

# Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Evolving  
Multiculturalism  
in Museums in the  
United States

Editors

**Yun Shun Susie Chung**

**Anna Leshchenko**

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# **Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Evolving Multiculturalism in Museums in the United States**

Papers from the ICOFOM  
online symposium  
with Southern New Hampshire University  
in the United States  
on September 14,  
2018

Editors

Yun Shun Susie Chung  
Anna Leshchenko  
Bruno Brulon Soares

 **ICOFOM** ICOM  
international  
committee  
for museology

  
Southern New Hampshire University

This publication brings together a selection of papers presented at the online symposium organized by ICOFOM under the general theme Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with Southern New Hampshire University in the United States on September 14, 2018.

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# Fore- word



*François Mairesse*  
*ICOFOM President*

This book is the third of a series devoted to the redefinition of the museum that ICOFOM has launched in parallel with ICOM's project to revise its own museum definition. This process was started in 2016 with the establishment of a working group on the museum definition, headed by Jette Sandahl. Its closure is planned for the General Assembly of ICOM in 2019 in Kyoto, where a new definition could be proposed. It is difficult to know the form, the content and the structure that this new definition could take, but this is a very important task. In reflecting on the definition of the museum, we indeed reflect on the very nature of the institution to which we devote a large part of our professional or private lives. Such moments of reflection are rare for museum professionals, who are constantly being solicited for new projects – organizing exhibitions, new educational or conservation projects, fundraising activities, etc. Such moments are invaluable because they make it possible to re-situate all museum activities in the light of the museum's most important issues.

The role of ICOFOM in the reflection on the fundamental concepts of museology is old. Throughout its existence, our committee has focused on analyzing, discussing and proposing to the museum community reflections on the museum field's most fundamental concepts. Thus, ICOFOM has developed a series of conferences on this theme since 2017. One of our objectives was to overcome language barriers. While this publication is edited in English, most ICOM members are native speakers of other languages. Language structure influences thought. That is why ICOFOM wanted to encourage and enable museum professionals and museologists to discuss, in their own language, the terms used by the current ICOM definition. Our aim was to identify questionable or obsolete notions, but also to identify new notions or concepts that should be part of the definition. The first conference took place in Paris in June 2017, which was soon followed by conferences in Beijing (October), Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and St Andrews (Scotland) (November), then the following year in Leuven (Belgium, January), Kaunas (Lithuania, June), Montreal and Moscow (May and October). The Southern New Hampshire University conference held in September took place in that context.

The articles written for the Paris, Rio, Buenos Aires and St Andrews Conferences have already been the subject of two previous publications (Mairesse, 2017; Brulon, Brown & Nazor, 2018). I am particularly pleased that the third publication is devoted to the derived texts of the Southern New Hampshire University Symposium, organized by Yun Shun Susie Chung with the particularly dynamic and enthusiastic collaboration of other faculty members.

The organization of an ICOFOM symposium in the United States was particularly pleasing to me. It should be noted, in fact, how much the United States has played a considerable role in defining the museum. The definition given by

George Brown Goode (1896), to which a few years later Benjamin Ives Gilman (1923) responded, could be recalled. Brown Goode already mentioned – perhaps because of his training skills, as he was specialized in ichthyology – the importance of the environment to ensure the development of the museum: it is only when the latter plays an important role, in the eyes of the stakeholders, that it would be supported and financed in a coherent way. While Gilman’s comments were aimed primarily at asserting the nature of the art museum (a temple rather than a school), he was equally concerned about visitors and the conditions of their experience (Gilman was among the first museum specialists to actually survey visitors about their experiences). The place of visitors within the museum was from the beginning therefore a priority, much more so than on the old continent, where the institution remained focused on the preservation and study of collections. The work of John Cotton Dana, which developed at the same time as that of Gilman, no doubt represents the most interesting illustration of this striking difference between some museums and in particular those promoted by Dana, affirming the social role of the museum within the community, the influence it can have on it, the “utility” that must be derived from it, but also the resulting funding. It is no coincidence that Dana, who centered on the use of collections through mediation or the preparation of really profitable exhibitions for all audiences, would be widely presented at the end of the twentieth century as one of the pioneering figures of the French new museology or community museology centered around the values of participation, sharing and reflecting on identity (Desvallées, 1992 & 1994).

These first emblematic figures of U.S. American museology are of course far from being the only ones to have played a role in the history of museology, and in particular the definition of the museum. Shortly after the birth of ICOFOM in 1977, George Ellis Burcaw (1981, p. 84) noted the more pragmatic approach of U.S. professionals to museology:

*The interest of the American museum is in the philosophical basis of collection (the relation of man to three-dimensional reality) and in the efficient use of the collections in applied education (applied museography). Their concerns are: how to make friends, how to make money, how to make money, how to make money, how to create beautiful environments, how trustees can avoid being sued in court of law, and so on.*

This statement does not perfectly reflect the whole U.S. American reality, as some museologists and museum professionals are also very much interested in concepts and definitions. It was an U.S. American, Judith Spielbauer (1987, p. 273), who gave, a few years later, one of the most frequently mentioned museum definitions at ICOFOM:

*The established museum is a means to an end, not the end itself. These ends have been stated in many ways. They include varying perspectives on broadening an individual’s perception of the interdependence of the social, aesthetic and natural worlds in which he lives by providing information and experience and fostering an understanding of self within*

*this widening context. The increase and dissemination of knowledge, the improvement of the quality of life, and preservation for future generations are included in the usual parade of rationales.*

This definition, conceived for theoretical and non-practical purposes such as that of ICOM, underlines the museum's truly experimental character - a meeting place between these three spheres of the sensitive that are too widely dissociated: nature, aesthetics and society. No two museums' experiences are equal: while some insist more on societal aspects, others emphasize its aesthetic or natural project. For a long time, as we know, the Western museum world privileged the characteristics of research and knowledge. Many American museums, on the other hand, have opted, following in the footsteps of Dana, to emphasize their social and community characteristics. It is remarkable to note from this perspective, how the themes at the heart of the discussions of this symposium echo, in some ways, those already evoked by Dana: community, diversity, multiculturalism, nation building, citizenship, inclusion ... These themes are particularly important for current museums around the world and highlight the social role of the museum.

I am very pleased with the success of the symposium hosted by Southern New Hampshire University on the Internet – a *première* in the history of ICOFOM. I hope that it will be followed by other seminars organized with ICOFOM in the United States in the coming years.

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# Intro- duction



*Yun Shun Susie Chung*  
*ICOFOM Member*

*Anna Leshchenko*  
*ICOFOM Study Series General Secretary*

*Bruno Brulon Soares*  
*ICOFOM Vice President*

The publications that follow in this monograph are a part of the series of symposia on the theme *Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* led by the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM). Two major publications that are the results of the preceding symposia on the subject are *Définir le musée du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle Matériaux pour une discussion* (Mairesse, 2017) and *Defining Museums of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Plural Experiences* (Brulon Soares, Brown, & Nazor, 2018). The International Council of Museums' (ICOM) definition of a museum was adopted in 2007 as a part of ICOM's Statutes and has been used as an international reference (International Council of Museums, 2007), which is now in the process of change.

