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Developed by Seibold Security and Mavin Technologies.

# MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS SECURITY RISKS AND COUNTERMEASURES

USA TODAY reports there are more than 35,000 museums in the United States, according to a figure released by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. That means there are more than twice as many museums in the country as there are McDonald's restaurants – a staggering figure.



The art and other items in most museums are derived from private, government, or similar collections. In a recent article from [Masterworks](#), just the top five private art collections are valued at ~10B. When you consider all the museums in the US and all of the galleries and exhibits, it's possible to consider a value estimate at hundreds of billions (USD); perhaps the value is incalculable as so many pieces and artifacts are irreplaceable.

After working with museums large and small for over 20 years, helping customers and system integrators to plan, deploy, and service their electronic physical security systems, Mavin Technologies has gained wide expertise in this segment.

Museums, as custodians of valuable artifacts and cultural treasures, face many security risks. Here are some of the prominent security issues that museums typically encounter:

## Security Risks

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**Internal Theft and Employee Misconduct:** Museum staff members, including employees and contractors, can be involved in theft or misconduct. They may have access to restricted areas or possess insider knowledge, making it crucial for museums to implement robust access controls, background checks, and internal monitoring systems to prevent such incidents.

**External Actors - Theft and Burglary:** One of the most significant security concerns for museums is the risk of theft and burglary. High-profile museums often house valuable and irreplaceable artworks, historical artifacts, and rare specimens, making them attractive targets for criminals. Thieves may attempt to steal items for personal gain or to sell them on the black market.



**Vandalism and Damage:** Museums may be vulnerable to acts of vandalism, where individuals intentionally deface or damage artwork or exhibits. This could be driven by personal motives, political statements, or even random acts of destruction. Vandalism can cause significant harm to cultural heritage and disrupt public access to important artifacts.

**Fire and Natural Disasters:** Fires and natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, pose serious risks to museums. These events can result in the destruction or damage of valuable collections and infrastructure.

**Trafficking and Illicit Trade:** Museums must be vigilant about preventing the trafficking and illicit trade of cultural artifacts. Some individuals or organizations may attempt to acquire stolen or illegally excavated objects and sell them through legitimate-looking channels. Implementing strict acquisition protocols, due diligence procedures, and collaborating with law enforcement agencies can help combat this issue.

**Terrorism and Political Unrest:** Museums located in areas with a history of political unrest or housing politically significant artifacts may face the risk of targeted attacks. Terrorist groups may view museums as symbols of cultural heritage or seek to destroy important historical artifacts to advance their ideologies.

**Environmental Factors:** Museums must carefully manage environmental factors to preserve delicate artifacts.

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## Mitigation and Countermeasures

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Museums typically focus on several types of security to protect their collections and ensure the safety of buildings, exhibits, storage, transportation, visitors, and staff. The most important types of security for museums include:



**Access Control (aka PACS):** PACS systems should be considered as the central command software of a museum security ecosystem. The reason is PACS data not only covers sensor integration but uniquely includes a database of people and their associated privileges throughout a facility.

**Physical Security:** This involves protecting the building and its contents from theft, vandalism, and damage. It includes locks, barriers, security guards, and controlled access to storage and display areas.

**Specialized Museum Security:** Thinking about the art, artifacts, and treasures, robust countermeasures must include sub-systems or technology layers such as laser beams and automation, coupled with video analytics, integrated tailgating and alerts, and asset movements and tracking.

Likely, the most important aspect is flexibility to change and incorporate new technology.

**Environmental Security:** Museums must maintain stable environmental conditions to preserve artifacts. This includes controlling temperature, humidity, and light and preventing damage from water or pests. Incorrect environmental conditions can accelerate deterioration and damage the integrity of objects. Monitoring and controlling these factors require specialized systems and expertise.

**Surveillance and Alarm Systems:** CCTV cameras, motion detectors, and alarms are crucial for reacting to breaches in museum spaces and protecting against unauthorized access or theft. With the inclusion of analytics, security system operators and responders can immediately see the people involved in the breach, alert forces to the location, know positions and directions, understand the assets at risk, and automatically track people, objects, artifacts, and treasures.

**Cybersecurity:** As museums increasingly digitize their collections and rely on computer systems for operations, protecting against cyber threats is essential. This includes securing networks, databases, and digital archives. Most importantly, it must be factored into making the security system (from headend to endpoints) secure and meeting security standards.

