



SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2025

Sustainable Futures Through Cultural Resilience

2-4 September 2025 | Javett-UP Art Centre, City of Tshwane

*Integrating cultural preservation, digital innovation, and
environmental sustainability to build resilient heritage.*

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CONFERENCE OVERVIEW



**SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION
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The 89th South African Museums Association (SAMA) National Conference will be held in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng, from 2 to 4 September 2025. This year's theme, Sustainable Futures Through Cultural Resilience, highlights the urgent need to harmonise three key pillars:



Cultural Preservation



Digital Innovation



**Environmental
Sustainability**

In a time shaped by rapid technological advancements and escalating environmental challenges, cultural institutions and communities must innovate and adapt while continuing to honor their traditions and histories.

Through the integration of cutting-edge digital technologies—such as virtual archives, immersive storytelling, and AI-driven curation—alongside sustainable practices, museums and heritage sites can revitalise their relevance and accessibility. This multifaceted approach celebrates the richness of diverse traditions while fostering resilience in the face of global changes.

The conference will inspire participants to embrace sustainability and resilience as shared values and examine how these interconnected principles equip cultural institutions to thrive in the modern age.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The annual SAMA National Conference aims to:



Facilitate networking among museum colleagues



Foster the development of the museum profession



Elevate and ensure improvement of museum standards



Advocate for and uphold museum ethics.



Promote museum training and skills development



Engage in discourse on key museum-related topics, including the intersection of cultural preservation, digital innovation, and environmental sustainability.

CONFERENCE THEMES & SUB-THEMES



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The conference includes a range of interconnected themes and sub-themes:

CULTURAL PRESERVATION IN A CHANGING WORLD



THEME 1

1. Balancing traditional practices with modern demands.
2. Safeguarding intangible heritage in the digital era.
3. Collaborative efforts in cultural conservation across borders.
4. Revitalising endangered practices through community-led initiatives.
5. Decolonisation and authenticity in cultural heritage representation.

EMBRACING DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR HERITAGE



THEME 2

1. Using digital tools to preserve and share cultural knowledge.
2. Virtual and augmented reality: immersive storytelling in cultural spaces.
3. Artificial intelligence in cultural conservation and education.
4. Bridging gaps: digital access to cultural resources for global audiences.
5. Challenges of digitising heritage: ethics, ownership, and access.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN CULTURAL HERITAGE



THEME 3

1. Eco-friendly practices in museum operations and curation.
2. Resilience against climate change impacts on heritage sites.
3. Incorporating sustainable materials in preservation efforts.
4. Raising environmental awareness through cultural initiatives.
5. Promoting biodiversity through cultural and natural heritage integration.

BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES THROUGH HERITAGE



THEME 4

1. Empowering local communities as heritage stewards.
2. Cultural tourism as a tool for sustainable development.
3. Strengthening identity and belonging through heritage projects.
4. Fostering inter-generational knowledge transfer in cultural resilience.
5. Heritage education for fostering a sustainable and inclusive future.



THE CONFERENCE WILL INCLUDE:



Plenary sessions featuring keynote speakers.



Thematic panels, workshops, and break-away groups.



Awards ceremonies to promote excellence within the museum profession



A showcase of exhibitions, museum publications, and research projects from South African institutions.



Networking and collaboration opportunities for participants from diverse backgrounds.

AWARDS

SAMA offers several prestigious awards to raise the standard of the conference:

- ***FitzSimons Award:*** For the best paper presented at the conference, in memory of Frederick William FitzSimons.
- ***President's Award:*** For the best paper by a first-time speaker.
- ***Novice Speaker's Award:*** For the best paper by a new recruit to the profession (less than three years in the field).
- ***Publication Design Award:*** Recognising excellence in museum publications, such as brochures, promotional material, and websites.



Awards are presented during the conference dinner, accompanied by book vouchers or gifts and framed certificates.



