Idea: A Design & Technology Museum operated by FH Münster

A technology-oriented university museum can create strategic value for the Technology Campus Steinfurt by connecting research, teaching, and public engagement. Rather than functioning as a traditional exhibition space, it would serve as a dynamic infrastructure that documents technological developments, contextualises them, and links them to current research. It can integrate historical perspectives with ongoing projects and highlight the specific strengths of the campus as an engineering-focused location.

Such a museum would provide a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration across engineering, computer science, creative technologies, sustainability studies, and media design. Modular exhibitions, open laboratory zones, and interactive demonstrators can show how technologies are developed, tested, and applied. At the same time, the museum can present student projects, prototypes, and research results in a form accessible to broader audiences.

The museum can also act as a communication space where relevant societal and technological topics are addressed, such as energy, mobility, digitalisation, robotics, materials science, artificial intelligence, or sustainable production. These themes can be translated into immersive installations, object-based learning settings, or participatory formats.

Steinfurt already has a diverse cultural landscape, including the City Museum, the Kreislehrgarten, the Heinrich Neuy Bauhaus Museum, and the Heimathaus Borghorst. These institutions primarily focus on history, nature, or design. A technology-oriented university museum would complement them by making the region’s engineering, digital, and future-oriented dimensions visible. It would not compete with existing museums but fill a structural and thematic gap.

Possible thematic focus areas for the museum include energy and environmental technologies, automation and sensor systems, robotics, materials and manufacturing technologies, digital and embedded systems, and creative technologies. These topics reflect current research at the campus and link classical engineering with contemporary societal and technological questions.

Recommended formats include modular exhibition elements, functional models, open labs, and interactive demonstrators. Spaces for student projects, temporary exhibitions, prototypes, and public experimentation can ensure flexibility and enable integration of new research initiatives and collaborations with local industry.

Potential collection elements include historic technical devices from the region, prototypes from campus labs, current research setups, industrial components from partnerships, as well as digital datasets, simulations, and interactive software environments. This mix supports a contemporary understanding of technology development.

The museum should be institutionally anchored within FH Münster while functioning as an open interface between research, teaching, regional industry, and the public. It could be connected to existing labs or the Creative Technologies Lab, guided by a dedicated curatorial concept that defines long-term development.

Examples of university-based museums include the MIT Museum, the Harvard scientific collections, the Oxford and Cambridge history-of-science museums, the EPFL Pavilions, focusTerra at ETH Zurich, the TU Delft Science Centre, and others.

Reasons for universities to operate a museum:

- Museums strengthen the university’s academic profile and make research areas publicly visible.
- They function as research infrastructures and support long-term scientific projects.
- They enable object-based and practice-oriented teaching formats.
- They create spaces for collaboration with industry, schools, municipalities, and civil society.
- They support public engagement and trust in science.
- They enrich local cultural offerings and help integrate the university into the region.

Economic perspective:

- University museums are usually not profit-oriented.
- Income from tickets or rentals covers only a small portion of costs.
- Their primary value lies in academic, institutional, and societal impact.
- Large science centres may partly cover costs but typically depend on mixed funding.