViewer. This tool presents distance-based visualizations of bibliometric networks, using text mining techniques. The closer the nodes, the more related are the topics displayed, but otherwise, the in-depth investigation of the networks is relatively limited (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014). The topics are then grouped in clusters, based on proximity, not content.

The second part of the investigation concentrates on the journals dedicated to museum studies, not included in the “main” scientific flows (i.e. the journals included in the most praised academic databases), and which are generally published in various languages, other than English. We hypothesize that most of these journals are addressing mainly a professional audience, are promoting best practices in the museums as well as professional development of the museums’ employees, and are mainly practice-oriented. To identify a European journal database as wide as possible, we initiated successive online searches, both considering the wider WWW, as well as specific academic databases which cover more journals with local interests (e.g. CEEOL, DOAJ, Index Copernicus). The general search used the keywords such as museum studies journal and variations both in English and in various European languages. Also, all professional associations in Europe, such as national chapters of ICOM or national museum associations have been investigated, to identify if they publish professional periodicals.

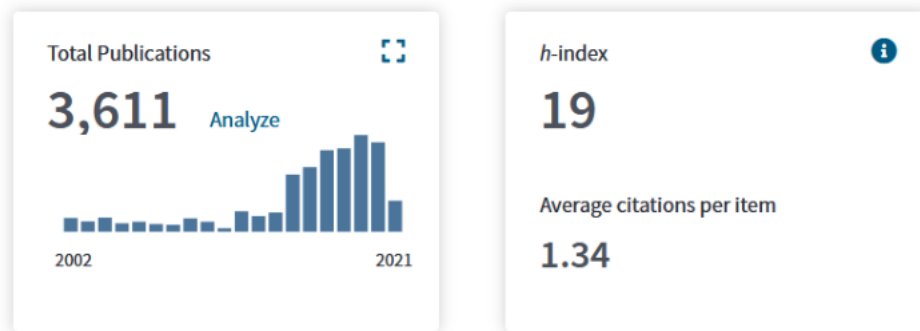
## Museum research on WOS

There are ten journals included in WoS, not taking into account the journals of various museums (see Table 1). These journals are published by powerful publishing houses, and some are associated with strong organizations, such as ICOM. Most of these journals are recently added in ESCI, not having an impact factor. There are also journals with a long tradition, the oldest ones being edited since 1948. Another museum-related journal included in WoS is *Visitor Studies*. We decided not to include this journal in the sample, being too specific and probably having a great impact on the thematic analysis.

**Table 1. Journals included in Clarivate Analytics - the World of Science (WoS)**

Journal	Publisher	Indexing & abstracting	Date - Covered since	No. of issues/year
Museum International	ICOM & Wiley	EBSCO Publishing, ProQuest, Clarivate Analytics, BIAB, IBR & IBZ, RILM, Scopus	1948 - 1993	4
Museum	UNESCO		1948-1992 - 1975-1992	4
Curator. The Museum Journal	Wiley Periodicals	ProQuest, Clarivate Analytics, Scopus	1958 - 2012	4
Journal of Museum Education	Taylor & Francis	Periodicals Index Online, ESCI, Scopus	1973/1984 - 2015	4
Museum Anthropology	Wiley Periodicals	EBSCO Publishing, Anthropological Literature (Harvard University), ProQuest, MLA, Scopus	1976 - 2015	2
Museum Management and Curatorship	Taylor & Francis	Council for British Archaeology - British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography, Clarivate Analytics, EBSCOhost, Scopus, Gale, OCLC, ProQuest	1982/1990 - 2015	6
Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies	UCL Institute of Archaeology & British Library	ERIH Plus, Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, CrossRef, JISC KB+, SHERPA RoMEO, DOAJ Google Scholar, Cengage Learning, AATA Online	1996 - 2015	Ongoing
Museum History Journal	Taylor & Francis	ESCI, ERIH. Periodicals Index Online, Scopus	2008 - 2015	2
Museum Worlds	Berghahn Journals	CABI Abstracts (CABI), ESCI, ERIH Plus, Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, Scopus	2013 - 2017	1
Museologia Scientifica	Associazione Musei Scientifici	ESCI	2007 (new series) - 2017	1

The search revealed 3,611 entries from these periodicals since 1975. Eliminating editorials, reviews, etc. resulted a number of 2,747 – articles. Considering the evolution of the publication, one observed a significant increase in the past few years, with a jump registered in 2015 (see Figure 1).



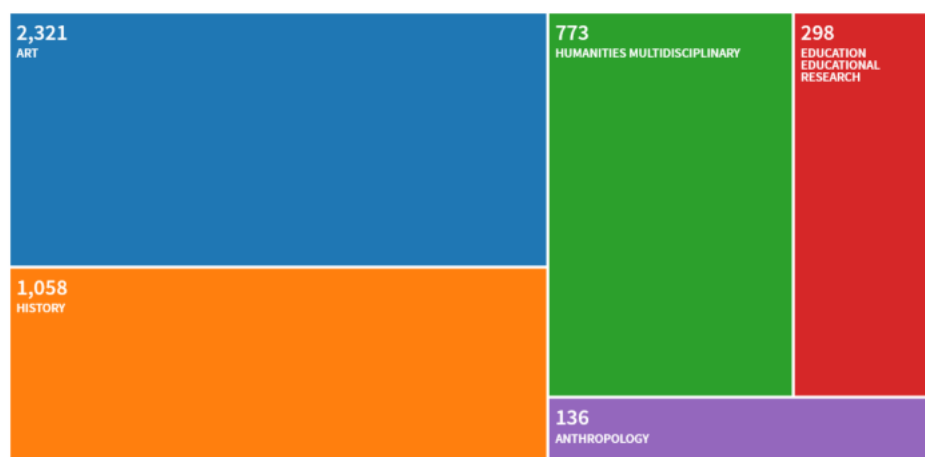
**Figure 1.** The main reports of WoS

The average citation number (considered only in WoS) is 1.34, which is low in our opinion, showing the overall reduced visibility of these studies. Some journals enjoy higher visibility and impact than others. Table 2 shows that the most influential journal of them is *Curator: The Museum Journal*.

