

HERITAGE

THE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

Executive Leadership Development in Heritage Management Workshops

Engaging Communities in Cultural Heritage

International Winter School

Online

26 January - 8 February 2026



Course Directors & Instructors

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The Heritage Management Organization (HERITAGE) is pleased to announce the launch of its third training program on Community Engagement, a pioneering initiative designed to expand access for scholars and professionals interested in this vital and evolving field.

Community engagement is the cornerstone of heritage institutions' public programs worldwide. Over the past decades, a variety of methods and best practices have been developed to effectively reach and collaborate with the diverse communities and publics that these institutions serve. Yet, the uncritical use of standardized "toolkits" for engagement can often overlook the ethical and cultural nuances essential to meaningful collaboration.

In this online program, we aim to develop a different approach to community engagement, that is based on social and artistic research with community-led initiatives. Research-led practice can lead to exhibition design and collaborative actions that are better suited to the cultural and social particularities of each milieu and each specific group or community and its relation to others. This course draws from our long experience with community engagement through heritage and will discuss several examples from our own and other work.

The Engaging Communities Winter School offers a comprehensive and in-depth training experience that extends beyond the scope of the standard 4-day workshop. Delivered fully online, the program enables participants to develop advanced methodologies and fieldwork tools for community engagement—without the need for travel.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- demonstrate an understanding of the principles of community engagement, collaborative research and heritage values
- conduct research in a dynamic mode, tailored to community needs and community engagement initiatives
- demonstrate skills in applied ethnography, doing long-distance oral history interviews and digitally documenting personal narratives and material objects
- practice the curation of multimedia content and create narratives for online exhibitions
- ponder on the possibilities of cultural heritage becoming part of festival activities and temporary exhibitions
- get introduced to interpretation skills for heritage managers
- learn about the potentials and pitfalls of festival organization around heritage
- learn and discuss the issues involved with community tourism
- ponder on the uses of art and artistic research in the preservation, highlighting and interpretation of heritage, and its role in engaging communities

Course Outline

Theme 1: Introduction to heritage management and community engagement

(by Aris Anagnostopoulos, Lena Stefanou, Evangelos Kyriakidis)

What is community engagement? How is it different from outreach or public education programs? What is a community and how do we set up collaborative programs of research and presentation? What is the decolonizing potential of community engagement programs? In this summer school, we give an introduction to heritage management and the fact that we are managing values when we manage heritage, rather than just fabric. This comes to explain the primacy of the local communities as important stakeholders for the management of heritage. We further discuss the developments in community engagement within archaeology and heritage in the last few decades. We look at criticisms, dilemmas and put emphasis on examples of good practice. The instructors present their own work, in comparison with other examples from the world over, and lay out their method of incorporating research and public actions into a complete plan for working with communities.

Theme 2: Ethnographic methods and collaborative research

(by Aris Anagnostopoulos, Lena Stefanou)

What is ethnographic research? Why is it necessary for heritage practitioners? How can we use it to solve issues with heritage spaces? Why is it a strong engagement tool? How do we define our audiences and publics? How does audience segmentation help us through this process to expand our potential to offer tailored projects for the needs of different communities and to produce audience-centred and people-centred approaches and results? Ethnographic research is an indispensable aspect of designing and implementing a community engagement project. It is essential in establishing relations with the communities involved and understanding their values, culture and issues, as well as the differentials in power and access.

Theme 3: Oral history

(by Lena Stefanou)

In this theme we will explore the relationship between oral history and heritage. The collection of oral testimonies regarding heritage sites and cultural practices, as well as their incorporation in museum exhibitions and heritage projects has acquired a great importance over the last decade. During the summer school we will have ample time to explore how we set up or support projects that focus on collecting personal and communal narratives, and on publicly displaying community memory. Some of the themes to be explored are the main principles of conducting an interview, the structure of an interview guide, the technical parameters we need to be aware of for conducting successful oral history interviews, as well as the consent forms and the General Data Protection Regulations.

Theme 4: Going digital: producing and displaying local cultural heritage and history

(by Aris Anagnostopoulos, Lena Stefanou)

How can cultural heritage and local history be transformed into multimedia content? What are the specificities of curatorial work and research on the web? In what different ways do communities of users participate in online collections and what role do social media play in creating and sustaining communities? We look into the making of web-based platforms, such as the "Postman's Road" in Sfakia, Crete, the "Archives and Collections of Paros" online repository, and the digital initiative "The Museum inside Me". Based on the experience of working both online and offline for creating digital content, we will discuss modes of knowledge production and practices of engaging with communities based on online content.

Theme 5: FESTIVALS National / State-Regional / Private-Local / Community: mission, objectives, characteristics, challenges

Each festival organization is an entity in itself: its mission, objectives, stakeholders, format, and outcome define the core of its identity. And these may differ from National/State to Regional/Private, to Local/Community. By understanding the specific characteristics of each such event, and the parameters that influence its very essence at all stages (initiating - designing - planning - executing - evaluating), one can put into perspective the role of community in different types of festivals. And as festivals around

the world become a prevailing element of cultural activity, the key request for community engagement is not always a fact by default. Different festivals entail different challenges in terms of community involvement, different tools to address them, diverse outcomes to expect in different levels of ownership, and participatory approaches. But there is always a way to engage the community, as long as it is set as a primary aspect of any festival!

Bibliography

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[Download here.](#)
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To apply for this workshop please:

1. Fill in and submit the [Executive Leadership Program in Heritage Management Application Form](#). Please complete the application process by submitting your CV, a personal statement (describing your current project that will benefit from this training) and a reference letter (which may come in separately by your referee at their earliest convenience).
2. A reasonable proficiency in spoken and written English is required to attend the course.
3. Applicants will be asked to participate in a personal (oral) interview.

After approval of their application file, participants will receive an official letter outlining in detail the conditions of participation.

Places for this workshop are limited, so please apply early.

The application deadline is 1 December 2025.

For questions regarding the application process and the administrative aspects of the course, contact us at info@heritagemanagement.org.