

Statement on Linked Data identifiers for museum objects

ICOM recognizes the accelerating trend for cultural resources to be described within digital environments. Huge digital libraries and aggregation services are collecting data and metadata about cultural objects, including museum objects. These services often rely on the principles and infrastructure of Linked (Open) Data as promoted by the World Wide Web Consortium (see <http://www.w3.org/standards/semanticweb/data>).

Accordingly the publication of museum collections on the internet is becoming a matter of routine, and museum objects – traditionally identified in a museum collection by an accession and / or inventory numbers – become referenceable on the internet through URLs.

In order to support and advance the development and implementation of Linked Data technologies in a comprehensive way ICOM states the following principles

- Museums are the sole authority with responsibility for establishing globally unique and persistent identities (URIs) for each of the objects in their collections;
- Each museum should establish and publish on the internet such a unique and persistent identity – preferably as http URI (=URL) – for each of its objects;
- This URL should resolve to a human-readable description of the object, which is sufficiently detailed to identify it unambiguously;
- Ideally, this URL should additionally resolve to a comparable description in a machine-processible format, using best practice Linked Data principles;
- When describing the relationship of the collection object to its cultural context (people, places, events, etc.), the museum should where possible use URLs from common frameworks, rather than minting its own URLs for these concepts;
- A museum can choose to delegate this responsibility;
- The museum should encourage other institutions to use this set of URLs, by publishing metadata such as VoID descriptions (see <http://www.w3.org/TR/void>) of its collection resources;

ICOM's International Committee for Documentation, CIDOC, and its Working Groups are committed to provide the museum community with hands-on documentation for the practical implementation of these principles.