**Table 2.** The relative influence of museum journals indexed in WoS

Journal	h-index	Average citations per item
Museum International	14	1.8
Museum	7	0.42
Curator. The Museum Journal	15	2.44
Journal of Museum Education	7	1.25
Museum Anthropology	6	1.03
Museum Management and Curatorship	10	1.74
J. of Conservation and Museum Studies	3	1.16
Museum History Journal	4	0.79
Museum Worlds	3	0.25
Museologia Scientifica	2	0.23

WoS also centralized the publications according to the main domains of investigation. Considering this aspect, most of the publications included in the previous journals are in the field of Art and History (see Figure 2). Museum education is also a relevant topic.



**Figure 2.** The main domains of research  
 (Source: Web of Science)

WoS also documents a geographical polarization (Figure 3). Most of the research is developed in the US, the UK, Canada, France, Austria, Italy, and Germany. In terms of

organizations, the best-represented ones are The Smithsonian Institutions and UNESCO, followed by several universities (Figure 4).

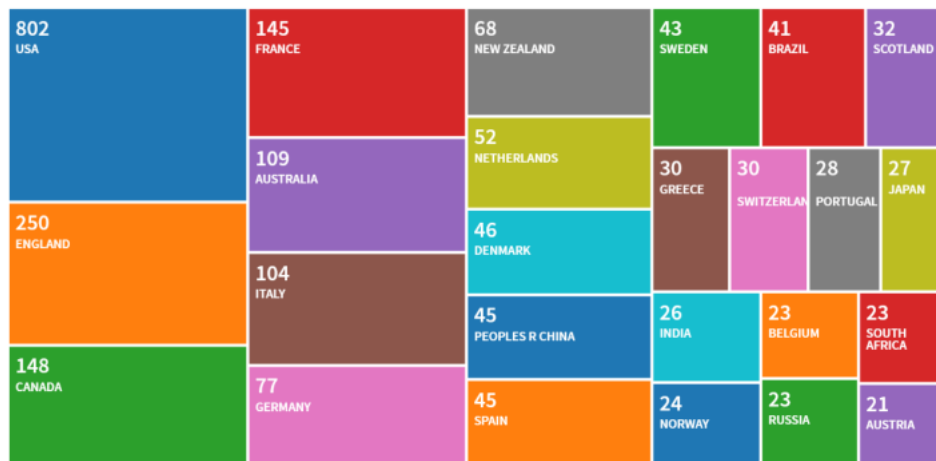


Figure 3. The geographic distribution of researchers (Source: Web of Science)



Figure 4. The institutions best represented in WoS (Source: Web of Science)

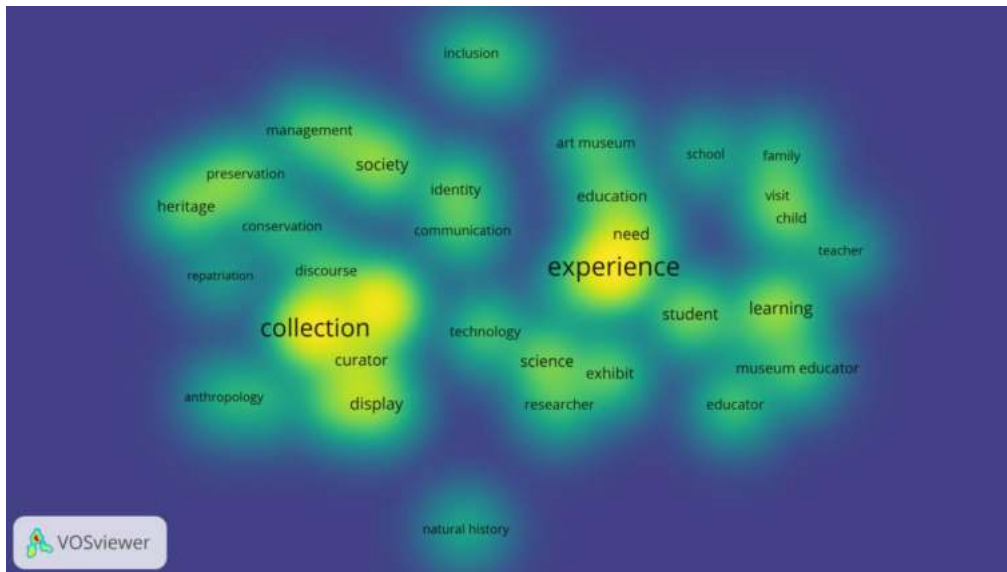
To map the thematic interests of researchers publishing in these journals, we used VOSViewer 1.6.16. Figure 5 illustrates the main research topics and the relationships between them, considering the titles of the articles included since they synthesize the best main points presented by researchers. One observes that the heritage preserved and curated by museums is at the center of the research. A second line of investigation seems to be related to the very pressing discussions on cultural property and repatriation.



