ICOM Germany Museums Definition
Report on ICOM Define Consultation 2
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Executive summary

In recent years, technology and the emergence of new types of visitor experience have resulted in ICOM receiving applications for membership from organisations that do not easily fit within the traditional definition of the term "museum." The question is not so much one of why these organisations are applying, for they clearly think of themselves as museums – it is more a question of whether the existing definition of the term is becoming outdated as museums evolve. Accordingly, in December 2020 the International Council of Museums asked all Committees, Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organisations to consult with their memberships and provide up to 20 words and/or phrases that can form the basis of a new definition of the word "museum." This is an exciting development with potential to do much more than simply inform the application process for membership of ICOM.

ICOM Germany commissioned Stakeholder Design, a UK agency known for its innovative work with communities and learning environments, to create an engagement process that would enable as many members as possible to participate in the process. As the consultation had to be conducted in the midst of a global lockdown, it was conducted using online tools and communications platforms.

The findings of the consultation are very clear, with the top three words emerging as:

1. Vermittelt (Interprets)
2. Bewahrt (Preserves)
3. Öffentlich (Public)

The top 20 words are shown overleaf in Section One.

While ICOM Germany is delighted to be able to supply the information requested, the process has also made it very clear that a subset of ICOM Germany's members are highly engaged with the topic and wish to continue discussing the themes and principles that underpin their choice of words. There is a desire to ensure that words highlighted in the process – such as inclusion, multiple-perspectives and learning become part of how ICOM and its national branches relate to members.

Members also wish to convey to ICOM their strong conviction that the chosen words and phrases need to be properly explained and put into context. Accordingly, the present report is in three parts:

- Section One (The top 20 key keywords resulting from two surveys of the members)
- Section Two (Consultation Process – description of the process followed)
- Section Three (Consultation Outcomes – putting the words into context using examples provided by members)

ICOM Germany will be facilitating further discussion with its members to explore many of the themes that were raised during the consultation. While the process was intended to contribute to the first phase of a global consultation on the museum definition, it has become an opportunity to begin a new process of engagement at national level and raise important questions concerning changing visions and values of museums.

Section One: the top 20 keywords and concepts selected by members

ICOM Germany has submitted separately to the ICOM Define process the 20 most popular key concepts validated by the membership survey carried out in December 2019.

The results of this survey were strongly endorsed by a second survey conducted in March 2021, with 82% of respondents agreeing that the results of the December 2019 survey could be used as the basis for the definition, and 51.2% making no additional suggestions for key words.

The process by which the words in the 2021 survey were identified is detailed in Section Two. In summary:

- Words and phrases identified in the December 2019 survey conducted by ICOM Germany were extracted and ranked according to the number of people who described them as important or very important.
- A second survey was conducted using Google Forms. This allowed members to update the findings.
- The findings of both surveys were combined, creating this list of 20 words.
- The top 10 words were subjected to a live vote on March 24 using Zoom polls to identify the three most important words.
- These words have been placed at the top of the list while the remainder are displayed in order of popularity.

Word	Translation
Vermittelt	Interprets
Bewahrt	Preserves
Öffentlich	Public
Erbe	Heritage
Bildung	Learning
Materielle	Material
Menschheit	Humanity
Umwelt	Environment
Präsentiert	Presents
Beforscht	Investigates
Gesellschaft	Society
Forschung	Research
Kultur	Culture
Dokumentation	Documentation
Natur	Nature
Zukünftiger	Future
Kommunikation	Communication
Wissenschaft	Science
Studien	Studies
Sammlungen	Collections

Section Two: Consultation Process – description of the process followed

In February 2021, ICOM Germany commissioned Stakeholder Design to create an engagement process that would enable as many members as possible to participate in the process. As the consultation had to be conducted in the midst of a global lockdown, it was conducted using online tools and communications platforms.

From the start, the process was built around three principles:
- simplicity (to facilitate participation and reduce the risk of technology going wrong at scale)
- transparency (making the decision-making process visible to all)
- inclusion (allowing people to see that they played a central role in the process)

This led to a decision to use Google Forms as the main method of engagement, and it was pleasing to see that ICOM subsequently recommended the same solution to all of its members. This was combined with a word cloud to help respondents visualise the collected responses. Finally, on 24 March a Zoom conference took place, with members discussing the words before voting for their top three.

As a result, ICOM Germany has assembled a huge data bank of inputs from members, including 212 separate words, detailed explanations of why they are important, the recorded comments from the Chat function in Zoom, imagery, videos and live polls. The main elements are discussed below.

The Google Form

The original intention was to use Google Forms and Twitter to collect words and images from members, along with explanations of why the words were considered important. However, it emerged that Twitter is not as widely used in Germany as in some other countries so this option was dropped.

As you may know, where Google Forms asks for an email address or allows files to be uploaded, it requires that the user logs in with a Google account. As 80% of Germans own an Android device it was felt that this was unlikely to cause a big problem, but an option to email in responses was added for those who do not have a Google account.

Shortly before the form went live, the decision was taken to incorporate the results of the membership survey conducted by ICOM Germany in December 2019. While this survey was focused on phrases and concepts rather than words, it was felt to be important to give members the option to indicate if they agreed with the findings of the survey which had 302 respondents.

Against this there was the issue of how to translate phrases and concepts into words within a very short timeframe. In addition, inclusion of the survey then placed a very heavy reliance on large scale participation in the online survey as otherwise it would be hard for new words to make their way into the top 20. Both of these issues were later to prove problematic.

It was felt important to give members at least two full weeks in which to respond. A decision was taken to extract phrases from the 2019 survey that had been deemed important or very important by at least 80% of respondents. Where a phrase contained distinct words (for example, "Culture and Heritage") each main word was given one vote, and this was then multiplied by the number of respondents. The aggregated words were then placed into a word-cloud generator and the image was used on the Google Form. Respondents were asked if they had read the survey (a link was also provided), and they were then asked "Are you happy for the words used in the 2019 survey to be used as a starting point?" 90.8% of respondents said they had read the results of the survey and 82% said that they were happy with this approach.