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and ICOFOM organized and hosted this online symposium as a method to increase inclusivity. Using this online platform, the organizers brought together the keynote speakers, panel speakers, and a global audience; prompted discussions via surveys and question-and-answer sessions, and created audio podcast interviews with various participants on the definition of the twenty-first-century US and Indigenous nations' museums. Though a face-to-face physical symposium may have its strengths, here in this online platform we gathered to reach those who are in the fifty states and beyond to the international community by providing a virtual room to collaborate. We sent out questionnaires to the registrants and the SNHU community, and we conducted a synchronous poll during the symposium where the results were collected. Participants answered a series of questions in synchronous "pop-up" surveys throughout the symposium.

For the past two years, ICOFOM has been engaged in developing a worldwide debate on the definition and meaning of the museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in different societies that includes the perspectives of professionals and local groups. This project intends to connect the ICOM agenda with a most diverse community of museum professionals and museum users in general, providing discussions based on plural experiences and points of view - going from the academic perspectives to the lived reality of museums everywhere.

The Organizing Committee members were James Fennessy, Associate Dean of Liberal Arts, Robert Denning, Faculty Lead for History, and Yun Shun Susie

Chung, Team Lead & Adjunct Faculty at SNHU. During the nine-month period that led to the online symposium, this group created interviews, later uploaded as episodes of the *Filibustering Museology* podcast, with professionals involved in the ICOM Standing Committee on Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials (MDPP) formed after the 2016 ICOM General Conference in Milan. The goal of the Call for Papers was to attract presenters and keynote speakers of diverse cultures and ethnicities. Announcements were sent through the SNHU Community of Practice, ICOFOM social media pages and website, H-Net, and generously shared by ICOM and national committees, The Council for Museum Anthropology, American Alliance of Museums Curators Committee, Western Museums Association, Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, American Association for State and Local History, Association of Midwest Museums, Museums of Ahmedabad, Conceição Serôdio, Grupo de Trabalho Sistemas de Informação em Museus - BAD, and Sense Heritage amongst many other organizations. The Editorial Committee consisted of faculty members at SNHU, Yun Shun Susie Chung, Cassandra Clark, and Katherine Perrotta, who edited the papers to conform to ICOFOM publication standards. The final Editors of the ICOFOM monograph were Yun Shun Susie Chung, Anna Leshchenko, and Bruno Brulon Soares. The audience at the online symposium was diverse, with the registrants representing many nations and ethnicities.

The opening remarks were presented by faculty at SNHU. James Fennessy presented “Contested Terms, Contested Territory,” anticipating the discourse on contested terms and territory of museums in relation to bridging the past and present with contested stories. Robert Denning addressed “From ‘Cabinets of Curiosities’ to Decolonization: A Crash Course in Museum Studies,” questioning concepts and keywords such as “experimentation,” “community-oriented,” “inclusive,” “stories,” “engage,” and “activism” introduced and recorded in the *Filibustering History SNHU & ICOFOM Online Symposium* podcast interviews of keynote speakers and panel chairs. Debbie Disston, Director of The Mcininch Art Gallery, viewed museums as business partnerships and multicultural endeavors in “A Perspective on Multiculturalism and the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. Yun Shun Susie Chung provided the introduction to the main themes and questions of this online symposium in “Nations Building, Community, and Diversity: Toward a New Definition of ‘Museum,’” and emphasized the importance of terms that might be incorporated in the re-definition of the museum: living, professionalization, digital, representation, causes, diversity, and multi-, inter-, cross-, and trans- cultural and natural heritage.

The President of ICOFOM, François Mairesse, presented his keynote speech on the “History & Developments of ICOFOM and Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” which helped set the starting point for the series of ICOFOM symposia and their results, stressing the unanimous understanding of the social roles of museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Alyce Sadongei, the Chair of the Partnership for Native Americans and representative of the nations of the indigenous peoples and museums, gave her keynote speech on “The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum in Native America.” The main shared concepts were on the value and relevance of the life

and death of heritage, the museal preservation and communication of heritage, and the use of heritage outside of the museum. Bruno Brulon Soares, ICOFOM Vice-President, conveyed his keynote address on “Rise and Fall of the National Museum: Reflexions for Museums of Tomorrow,” highlighting the museum as a political institution and connecting the past and present as a notable function of museums as public institutions and research centers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The first panel on “Nation-Building in Museums in the United States” was chaired by Anna Leshchenko, ICOFOM Board Member, and Deborah Ziska, ICOM-US Board Member. Lara Hall, Foreign Policy Archivist at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, traced the concepts of reflexive advocates incorporating the developments in the *ICOFOM Study Series* in her paper on “In Lieu of Objectivity: Defining Advocacy in the New Museum.” In “Legal, Equitable, and Ethical Perspectives on Heritage in Museums,” Mariko Kageyama, Independent Museum Legal Consultant, elaborated on the foundations of international law, such as the Nagoya Protocol, ethics, and equity and their essential influences that should be a part of the standards of the definition. Jillian Hartley, Professor at Arkansas Northeastern College, contributed impressions on emancipatory education in her paper on “Commemorating the Civil War in Border States: The Case of John Hunt Morgan.” The discussions focused on national debates on regional and local issues of systemic functions that affect museums.

The second panel on “Collecting Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Museums in the United States” was chaired by Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas, ICOFOM Board Member, and David J. de la Torre, ICOM-US Board Member. Jeffrey Max Henry, Museum Professional, stressed the importance of reflexive historiography in the collections and exhibits in his paper, “The Artifacts of Cultural Change and Their Effect on the Museum.” Fabienne Sowa–Dobkowski, Team Lead & Adjunct Faculty at SNHU, noted that an addendum and natural heritage excluded from the 2007 re-definition from previous definitions should be re-addressed in her paper on “Calling for the Inclusion of “Natural” Heritage in the New ICOM Definition of the Museum.” In “Museum 4D,” Alexandros Giannikopoulos, Architect at the National Technical University of Athens, developed a theoretical and philosophical dialogue on the need for the balance of the 4D environment and the authentic artifact and naturfact. The discussions that followed were on the non-dichotomous nature of the intangible and tangible, questioned and strongly emphasized by Mohammad Hekmat of Iran in the audience.

Yun Shun Susie Chung and Robert Denning led the third panel on “Serving Nearby Heritage for All in Museums in the United States.” Natalie Sweet, Program Coordinator at the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, shared results of programs that engage in politically charged conversations through civic engagement and diversity, drawing attention to the fact that all museums are not neutral in “Defining the Citizen within the Rural Museum: A Case Study in Programming.” Sara Torres Vega, Museum Education Archival Researcher and Artist at The Museum of Modern Art, introduced key concepts of the museum

as lab, a place for experimentation, and the decentration of curation in her paper on “The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum as a Lab: Lessons Learned from MoMA’s Educational History.” Diana E. Marsh, Postdoctoral Fellow, National Anthropological Archives, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, in “Toward Inclusive Museum Archives: User Research at the Smithsonian’s National Anthropological Archives,” presented the outcomes of her project on the use, discoverability, repository needs and user’s needs, non-traditional users, and the need for an infrastructure of culturally-nuanced access. Antoniette M. Guglielmo, Associate Director at the Getty Leadership Institute at Claremont Graduate University, traced the theoretical notions of social consciousness, social justice, and multiculturalism in defining the museum of the twenty-first century in “Museums of Greater Consciousness.”

