

Foreword

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The present volume stems from the conference *Cultures of Artificial Intelligence: New Perspectives for Museums*, which took place at the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe on 1 and 2 December 2022 and was simultaneously streamed on the web. Artificial intelligence is not yet a mainstream topic in the cultural world, but does feature in general debates about digitization and digitality. The use of machine learning, neural networks, and large language models has, however—and contrary to common assumptions—been growing for years. Beyond prominent lighthouses, initial surveys of the international museum landscape list many hundreds of projects addressing issues of traditional museum work and the digitality debate by means of new approaches. The number is continually increasing, and it is not always easy to obtain an overview of all the developments. English- and German-speaking networks on artificial intelligence and museums were therefore established long before the current hype about ChatGPT—and the conference thus aimed to bring together experts and representatives of as many disciplines as possible and to discuss new perspectives for museums precisely in this direction.

The conference emerged from a cooperation of the Badisches Landesmuseum with the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam and the LINK funding program of the Stiftung Niedersachsen. There has been intensive cooperation with the Allard Pierson over many years, ranging from joint exhibitions and MuseumCamps to the ongoing project *Creative User Empowerment*, which uses artificial intelligence to offer new access to the collections and is presented in more detail in this volume. There has also been an intensive exchange with the LINK program of the Stiftung Niedersachsen for quite some time, which has led, among other things, to the foundation of the German-speaking network *AI & Museums*. Against this backdrop, joining forces and organizing this conference together was an obvious step. The somewhat more general title ‘AI in Museums’ was chosen for the present publication, which also includes additional papers in order to provide a broader scope; in line with the subtitle, the volume is structured into three larger sections on reflections, perspectives, and applications of artificial intelligence in museums.

In closing, there remains the pleasure of expressing our gratitude: First, we must mention the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Me-

dia (BKM), which provides generous support for the joint project Creative User Empowerment, and thus facilitated the conditions for the conference and publication. The same also applies to the Stiftung Niedersachsen, which contributed to the success of the conference with a substantial grant. With respect to conceptual questions, we greatly benefited from the exchange with Tabea Golgath, Etienne Posthumus, Pauline Retèl, and Marjolein Beumer. In realizing the conference in Karlsruhe, the technical department and the colleagues of the Badisches Landesmuseum were of invaluable help, with Martin Nadarzinski, who managed the stream, deserving special mention. Without the support of the directorates of the participating museums, neither projects nor larger conferences would be feasible; for the Badisches Landesmuseum, our special thanks go to Eckart Köhne, and for the Allard Pierson Museum, to Els van der Plas. Finally, our heartfelt gratitude is extended to the international team of authors whose papers all contribute to providing a broad and polyphonic picture of the current situation in the field, and to Amy Klement for her invaluable help in editing the language of the papers.

While a book on AI may seem like a paradox from a formal perspective, for the development of the debate such focussed assessments are nonetheless still needed. Much is currently in a state of flux and is both reflexively and technically preliminary, but for all those working in the field it is already obvious that artificial intelligence will permanently change museum experiences and museum work and will become one, if not *the* dominant topic in the debate on digitality. This change needs to be shaped actively by means of critical reflection, new perspectives, and concrete experiments—if the present volume can provide impulses and inspirations for this, its purpose will be more than fulfilled.