Respondents were then asked if they wished to add any words or images for consideration and just under half of all respondents (48.8%) chose to do so. These respondents were then asked which three words were most important to them, and why. They were also offered the chance to upload up to three images that exemplify something important in relation to the definition of a museum.

The collected answers have been anonymised and supplied in Section Three of this report.

Although a link to the form was emailed to all members of ICOM Germany, the engagement rate was surprisingly low – just 173 people responded. This may also be due to the short time available to carry out the survey, which resulted in the invitation not being promoted as much as would normally be the case. In the run-up to the final event the impression created was that the membership was largely happy with the results of the 2019 survey, and largely uninterested in contributing new words. It was something of a surprise, then, when over 300 members registered for the Zoom event.

The word-cloud

This is the word-cloud created from the December 2019 survey:

And this is the word cloud based solely on the March 2021 survey:

While it looks very different, this is in part because most people chose to enter new words (such as "Bewahren" (to preserve/safegaurd)). However, a few also chose to enter words visible in the 2019 survey (such as "Erbe" (heritage)) while also taking the opportunity to provide valuable insight as to why those words mattered.

This is a word-cloud based on the combined results of the 2019 and 2021 surveys.

What is interesting here is that words such as "Erbe" and "Vermittelt" have retained their importance in the cloud, but the biggest word in the 2021 survey ("Bewahren") has shrunk almost to insignificance. With just 173 respondents (each getting three votes) no new word came close to getting the 248 votes necessary to enter the top 20 ("Bewahren" got 11 votes). That said, respondents did succeed in changing the order of the words in the top 10.

That is not to say that these words are not important. In fact, if the survey had been run for longer, with repeated emails encouraging people to respond, it is very likely that some words from the 2019 survey would have grown in importance while others would have shrunk or been replaced.

One other issue is that respondents sometimes put forward words that, while different, have very similar meanings.

The live event

On 24 March around 350 ICOM Germany members took part in a three hour Zoom conference to consider the outcome of the survey, talk in depth about the meaning of important words and then vote on the top three most important words.

The event was facilitated by Marion Bösker, who is based at the Literaturhaus München, with support from ICOM Germany board members Michael John Gorman and Felicia Sternfeld.

The event began with a presentation from Bruno Brulon Soares and Lauran Bonilla-Merchav of ICOM Define on the process to update the definition of the word "museum" in order to reflect the changes in the sector.

This was followed by a presentation by ICOM Germany Board Member Professor Markus Walz recapping the discussions on the Museum Definition and the December 2019 survey of ICOM members. Following

that, Professor Michael John Gorman, also a member of the ICOM Germany Board gave a brief presentation in which he summarised the most recent engagement process and key findings. He drew attention to:

- a range of words to show that there are different perspectives on the matter, but all views are valid
- text supplied by individual members to explain why the words they chose are important
- representative images uploaded by members

Words	Words	Words
„Öffentlich zugänglich. Ein Ort für jeden. Offen gegenüber Diversität. Ein Ort der MIT den Menschen arbeitet und nicht ausschließlich für sie. Jeder ist willkommen." Translation: Open to the public. A place for everyone. Open to diversity. A place that works WITH people, not exclusively for them. Everyone is welcome.	Vermittelt. „Dinge einfach nur bewahrt zu haben, ist nur der erste Schritt. Profitieren und daraus lernen werden die Menschen davon erst, wenn die Dinge vermittelt werden." Translation: Just having things preserved is only the first step. People will only profit and learn from it when things are interpreted.	Bewahren. „Ein Museum ist, zumindest in seinem Magazin , auch ein Hort der Beständigkeit und der möglichen Vollständigkeit. Wenn nicht im Museum Kulturgut aus Gesellschaft und Natur bewahrt wird, wo dann?" Translation: Preservation. "A museum, at least in its stores, is also a haven of permanence and possible completeness. If cultural assets from society and nature are not preserved in the museum, then where?"
Images	Images	Images
„Es zeigt, dass sich Museen als permanent wandelnde und reflexive Orte verstehen sollten" Translation: "It shows that museums should see themselves as permanently changing and reflective places"	„Weil Menschenfreundlichkeit die Basis heutiger Museumsarbeit sein sollte" Translation: "Because kindness should be the basis of today's museum work."	"Nur der Blick nach vorne kann Museen retten!" Translation: "Only by looking ahead can we save museums!"

The audience clearly seemed happy to see that their words and images were at the heart of the process. ICOM's Young Professionals group then made a highly inspiring presentation and engagement levels increased further. The Young Professionals had developed their own glossary and made a video to share the findings. They aired the view that the museum definition process was flawed in that it was overly focused on what museums do rather than how they do it and what their overarching goals are. This won the endorsement of many members of the audience.

The Young Professionals´ presentation was followed by a panel discussion in which respected figures and museum leaders from different museum sectors highlighted the words that matter most to them and explained why they hold such significance. However, given the high-level resonance with the ideas expressed by the Young Professionals, it was natural that some of the panellists would pick up the theme, as did the audience (via Zoom chat, with questions and comments being summarised by the event host).

Following a planned break, around half of the audience chose to leave the meeting, with their comments making clear that they had found the event to be very informative and enjoyable. When the event
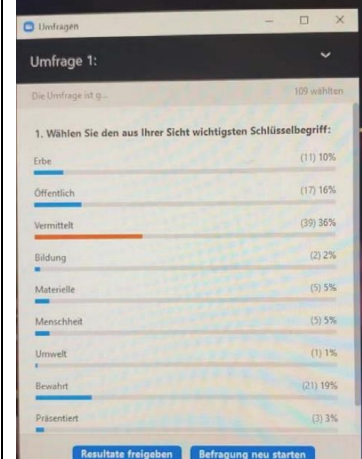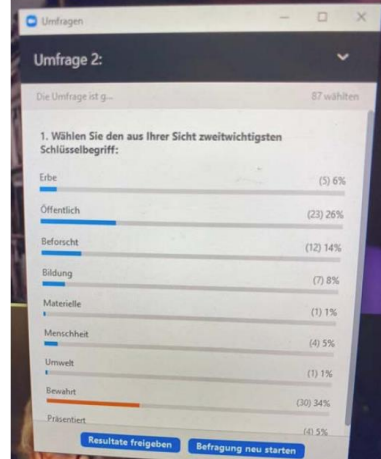
resumed, the remaining approximately 150 members then went into breakout rooms where they were asked to discuss the words that mattered to them as individuals. There was no expectation that they would be asked to report back – this was purely about allowing them the maximum opportunity to share views, listen to others and choose key words prior to a vote. Realistically, there was no way that 15 groups could report back within the time available. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a widespread assumption that they had been asked to decide on words as groups and then announce their findings.