The asynchronous questionnaire distributed to the registrants and the SNHU Community posed three main questions. The questions revolved around the three main themes of the online symposium:

1. How can the new ICOM definition of “museum” address the political, legal, administrative, and funding issues of the museum in a nation with different state and local laws, ordinances, and standards? The responses stressed the essence of respecting human dignity and accountability through professionalization or professionalism to inspire through some kind of permanent space and the need for a Minister of Culture in the US; at the same time, the differences in the federal, state, and local system should be respected.

2. In examining this theme, consider which types of collections, if any, should be included in the new ICOM definition of “museum,” with respect to preservation and research? The significance of the representation of collections was the unanimous response, which can be summarized by one of the respondents:

*“Museums today are so much more than collection repositories and displayers. The new definition should not limit museums by collections, but by governance and business model -- non-profit, government, university and tribal governance. For-profit and private museums should not be full members of ICOM, but non-profit children’s museums, science centers, zoos and art centers run in the public interest should be covered by the new definition.”*

3. What role should the broader public and other stakeholders play in the design and interpretation of exhibits, programming, events, and communication in 21<sup>st</sup>-century museums? How should ICOM’s new definition of “museum” reflect these issues? The majority of the responses focused on inclusion through multivocality and broader public participatory practice as “community service organizations” as museums are a part of a broader “experience economy.”

The pop-up survey results showed that 62.8% of the online symposium audience thought that the U.S. should have a consolidated definition of a museum. 93.1% considered the word “ethics” be part of the twenty-first century museum defini-

tion. 96.4% agreed that museums should be a venue for open forums to address complex issues in the community and society at large. Two words that stood out to be the most important to add to the current definition of “museum” were “community” and “diversity.” These results are recorded to contribute to ICOM’s new definition following the series of international symposia and roundtables during 2017 and 2018 in France, China, Argentina, Brazil, Scotland, Belgium (Flanders), and Russia.

## **Key terms and concepts discussed in the online symposium and podcast interviews**

Keynote speakers, panelists, and audience participants consistently referred to three major concepts: museums as political, social, and cultural institutions; museums as purveyors of heritage; and the importance of inclusivity in museums and other institutions.

**Political, social, and cultural institution:** The 21<sup>st</sup>-century redefinition should emphasize museums’ political, social, and cultural functions. Museums must emphasize representation at all political levels (local, state, and federal), they must present contested stories that connect the past to the present, and they must tackle current political, social, and cultural issues. Museums exist as community spaces, which reflect their multicultural surroundings, and should be prepared to advocate for equity, ethics, and emancipatory education in addition to participating in the common physical and mental construction of the nation. Many speakers emphasized a holistic approach to the administration of museums.

**Heritage:** Participants emphasized the importance of reflexive historiography in the foundations and practices of museums in relation to heritage. An addendum on the kinds of institutions was addressed in relation to the previous ICOM definitions before 2007. Panel presenters and audience members highlighted natural heritage and the non-dichotomous nature of the intangible and tangible. One important task for museums in the Americas is to display indigenous artifacts and heritage with respect for, and in collaboration with, the relevant indigenous communities. The Native American Graves Protection Act of 1990 changed how museums operate with regard to indigenous heritage for the better. Rarely do we find the use of collections in museums, though after the Native American Graves Protection Act of 1990, artifacts are repatriated or ceremonial and burial artifacts are displayed with respect for the indigenous ancestors and descendants. However, how this Act can be of further practice, not as museums that preserve heritage solely for musealization, but back to the notion of the use of heritage by those whose heritage had been musealized is discussed. Thus, not in the classification of art objects for example, but heritage should be placed back and forth for cultural practice and for museal practice. The continuous use of collections, the importance of cognizance of Indigeneity that pays respect to objects, holistic approaches to the continuation of heritage such as language, which breathes life, were introduced. Moreover, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,

heritage can also now be explained directly in relation to virtual “collections” in the 4<sup>th</sup> dimension as conceptual museums.

**Inclusive:** Inclusivity is related to the political, social, and cultural roles of museums as institutions within the community (discussed above). Inclusivity also means that museums should explore the meaning of citizenship; produce three programs to engage in constructive learning through conversations; involve politically-charged conversations through activism and civic engagement; enhance discoverability of collections; balance repository needs and user’s needs, responsive to non-traditional users; provide an infrastructure of culturally nuanced access; enable consciousness of multiculturalism, diversity, and social justice; and use the museum as a lab for participatory activities and experimentation, and the deccentration of curation.

In conclusion, museums are political, social, and cultural institutions that should adopt a holistic methodology to administration and apply ethical standards through professionalization, reflecting the United States and Indigenous nations autonomously but cooperatively. Heritage should now be looked upon as not only for preservation sake but for use. A necessity for an addendum in the re-definition of the museum should be considered. The museum is part of an experience economy, having to compete with other kinds of venues and events, which calls for representation of multi cultures and community access through experimentation and deccentration of curation. Contributions of the papers that follow reflect the activities of ICOFOM and the ICOM MDPP Standing Committee, which should generate value-related concepts in some new and already stated terminologies that will help in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century defining of a museum. Consequently, the outcomes could be shared worldwide for a fuller understanding of diverse cultures that have evolved in the representation of museums with an inclusive nature communicating that the museum is a place of political, social, and cultural experiences for a vast diversity of audiences and professionals.

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**Evolving  
Multi-  
culturalism  
and  
Museums:  
Where Are  
We Now?**



# Contested Terms, Contested Territory

*James Fennessy*

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It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and International Committee for Museology's (ICOFOM) symposium on "Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" where we explore evolving multiculturalism in museums in the United States. We are honored to partner with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in this important endeavor.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the efforts of Dr. Susie Chung, a trusted colleague, a core member of our Public History program at SNHU, and the driving force behind making this symposium a reality. Susie, thank you for the selfless hours of your own time that you gave in planning, coordinating, and promoting this symposium as you travelled to museums and conferences around the world. I would also like to thank Dr. Rob Denning, our History department Faculty Lead. Rob assisted in the coordination of our symposium, created the informational website, and spent hours recording and editing interviews with the academics and Museologists joining us today. I would like to extend a special, "Thank you!" as well to Lori Stein, our Associate Dean of Programs in Liberal Arts, and the larger Liberal Arts department for their assistance and support in making this symposium a reality.

Establishing a clear definition for museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is no small endeavor. Museums in the US have long been contested spaces and battlegrounds in the nation's Culture Wars, even if this is not common knowledge to the general public. I would guess that the majority of people do not think about the research, planning, coordination and, sometimes, political dealings that are part of a museum exhibition. I actually plead ignorance to the entire process for the vast majority of my life. For me, as for many others who visit museums each year, a museum is simply a repository of artifacts on display, either as solo pieces or part of an exhibit. In prior times, only a small population of those creating exhibits and visiting them probably considered the politics and power dynamics involved in acquiring the pieces for those exhibits, such as items taken from colonial holdings and presented in the museums of the imperial powers, or how they were displayed and explained as part of the creators positioning in a larger cultural narrative of power.

I definitely did not consider these invisible structures as a pre-teen during my visit to the Kent-Delord House Museum, an historic house located in Plattsburgh, NY, that displays portraits and objects created and owned by generations of the

Kent-Delord family. For me, this museum simply displayed History. It did not engage in political conversations or “interpret” the past. It simply preserved and presented it.