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CALL FOR PAPERS

The SAMA National Conference Organising Committee invites submissions addressing the conference theme and its relevance to South Africa's museum and heritage sector. Papers not covered within the listed sub-themes, but aligned to museum-related work or collaborations with other sectors are also encouraged.

DEADLINE

13
June
2025

THEMES



Cultural Preservation in a Changing World

1. Balancing traditional practices with modern demands.
2. Safeguarding intangible heritage in the digital era.
3. Collaborative efforts in cultural conservation across borders.
4. Revitalising endangered practices through community-led initiatives.
5. Decolonisation and authenticity in cultural heritage representation.



Environmental Sustainability in Cultural Heritage

1. Eco-friendly practices in museum operations and curation.
2. Resilience against climate change impacts on heritage sites.
3. Incorporating sustainable materials in preservation efforts.
4. Raising environmental awareness through cultural initiatives.
5. Promoting biodiversity through cultural and natural heritage integration.



Embracing Digital Innovation for Heritage

1. Using digital tools to preserve and share cultural knowledge.
2. Virtual and augmented reality: immersive storytelling in cultural spaces.
3. Artificial intelligence in cultural conservation and education.
4. Bridging gaps: digital access to cultural resources for global audiences.
5. Challenges of digitising heritage: ethics, ownership, and access.



Building Resilient Communities Through Heritage

1. Empowering local communities as heritage stewards.
2. Cultural tourism as a tool for sustainable development.
3. Strengthening identity and belonging through heritage projects.
4. Fostering inter-generational knowledge transfer in cultural resilience.
5. Heritage education for fostering a sustainable and inclusive future.

IMPORTANT

All presenters must register and pay for the full conference.

Accepted abstracts will be confirmed by early July.

Presentations can be delivered either virtually or in person.

Papers may be submitted post-conference for potential publication in Samantics

or via SAMAB (<https://samuseums.co.za/samab/>) following relevant formatting and peer review guidelines.



- ✓ **200 to 300 words.**
- ✓ **Include a short bio of no more than 200 words.**



Registration Period:

Opens end of April, closes mid-August (details to follow in future circulars).

Early Bird Rates:

- SAMA Members (in person): R2,500
- Non-members (in person): R2,800 (includes 1-year individual SAMA membership for 2026)
- Online Attendance (SAMA & non-SAMA members): R800

After Early Bird Period:

- SAMA Members (in person): R2,700
- Non-members (in person or online): R3,000 (includes 1-year SAMA membership for 2026)

SUBMIT TO:

sama2025conferencepapers@gmail.com



For queries or information, please contact SAMA North at samanationalconference2025@gmail.com.

The first 10 registrations receive a complimentary SAMA membership for 2026.



South African Museums Association

CONFERENCE OUTLINE



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Sustainable Futures Through Cultural Resilience
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Monday, 1 Sept

18:00 – 20:00: Welcome function

Tuesday, 2 Sept

09:00 – 16:00: Opening session, Keynote address, Presentations

Wednesday, 3 Sept

09:00 – 16:00: Keynote address, Presentations

Thursday, 4 Sept

09:00 – 11:00: Presentations, Closing remarks, SAMA AGM, Behind-the-scenes UP Museums tour
18:30 – 21:30: Conference Dinner

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- **Keynote Address:** Delivered during the opening session, focusing on the conference theme.
- **Opening Speeches:** Include remarks from the SAMA President and VIPs (e.g., DAC, provincial, and local government officials).

Friday, 5 Sept

Optional excursions (not included in registration fee)

- **Paper Presentations:** Approximately 20 minutes per paper, followed by 15 minutes for discussion.
- **Interactive Sessions:** Workshops, demonstrations, and group discussions to deepen engagement with the themes.
- **Daily Schedule:** Sessions to include regular breaks and conclude by 16:00.
- **Conference Dinner:** A celebratory evening to network and present awards.

DELIVERABLES/OUTCOMES

- Strengthened professional networks.
- Recognition of excellence in museum practices through awards.
- Advancements in sustainable and innovative museum practices.
- Published conference proceedings in SAMAB journal and Samantics newsletter.



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