[One respondent to the survey uploaded an image of a Village Brawl from the comic series Asterix, neatly foreseeing and encapsulating the final 20 minutes of the event. Their caption read: "Auseinandersetzung" - Museums offer occasion and framework for bitter quarrel - and the chance to come together peacefully again in the end."]

Being told that there was no time to hear back from each breakout room triggered a significant degree of protest. As noted above, it appears that the process of engagement caught the imagination of the participants at the exact moment when the process was coming to a close. While ICOM Germany was intent on finishing off the process of ranking words for this consultation phase, the membership very clearly saw the event as the start of a process of engagement and discussion. ICOM Germany recognises and welcomes the opportunity to facilitate further discussion with members going forward in the next phases.

Ultimately, votes on the top three words took place, with 109 of around 120 members taking part (this number diminished through the three votes, with 87 voting in the second round and 79 in the third round with an energetic discussion in the chat and some people protesting at being asked to vote on words that had be "preselected" through the survey of ICOM Deutschland members. Nonetheless the clear winners (consistent in all three sequential votes) were as follows:

Round one: **Vermittelt** Translation: Interprets	Round two: **Bewahrt** Translation: Preserves	Round three: **Öffentlich** Translation: Public

When a fourth poll, in reaction to the controversial discussions in the chat, was spontaneously put up, asking the remaining 118 members if they felt it important to continue the discussion, a staggering 81% said yes. This indicates that around one in four of those who joined the meeting at any time want further dialogue on this topic, and it can be assumed that a large number of those who left (or did not participate at all) would agree with them.

Section Three: Consultation Outcomes – putting the words into context using examples provided by members

This section of the report contains data from three sources:

- Words and text submitted as part of the online survey
- Images submitted as part of the online survey
- Comments made during the live Zoom event via the Chat function

ICOM Germany hopes that this will provide useful insights to ICOM Define as it ranks and combines words to update the definition of the word "museum."

Words and text submitted as part of the online survey

The table below includes additional words and justifications contributed in response to the March 2021 survey.

The most important word for me is:	Why do you think this word is important?
Visitors	Visitors and collections are equally a *raison d'être* of the museum. Visitors (in the broadest sense of the word) are the (final) addressees of all museum activities. All people, who perceive and accept the museum's various offers, whether on site, on other media or online. Visitors are diverse and can be differentiated into groups or sub-groups, each of which has specific characteristics, expectations and needs that must be considered in museum work - keyword visitor orientation.
In the service of society	The museum´s tasks are derived from the purpose that it fulfils for society.
Agency of cultural heritage	This is comprehensive enough to encompass the multitude of very different museums.
Preserve	What is not preserved is lost in all other activities. However, the term should be understood beyond "preservation". For example, also in the sense of "preserving in consciousness".
Responsibility	Museums, especially publicly funded ones, must assume responsibility for society in its diversity and plurality and must not retreat to seemingly object-neutral specialist viewpoints.
Sustainable development	The concept of sustainable development replaces the concept of permanence (because if something develops sustainably, it will remain so at least for the foreseeable future) and supplements it with the concrete levels of action of ecology, economy and the social sphere and the concrete strategies of action of consistency, sufficiency and efficiency. In contrast to the concept of permanence, the concept of sustainable development is based on the assumption of a development that is constantly questioned, realigned and adapted.
Access	
Preserves	Unadulterated, open to future interpretation.
Collection	It constitutes the museum.
Heritage	Beyond changing ownership constellations, it seems important to me to emphasise, in the interest of the contemporary general public as well as later generations, the fundamental principle of transmission, combined with the responsibility for long-term preservation and transmission on equal terms.
Preserve	To preserve a cultural memory.
Documentation	Without documentation, acquiring, preserving and researching is hardly worthwhile, because there can be no meaningful exhibition and mediation.

Transparency	Museums must be transparent in their work, as they work in the service of society. Among other things, it must become transparent for everyone according to which criteria objects are collected and exhibited.
Inclusion	A core task for museums is to provide and make accessible content in an unreserved, democratic, low-threshold way.
Visitor-oriented	Museums work for society.
Culture	Because a museum without culture is unthinkable.
Collections	The unique selling point of museums vis-à-vis other cultural and educational institutions, and the intellectual and material foundation of all other activities.
Political	Museums are always also political places - not in the sense of party politics, but in their social function as places of education, mediation and the preservation of history.
Democratic	Museums should be equally accessible to all!
Audience	Because museums are not/should not be closed research institutions.
Decolonisation	Since museums are social actors that have a history of oppression.
(Social) responsibility	Museums have the responsibility to position themselves in the socio-political discourse as an educational institution; they also have responsibility towards the collection (to preserve this, to research it and finally to take responsibility for exhibits of difficult provenance).
Discrimination-critical	Museums are educational institutions and are in a position of power. Therefore, they must act critically of discrimination in all areas and processes of their work, i.e. reflect all dimensions of discrimination and avoid them as best as possible.
Caring	For me, the museum is first and foremost a caring institution. This applies not only to the preservation of things, but also to people, e.g. the question of how we want to live together in the future, how we take responsibility for society and the planet.
Education & Mediation	Museums are places of knowledge transfer, science communication, exchange. Museums can be places of learning for individuals. Museums contribute to the democratisation of knowledge.
Polyphonic (multi-voiced)	Museums should tell the story(s) of as many and different groups of society as possible and present them in its different media (therefore collect, preserve, research corresponding cultural objects), because they serve the breadth of society and its development (its cohesion) (Similar keywords: diversity, variety).
Polyphony (multi-voice)	Because museums should represent a variety of voices and positions.
Preserve	Universal cultural heritage.
Collect/ Preserve/ Exhibit	No form of valuation occurs in these terms. It is fundamentally about material things, artefacts, whose selection and valuation is time-dependent. Contemporary written and oral statements from which the valuation at the time of collecting emerges have primary significance. Later valuations or future revaluations remain a contemporary interpretation and should be articulated with appropriate caution.
Relevance	Museums today are under pressure to constantly justify themselves. That is why it is crucial to clarify the relevance of museums for society.
Multi-perspective	Including: diverse, postcolonial, non-European, participatory, inclusive, integrative

