

Definition of a Museum

"A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."¹

To acknowledge the diversity of the Alberta Museums Association's Institutional Members, the following qualify as museums for the purposes of this definition:

- natural, archaeological, and ethnographic monuments and sites, and historical monuments and sites of a museum nature that acquire, conserve, and communicate material evidence of people and their environment
- institutions holding collections of and displaying live specimens of plants and animals, such as botanical and zoological gardens, aquariums, and vivariums
- institutions holding collections of and displaying specimens of ancient and prehistoric life, such as palaeontological institutions
- science centres and planetariums
- non-profit art exhibition galleries
- non-profit institutions or organizations undertaking conservation, research, education, training, documentation, or other activities relating to museums and museology
- cultural centres that facilitate the preservation, continuation, and management of tangible or intangible (living heritage) resources

Originally adopted May 14, 2001. Updated definition adopted by the AMA Membership September 22, 2023.

¹ In Prague, on August 24, 2022, the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM approved the proposal for the new museum definition with 92.41% voting in favour (For: 487, Against: 23, Abstention: 17). "Museums Definition," International Council of Museums, accessed May 8, 2023, <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>.