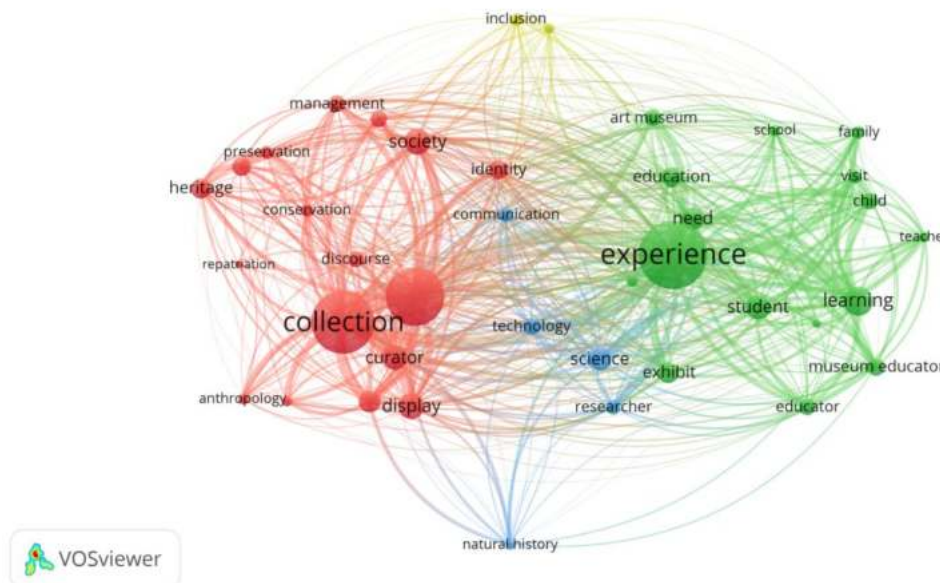
Figure 5. The main research interests. Title map

Extending the research to the content of the studies published, we obtain a more detailed picture of the interests. Figure 6 presents the key thematic focus: collection,

history, experience, and learning. It presents a bipolar interest – both in understanding heritage and the educational processes associated with museums. The connections between investigated topics are presented in Figure 7, presenting 4 clusters.