Permanent institution	Museums should be designed for the long term and not be subject to the whims of society. In order to be able to fulfil their core mission as a memory intuition for cultural assets.
Not the most important term, but in the overview on page 2, the following were missing for me: community and multi-perspective representation/polyphony.	I think it is important to be sensitive to the diversity of our society and to seek, whenever appropriate, a representation that recognises different perspectives.
Non-profit	For me, this term refers to the responsibility that museums have towards society and the future. The need to communicate and present, to collect and preserve and to research can be based on this self-image.
Multi-perspective	There are different points of view for all decisions and processes, which must at least be respected and taken into account as far as possible in this day and age.
Democracy	
Discussion	A museum should be a place to meet and exchange. There should be an exchange between many different opinions and this exchange should take the form of a discussion. If people are involved and their opinions are taken seriously, they can be reached.
Audience	Museums are there for the public. The word links museum with society/humanity.
Discussion	For me, mediation is an open process that should always take place on the basis of an open discussion.
Preserve	it does the most work, costs money and requires sustainable infrastructures.
Postcolonial perspective	Because museums as institutions are inextricably linked to colonialism and constantly question their power to know and interpret.
Cultural heritage	Because museums are usually collection-based and the preservation of cultural heritage is one of their core tasks.
Edutainment	The experience, and emotions during the experience play an important role for sustainable comprehension and learning of contents.
Participation	Community engagement is an important social mission of the museum. Better than mediation. Museums also have a lot to learn from their audiences.
Collection-based institution ("indispensable basis are the collections")	An institution without its own collections is something different from a museum.
Education	Relevance to society, future oriented.
Sharing knowledge	I find it important that the collections are questioned again and again.
Presentation	A thematic exhibition uses historical, technical and socio-cultural exhibits to show connections on many levels.
Visitors	Because visitors should consistently be at the centre of all museum work.
Social space	Museums are "vessels" for social interaction, a visit to a museum is often a social experience with other people. For them and their needs, there should be "free spaces" in addition to stimulation and inspiration.
Multi-perspectivalism	
Art	Freedom
The material heritage of humanity and its environment	The heritage of humanity is only treated as such in the museum. However, the environment is not human-related. So instead of "their", rather "the".
Storytelling	Narration is the elementary basis.
Inclusive	To include all people.

Visual arts	That is what our exhibitions are primarily about.
Heritage	Because this term encompasses the tangible or intangible assets that we did not create ourselves and for whose care and preservation we therefore bear all the more responsibility. It is said that ownership obliges. This applies all the more to inherited property.
Public	Museum is for everyone.
Cultural heritage	
Establishment in perpetuity	The preservation of cultural heritage is a long-term mission in the service of society and distinguishes museums from other leisure facilities.
An experimental space of experience	the reception of an exhibit is always a personal experience. The display and interpretation of an exhibit is always an experiment, but not an agreement of a reality.
Educational mission	
Cultural institution	Open to lay people and professionals.
Link in the historical continuum	Experienceability and verifiability of past or ongoing processes, fulfils the conditions of a model approach for the respective selected topic
Democratisation	because museums are political places and need to reflect on their role and their inclusions and exclusions
A place of living culture	Today is inconceivable without tangible cultural heritage.
Society	Society is the alpha and omega of our work.
Decolonisation	Because the credibility of museums depends on a credible and honest approach to their own historical failures and complicity with the dominant, but not necessarily morally unquestionable, social narratives.
Preserve	Only when you have something to preserve can you think about what you want to do with what you have preserved.
Forum	Because museums are a place of exchange and encounter.
(Self-) critical examination	
In the service of society	Because it clarifies the responsibility of museums for the general public and can be thought of in an all-encompassing way, question of accessibility of the collection (e.g. online), the exhibitions (e.g. entrance, barriers) and participation (e.g. urban-rural, staff).
Sustainability	Because sustainability is enormously important! In everything we do.
Encounter with culture	To be aware of one's culture.
Diverse	Museums are public institutions and accordingly there for the public. This is increasingly diverse, so this should also be reflected in the programme, audience and staff.
Self-reflective	Because this task, which is important in my opinion, needs to be extremely expanded.
Collect	Collections and collecting are the basis for all other tasks and distinguish museums from other cultural institutions.
Communicates	The museum is the most important mediator of facts and cultural assets without any great inhibitions. The visitor can remain anonymous and does not have to "reveal" what moves him during his visit to the museum and what he takes away with him in terms of intellectually conveyed goods.
Collect & Preserve	The material natural and cultural heritage must be preserved in a politically neutral and permanent manner - also in order to bring it safely through temporary political extremes and to be able to view it from ever new perspectives in the future. Any necessary de-accessioning must

