

MODERNIZATION OF MUSEUM ACTIVITIES IN THE KHOREZM REGION (2021–2025): DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, INNOVATIVE EXPOSITIONS, AND TOURISM INTEGRATION

Abdrimova S.

Lecturer of History, Khorezm Branch of the Asia International University

Email: abdrimova1809@gmail.com

Abstract: This article examines the key directions of modernization in museum activities in the Khorezm region during 2021–2025. It focuses on the development of new exhibitions, the implementation of digital archival systems, and the integration of museums with the tourism sector. The study draws on recent reforms, statistical analyses, and outcomes from international cooperation projects to provide scientific insights into the effectiveness and impact of these modernization efforts. In addition, it explores how modern technologies and innovative approaches are enhancing visitor engagement and preserving cultural heritage. The findings highlight the evolving role of museums as cultural, educational, and tourism hubs in the region, contributing to both local development and international cultural exchange

Keywords: Khorezm Region; museum digitalization; digital cultural heritage; cultural heritage preservation; museum innovation; smart museums; electronic archiving systems; heritage tourism; sustainable tourism development; interactive museum technologies; cultural policy reform; digital transformation in museums.

Uzbekistan’s rich cultural heritage, particularly the ancient history of the Khorezm region, occupies a prominent place in world civilization. In today’s era of globalization and digital technologies, it has become essential for museums to modernize and reform their operations. Preserving Uzbekistan’s long-standing historical and cultural legacy and promoting it to the world through contemporary technological means is one of the most pressing tasks of our time. The Khorezm region, with its 3,000-year-old history, distinctive architecture, and unique art, holds a significant position in global civilization. The government resolution adopted in 2021, “On Measures to Improve the Activities of Museums,” has opened new prospects for museums in Khorezm. These institutions have evolved beyond being mere repositories of antiquities, becoming major centers for fostering national identity and patriotism. Previously, museums were limited to the function of displaying exhibits; however, during 2021–2025, they have transformed into edutainment centers, integrating education and entertainment. They now host interactive history lessons for school students and serve as digital platforms for international scholars.

Since 2021, museums within “Itchan Kala” have begun arranging and illuminating exhibits in accordance with the recommendations of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The redesigned exhibitions present historical events to visitors in a chronologically and thematically coherent manner. For instance, the exhibition at the Nurillaboy Palace vividly recreates life during the final period of the Khiva Khanate. Under the new program, QR codes have been installed on nearly all museum exhibits. Using these codes, visitors can access information in more than 15 languages—including Uzbek, English, Russian, German, French, Turkish, and Japanese—both in text and audio formats on their smartphones. This innovation reduces the need for tour guides for foreign tourists and greatly enhances their ability to explore the museums independently. The harsh continental climate of Khorezm negatively affects the preservation of exhibits. As part of modernization efforts, by 2024, all unique manuscripts and archaeological

textiles in the collections were placed in display cases manufactured in Germany, equipped with automatic internal humidity and temperature control systems.

Through the touchscreen info kiosks installed in museum halls, visitors can now access detailed information about each exhibit, including its history, place of discovery, and significance. This feature is particularly convenient for young tourists exploring the museums without a guide.

The modernization efforts carried out between 2021 and 2025 have rested on three main pillars: technological innovations, scientific digitization, and tourist appeal. During this period, a number of state programs were implemented in Uzbekistan to preserve cultural heritage sites and modernize museums. In particular, the concept of “Digitizing Cultural Heritage Sites and Integrating Them into the Tourism Sector” was adopted [1].

The Khorezm region has been one of the leading areas in this process, with several museums and exhibitions reorganized between 2021 and 2025 [2]. Notably, the inclusion of the city of Khiva in the World Heritage List enabled local museums to connect their activities with global tourism [3]. According to statistics, in 2024 there were 17 operational museums in Khorezm, which is 5.7 times more than in 2020 [4]. In 2022, the number of museum visitors reached 431,800 [5]. These figures indicate the steadily expanding museum infrastructure in the region. Digitization of museum collections across Uzbekistan is being carried out through international cooperation. The “Museum Collections Digitization Project,” funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), was launched in 2023 [6]. At the same time, electronic catalog systems are being implemented in museums across the Khorezm region [7]. In 2023, a nationwide decision was adopted to establish an electronic archival system [8].