While my youth and the local nature of this collection might excuse my *naiveté* regarding the purposes and dynamic nature of museums, I do not think that I was alone in my views. Years later, my research led me to Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt’s (1996) *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*. The essays in Linenthal and Engelhardt’s collection introduced me to a museum controversy set during America’s Culture Wars in the mid-90s, specifically surrounding the 1995 Smithsonian Air and Space exhibit on the Enola Gay, the WWII B-29 aircraft that dropped atomic bomb on Hiroshima to secure Japan’s surrender and end the conflict in the Pacific. The planned exhibit sparked intense debate about not only the interpretation of events presented, but also about the nature of museums, the power of public memorials and national myths, and the competing agendas of various people and groups that negotiate, plan, oppose, and, eventually, cooperate to realize an exhibition.

I will not relate the specifics of this debate, but many of the same themes have recently resurfaced with the controversies surrounding Civil War memorials and their place in [US in front since Deborah and the rest of the world might have issues with writing “American” alone] American History. Are these memorials icons of the past, images of aggression, relators of History, or chess pieces in current political debates? Or can they be all of these things, as well as a range of other descriptors that demonstrate how the past is never simply the past, and that museums, memorials, and other monuments are not simply innocent displays or depictions. They are signifiers that hold deep meaning not only in the context of their creation, but also in relation to how they continue to be presented, interpreted, and used in our current time.

These debates do not only occur in the US. At the beginning of 2018, the Manchester Art Gallery temporarily removed *Hylas and the Nymphs* by JW Waterhouse from display. The curator, Clare Gannaway, stated that the move was to “challenge the Victorian fantasy” of depicting women “either as passive beautiful objects or femme fatales” (BBC News, 2018). The removal of the painting was filmed as a video art piece for Sandra Boyce’s *March* exhibition, and the gallery invited visitors to share their thoughts on the removal of the piece, which resulted in mixed reactions from the public. Boyce also reflected on the reasoning behind the gallery’s actions and her participation in the event, noting that she “consider[s] the museum as a place to explore new meanings and to forge new relationships between people and art,” never allowing the past to simply “sit still” (Boyce, 2018). This temporary removal did spark debate and, whether one considered it censorship or “art in action,” it demonstrates that museums continue to be contested spaces, with conflicting views on their role. Should they simply preserve, present and protect the past? Or should they engage audiences in

current debates as our societies continue to wrestle with concepts of gender, race, ethnicity, and culture?

And what about spaces that are museums only in name, such as the Museum of Candy, the Selfie Museum, or the Museum of Ice Cream in San Francisco, which I recently visited. Do these spaces demonstrate our changing concept of the museum, or do they “undermine the trust placed in cultural institutions, perhaps altering our relationship to culture, art, and commerce in the process,” a concern voiced by Mitchell Kuga, a culture writer and editor of *SALT* (Kuga, 2018)? The corporate sponsorship of these spaces is explicit, and the U.S. federal government and organizations like ICOM would balk at the idea of giving them official accreditation, which formally recognizes them as museums and provides all of the prestige and access to grant money that accompanies such a designation. These self-designated museums also raise cultural questions regarding whether these are spaces that promote consumption or are reflections on modern society. Will they simply be emblematic of the current zeitgeist of egotism and consumption, or are they a challenge to the modern concept of a museum that will transform these institutions from spaces sometimes associated with intellectual and social elitism by expanding the concept to include corporate and populist displays and experiences? These are questions beyond my own research experience, but which might prove important in the following presentations.

I am honored to introduce the scholarship that we will hear in this symposium. We are lucky to have an international group of scholars who bring a range of perspectives toward defining the museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their work, and the findings of this symposium, will add to both this symposia series and the important research presented in the *ICOFOM Study Series* (<http://network.icom.museum/icofom/publications/icofom-study-series>).

While not every institution designated as a museum need follow the same approach, a common definition will help both the institutions and the public to understand the purpose of museums, especially as we all continue to think about our own culture, the cultures of others, and how and why preservation and display not only paint a picture of the past, but help us to reflect on the assumptions and biases of both the past and present, as we look toward the future. I hope that you enjoy the proceedings and intellectual discussions therein presented.

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# From “Cabinets of Curiosities” to Decolonization: A Crash Course in Museum Studies

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Hello and welcome to this symposium on Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I am really excited to be here with you all today. This will be a fascinating conversation and I hope you have an enjoyable day with us as we discuss museums in all their forms and their relationships to the communities in which they exist.

My name is Rob Denning and I am the Lead Faculty for History at Southern New Hampshire University. I am, alas, not an expert in museum studies. I am a trained historian, and I share with museum professionals a passion for sharing information about the past with audiences of the present. Beyond that passion, and an appreciation for the hard work of librarians, archivists, and museum professionals, I have had little formal training in what museums actually do and how they do it.

Over the past year, ever since Susie Chung invited me to join in the planning for this symposium, I have enjoyed a bit of a crash course in the fundamentals of museum studies (or museology, depending on where one is located; see, I learned something already!). To prepare for this symposium, Susie graciously facilitated a series of interviews between me, James Fennessy, and some of the leading lights in the international museology community. During the spring and summer of 2018, we spent time chatting with all of our keynote speakers – François, Alyce, and Bruno – and all of our panel chairs – Anna, Deborah, Mónica, and David.<sup>1</sup> During those chats we discussed the professional and academic experiences that brought them to prominence in the field but we focused on how they conceptualized museums. We discussed the roles of museums in their lives, the things that museums do well now, what museums could do to improve, and where they think museums will go in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For me, all of these conversations added up to my own personalized “Introduction to Museology” course, without pesky details like tuition and textbooks. I suppose this is my final exam for that course.

So, what did I learn?

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1. Recordings of these interviews are available at <https://soundcloud.com/user-399142700/sets/filibustering-museology>.

First, the formal study of museums is a surprisingly recent development. Though people have created various institutions to collect and preserve artifacts for thousands of years, it is only within the last half century that formal academic programs have arisen to study how museums operate and to consider how they should operate. Many of the writers and speakers here today are among the first generation of professionals dedicated to the formal study of museums. David de la Torre, for example, was a West Coast pioneer in museum studies in the 1970s (De la Torre, Denning, Fennessy, & Chung, 2018). Around the same time, Monica de Gorgas's school colleagues in Argentina did not believe that the study of museums could lead to viable careers (Risnicoff de Gorgas, Denning, & Chung, 2018).

The museum profession and its professionals have come a long way in the intervening decades. Museum studies courses and programs now exist across academia. The graduate history program at my home institution at Southern New Hampshire University provides a concentration on public history, which in turn includes courses on museum collections management, archival management, and strategic management. Today a very well trained corps of museum professionals works around the world to make their institutions accessible and relevant to their local and broader communities. They are doing so in a time of great change.

The second thing I learned is that the institutions where those professionals work have been undergoing a long, slow transformation in recent decades. The museums of the past were grand experiments in maintaining, interpreting, and transmitting past cultures and artifacts to contemporary, mostly Western, audiences. From the old idiosyncratic "cabinets of curiosities" to the massive British or Smithsonian Museums, these efforts were largely oriented toward middle- and upper-class audiences who may have been curious about non-Western cultures but had no desire to engage them in their own context. In many ways, this was another manifestation of colonialism, where people in power, mainly in the West, imposed their views of the world on people who were not in power.