	therefore not be politically motivated. Private collections, on the other hand, are subject to taste, world view and financial possibilities; only rarely can they be created permanently.
Participation	Participation in a comprehensive sense includes a wide range of concepts: public, (free, equal) access, dismantling of thresholds and barriers, social aspects, economic aspects, the fight against discrimination, questions of ownership, relational access, etc. Participation is an everyday modus operandi of museums and at the same time part of their value horizon. Places/institutions that systematically and permanently prevent participation forfeit the privilege of calling themselves "museums". Note: The English term "participation", which is commonly used here, has an even more active accent than participation; however, it does not mean what is negotiated in the narrower sense as "participation" in the museum.
Diversity	Diversity is an instrument of museum work that underlies all the central tasks of the museum.
Museums seek to provide equal access to [cultural and natural] heritage for all.	Museums seek to provide equal access to [cultural and natural] heritage for all: This is not a reality, but a great aspiration that encompasses attitude and work culture as well as all core tasks, contains a great potential for transformation and could become effective as a corrective.
Education	Those who value education for themselves and others, can make connections and remain curious, feel more at ease in the world.
Inclusive	Because collecting, preserving, researching, presenting and communicating must focus on the entire (world) population in all its personal and cultural manifestations, and not just on the propagated majority with its supposed interpretive sovereignty.
Cultural heritage	Encompasses everything that makes up museums.
Preserve	Only in museums (with a few exceptions) are historical objects professionally preserved for the future.
Visitors	Visitors and collections are equally a raison d'être of the museum. Visitors (in the broadest sense of the word) are the (final) addressees of all museum activities. All people who perceive and accept the museum's various offers, whether on site, on other media or online. Visitors are diverse and can be differentiated into groups or sub-groups, each of which has specific characteristics, expectations and needs that must be considered in museum work - keyword visitor orientation.

The second most important term for me is	Why do you think this second term is important?
Accessibility	Only if it is ensured that everyone benefits from museums will they fulfil their mission.
Platform of remembrance culture	It includes the functions of the museum: exhibition, discourse space and preservation.
Heritage	The term implies the responsibility and conflict of our work: we can never fully preserve what we inherit, but intervene in a selecting, interpreting, evaluating way, adding a small part of the heritage to our existence.
Self-reflection	Reflecting on one's own work is part of professional museum work and is not limited to the scientific elaboration of content.
Multi-perspectival	There is no truth and no objectivity. Museums must say goodbye to their claim to embody this and try to depict themes in their many voices. This also includes recurrent, critical self-reflection.
Society	
Researched	Meaning not finally defined, but open to new networking.

Non-profit or not for profit	It ensures, at least in part, the independence and reliability of information.
Participation	To preserve and further develop cultural memory, natural and cultural assets must be generally accessible across collections and nations.
Place of remembrance	Meeting place for people.
Inclusive	Museums should break down barriers and be accessible to all people, as they work in the service of society.
Vision	Museum as a borderless place. Inspiring, free, forward-looking, non-judgemental, courageous. Outside the usual patterns, being able to experience thinking.
Relevant to research	Museums are a central research site for object-related research.
Mediation	Because a museum must impart knowledge.
Independence	(= political, intellectual, financial) To be able to function as a platform for the exchange of different positions and to be able to take a position themselves.
Polyphonic	It formulates both the unilateral perspective of (Western) historiography and the need for inclusion of other perspectives by asking "who speaks?"
Inclusive	We must continuously work to ensure that museums are accessible to all and not just to a cultural elite.
Forum	Museums should direct the exploration of their collections and their work in general towards socially relevant topics and offer the possibility of participation in public discourses.
Diversity	As we live in a diverse society, which museums are currently not able to cope with.
Education	An institution that uses its exhibitions and work to educate and train people (= visitors, but also staff) and to satisfy their thirst for knowledge and education.
Breaking down barriers	Museums are public places that should ensure equal accessibility for all. To achieve this, barriers (e.g. spatial, sensory, social, financial, content-related, linguistic) must be actively removed.
Public	Things without meaning are just "stuff". Things get their meaning from the people who use or question them. Therefore, the public character of museums is central for me. They are committed to the public, or more precisely to a good (= democratic, inclusive) production and shaping of the public.
Public and participatory	Open to the public. A place for everyone. Open to diversity. A place that works WITH people and not exclusively for them. Everyone is welcome.
Inclusive	Museums should offer access to their content and offerings to as many and diverse groups of society as possible in an actively inclusive manner (and therefore collect, preserve, research appropriate cultural assets), because they serve the breadth of society and its development (its cohesion) (similar keywords: inclusion, access, participation).
(Self-) critical mediation	Decolonisation of museums and collections.
Scientific research and communication	Science must be open-ended, non-ideological and comprehensible. The communication with the counterpart (museum visitor, scientist) should be oriented towards the same principles
Interpret	Decreasing general education requires additional efforts in the field of education to make the relevance of museum content clear.
Sustainable	Including: environment and climate, but also economic, social and internal structures.

Conserves	If you don't preserve the collection of museums as well as possible, museums make no sense.
Making it accessible for the future	Tangible and intangible cultural heritage is thus not preserved for its own sake, but to make the past and present understandable.
Curate, exhibit, interpret, educate, research, preserve, critically engage with collections, break down barriers	The classic core tasks of a museum - expanded and updated.
Transparency	
Reflection	Any form of museum work (collecting, researching, mediating, exhibiting ...) must not be static, but must be based on reflection, i.e. it must be open to re-evaluations, rediscoveries, rewritings...
Research	Research is a prerequisite for being able to share what has been preserved and what is known.
Participatory	Because museums work in exchange with actors and generate knowledge and work from multiple perspectives.
Meeting and negotiation place	Because a museum should always be an interface between the past and the future, objects and people, etc.
Collect, Preserve	There are few other places for this important function of preserving cultural heritage, art.
Pluralism	Plural perspectives on material heritage make it possible to overcome the interpretive sovereignty of one group/institution/discipline.
A museum is a non-profit institution	The motivation or obligation to generate profit is in principle in conflict with the motivation and obligation to preserve the natural and cultural heritage.
Indulgence	A museum is not exhausting but conveys in a stimulating and varied way.
Openness	Museums are not the place of cultural elites, but the place for debate and discussion.
Collection	Social change becomes visible through conserved exhibits.
Relevance	Because museums need to ask themselves what makes them meaningful to audiences and society
Communication	The many often hidden treasures of a museum must be brought to the public. Good communication is crucial for this.
Sustainability (social and ecological)	Critical faculties (internal and external criticism/self-reflection)
Interpret	Audience
Collect	Basis for presentation / narration
Diversity	To include all people
Mediation	is an essential part of the museum's work
Research	We cannot do justice to the above-mentioned responsibilities without constantly re- examining the surviving testimonies in relation to the background and contexts of their creation and use, their specific nature and (past) significance, their social, cultural or political contexts.
Reminder	Museums as memory
Natural heritage	
The documented collection of material goods and their knowledge about it	Material cultural property is the starting point for the museum's research and education work, just as books or archives etc.
A social-political space for reflection	It means the museum's reflection on itself, its authority, its collection - also politically. It also means reflecting on the here and now in all actions. Keeping in touch with individual actors.