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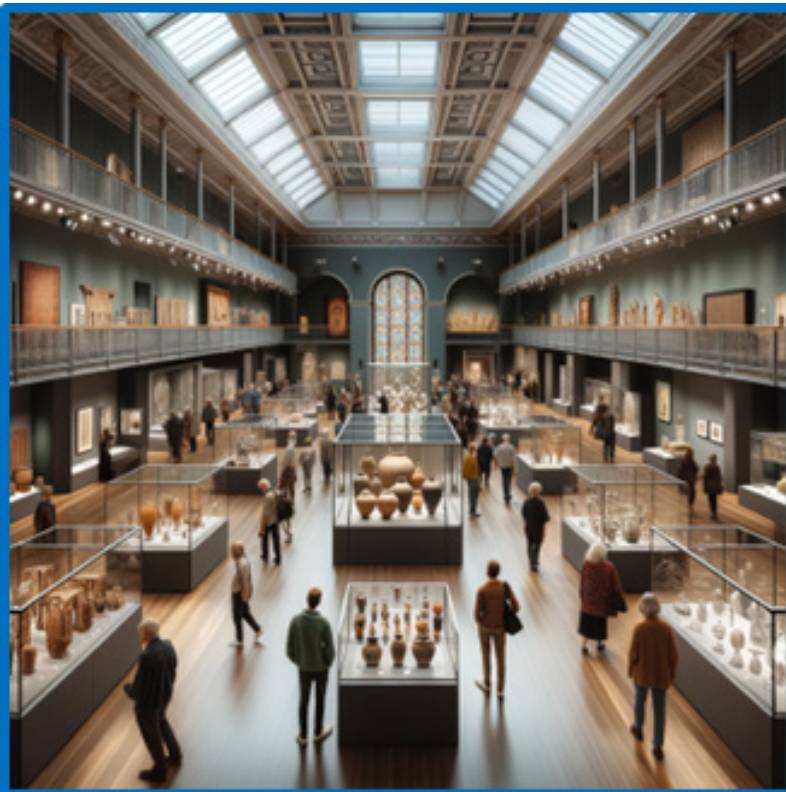


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**Fire Safety and Disaster Planning:** Museums need robust fire detection and suppression systems, as well as plans for natural disasters, to protect both people and collections.

**Art Handling and Transportation Security:** When artworks are moved, either within the museum or to other locations, security protocols are necessary to prevent damage or theft.

**Visitor Management:** Controlling the flow of visitors, managing crowds, and ensuring visitor safety are also important aspects of museum security.



Museums should have comprehensive emergency preparedness plans in place to address various security threats and potential crises. These plans should outline protocols for evacuations, salvage operations, and recovery procedures to minimize damage and facilitate swift response in times of emergencies.

Museums must continually assess and update their security protocols to address emerging risks and protect their collections, staff, and visitors. Collaborating with law enforcement agencies, implementing advanced security technologies, and staying informed about evolving security threats can help mitigate these concerns.

Each museum might prioritize these aspects differently depending on their specific needs, the nature of their collection, and their location. For instance, a museum with a large digital archive may place a higher emphasis on cybersecurity, while another with priceless artifacts might focus more on physical security measures.

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## About Mavin Technologies

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Mavin Technologies is a leading Physical Access Control (PACS) Software company. Spinning from USA Today, while Mavin can't prevent the loss of every single golden delicious McD's french fry, we can help museums improve their security operations!

Founded in the mid-80s as a unit of LITTON Poly Scientific, Mavin Solutions are designed for and have been used by Museums, large and small, since day one. Now in its fourth generation and with features driven by our numerous museum customers, Mavin delivers proven, innovative, robust, and secure solutions that achieve high reliability and optimum performance.

Mavin Software Platform comprises modules for access control, art and treasure tracking, people and credential management, alarm monitoring, event scheduling, guard desk interface, identity verification, and real-time device status monitoring. Mavin provides the museum market with the best Total Solution, and in many cases, existing system components (controllers, readers, network devices, and structures) can be retrofitted to provide for a smooth transition.

Today, we offer a solution set that includes Mavin Software, modern hardware and IoT support, and robust API integration capabilities. We support and implement Open Security Device Protocol (OSDP) capabilities for panels/boards as a system. So, from the controller to the reader and anything between, you can trust that your Security System is Secure!

Mavin can help museum security leaders Take Integration Further and address security practitioners' ever-expanding opportunity to partner with IT, HR, Facility Operations, and Enterprise Planning – all to address overall business-organization strategy, productivity, security, and risk management objectives.

Our customers tell us our knowledge, process, and follow-through for service are innovative and unusually comprehensive, providing the highest Return on Investment and reducing the Total Cost of Ownership.

Learn more at [sales@go-Mavin.com](mailto:sales@go-Mavin.com) or [www.go-Mavin.com](http://www.go-Mavin.com)



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