Lynn Maranda and Bruno Brulon Soares used the term "predatory museums" in a recent addition to the ICOFOM Study Series (2017), where they argued that many institutions in the nineteenth century "formed their collections by depriving certain populations of many of their most valued cultural objects, decontextualizing such objects from their indigenous symbolic systems and re-contextualizing them based on European values" (p. 14). This colonialist mindset became obsolete as we entered a post-colonial world in the late twentieth century.

Museums today often look very different from those of the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. Museums have begun to focus less on the acquisition of artifacts and building collections and more on the needs of the community around them and repurposing acquisitions and collections to meet those needs. "**Experimentation**" is not a word that many laypeople would apply to museums, but it is a guiding principle for museum specialists today. According to Bruno Brulon Soares, museums are in a state of transition, where indigenous



museums and community museums around the world are experimenting with the museum concept in ways that defy traditional norms and forms. Some museums are shedding their old brick and mortar shells and becoming mobile and even virtual. Some museums pop up for a short time in one location and then move to another. Sometimes this is in response to funding crises or changing political climates, but often this is pursued as a way to connect with the local community, because the people in those communities may not have the time or other resources to visit more formal museums (Brulon Soares, Denning, & Chung, 2018).

Latin America is home to a number of these exciting new **community-oriented** museums, often in the last places one would expect, such as the barrios of Medellín, Colombia, and the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Parque Explora, for example, provides an interactive science museum to some of the poorer neighborhoods of Medellín. This institution invited local women to share their stories and heritage through play-acting. The Parque Explora also went beyond the traditional conception of a museum by working with the local community to replace piles of garbage with community gardens (Ziska, Denning, Fennessy, & Chung, 2018; Aguirre, 2016).

Where scientists came to help members of the Medellín community tell their story, artists came together in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to help tell the **stories** of some of the poorest neighborhoods in Brazil. Some of these community museums try to meet the needs of the local community beyond simply transmitting history and culture. The Museu da Maré, for example, includes a computer lab, arts and crafts space, and conference rooms for locals to use (Ziska et al., 2018). A similar institution, the Museu de Favela, includes a Catholic chapel, film screenings, and classes on ballet and capoeira. Unfortunately, according to one news account, these “community museums are often overlooked, undervalued and underfunded” and are also “under threat of eviction” (Mackay, 2016). Community-oriented museums like those in the favela will become ever more important with the devastating loss of Brazil’s National Museum, and most of its millions of holdings, to fire in September of 2018.

By focusing on the communities around them, museums have become more **inclusive** in recent decades. Large numbers of descendants of African slaves in Argentina, for example, has prompted professionals like Mónica Risnicoff de Gorgas to identify UNESCO World Heritage Sites along the trans-Atlantic slave routes (Risnicoff de Gorgas et al., 2018). Alyce Sadongei has dedicated her career to bringing Native Americans into the museum world, not as exhibits like during the colonial era, but as equal partners (Sadongei, Denning, Fennessy, & Chung, 2018). As Monica noted in our conversation, museums are uniquely able to facilitate communication and empathy between different peoples. “The best things of museums,” Monica told us, is that “they open your mind. When you visit a museum with an open mind you discover other things, other people, other stories through the objects. I think that’s a very moving thing about mu-

seums. You discover not only other cultures, but you feel like being the other” (Risnicoff de Gorgas et al., 2018).

“Inclusiveness” does not always mean “race.” Museum specialists are also engaging with other intellectual fields beyond the humanities in order to improve the museum experience and to improve museums’ effectiveness in fulfilling their missions. Anna Leshchenko has been studying data analytics, neuropsychology, and neurolinguistics to understand how people think and behave. Her work on the connections between museums and the various branches of sciences will hopefully help to develop better labels and texts and also improve wayfinding systems to help maximize visitor learning and satisfaction (Leshchenko, Denning, Fennessy, & Chung, 2018).

These changes and ideas provide us with foundations for future change. In order to remain relevant to their communities, institutions like museums and libraries must continue to embrace change. But not everything has to be theoretical.

Ann Davis has argued that museums “need to find out what people enjoy, what is fun, what is interesting, what they want” to learn, and “not just what the curator thinks is neat.” Museums need to accommodate the community. This can be as simple as extending their hours of operation beyond the normal workday and providing air conditioning and seating to ensure the comfort of visitors. Museums should adopt policies that encourage visitors to **engage** with the collections and with each other. Do not rely on technology, which often does not work correctly, to foster engagement. Focus instead on providing comfortable spaces where visitors can relax and talk to each other about the collections (Davis, Denning, & Chung, 2018). François Mairesse has argued that museums should be places of recreation, relaxation, and enjoyment (Mairesse, Denning, Fennessy, & Chung, 2018). Don’t shush people; draw them into conversations. We have seen the success of these community-oriented spaces in places like the Brazilian favela and in neighborhood libraries around the world. We need to see this applied more universally.

Third, I learned that in addition to changes in the physical spaces of museums and similar institutions, we should expect museums to become places of **activism** for their local communities. As Deborah Ziska has argued, museums are inherently political because they embody popular ideals such as democracy, liberty, and community (Ziska et al., 2018). Bruno notes that truly inclusive museums challenge the authority of the state, politicians, and other elites (Brulon Soares et al., 2018). Anna Leshchenko told us that museums do not exist solely to tell interesting stories; they also recount and interpret uncomfortable and shocking moments in history. In the past, museums served as temples and forums for discussion, but future museums will serve as places of activism (Leshchenko et al., 2018). David de la Torre predicts that today’s youth will bring entirely new interpretations of history and museology to bear as they reach maturity in coming decades, and they will fuse those interpretations with new technology to reinvent museums and, by extension, their surrounding communities (De la Torre et al., 2018).

These are a few of the most important things I learned during my crash course in museology. I have not identified all of the problems facing museums or all of the potential ways that museums will evolve. I do not have the space or the time. Instead, I can't wait to hear all of the professionals assembled here today talk more about museums and their place in our modern culture and in our communities. This is an exciting time to think about a new definition of "museum" for the twenty-first century, one that incorporates all of these developments and attempts to predict future developments. This is a large task, but it is vitally important, and I look forward to working with the broader museum community to complete that task.

