Why Collections Matter: Impacts of heritage collections on people’s lives

Amy Iwasaki & José Luiz Pederzoli Junior
Strategic Planning Unit, ICCROM & Cambridge Heritage Research Centre, University of Cambridge

In 2018–19, ICCROM circulated a brief open survey offered in 22 different languages asking the following question:

*Imagine a world without cultural heritage collections: no more libraries, archives, museums, treasured artefacts in temples, cultural centres & communities. How big a difference do you think this would make in your life?*

The survey collected ~2,400 responses from 103 countries, with respondents reporting ages 9 to 88 and a wide range of occupations.

Two complementary methods of qualitative data analysis—inductive coding and asymmetrical correspondence analysis—were used in tandem to analyze the qualitative survey responses, assisted by the software NVivo and XLSTAT. Coding involves systematically labeling coherent portions of textual documents with various “codes,” or thematic categories, to ease mining of key insights and increase analytical validity. Correspondence analysis is a statistical method that explores associations between categorical variables (here, the coded themes and respondents’ demographic attributes) based on relative frequencies.

![Fig. 1. Demographic composition of survey sample.](image)

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**Fig. 2. Reported degrees of impact of the loss of collections.**

**Fig. 3. Main themes for why collections have on respondents’ lives (see Fig. 3).**

**Fig. 4. Results of asymmetrical correspondence analyses of contingency tables cross-tabulating main themes and demographic attributes.**

This exploratory research casts light on the breadth of positive contributions that collections offer to people’s lives across all ages, world regions, and walks of life. Moreover, it stresses that heritage values are multivocal and variable across identity lines, which implores recognition in any discussion of heritage benefits.

"Culture and art bring us together and are what makes us human. For the sake of posterity alone, culture should be preserved and celebrated." (Youth, Kenya, Non-heritage professional)