Museums have long been sites for the collection and display of tangible heritage, including art and artifacts. In recent years, however, museums around the world have expanded the scope of their exhibitions and curatorial practices to include living heritage, such as oral history and memory, craftsmanship, festivals, ritual and performance, and in this regard, museums are increasingly being recognized as important partners in the effort to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

As noted by Richard Kurin, Director of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage at the Smithsonian Institution, this expansion of museum work to include intangible heritage presents a number of methodological challenges. While most museum professionals are trained to manage collections of objects, working with intangible heritage entails the extensive involvement and active participation of communities who are the bearers of living culture. In learning about intangible heritage, museum professionals must engage with local communities to understand the history and meaning of their cultural expressions. In addition, in curating intangible heritage, they must know how to establish equal partnerships with culture bearers and develop mechanisms for sharing authority and decision-making about museum activities and representations.

The ICH and Museums Learning Resources focus on the role of the museum in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. Aimed at heritage practitioners and museum operators, these resources provide an introduction to the conceptual and methodological linkages between museology and intangible cultural heritage. Drawing on lectures and hands-on field experience from the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Field School held in Thailand's Lamphun Province since 2009, the resources offer lectures, readings, and case studies on the research, documentation, transmission and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage.

Another aim of the Learning Resources is to foster dialog and exchange among heritage institutions involved in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Towards this goal, the Learning Resources Website will serve as a forum for sharing news, knowledge and case studies on ICH safeguarding initiatives. Please take the time to visit the exhibitions and contribute to the ICH blog on our website!