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# A Perspective on Multiculturalism and the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*Debbie Disston*

*The McIninch Art Gallery at Southern New Hampshire University, New Hampshire, United States*

I was asked to provide a short presentation on how the McIninch Art Gallery at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) addresses issues of multiculturalism within the mission and vision of the gallery and the university. Unlike many of you who are scholars and/or work at very large cultural institutions, I am not a scholar, and The McIninch Art Gallery is a small academic gallery in a rapidly growing university (Southern New Hampshire University, 2018). As the Director of this small but growing gallery, I am interested in the business of the arts, and I am concerned with the most relevant ways in which we can make the experience and appreciation of the arts accessible for our academic community and our community at large. Accessibility is at the core of the Mission and Vision of SNHU's Strategic Plan. The mission of the McIninch Art Gallery is completely aligned with that of the university:

*The Mission of the McIninch Art Gallery*

*The McIninch Art Gallery, administered by the School of Arts and Sciences at Southern New Hampshire University, provides first hand experiences in the arts through its collections, exhibitions and diverse programs designed to support the university curriculum and enhance public engagement in the arts.*

I want our exhibitions and programming to be fiscally sound as well as accessible and yet account for taking risks, and to be transformative by presenting challenging conversations and experiences. The McIninch Art Gallery at SNHU is an anomaly. We do not have an Art History major at SNHU, and we do not have a studio art practice. We offer a Graphic Design Major as well as a Game Design Major. Many of our students have never stepped foot into any type of museum. The rhetoric of an art historian, curator, conservator or any other discipline in the museum field is more akin to a foreign language. The undergraduate, on campus community, has slowly grown to be more diverse with inclusion of more people of color, different faiths, as well as an increase in the population of our LGBTQ community. The on campus community has thrived and by extension The McIninch Art Gallery and the arts have thrived at SNHU because we see the arts as a vehicle to connect individuals to conversations that address some of the most pressing issues in our global community.

How have we accomplished this? Through listening to the interests and concerns of our peers we were able to identify constant threads that would weave a story applicable to an array of constituents. This has resulted in the following exhibitions:

*Distant Shores: Cultural Exchange in Contemporary Art - November 3<sup>rd</sup> through December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008.*

Themes of globalization, nationalism, multiculturalism and ideals of home were presented in this exhibition. Artists represented: Ambreen Butt, Fred H.C. Liang, Raja Ram Sharma, Karen Meninno, Shiva Ahmadi, Shelly Bahl and Eung Ho Park.

*Visage: Portraits by Chris Bartlett and Daniel Heyman - September 24<sup>th</sup> through October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009* Portraits created by Chris Bartlett, fashion still life photographer and Daniel Heyman, painter/printmaker revealed the complex relationship between artists and sitter. The images displayed in this exhibit included portraits from the Detainee Project (Bartlett, 2018); these images are of Iraqis who have been tortured and abused while in the custody of the United States military and its surrogates. Both artists participated in this project with the Center for Constitutional Rights, a non-profit legal and educational organization committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change.

*Notes from the Field: Learning through Service – November 5<sup>th</sup> through December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009* This exhibit presented visual and written reflections inviting visitors to explore the relationship between scholarship and service. The photographs, books, posters, public service announcement and journals on display focused on the service learning program at SNHU. This program aims to expand the classroom beyond the confines of the campus and into the community at large. The following testimony by an SNHU student who experienced the impact of a multi-cultural experience.

*New England has become home to a sizeable community of refugees from the war-torn country of Somalia. Fleeing the threat of starvation and violence in their home country's civil war, Somalis arrive in the New England region bearing the traumas of war, poverty, and the disruption of migrating half way across the world. Nearly 10,000 Somalis live in New England, 300 of which are settled in Manchester, New Hampshire.*

*Those in Manchester go largely unnoticed by the local residents, myself included. The Somali men, women and children face the challenges of acclimating not only to a new city, but a new way of life. They rely heavily on the few public organizations that successfully provide culturally sensitive and supportive services, and often struggle through their first years in America*

*My view of Manchester was drastically changed and I set out to connect myself to the very population I had unknowingly ignored. I worked first as a volunteer among the newly resettled refugees, and more recently explored their lives through photography.*

Ashley Bachelder, Service Learning Student, SNHU Class 2009, Documentary Photography Class with Prof. Meryl Levin, Spring 2009 (exhibition text panel)

*Traversing Gender – September 20<sup>th</sup> through October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010*

Selections for this exhibit traversed gendered representation in contemporary art and provided an array of stories that reveal how we adopt various roles, either masculine or feminine, and how these interpretations are visually constructed. *Traversing Gender* was an exhibit that included political, social, economic and religious content that gives way to broader implications illustrated in a disparate selection of photography, painting, installation and sculpture. The exhibiting artists include: Hannah Barrett, Jesse Burke, Caleb Cole, Jess Dugan, Lauren DiCioccio, Lalla A. Essaydi, Elisas Johns, Steve Locke, Mary Ellen Strom, Triiibe, Suzanne Sinclair and Rune Olsen.

*An AIDS Action Project at Artist Proof Studio, Johannesburg – January 18<sup>th</sup> through February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011*

This exhibit was comprised of 100 black and white etchings by 97 collaborating artists in Johannesburg, South Africa, as a response to a three-day New Start HIV voluntary testing and counseling program at Artist Proof Studio in 2006. Kim Berman, the initiator of the project and a resident of Johannesburg, believes that as an artist, educator and activist, she has an important role to play in contributing to social transformation. This installation of etchings considered how artists can use their work as a catalyst for change. Social issues affecting South Africa, such as the losses and devastation caused by the HIV/Aids pandemic, are reflected in the artists' work.

*Linda Bond: Shadow War – February 27<sup>th</sup> through April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014*

In the exhibition, *Shadow War*, (McIninch, 2014) Linda Bond explored the experience of war filtered through the lens of our media saturated culture. The work she has produced during more than a decade of American combat in Iraq and Afghanistan examines some of the difficult questions warfare imposes. With compassion, she touches the human suffering central to the tragedies inflicted upon both sides of a conflict, challenging our perceptions of good and evil, hero and enemy, terrorist and victim. "What makes a moral society?" is the central question of what Bond is addressing.

*Still Lifes from a Vanishing City – January 15<sup>th</sup> through February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015*

*Still Lifes from a Vanishing City*, was an exhibition chronicling the re-appropriation of colonial urban space in Yangon, Myanmar. The documentary photography by Brooklyn based artist/writer, Elizabeth Rush, is of a changing culture as well as an exercise in capturing a way of life in the face of modernism. Rush's poetic images introduce us to teachers, mohinga sellers, accordion players, journalists, accountants and tea shop workers living alongside each other in forgotten and neglected colonial-era gems of Yangon, buildings that in their heyday, would



have only belonged to the extremely wealthy. The allegory imbued in these photographs unleashes the ghosts of dreams won and lost, and powers uplifted and suppressed.

*Chagoya + Gonzalez: The Walls Around Fantasylandia, November 2<sup>nd</sup> through December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.*

This exhibition (McIninch, 2017) addressed the subject of immigration and by extension the physical, intellectual and emotional nature of border walls built between countries. Enriques Chagoya and Raul Gonzalez III are artists whose work addresses cultural issues related to racism, politics, religion and economic disparities. Cultural references are appropriated from art history, literature and religious traditions. They employ a sense of humor about controversial subjects and are self-effacing in their representation of their own culture and simultaneously imbue their work with imagery that evokes a strong sense of pride in their heritage.

These are just a few examples of how the McIninch Gallery has addressed the subject of multiculturalism. This does not necessarily mean that the trajectory of curated exhibitions dealing with multicultural content is what makes the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To me the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century involves a variety of topics that address the problem of the brick and mortar structure, which include but are not limited to:

- fund-raising and the fact that philanthropic dollars are being stretched over a huge arc of humanitarian, political and economic demands;
- economic viability and understanding the limits of the return on investment and when to cap the operating budget;
- new business models that can infuse dollars into that budget.