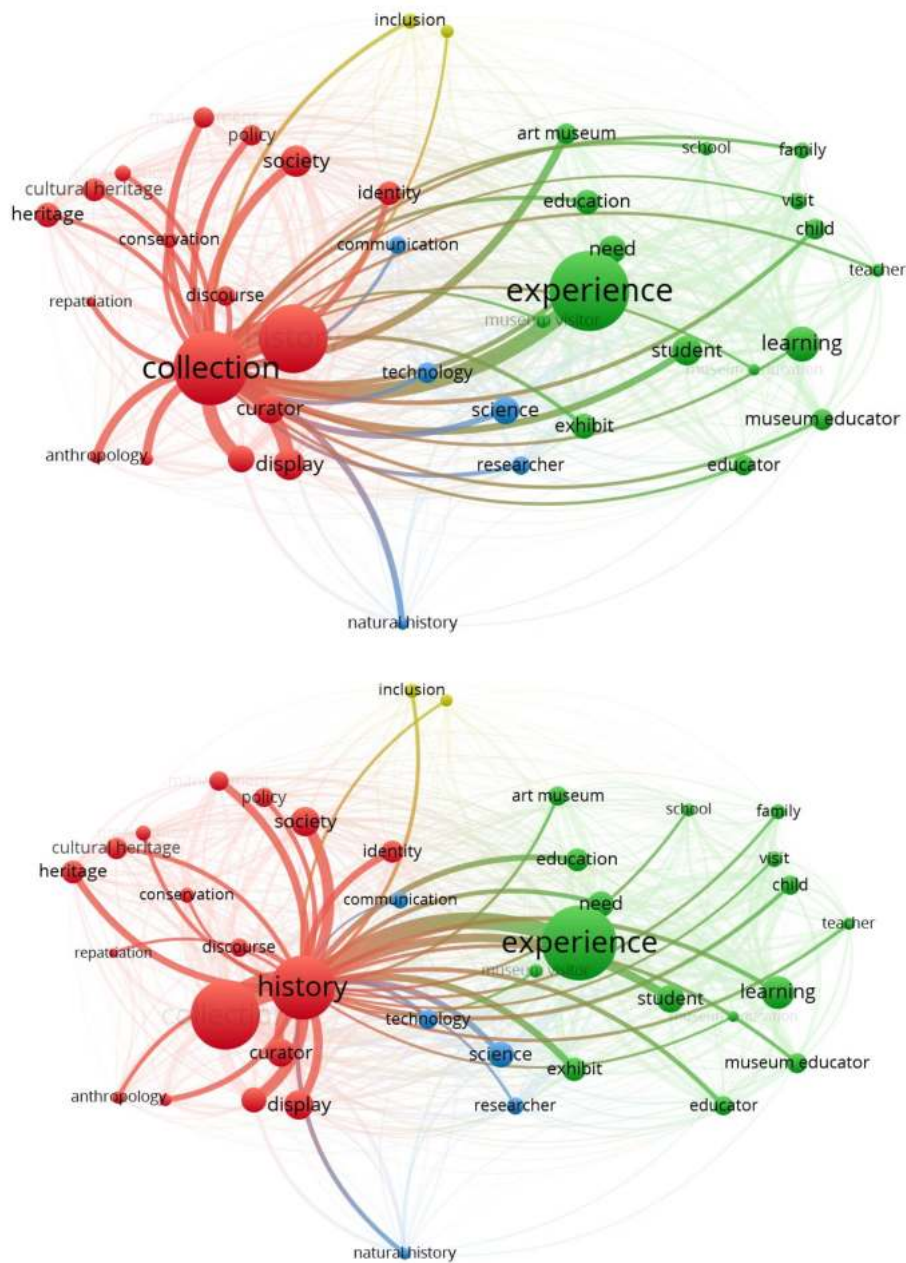


**Figure 6. Density visualization of the main research topics**



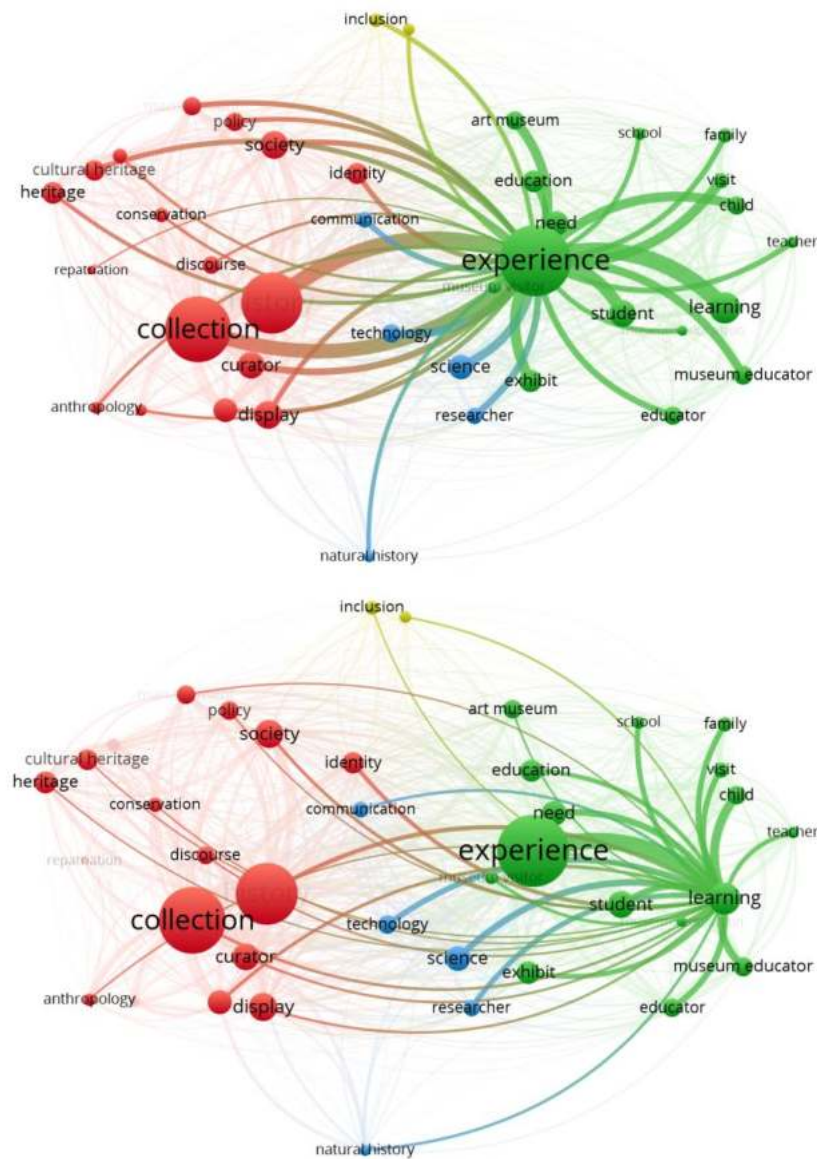
**Figure 7. Clustering and networks of the main research topics**

The distance between topics shows how much associated they are, while the weight of the connecting lines presents their association in research. Two of the four clusters identified are dominant, presenting a balanced concern both for the museum-side and for the visitor-side. The red cluster represents the interests interested in collections and heritage. It includes 17 items: anthropology, collection, conservation, cultural heritage, curator, discourse, display, heritage, history, identity, management, museum collection, national museum, policy, preservation, repatriation, society. The five dominant topics are collection, history, curator, display, and society. The connections between the main two and the rest of the dominant topics are presented in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** *The thematic connection between the main items of the red cluster*

The green cluster identifies the main processes associated with museum experience, with a strong emphasis on the educational component. There are 16 items included: art museum, child, education, educator, exhibit, experience, family, learning, museum education, museum educator, museum visitor, need, school, student, teacher, and visit. The two main concerns are experience and learning. Figure 9 presents the connections to these two topics.



**Figure 9.** *The thematic connection between the main items of the green cluster*

Two minor clusters have been also evidenced. The blue one comprises communication, researcher, science, natural history, and technology. The yellow one includes only two items: diversity and inclusion.

We also did a bibliographic coupling of the authors. Considering the relatively small sample, we chose to select authors with at least 3 publications. The most prolific authors in the database are K. Hudson with 10 publications (no link strength, most publications were registered in *Museum International*), Y. Herreman with 9 publications (no link strength, working with *Museum* and *Museum International*), D. Anderson and J.E. Heimlich with 6 publications each (with 3 and 2 link strengths). The result shows 15 authors with at least one link between them and one consistent cluster containing V. Dziekan, J. Gilbert, and S. Mehzoud.

## Periodicals addressing museum studies published in Europe

### *Periodicals published by professional associations*

From 45 European countries, we identified 25 national museum associations. All the European countries have national chapters for the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and in some countries these branches are very strong, acting at the same time as national professional associations. In some countries, such as France, Portugal, and Spain, the ICOM national organizations have a very complex activity, including periodical publications. ICOM France publishes *La lettre du Comité national français de l'ICOM*, an open access annual publication ([https://www.icom-musees.fr/toutes-les-ressources?type%5B0%5D=type\\_de\\_document%3A30](https://www.icom-musees.fr/toutes-les-ressources?type%5B0%5D=type_de_document%3A30)). ICOM Portugal publishes a few times annually *Boletim ICOM Portugal*, accessible to members (<https://icom-portugal.org/boletim-icom-pt/>). Similarly, ICOM Spain has its own periodical *ICOM CE Digital*, open access to those interested (<https://www.icom-ce.org/revista-icom-ce-digital/>). We also identified 5 European associations (AEJM - Association of European Jewish museums, AEOM - Association of European Open Air Museums, Association of European Printing Museums, NEMO, European Network of Science Centers and Museums) and one regional one (BMN - Balkan Museum Network)

In some countries (Belgium and Italy) we could not identify national museum associations besides the ICOM national chapters, but regional ones. The research also revealed some country-level thematic organizations (in Germany, Spain, France, Romania, or Russia), such as the Wine Museums Association in Spain or the Association of Memory Museums in Russia. We identified seven such associations, organized at the national level besides a few international associations such as *Hands-on!*, but probably their number and diversity are larger. The relative online invisibility of such organizations is, partly, related to the difficulty to find a specific national organization, operating in a specific language, using mainly searching tools in English or translation instruments offered by online browsers. Nevertheless, it might be the case that these organizations generally lack the necessary abilities of online proficient communication, their websites are not benefiting from SEO, etc.

