

Ontario Museum Digitalization Index Roadmap

“Digitalization is a journey.”

Drivers of Digital Transformation



Ontario's population is changing.



Visitor needs are changing and vary by segment.



Digital transformation drives in-person engagement.



The role of museums is changing.



Centres of excellence in digital transformation.

Moving Forward



Align digital investments with target audience(s).



Standardize digitalization terms, standards, and policies.



Museums develop more sustainable business models.



Embrace an open innovation model to improve the likelihood of success.

The Vision for Ontario Museums.



Visitors are more engaged and feel that they belong.



Museums are recognized as community centres and assets.



Museums and visitors have a credible data source.



Local histories are more recognized as globally relevant.



Museums are able to sustain digital transformation.

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Drivers of Digital Transformation



Ontario's population is changing.

Ontario's population is changing in many ways:

- Increased diversity, 30% of Ontario's population is or has been a landed immigrant or permanent resident
- An aging population
- Digital generations (Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha)
- Evolving family structures
- Pandemic driven changes to where people live and how they work

Ontario museum-visitors are changing too.



Visitor needs are changing and vary by segment.

Ontario's population isn't homogenous – nor are museum visitors.

George Brown College (GBC) researchers present four personas to highlight how key visitor segments differ in personal values, activities, interests, and digital touchpoints.



Digital transformation drives in-person engagement.

The results of a 2022 survey revealed that most Ontario museum-visitors (51.4%) engage with museums in-person and online. These omni-channel visitors participate in more in-person and online museum experiences on average per year (4.3 times) than in-person only or online-only visitors (1.4 and 1.7 times).

Technology has an increasing role in the visitor experience before, during, and after a visit.



The role of museums is changing.

The International Council of Museums' (ICOM) new definition of museums emphasizes their evolving roles as dynamic and community-oriented institutions. Changes in society and technology will continue to drive changes in the roles of museums and challenge any perception that they are solely keepers of tangible heritage.



Centres of excellence in digital transformation.

The Ontario Museum Digital Index (OMDI) was developed to measure the digital transformation effectiveness of Ontario museums. Similar to S&M businesses, museum adoption of digital transformation is overall low. They face similar barriers to digital transformation including limited resources and shortages in expertise.

The OMDI also identified that some museums are leading the way on digital transformation!

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Align digital investments with target audience(s).

The Ontario museum-visitor experience is omni-channel, but different segments engage with different digital technologies and digital touchpoints as highlighted by the four personas.

It is important for museum professionals:

- to understand who their key visitor segments are and what drives them to visit museums.
- to develop digital strategies that are aligned with target audiences with a continued focus on issues of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusivity to foster a sense of belonging.



Standardize digitalization terms, standards, and policies.

Digital transformation introduces new vocabulary and challenges. Ontario museum professionals are encouraged to:

- standardize digitalization terms (e.g. a "virtual reality exhibit") for clear communication and consistent use.
- develop ownership standards and policies for shared, democratized, and transparent collections.
- develop cyber security standards and policies to protect against cyber threats; comply with regulations; protect public trust in museums; ensure operation continuity; and protect visitor, museum, and partner data.



Museums develop more sustainable business models.

Digital transformation introduces new opportunities. The Ontario museum sector is encouraged to:

- improve the awareness and transparency of how museums are currently funded (grants, donations, admission, etc.) and what obligations they have (salaries, overhead, collections, etc.)
- develop new business models that allow museums to shift away from project funding and other short-term funding by changing their value propositions.
- identify how much money is required to invest in digital transformation and the operational funding required to sustain it.



Embrace an open innovation model to improve the likelihood of success.

Collaboration can reduce the barriers to digital transformation. Potential partners for Ontario museums include:

- other museums, working in cohorts and establishing centers of excellence to share knowledge and best practices.
- governments and funding partners for financial and other support.
- galleries, libraries, and archives (GLAM) to create a comprehensive and interconnected digital ecosystem.
- educational institutions to develop digitally enhanced and enabled programming that is aligned with Ontario's education curriculum.

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Visitors are more engaged and feel that they belong.

Visitors to Ontario museums:

- are more engaged in-person and online.
- participate in digitally-enabled experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing.
- feel that they belong as individuals, as community members, and as part of Ontario's narrative



Museums are recognized as community centres and assets.

Museums are recognized as:

- community centres that provide education, connection, cultural preservation, and community engagement.
- key assets for tourism by governments and local businesses.
- a third place. Not home or work but a third place to connect with others over a shared interest or activity.



Museums professionals and visitors have a credible data source of Ontario museums.

Museum professionals have access to a shared and credible database that enables collaboration and data-driven decisions.

Visitors have access to an aggregate of complete and accurate information about Ontario museums and events.

OMA or another organization facilitate that credible data source.



Local histories are more recognized as globally relevant.

Ontario's local histories are that of First Nations people and immigrants. They are histories and expression with universal themes and global relevance.

The value of those histories is recognized by local and global audiences, fostering connection.



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Museums are able to sustain digital transformation.

Museums have the operational funding, partnerships, resources and skills to sustain digital transformation.