Can and should we sustain these pressures to maintain the *status quo* or should we seek alternative interpretations and examine what is relevant and support that? Cultural institutions, whether large or small, face the challenge in finding the right equation of mission, vision, outcomes and cost. The definition of The Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should consider how the advancements of science, technology and business development can strengthen the purpose of museums. The leaders in these disciplines have and will continue to be outstanding partners for the museum professional.

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# Nations Building, Community, and Diversity: Toward a New Definition of ‘Museum’

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## Introduction

We are here today jointly with SNHU and ICOFOM, to seek answers to the questions on “Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Evolving Multiculturalism in Museums in the United States.” It is the first time ever that an ICOFOM symposium is held in the US and in an online platform that aims to reach the goal questioned in an interview on the Museum Definition process by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), “How far can such a symposium reach communities?” (Sandahl, 2017).

In reference to the series of ICOFOM symposia on the “museum definition” in seven different countries representing four continents (Mairesse, 2017; Brulon Soares, Brown, & Nazor, 2018; ICOFOM, 2018), an official museum definition in the US amongst the museum community does not exist. Another goal is to introduce what ICOFOM has been contributing to in the international museum community, with foundations in theoretical museology in the symposia and the publications, namely the *ICOFOM Study Series* and monographs to be shared amongst the museums and academic community in the US.

## Themes

A conference that laid precedence to defining cultures in museums was “The Poetics and Politics of Representation,” hosted and organized by the International Center of the Smithsonian Institution (ICSI). The publications *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Karp & Lavine, 1991) and *Museums and Communities* (Karp & Lavine, 1992) were outcomes of two conferences by ICSI. This precedence of defining cultures through a conference helps to reflect on where we are today in the museum world, and in this particular symposium, on museums in the US.

The themes for this online symposium are “Nation-Building in Museums in the US,” “Collecting Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Museums in the US,” and “Serving Nearby Heritage for All in Museums in the US.” These themes address not only defining a museum through a legal definition or a professio-

nal one but also what it means to museologists, museum workers, specialists, visitors, Indigenous nations, US citizens (naturalized, native-born, or natural born), immigrants, migrants, refugees, tourists, stakeholders, and community members. These themes will help us conceptualize the modern museum, but we need to answer specific questions about those themes in order to contribute to a new definition of “museum.” Throughout the day, we will ask everybody here to consider the following questions:

**Question 1:** “What does it mean to be a nation or nations in such a historical context, and how do museums help play a role in defining the nation or nations? How will that role change for museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How can the new ICOM definition of museum address the political, legal, administrative, and funding issues of the museum in a nation or nations with different state and local laws, ordinances, and standards?” (Chung, Denning, & Fennessy, 2018).

In regard to the first question, a very legal definition of a museum from the United States Code of Federal Regulations exists, but it is not to restrict ourselves from re-defining the museum even within the nations to gain a more comprehensive understanding:

- (a) Museum means a public or private nonprofit institution which is organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes and which, using a professional staff:
  - (1) Owns or uses tangible objects, either animate or inanimate;
  - (2) Cares for these objects; and
  - (3) Exhibits them to the general public on a regular basis (US Government Publishing Office, 2017).

Some aspects of the US definition to consider include the difference between a public and private museum. The word professionalization should be applied in relation to establishing a code of ethics, training, policies and plans. Museums should extensively apply the American Disabilities Act (ADA) within the facilities and programs. The ADA of 1990 should apply to museum websites and online exhibits. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) (Federal Communications Commission, 2017) requires captioning video programs on the Internet. However, there are obstacles to ADA compliance such as funding and grants in relation to federal and state political status. In addition, historic structures in many cases cannot be renovated to become handicap accessible. Thus the federal, state, and local laws that affect museums and how they have developed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century context should be carefully considered.

**Question 2:** “How should museums prioritize physical and digital artifacts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century US? How should museums handle intangible or digital artifacts such as oral histories and Living Human Treasures? Will physical museums continue to exist, or will we someday see only online collections of artifacts and naturfacts? In examining this theme, consider which types of collections, if any, should be included in the new ICOM definition of “museum,” with respect to preservation and research” (Chung et al., 2018).

Other questions arise as to what is represented in the museum in regard to multi-cultures, inter-cultures, cross-cultures, and trans-cultures; based on the Onion Model, I would like to introduce the Interlocutions of Cultural Heritage Model. Then the collections must be represented as multi-cultural heritage (many cultures) inter-cultural heritage (partnerships), cross-cultural heritage (blended together), and trans-cultural heritage (change in identities).

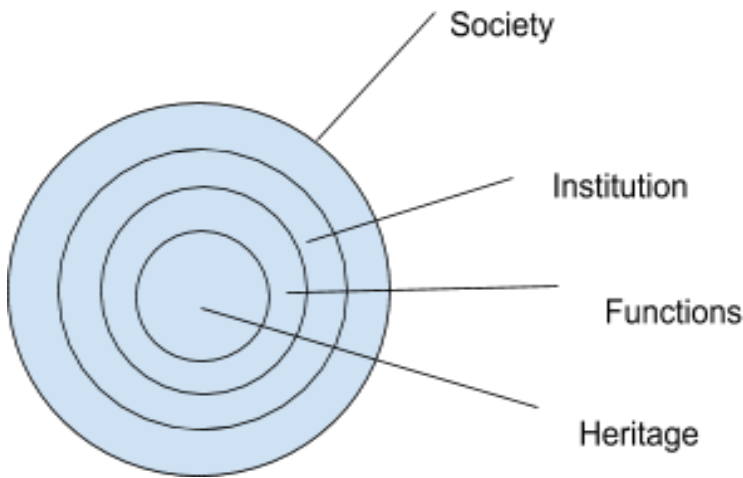


Figure 1: Peter van Mensch's Heritage Onion Model

For many people, heritage differs as the definition of museums vary. To provide a comprehensive international definition of heritage by UNESCO in connection with the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the definition is incorporated into categories as follows:

**Tangible cultural heritage:**

- movable cultural heritage (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts)
- immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, and so on)
- underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities)
- Intangible cultural heritage: oral traditions, performing arts, rituals

**Natural heritage:** natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes, physical, biological or geological formations (UNESCO, 2018).

Although the US legal definition of a museum states tangible objects, we should introduce the subject of intangible heritage. In many countries around the world, UNESCO's Living Human Treasures system has been adopted with centers for training the next generation of the knowledge and displayed in museums (UNESCO, 2017; Chung, 2004); and the concept and application of ecomuseums by Indigenous nations (Sadongei, 2005; Sadongei, Denning, Fennessy, & Chung, 2018; Sadongei & Norwood, 2016), and ecomuseums by ICOM Canada are

embraced. Thus, *artificialia* and *naturalia*, as the beginnings of collections in private, semi-private, and public spaces, transformed into the modern museums; and adding *intactilis hereditatem* with the preservation of oral histories, songs, dances, rites and rituals in various forms of recordings evolved into digitization.

Connecting the first and second questions, private museums should operate in terms of the balance of public interest on the collections, many of which are funded by endowments in addition to entry fees. According to Larry's List, the US has the second most private art museums in the world, allowing for many possibilities in balancing public interest (Larry's List, 2015). One example is the Berkshire Museum where there was controversy over the sales of artwork to aid in the museum's overall funding. Museums may also see public interest in new kinds of social-media targeted pop-up and digital museums, all in all, conceptual museums. An example of a pop-up museum connected with social media is The Daily Show's Presidential Twitter Library ("The Daily Show with Trevor Noah," 2018).