We did not specifically monitor the activity of these associations, but since we accessed each website, we observed their activity. Most of them are concerned about professional advancement in the museum sector, but they do not display a very complex approach (or at least this is how they communicate their activity). Some of them are involved in many projects and publish diverse reports and volumes interesting for the professionals in museums, such as the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO) or the associations of the EU countries with a long history of the sector.

In terms of periodical publications, we identify museum journals published by the European Network of Science Centers and Museums, Bundesverband Museumspädagogik, German Museums Association, Irish Museums Association, Lithuanian Museums Association, Swiss Museums Association, and Museums Association (UK). To these, the three publications of ICOM national committees should be added. We did not count the newsletters the museum associations distribute for their members, or maybe for a wider audience in some cases. We considered only the periodic publications which are more consistent, contributing not only to informing and to advocating in the field, but also to better understanding the evolutions, presenting more complex analysis, or contributing to the professional development of the recipients.

The editorial strategies of these publications vary a lot. For instance, the Museums Association of the UK publishes the *Museums Journal* (<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/>). This is an online platform of news, best practices, analysis, and interpretations relevant for all museum professionals. It is continuously updated. The content is featured in several sections: News, Analysis, Opinion, In practice, People, Features, Reviews, and Careers guide. The

German Association of Museums has a different approach. It proposes two types of periodicals. The *Bulletin* is issued quarterly for its members ([https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp\\_publication\\_art=bulletin](https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp_publication_art=bulletin)). The *Bulletin* informs about "offers and focal points of our work. We give tips on current, museum-relevant topics and inform you about the work of our specialist groups and working groups". The *Museumskunde* is a scientific publication published twice a year ([https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp\\_publication\\_art=museumskunde](https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp_publication_art=museumskunde)). On one hand, *Museumskunde* is a prestigious journal with a long history (since 1905). It addresses a wide range of topics in the field of museum studies, but each issue has a special focus. Especially in the first decades, the journal published information on museums worldwide (Meyer, 2014), but lately, it is more focused on the specific aspects relevant for German museums, but not only for them. For instance, the past few topics addressed by it were: Current expectations of the collection's work, Museums in the digital age, or The future of technology and industrial museums.

Another brief discussion is suitable concerning *Nuova Museologia*, a biannual publication edited by Giovanni Pinna. It was initiated under the umbrella of ICOM Italia, but today this affiliation is not mentioned anymore in the journal or its website (<https://www.nuovamuseologia.it/>). The journal is meant to be a manifest for the "new museology". Many of its articles discuss best practices in this field, almost exclusively from Italy, even if it encourages professionals and researchers from around the world to contribute by publishing contributions in the original languages (English, German, French, and Spanish – sic!). All the issues we browsed are published in Italian and have Italian authors. Nevertheless, the articles investigate best practices in their domains, therefore they are of relevance to all museum professionals.

The last journal we present in this section is *Spokes Mag* (<https://www.ecsite.eu/activities-and-services/news-and-publications/digital-spokes>), published by the European Network of Science Centers and Museums. It was established as a monthly publication in April 2015 and has become a quarterly from January 2021. It is an open-access English publication. It addresses various topics in museum studies, relevant to the contemporary dynamics of the museum sector. It is well structured, most issues including the following sections: In-depth, Lookout, Column, News and Resources.

### ***Mining the museum studies journals published in Europe***

The exploration of museum-related journals was a laborious process, as presented previously. Nevertheless, considering the language barriers and also various editorial practices, we could finally establish a list of 28 journals from 16 European countries (Table 3). Two of the journals are common with the list of highly indexed journals.

**Table 3. Museum studies focused on journals published in Europe**

<b>Name of the journal</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Albania	
Studime Muzeologjike / Museological Studies	National Historical Museum of Albania
Croatia	
Informatica Museologica	Museum Documentation Center
Muzeologija / Museology	Museum Documentation Center
Czech Republic	
Muzeum: Muzejní a vlastivědná práce / Museum: Museum and Regional Studies	National Museum
Germany	
MuseumsJournal	Kulturprojekte Berlin
Museumskunde	Deutsche Museumsbund
Standbein Spielbein	Bundesverband Museumspädagogik

Greece	
MusEd, Museum - School - Education	Museum of School Life and Education & National Centre for Research and Rescue of School Materials
The Museum	University of Athens
Ireland	
Museum Ireland	Irish Museums Association
Italy	
Museologia Scientifica / Scientific Museology	Associazione Nazionale Musei Scientifici
Nuova museologia / New Museology	
Lithuania	
Acta Museologica Lithuanica	Museology Department of the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University
Lietuvos Muziejai / Lithuanian Museums	Lithuanian Museum Association
Poland	
Muzeológia a Kultúrne Dedičstvo / Museology and Cultural Heritage	Comenius University
Portugal	
Cadernos de Sociomuseologia	Universitárias Lusófonas
Midas: Museus e Estudos Interdisciplinares	Universidade de Évora
Revista de Museus / Museums Journal	Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
Romania	
Revista muzeelor / Museums Journal	INCF
Slovakia	
Muzealnictwo / Museologia	National Institute of Museum and Conservation of Collections
Spain	
Differents. Revista de museus	Museum of Contemporary Art Vicente Aguilera Cerni de Vilafamés
Heritage and Museography	Universitat de Lleida
Revista de Museologia / Museology Journal	Asociación Española de Museología
Switzerland	
Schweizer Museumszeitschrift	Verband der Museen der Schweiz
UK	
Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies	UCL Institute of Archaeology
Museological Review	Leicester University
Museum & Society	Leicester University
Science Museum Group Journal	Science Museum Group
Ukraine	
Bulletin of Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts: Series in Museology and Monumental Studies	Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts

These are not, for sure, all publications on museums studies in Europe, the list being, we believe, much wider. We also point out that we excluded the proceedings of the periodical conferences in the field, such as *Museologia Scientifica Memorie* edited by the Associazione Nazionale Musei Scientifici. We also did not include in the database

periodicals of museums around Europe, which are associated with the study of their collections and the associated scientific field. We are aware that some of these journals also cover topics associated with museum studies, some of them even having regular sections in this field. We have undergone a micro-research of the periodicals published by the Romanian museums to better observe the coverage of topics and the interest in museum studies.