For all	
Publicly accessible	Avoid barriers, including psychological ones.
Debate	because museums should be places of critical exchange and must make the cultural heritage, they store negotiable and open to discussion
A place for dialogue	Visitors should be able to find their own images of why what they see is important to them and enter an exchange with the museum makers.
Interpret	The museum is intermediary, between heritage and society, between the diversity of communities.
Social discourse	Stimulating social discourse is more than ever the task of museums.
Interpret	Simply having things preserved is only the first step. People will only benefit and learn from it when things are communicated.
Collection	Because museums differ from other institutions by their specific collection.
Diversity	...is not a buzzword but must be a guiding category.
Research	Because knowledge about our heritage is the basis for the work at the museum
Social relevance	Without this, we can close the door ....
Preservation of culture	To be able to convey the culture in the future,
Research	Through their activities and in compliance with scientific standards, museums contribute to the expansion and communication of knowledge and thus encourage critical engagement with the past, present and future.
Critical of discrimination	Because museums do not sufficiently fulfil this issue.
Research	Only through research and exploration can new knowledge emerge, and objects acquire new meanings.
Education	A good museum should educate visitors without them noticing. School classes and students should also be able to enjoy the visit and take the education with them "along the way", so to speak. Museums can educate in a neutral way.
Research	Making collection objects available for understanding, creation and classification, i.e. object research, or for reflection, allows the generation of new knowledge. The museum must invite this research.
Spaces ("Räume")	The term "spaces" (inadequately translated in German as "Räume") opens and liquefies the term "institution, establishment". It writes itself more from actions than from structures, without negating the latter. It integrates both the important quality of museums as physical places of collection and assembly and the imaginary spaces that museums are and (historically, etymologically) have always been and generated. In this way, it also easily includes non-physical museums (virtual, without walls...), which makes sense and becomes more necessary. The term is specifically qualified by the other attributes of the definition and sufficiently differentiated from other "spaces" ("Räume") so that it does not become arbitrary (this is no different with "furnishings" or the like).
Participation	Museums are social actors. They fulfil their tasks in collaborative cooperation with communities.
Museums are places of critical dialogue and social negotiation processes.	Museums are places of critical dialogue and social negotiation processes: This definition concretises their function in the service of society.
Research	Scientifically sound knowledge protects against irrationality, superstition and other alike.
Competence centre for the chosen topic	Includes all museum tasks.

Explore	Without research into their use, function, history, etc., objects remain "objectless" - important: cooperation with the source communities!

The third most important term for me is	Why do you think this third term is important?
Culture	Through and in culture, subjects are empowered to express themselves freely.
Society	Museums are places where a society that is drifting apart can still find community.
Transparency	Museums make their actions and attitudes transparent.
Inclusive	Museums are a collection of barriers. These must be systematically evaluated, recognised and dismantled again and again so that as many people as possible have actual access to what museums have to offer.
Society	Social fabric in the cultural process.
Permanent	It is essential for the preservation of cultural heritage.
Collection documentation as a process	Collection management, mediation and presentation of museum objects in exhibitions and online portals require the constant updating of documentation with a view to the state of knowledge of research.
Interpretation	Without interpretation and in context, no memory work can take place
Democracy	Museums should be places of democratic negotiation (e.g. of history).
Responsibility	Responsibility towards all interested parties. The factory, the visitors, the employees ...
Open	Museums are open in the service they provide with their object knowledge for all areas of society.
Exhibition	This is because the primary channel for museums in communicating knowledge and culture is through exhibitions,
Science	As a frame of reference, and basis for everything else: mediation and exchange, etc. Understood as a critical (as opposed to affirmative) stance, intersubjective understanding, against fake news.
Open	Museums must not reproduce exclusive circles, but act on behalf of society and as such are open to it in their entirety. "Open" also implies the willingness of museums to open up previously closed - or at least pseudo-open - fields of discourse in the sense of the polyphony mentioned above.
Polyphonic	Museums must also reflect our diverse societies in their activities and collections!
Co-creation	Audience participation in the creation of museum content should be seen as enrichment and not as dilution/selling out of museum content.
Stance	Since museums have to take a position
Exhibit	Exhibitions, whether analogue or digital, are the most important visualisation of the (scientific) work of a museum. Here, new contexts and connections can be opened up and interdisciplinary approaches and/or technological innovations can be shown.
Participation	Museums enable all people to actively participate and contribute to museum processes and thus become places of exchange.
Stance	Society/humanity is facing great challenges. Museums as public institutions should do their part to shape a good and liveable future. Therefore, they should show a clear stance and e.g. openly position themselves as actors of a democratic, plural and just society.

