

## Crowdsourcing in Museums: The Power of Community Engagement

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### **Abstract**

Over the past two decades, as museums have experimented with digital technologies, there has been a conscious effort to better connect with wider audiences. This paper considers the role crowdsourcing can play in transforming museums into more engaged environments, raising visibility and inclusivity, and reconfiguring the power relation to involve diverse people and populations in knowledge-creation processes. It provides a scoping review of the history, definitions and concepts of academic crowdsourcing, citizen science, and participatory engagement. All too often participation in crowdsourcing is influenced by education, socio-economic, gender, and cultural lines. Diversity and inclusivity remain rooted in infrastructural complexities and involve an intricate array of historical values, traditions and customs. If museums are to play a leading role in communication, it is important to clarify who constitutes the 'crowd'. This study investigates innovative approaches that museums can or have played in engaging diverse people and populations in the knowledge exchange. It asks: How can museums build a more open, connected, and equitable environment? Who represent their 'crowd' and to what extent can they be engaged? How can crowdsourcing unlock access to data, information, and knowledge to yield positive outcomes for all regardless of their socio-economic, gender, geographical or cultural background? The paper reviews how through crowdsourcing, and 'niche-sourcing', museums can reposition themselves as contemporary institutions that question dominant social narratives and engage a broader community.

**Keywords:** digital technologies, citizen science, knowledge creation, popular culture, inclusivity