We selected as a sample the museum members of the Romanian National Network of Museums. We decided on this sample since the Network is comprehensive, including 76 of the most dynamic museums in Romania, covering especially large national and regional museums, but also some small, local museums. 35 of these museums publish 45 periodicals. More than half of these publications are specialized in history & archaeology. Two of the publications have a section dedicated to museum studies/museology, while 3 others have regular sections dedicated to conservation/restoration techniques. With a few exceptions, all periodicals are presented on the museums' websites, but the level of information varies from a list of the past volumes to detailed presentations. Six of the periodicals have their own websites. 21 of the periodicals do not have updated archives. We identified 20 open-access periodicals among this sample. We also numbered 12 journals which sporadically include articles in the field of museology, while 4 others include research on conservation and restoration. Therefore, the editorial policies rarely include interests in museum studies, and such contributions are the exception. Additionally, more than half of the publications are in Romanian, some with English abstracts.

Extrapolating the situation from Romania to other countries, and considering that most of the museums' periodical publications are very related to their field of study and the circulation is mostly among scientists in those specific domains, we decided not to consider them in the present research. We included only the journals identified with a clear focus on Museum Studies if published by museums. For instance, the National Museum from Prague, Czech Republic, publishes 14 specialized periodicals. We included only one, *Muzeum: Muzejní a vlastivědná práce / Museum: Museum and Regional Studies*, that is "the oldest Czech purely museological journal, published continually from 1963. The journal focuses on all aspects of contemporary museum work and publishes studies, articles, essays, materials, news, and reviews from fields of theoretical and practical museology, museum exhibitions and presentation, museum education, museum management, as well as other related aspects of contemporary cultural heritage issues" (<https://publikace.nm.cz/en/periodicals/mmars>). The other 13 journals published by the museums are in the fields of Entomology, Mineralogy, Fossil Imprint, Natural History, Numismatic, Music, and others - covering all the main collections and lines of research of the museum.

Some of these journals have quite a long history. The oldest one - *Museumskunde* - dates back from 1905. It is published by the German Association of Museums, as mentioned before. The next group of journals in terms of age comes from former communist countries in Eastern Europe and dates from between 1950 and 1970. They are part of the strategy of the communist regimes to professionalize the activity in museums. Although there are a few publications on museology available in English from that era (Teather, 1991), coming from Eastern Europe (from Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic) - their breakthrough is proof for a very vivid domain. In Romania for example, a complex system of structures was charged with training newer as well as older generations of museologists / museographers and art restaurateurs in museums. During the 60s, the State Committee of Arts and Culture (Ministry of Culture) was overseeing a professional publication (*Revista Muzeelor*) as well as a special body of trainers (Oprîș, 1994; Bădică, 2011).

Half of the journals identified have been established in the past two decades. Ana Carvalho (2020) registered an increased dynamics and technical professionalization (in Portugal) for the last decades of the publications in the field of museums and heritage, in

connection with the increased need for training outside the cultural organizations as well as the need for publication venues in associated with the academic dynamics.

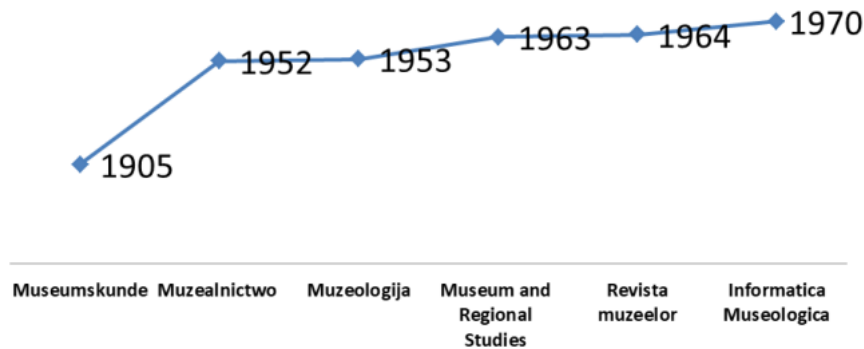


Figure 10. The oldest journals in the database

Three-quarters of the journals in the database are open-access online (Figure 11). Some of them also have printed editions.

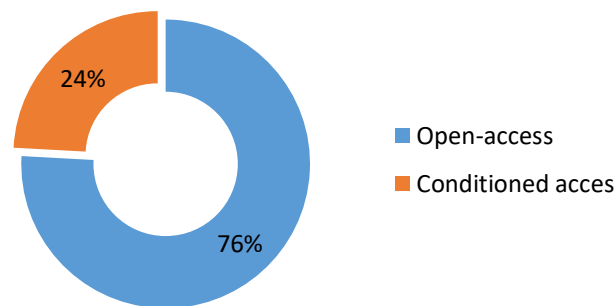


Figure 11. The journals by type of access

The price policies vary. Some of the papers have two types of prices, for individual papers and for a year plan (meaning a small discount is ensured). The lowest price, of almost 7 Euros per issue, is asked for the MuseumsJournal, published by Kultur Projekte Berlin. It provides “coverage of upcoming exhibitions and events, existing collections, new acquisitions, research projects, and recent discoveries. The journal gives readers insights into museum policies and everyday museum life, while also outlining future perspectives and spotlighting art and cultural history in key areas of focus.” (<https://www.kulturprojekte.berlin/en/projects/museumsjournal/>) This publication looks like a glossy publication, with a beautiful design, and a wide range of articles and approaches of subjects (see Figure 12 for various snap-shots of the content). The most expensive publication in the sample is also from Germany, *Museumskunde*, which is 26 Euros per issue. We identified the prices for around a third of the journals, some of them being open access online, but requiring some payment for the print editions.