Integrating museums with tourism is outlined in the Decree No. PQ-155 of the President of Uzbekistan, dated March 5, 2022 [9]. Within this framework, new exhibitions are being created in the Khorezm region under the “Khorezm – Karakalpakstan Tourism Circuit” project. As of 2025, reconstruction projects are underway for the “Lazgi” and “Avesto” museums in Khiva [10]. Furthermore, an online archival system is being developed in the region by digitizing museum collections in 3D format. The Agency for Cultural Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ACDF) has also made collections from Uzbek museums available on the Google Arts & Culture platform [11]. By integrating museum and tourism infrastructure, the number of visitors to the region has been steadily increasing. In 2024, the share of foreign tourists visiting Khiva’s museums rose by 15% [12]. A unified “State Catalog of Museum Objects and Collections” has been established across the Republic of Uzbekistan. Over 50,000 primary collection items from the Khorezm region have been entered into this electronic system. Each exhibit has been assigned a unique digital identifier, allowing for strict control over the movement of items, including their display in exhibitions, transfer for restoration, and other activities. As a result of digitization, remote access has been made available for scholars and researchers. Now, foreign specialists conducting research on the history of Khorezm can examine digital copies of manuscripts from museum collections through a special authorization system.

A shortage of specialists capable of combining IT expertise with museology has been observed. To address this issue by 2025, specialized professional development courses are planned. Khorezm museums have established experience-sharing collaborations with museums in France (the Louvre) and Germany. This cooperation enables the application of the latest chemical and technical methods in restoration work.

A unified “State Catalog of Museum Objects and Collections” has been created across the Republic of Uzbekistan. Over 50,000 primary collection items from the Khorezm region have been entered into this electronic system. Each exhibit has been assigned a unique digital identifier, allowing for strict control over the movement of items, including their display in exhibitions, transfer for restoration, and other activities.

As a result of the reforms carried out between 2021 and 2025, which fundamentally modernized museum operations across the Republic, the following outcomes were achieved:

1. Visitor numbers: The annual number of museum visitors (both domestic and foreign) increased on average by 20–25%.
2. Revenue: Through electronic tickets and additional paid services (such as audio guides and VR tours), museums improved their level of self-financing.
3. Education: Museums became “open classrooms” for school and university students, serving as interactive learning spaces.

Conclusion. In summary, the years 2021–2025 marked a turning point in the history of museums in the Khorezm region. The extensive introduction of digital technologies, the creation of new and interactive exhibitions, and close integration with the tourism industry have further strengthened Khorezm’s international reputation.

The task ahead is to build on these achievements by applying artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to museology and transforming Khorezm museums into one of the world’s most advanced digital cultural hubs. These efforts will not only help preserve the national history but also present it at a high level as a valuable part of global civilization.

It is worth emphasizing that the modernization of museums in Khorezm between 2021 and 2025 has been progressing positively. The number of museums, the quality of exhibitions, and the level of digital infrastructure continue to increase. At the same time, integrating museums with tourism, fully implementing electronic archival systems, and expanding international cooperation remain pressing priorities. The results indicate that the museum system in the Khorezm region is gradually transitioning to a digital infrastructure and innovative service model.

References:

1. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, February 12, 2021.
2. Khorezm Regional Department of Culture, Report Data, 2023.
3. UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Itchan Qala (Khiva), 2023.
4. Khorezm Regional Statistics Department, Cultural Sector Indicators, 2024.
5. Khorezm Regional Statistics Department, Cultural Sector Data, 2022.
6. UZA, “JICA to Finance the Digitization of Museum Collections in Uzbekistan,” 2023.
7. ACDF, “Electronic Cataloging of the National Museum Fund,” 2024.
8. KUN.UZ, “Uzbekistan Plans to Introduce Electronic Archiving,” 2023.
9. Decree No. PQ-155 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, March 5, 2022.
10. PLATINA.UZ, “Reconstruction of Lazgi and Avesto Museums in Khorezm,” 2025.
11. ACDF, “Collections of Uzbek Museums on Google Arts & Culture,” 2024.
12. Khorezm Regional Tourism Department, Reports, 2024.