Research	Research at museums is multifaceted, not only collection-related, but also teaching- theoretical. Museums are important research institutions.
Social justice	Social justice is the goal that museums serve, which are indeed committed to the breadth of society and its development (its cohesion) (similar keywords: human dignity, equality).
Discussion platform	Inclusive and participatory museology.
Understanding the world better	To develop and sharpen an understanding of the limitless diversity in which human life is embedded. I see a focus on providing a better understanding of developmental histories at all levels. Here, too, I would specifically take care to apply and formulate contemporary assessments only with caution.
Topicality	Museums must not only look back; they must look forward. Without topicality, there is no relevance and no acceptance in society.
Critically reflecting	Including: critical of discrimination, self-reflective, willing to change.
Research	Constantly researching the collection and enriching knowledge is indispensable for museums. On the one hand, to add objects that have not been made accessible to the known knowledge. On the other hand, to place objects in current contexts again and again and to explore them with the help of current questions.
Self-reflection	If museums constantly question their actions, structures and modes of operation, they can be forward-looking and innovative.
Discrimination-critical/sensitive	To show that we have learned from the past.
Integration	If museum work is not to become meaningless, it must be open to all social groups and develop concepts for adequately addressing and involving all these groups.
Share	Research (unlike at research institutions) never happens in museums as an end in itself, but rather it is about communication, mediation and the sharing of knowledge as a common good, to everyone (i.e. commitment to inclusion, low-threshold, accessibility, comprehensibility, change of perspective).
Discrimination-critical/sensitive	Because museums, as hegemonic institutions of historical culture, sensitively and intersectionally promote plural and equal coexistence.
Societies	Because the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage is useless without addressees.
Interaction	A museum should not be monological but dialogical, allow interaction with the audience, work with other mediation media than just text.
The object of the museum is the material and immaterial heritage of humanity and its environment.	The heritage of humanity and its environment consists of both tangible and intangible cultural and natural assets.
Accessibility	A museum is for everyone and therefore inclusive in the best and broadest sense of the word.
Learning site	in the museum you can do your own research and actively ask questions
Culture	A successful museum is a cultural meeting place with a wide range of offerings.
Joy	Because it often gets the short end of the stick when it comes to museum offers.
Storytelling	A well-told story is often more fascinating than a wealth of exhibited objects. Bringing objects into harmony with a good narrative form.
Education	Emancipation.
Participation	Relationships with visitors.

Anti-racist	To involve all people and take a stand.
Mediation	Objects and museum collections only acquire their actual value through ever new contextualisation. This includes creative processes that make museum objects and collections present and socially relevant.
Collect	Museums can do more.
Sustainability	This term has been missing for me so far, but it must be the guiding principle for every area of human activity from now on (especially regarding the preservation of the natural heritage). Without sustainability, the meaning of all action is cancelled out and ultimately leads to total loss.
The educational work of the museums	Museums must actively work on and with their collections as an extracurricular place of learning and a place of social exchange and make them accessible to society in a barrier-free way.
A space for action for amateurs	It is imperative that museums change the way they think and act institutionally. The light, fleeting truths in their collections will otherwise be buried under heavy intentional self-representation. The amateurish action enables the meaningful experiment.
Research	
Information and documentation facility	History also needs to be documented; a museum can also be part of a memorial site.
Participation	Because museums still only address a small part of the population and should strive for the greatest possible openness and participation,
Future workshop	Experiencing the past today in order to shape tomorrow, dealing with inherited values for a society of future generations.
Sustainability	Because all our activities must be sustainable and because all our activities should promote sustainability.
Present	To be able to convey things, you must show them and present them in a meaningful way.
Sensuality	Because museums offer a unique access to education and communication by appealing to all the senses.
Mediation	Because through mediation the first two terms can be brought together and different media are addressed (exhibitions, personal mediation, digital, lectures, etc.) that show the special nature of museums.
Mediation	Idem
Freedom of culture	Culture must not be influenced by politics, economics or the interests of individuals.
Democratic	By combining research and outreach, museums can play their own role in democracy education.
Socially relevant	This is an eternal task to legitimise the existence of museums.
Education	Education as a holistic and participatory approach is the basis for exhibiting and mediating.
Preserve	A museum, at least in its magazine, is also a haven of permanence and possible completeness. If cultural assets from society and nature are not preserved in the museum, then where?
Interpret	Both general knowledge and knowledge directly from the museum should be offered in the form of an educational venue in the exhibitions and educational formats. Here it is important to offer different target groups adequate points of contact. Here, fair and equitable mediation and preparation does not mean that it is the same for everyone. I must stimulate a philosopher differently than a schoolchild. Everyone should receive dedicated offerings, but not everything is suitable for everyone.

	Thus, "simple" or "easy" language should never replace more complex texts but should always be designed as an additive offer.
Dispute	Engagement means two things: intensive involvement (in a variety of ways) and conflict. Museums are and always have been both. Taking up the second aspect (conflict) seems even more important, both in descriptive and normative terms. Museums are fundamentally, quasi by definition, marked by conflict: in their history, their collections, their representations, structures, positioning, etc. They can be seen from different perspectives. For various reasons they cannot do otherwise. They cannot do otherwise for various reasons. To name this clearly, to understand it as the normal case, even as a premise, and to reflect on it, opens up the possibility of making this fundamental conflictuality transparent and turning it around productively.
Interpretation	Museums are not neutral places. They interpret tangible and intangible heritage from different perspectives
The cultural memory function of museums implies self- reflection and self-criticism.	The cultural memory function of museums implies self-reflection and self-criticism: this is the prerequisite for the credibility of museums.
Collect	Collecting means being able to get to know and explore something comprehensively.
Mediation	Bringing in the younger generation and those who are far away from culture
Present	If objects are only stored in the depot, no communication about them and research with them can take place. Moreover, it is the task of museums to make collections accessible to the public in the service of society.

Images submitted as part of the online survey

One of the most striking findings of the event was the difference in approaches and formats taken by members dependent on age. For example, the Young Professionals made a video to present their findings.

Allowing people to upload images in response to the survey was intended to allow choice in how to communicate and to allow for impressions, flavors and feelings to be set alongside text in a way that would open up conversation.

Only very few members did upload images with accompanying text. Some of those images have already been highlighted in Section Two. Together, they provide a useful insight into themes that cannot easily be conveyed using words. They show museums in a different light and help to stimulate conversation.

Together, the images uploaded by ICOM Germany members emphasize the importance of museums as places in which individuals can develop their understanding of themselves and make connections with the world around them. There is a sense of togetherness, movement, bonding and sharing in these images that goes far beyond architecture and issues of storage and display. These images are not so much about what museums do – they are about what humans do in museums.

Members who submitted images want museums to provide a serene environment in which to contemplate life while walking; equally, they see them as places that can host interactive dance events, helping to unveil inner emotions; and they are places where core human values such as kindness and caring for others can be exemplified and taught.

Their role in shaping opinion and countering destructive philosophies is made clear in these images, as is the need for museums to refresh themselves and look to the future. There is a strong commitment to the

role of museums in explaining the past to children, enabling them to make connections with previous generations, understand that there is a future too, and bond with people.