Figure 12. Excerpts from the Corona Issue of MuseumsJournal, no. 2/2020  
 (<https://www.kulturprojekte.berlin/en/projects/museumsjournal/>)

Almost half of the journals in the sample are published annually (Figure 13).

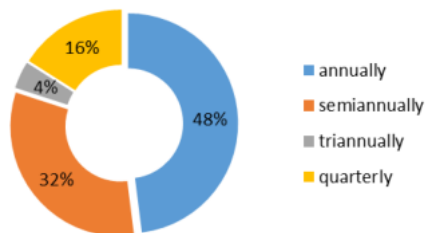


Figure 13. Periodicity of the journals

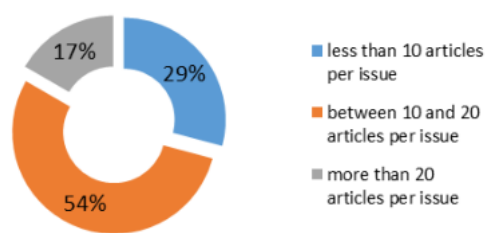


Figure 14. Average number of articles per issue

We also wanted to measure how many articles are included in one issue, since this number shows how many different perspectives and how much information is provided. We measured for 2020 (the latest full volume available) an average number of articles for each issue of the volume. We mention that we considered all sorts of articles, not only research or opinion ones but also book reviews and other types of insertions since all bring added value to their readers. We observed that there is not a connection between the frequency and the number of articles. We expected that annual publications would have more articles, but it was not always the case. The smallest number of articles was registered for the *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies* which is an annual publication (4 articles included in 2020), while among the highest number of articles was registered for *MuseumsJournal* (with an average of more than 40 articles for each of the four issues published in 2020). In terms of contributors, almost all journals present

an average number of authors/articles less than 2. The exception, with an average of around 4 authors per article, is the *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies*.

Most of the publications included in the sample are published either by professional organizations & associations or by universities (Figure 15). The journals clustered under the “other” label are published jointly by museums with universities or research institutes.

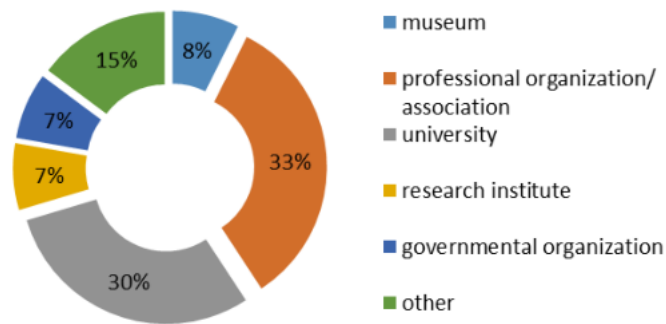


Figure 15. The types of publishers

Almost all identified journals publish contributions in the language of the publisher. Two exceptions publish contributions in English to widen the access to the content – the *Museology and Cultural Heritage* journal published by the Comenius University (Slovakia) and *Muzealnictwo* published by the National Institute of Museum and Conservation of Collections (Poland) both in English and Polish. Still, some of the journals try to make it more accessible to a non-national audience (Figure 16).

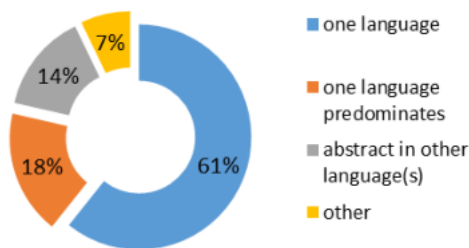


Figure 16. The language mix of the journals

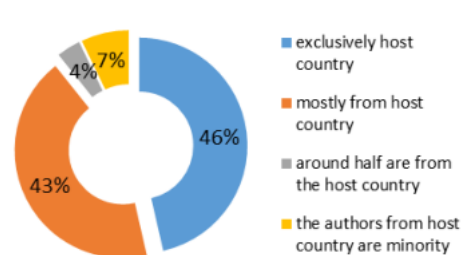


Figure 17. The affiliation of the authors

The national focus is also illustrated by the focus of the articles. If they are not general in nature, being theoretical contributions and opinions relevant for various museums no matter their “nationality”, the contributions tend to refer to local experiences and approaches. The authors are, in most cases, “locals” (Figure 17).

In terms of content, most of the journals address topics associated with museum studies/museology. A few of them also address some specialty domains. In terms of the focus of the studies included, some special issues are proposed, and the editorial policies balance between loose approaches and structured ones, including recurrent sections to cover the more systematically the domain (Figure 18). Even if there is an obvious interest in the quality of the articles published, there is little interest in a wider academic exposure, as illustrated by Figure 19. Only two of the journals are indexed in ESCI (*Museologia Scientifica*, *Museology and Cultural Heritage*) and two in Scopus (*Museology and Cultural Heritage*, *Muzealnictwo*), the databases which have become the reference for academics and researchers in Europe.

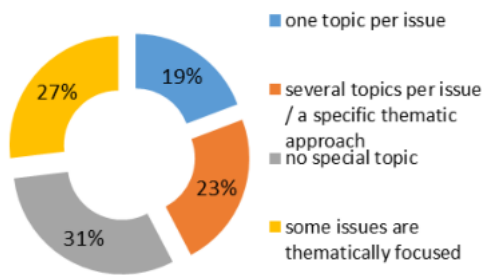


Figure 18. Thematic focus & structure

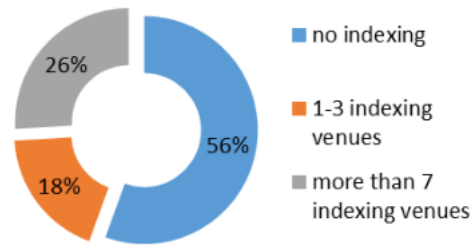


Figure 19. Indexing of the journals

## Conclusions and discussions

Innovation in the museum field emerges in practice, catching both the attention of the professionals, as well as of academics. The validation comes from public success, and this gives a push for researching those new practices. Nevertheless, before being widely visible “on-site” (e.g. in permanent exhibitions or temporary ones), shifts and trends shaping the museum world are visible “on paper”, namely in publications dedicated to museum studies. The first ones to reflect new practices are, in general, the professional periodicals and newsletters. Nevertheless, academic publications insert to an increased extent and variety of studies in the museum field.

