

«La conservation des équipements sportif»

Conférence en ligne - 21 octobre 2025

Conferencia ICMAH-ICOM

Sachiko Niina – Prince Chichibu Museum

"Current Status and Future Prospects of Sports Material Preservation in Japan"

This presentation provides an in-depth overview of sports material preservation in Japan, focusing on the challenges and strategies developed by the Prince Chichibu Memorial Sports Museum, the country's only comprehensive sports museum. Established in 1959, the museum has been central to documenting Japan's sports history, but since 2014, it has lacked a permanent exhibition space due to renovations for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, with all collections moved to a storage facility 13 kilometers away.

In 2021, the museum organized an online workshop with sports museums, equipment manufacturers, and conservation experts to address preservation challenges. Participants highlighted the short lifespan of many modern sports materials, including synthetic fabrics, polymers, and plastics, which deteriorate faster than traditional materials. Museums often face limited resources, including staff, storage space, and specialized conservation knowledge, which makes long-term preservation difficult.

The museum is actively building a network of collaboration. Local history museums often hold sports-related items, and sharing expertise with their conservators provides practical solutions. Cooperation with sports manufacturers also offers insights on material properties and optimal preservation techniques. The museum aims not only to preserve physical artifacts, such as jerseys, medals, and equipment, but also intangible heritage, including athlete movements, training methods, and audiovisual recordings.

Looking forward, the museum plans to reopen in the newly renovated Prince Chichibu Lock Vista Stadium in Tokyo by 2023, with modern exhibition facilities designed to protect artifacts while allowing public access. By creating a national network of sports museums and working with manufacturers, conservators, and scientists, the museum hopes to develop comprehensive guidelines for sports heritage preservation, ensuring Japan's rich sports history is safeguarded for future generations.



Patricia Reymond – Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland

A long-distance race against time: preserving sports costumes

Patricia Reymond presented the textile collection of the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, which preserves ceremonial and sports outfits from the Olympic Games. The collection is extensive, with about 5,900 competition outfits and 6,900 non-competitive items, complemented by around 1,000 flags and pennants. These include uniforms worn by athletes, volunteers, and staff, as well as costumes used during Olympic ceremonies.

Sport costumes present a unique conservation challenge because wear, tears, stains, modifications, and autographs are often an integral part of their historical value. Preserving them requires balancing protection with the need to maintain their authenticity and storytelling power. Patricia detailed how the museum manages these challenges using specialized storage solutions, such as large hangars, Tyvek covers, acid-free materials, and recently, oxygen-free storage systems for the most fragile objects.

Documentation also plays a crucial role in conservation. Each item is carefully recorded, and case studies have highlighted how precise records help restorers make informed decisions. Patricia also shared an interesting study conducted by a conservation student on the best type of pen to use for athlete autographs, ensuring signatures remain legible while minimizing damage to the textiles.

Despite being modest in size compared to other collections, the textile department is highly valued by visitors, offering a tangible link to Olympic history and highlighting the human stories behind the Games. The museum continues to innovate in conservation techniques while preserving the authenticity and integrity of these historic garments.



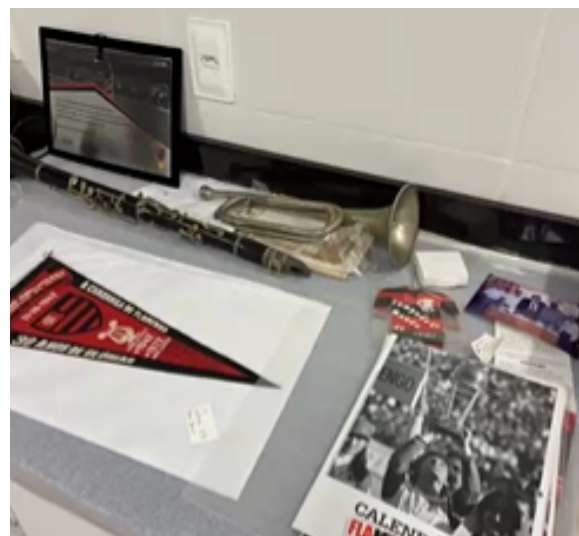
Cristina Mitidieri – Flamengo Museum, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Conservation of sports equipment at the Flamengo Museum

Cristina Mitidieri presented the conservation strategies and ongoing efforts of Flamengo Museum to preserve its rich sports heritage. Located in Rio de Janeiro, the museum welcomes 90,000–100,000 visitors annually and highlights 315 key historical objects in its permanent exhibition. However, the museum's collection extends far beyond the exhibition, encompassing over 35,000 items spanning multiple sports, including football, athletics, basketball, and more.

Since 2018, Flamengo has invested significantly in specialized professionals, dedicated storage spaces, and conservation equipment to ensure proper care of its collection. The team faces complex challenges: managing the sheer number of objects, accepting and documenting donations, and preserving materials that are highly susceptible to environmental conditions, such as high humidity and inadequate lighting, which can accelerate deterioration.

To overcome these challenges, the museum emphasizes preventive conservation, rigorous documentation, and carefully controlled storage conditions. Items are categorized, inventoried, and preserved according to their material type, ensuring longevity while maintaining historical integrity. Cristina highlighted the importance of combining museological expertise with sports heritage management, showing how thoughtful preservation safeguards objects that hold national and international significance, from historical jerseys to medals and ceremonial items. The presentation concluded by underlining that bringing museum practices closer to sports collections represents a meaningful step toward protecting Flamengo's legacy and enriching Brazil's broader sporting culture.



Jed Smith – Australian Sports Museum, Melbourne, Australia

Saving Sport: Audio-Visual Preservation

Jed Smith presented the Australian Sports Museum's ambitious audio-visual preservation project, aimed at safeguarding the museum's extensive collection of historical sports footage and recordings. The museum, located at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground, houses around 50,000 audio-visual items, spanning 35 different formats, including tape, film, and other now-obsolete media. These formats pose significant preservation challenges, as many playback machines are becoming rare or unavailable.

The museum is currently midway through a three-year digitization project, which involves auditing the collection, prioritizing high-value materials, and outsourcing digitization due to limited in-house capacity. Approximately 40% of the project is complete, and early results have already demonstrated the value of the work. Digitized content has been used to enhance exhibitions, develop new displays, and improve social media engagement, showing the tangible benefits of preservation to stakeholders.

Jed emphasized the urgency of initiating similar projects, highlighting that the window of opportunity to access specialized digitization equipment is closing quickly. He also stressed the importance of communicating the benefits in an engaging way to secure funding and institutional support. The project serves as a model for other sports museums worldwide, demonstrating how digitization not only preserves valuable heritage but also enhances visitor experience and promotes the historical significance of sport in national culture.