Comments made during the live Zoom event via the Chat function

More than twice the number of people who took part in the Google survey attended and contributed to the event. Most of them found the event very enjoyable, particularly the first half, and responded very warmly to the Young Professional's presentation. The multi-facetted views of the attendees were reflected in the chat. Views that were expressed ranged from the significance of mediation, education, study and to the role of enjoyment in the museum. Another important issue that was raised addressed the difference of a definition, mission and vision and the need for all of them. Some felt that much of the disagreement on the topic of the museums definition stemmed from a failure to separate these concepts clearly, for example one member posted "I believe a differentiation between Definition, Mission and Vision is urgently required". Another wrote „I understand the need for a practical definition (for fundraising, politics etc.) but are we not today and in the future primarily aiming to make the relevance of museums clear, and would that not be better achieved by focussing on a vision?" Many echoed this point, while another attendee suggested that a "definition through vision" could be possible.

Others emphasized the importance of the definition as a legal basis, important for national and regional laws and also for museum funding, and expressed concern at a departure from the existing definition for this reason. Some contributors felt there was a possible tension between museums being local and the definition being global, and one contributor asked if the definition was a "must" / imperative? Noticed by some contributors in the chat was also the importance of / dependency on language when wording a definition. A significant part of the chat discussion explored the role of the digital in museums today - one contributor inquired if Google was a museum? A prominent part of the debate focussed on the role of objects and the authenticity of artefacts and, moreover, the power of research for museums. Comments focussed on the significance of (cultural) contexts and it was clear there was a wish to discuss all these questions further. Towards the end, after the breakout session, several contributors felt like they were presented with a fait accompli and used the Chat to encourage people not to vote on the three words. Nonetheless, over 60% of people still present at this point voted in all three votes on the top three words.

Learnings and Next Steps

The process of participating in this round of consultation with ICOM Germany members provided some valuable insights.

Firstly, an open, democratic and transparent process was provided to ICOM Germany members to engage with the key concepts and key words of the museum definition. The results of the successive member surveys (December 2019 and March 2021), circulated to all ICOM Germany members, demonstrate that a majority of participants was satisfied with what one might describe as more conventional key concepts for a museum definition, with 82% of those surveyed in the second survey supporting the outcome of the first survey as a basis, and over 50% not suggesting any additional words. However, the level of participation in these surveys, especially the second survey, was not as high as was hoped, particularly in view of the large membership of ICOM Germany of approximately 6,500 members.

Secondly, the responses to the second survey, from those who did make suggestions, and the discussions at and around the event on March 24, both on the podium, in response to the Young Professionals presentation and in the chat, demonstrated a significant and active group within the ICOM Germany membership who are striving for a transformation in the definition and purpose of museums. Many in this group would like to see concepts brought into the museum definition which reflect the values of museums, and which propose a vision for a more inclusive, polyphonic future of museums. A definition that would focus less on the "what" of museums, and more the "how" and "why" of museums, less on the "lowest common denominator" and more on the goals to which our institutions should aspire – although there was a lively debate among the members

about whether these should belong to a definition of museums, which also has legal consequences, or to a separate "vision for museums".

While the official submission of key concepts to ICOM Define for this stage in the consultation process must necessarily reflect the concepts with have received the strongest democratic endorsement within the ICOM Germany community, namely the outcomes of the December 2019 survey[1], we believe it is important to reflect this lively discussion within the very heterogenous German museum community about the definition and purpose of museums, and also on the goals of a definition, whether it should serve as a practical and organisational instrument to allow inclusion of a "broad church" of members, including both more traditional and more future-oriented museums, or as more of a statement of intent to inspire the future directions museums can take.

This is why, in addition to submitting the 20 key concepts generated from the December 2019 survey in the form, we are also submitting to the ICOM Member space this report and also the report and glossary produced by the ICOM Young Professionals which generated such strong endorsement from the participants at the member online-event on March 24.

We have drawn several learnings from this process, including the following:

While we had considered internally that the ideal process for this consultation phase would have been to have two separate events (the first being a discussion event about the museum definition, to be followed by a members survey, to be followed by a final event focussed on selecting key words/concepts based on the results of the survey), time constraints forced us to combine into a single event, leading to some quite reasonable frustrations among members – some people felt that they had not realized the significance of the survey, others felt that they were being presented with a fait accompli. It was a surprise when very late in the process the deadline of submissions was extended by ICOM Define – if we had this information earlier we could potentially have been able to have a less compressed process.

We found that developing a process to produce 20 key words/concepts from member consultation was not a trivial task. First, translating the key concepts resulting from the 2019 survey into keywords was not a straightforward process, and secondly making the process open ended to allow for new suggestions, while providing some very interesting input necessarily generated many words which were quite similar in meaning. We are very interested to see how the data assembled from different national committees from this second consulting stage will be combined by ICOM Define in the next steps.

Finally, we noted that there is a very strong interest from the ICOM Germany membership in more discussion around the theme of the museum definition, and also around the theme of the vision/future of museums. In fact, perhaps unsurprisingly, the desire to participate in discussions with the museum community appears to exceed the desire to complete surveys and fill in forms, and the discussion itself arguably has value to the museum community which goes beyond the specific outputs submitted to ICOM Define. This is something that presents a great opportunity for future engagement of members, and following the event several members expressed interest in helping ICOM Deutschland to organize such discussions.

In the first instance, we believe it is very important to have ample time to engage members in the next stage of the ICOM Define process (Consultation 3 from 10 July to 10 September). Independent of the definition process, ICOM Germany is also in the process of planning future member events relating to the future and vision of museums to build on the discussions sparked off by the definition process.

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[1] See https://icom-deutschland.de/de/component/content/article/31-museumsdefinition/265-begriffe-und-konzepte-fuer-die-icom-museumsdefinition-mit-der-hoechsten-wertschaetzung-in-icom-mitgliederbefragungsdaten.html?Itemid=114 In the second survey, ICOM members were invited to state whether or not they agreed that these concepts should be used as a starting point for the museum definition.