Researchers and academics focused on museum studies are, like everybody else in social sciences, also experiencing a growing pressure to publish in highly cited publications. However, looking into recent titles and themes reveals a fragmented universe across Europe: despite facing more or less the same challenges related to the domain evolution, most of the research contributions are (still) oriented towards the professional body of people working in a museum and is included in practice-oriented journals. Moreover, these journals are most of the time addressing national concerns and therefore they convey limited and local exposure.

In the case of museum studies, the practice–research divide is not just a figure of speech, on the contrary. Being rooted in the evolution of the museum sector and its slow development of a specific field study, the differences between academics and museum professionals are constructed alongside interdisciplinarity and technical details. Meanwhile, researchers favor a more interdisciplinary approach, being closer to various other fields of study and their respective theories, museum professionals are still very much connected to the technical aspects of museology and they are further cultivating this orientation. Nevertheless, the evolution of the museum study field also shifted the plates, connecting some bridges and allowing interferences and collaborations. Academia enters museums for research, meanwhile, personal and professional experiences of the museum workforce valorize research instruments for better understanding their current situation and various phenomena shaping their everyday reality. Thus, professional and academic networks have started to entangle.

The landscape depicted by museum publications shows a dual image: on one hand, journals indexed in the “main” scientific flow, and on the other, a wide variety of professional publications. Amongst the firsts, there is a marked tendency towards theory, with a focus on broader themes, such as collection, experience, and learning in museums. Also, History and Art museums seem to be the most frequent frameworks considered. More recently, attention is given to discussions on (civil) rights, cultural property, and visitor-related perspectives. As for geographic coverage, we observe a correspondence with the most dynamic museum sectors, as in the US, UK, Canada, France, Australia, Italy, and Germany.

While periodic publications edited by museums seem to focus their research on specific fields (mainly history and archaeology), professional associations, universities and research centers are contributing to investigating and promoting museum studies at a local level. Most of these publications (with an annual or semiannual periodicity) contain pieces of research written in various languages and include local case studies. This brief investigation on museum studies is in line with studies in other domains which identified a wealth of valuable non-English journals (Greg, 2021).

If the body of literature concerning museum studies is to be depicted as a series of nodes, then they would have loose links between them, separated not by interests and significance of studies, but rather by language and local peculiarities related to practices. Links between these nodes seem to be unsystematic, and their reciprocal visibility is haphazard rather than intentionally constructed.

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### **Journal websites**

- Acta Museologica Lithuanica - <https://www.journals.vu.lt/acta-museologica-lithuanica>
- Boletim ICOM Portugal - <https://icom-portugal.org/boletim-icom-pt/>
- Bulletin - [https://www.museumbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp\\_publication\\_art=bulletin](https://www.museumbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp_publication_art=bulletin)
- Bulletin of Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts: Series in Museology and Monumental Studies - <http://museum-monument.knukim.edu.ua/>
- Cadernos de Sociomuseologia - <https://revistas.ulusofona.pt/index.php/cadernosociomuseologia>
- Diferents. Revista de museus - <https://www.e-revistas.uji.es/index.php/diferents>
- Heritage and Museography - <https://www.raco.cat/index.php/Hermus>
- ICOM CE Digital - <https://www.icom-ce.org/revista-icom-ce-digital/>
- Informatica Museologica - <https://hrcak.srce.hr/informatica-museologica?lang=en>
- Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies - <https://www.jcms-journal.com/>
- La Lettre du Comité National Français de l'ICOM - [https://www.icom-musees.fr/toutes-les-ressources?type%5B0%5D=type\\_de\\_document%3A30](https://www.icom-musees.fr/toutes-les-ressources?type%5B0%5D=type_de_document%3A30)
- Lietuvos Muziejai / Lithuanian Museums - <https://museums.lt/lietuvos-muziejai/>
- Midas: Museum e Estudos Interdisciplinares - <https://www.midasjournal.org/>
- MusEd, Museum - School – Education - <https://museum-education.weebly.com/>
- Museologia Scientifica / Scientific Museology - [http://anms.it/riviste/lista\\_tipo/1](http://anms.it/riviste/lista_tipo/1)
- Museological Review - <https://le.ac.uk/museum-studies/about/journals/museological-review>
- Museum & Society - <https://journals.le.ac.uk/ojs1/index.php/mas>
- Museum: Museum and Regional Studies - <https://publikace.nm.cz/periodicke-publikace/muzeum-muzejni-a-vlastivedna-prace>
- Museums Journal - <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal>
- MuseumsJournal - <http://www.museumsjournal.de>
- Museumskunde - [https://www.museumbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp\\_publication\\_art=museumskunde](https://www.museumbund.de/publikationen-suche/?fwp_publication_art=museumskunde)
- Muzealnictwo / Museologia - [www.muzealnictworocznik.com](http://www.muzealnictworocznik.com)
- Muzeológia a Kultúrne Dedičstvo / Museology and Cultural Heritage - [https://www.muzeologia.sk/casopis\\_mkd\\_en.htm](https://www.muzeologia.sk/casopis_mkd_en.htm)
- Muzeologija / Museology - <https://hrcak.srce.hr/muzeologija>
- Nuova museologia / New Museology - <https://www.nuovamuseologia.it/>
- Revista de Museologia / Museology Journal - <https://www.museologia.net/revista/>
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