**Question 3:** "In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how have museums dealt with contestation, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and social status through programs and exhibits? Should museums be venues for open forums to address these complex issues in the community? What role should the broader public and other stakeholders play in the design and interpretation of exhibits, programming, events, and communication in 21<sup>st</sup>-century museums? How should ICOM's new definition of 'museum' reflect these issues?" (Chung, Denning, & Fennessy, 2018).

The concept of nearby heritage for all locally and regionally should be explored. Participation in the decision-making of programs and exhibits is a requisite in the 21<sup>st</sup> century-museum (Chung, 2017). In other words, all programs and exhibits must incorporate evaluation from the targeted audience and the community. Moreover, visitor experiences are essential in the integration of museum functions (Davis & Smeds, 2017).

## Terminologies for the New Museum Definition

Three positive elements in museums arose three decades ago that we can also think about to this day in connection with the above-mentioned themes within the museum definition process:

- (1) the strengthening of institutions that give populations a chance to exert control over the way they are presented in museums;
- (2) the expansion of the expertise of established museums in the presentation of non-Western cultures and minority cultures in the United States; and
- (3) experiments with exhibition design that will allow museums to offer multiple perspectives or to reveal the tendentiousness of the approach taken" (Lavine & Karp, 1991, p. 6).

How much further have we come along since these three issues were first addressed?

*Exhibiting Cultures* had explored “museums systematically not only in terms of attitudes toward the “other,” but also in terms of how the strategies of exoticizing and assimilating fit with public culture in the West” (Karp, 1991, p. 379). The symposium and the publication examined the sacredness of objects and how they are turned into art objects from cultural heritage in art museums (Alpers, 1991, p. 31). As we are familiar in all fields of profession and academia, it is the lens or the “way of seeing” the objects and juxtapositions alluding to André Malraux (Alpers, 1991, p. 27). As noted three decades ago with the controversy of *The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II* and then a more successful one that included the planning of contestation outside of the Smithsonian Institution at a university museum, we should incorporate the multiplicity of contexts. We are constantly finding ways to reach objectivity in administering (A), preserving (P), researching (R), and communicating (C) (van Mensch, 1996, p. 146) which is untrue to the very nature of what museums do being selective and subjective. When examining cultural heritage, categories of decorative, functional, aesthetic preferences, economic and social factors, visual and psychological impacts, and language (Sweeney, 1978, p. 2), we should find approaches to view heritage through interdisciplinary and multiplicity of perspectives. The implications of how museums deal with censorship and self-censorship when defining whose voice the museum defines should be included. Museums as social activists identified in the Definition of a Museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Paris symposium (Leshchenko, 2017), is another purpose of why they exist today. For example, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the Museum of Mississippi History have no flagpoles in front of the buildings as the flag of Mississippi continues to symbolize Confederatism. This role does not only apply to cultural heritage but natural heritage where museums should be actively addressing the causes of the killing and trafficking of natural heritage.

As noted in the Turkish newspaper the *Hurriyet Daily News*, are museums representing the concept of the “doll diversity museum” (Özdemir, 2017)?

Idea 1: Know the history of the global fashion industry and correct the socially constructed misconceptions and the false color codes for gender.

Idea 2: Take the initiative as parents to create a “doll diversity museum,” with diverse dolls who have equal rights, regardless of gender, disability, color, or other characteristics.

Idea 3: Teach your son that women’s rights are a part of universal human rights.

Idea 4: Be consistent with your son regarding ALL equal rights.

Idea 5: Teach your son to be empathetic and not to be a NIMBY (an acronym for “not in my backyard” i.e. someone who agrees in principle but not in practice)! (Özdemir, 2017).

How many museums in the US and around the world tell the story of the indigenous peoples and their Holocaust or genocide, with those remaining displaced

in boarding schools as a part of the US's Manifest Destiny or Doctrine of Discovery? The Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, shares this story. Should not museums be purposefully active in presenting this hurtful heritage? Another example of a museum that incorporates the respectful representation of the indigenous cultures is the Isle a la Cache Museum in Romeoville, Illinois, where the Potawatami nation currently living in Michigan are consulted in relation to the museum's activities (Guest, 2018).

Therefore, the museum definition should include the words **“living,”** incorporating Living Human Treasures, comfort women from World War II, and living animals and plants, **“digital,” “professionalization,” “diversity,” “causes,”** and **“representation,”** where the museum is “represented” by the culture that so that it is associated not only through Tribal Relations Initiative Board Resolutions (Heard Museum, 2018), but also representation in the Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, and councils in the quest for the interpretation of **multi-cultural and natural heritage (many cultures and species) inter-cultural and natural heritage (partnerships), cross-cultural and natural heritage (blended together), and trans-cultural and natural heritage (change in identities).**

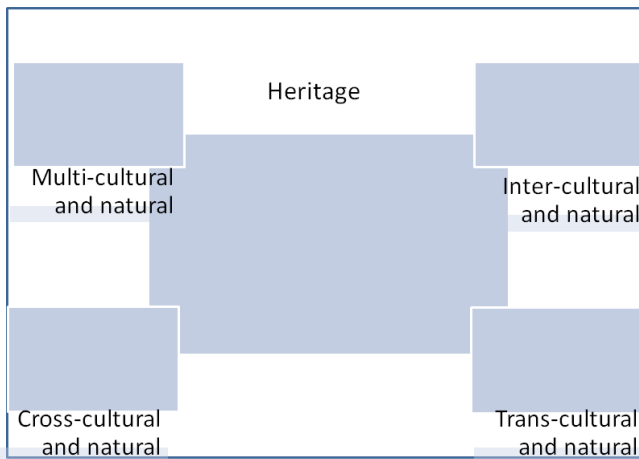


Figure 2: Interlocutions of Cultural and Natural Heritage Model, Y.S.S. Chung

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# **Keynote: Native America & Indigeneity**



# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum in Native America

*Alyce Sadongei*

*Partnership of Native Americans, Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, American Indian Language Development Institute at the University of Arizona*

Kiowa greeting:

Good morning, and greetings from the desert of southern Arizona! My name is Alyce Sadongei, and I am a Native American belonging to the Kiowa and Tohono O'odham tribes. The language I greeted you with is the Kiowa language. The Kiowa people are from southwestern Oklahoma. The Tohono O'odham people are from southern Arizona. The word "tohono" means desert and the word "o'odham" means people, hence they are called Desert People. My tribal heritage encompasses two unique tribes, differing linguistically, socially and culturally. I point this out since there are still many non-Native people who are unaware that tribal nations in the United States are not monolithic, but rather varied and distinct in cultural belief and practice.

I would like to express my thanks to the organizing committee for inviting me to speak at this virtual conference. It is a different experience for me to share with you all in this manner, and while I wish I could actually see all of you face to face, I will do my best to convey my thoughts.

I have been asked to speak on what I think the definition of a museum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be. I intend to respond primarily from a Native or indigenous viewpoint because that is where my personal and professional experience comes from. I appreciate that such a perspective has been included in this conference since, in many cases, the indigenous viewpoint is often overlooked.

My elders have always told me to speak from the heart. In doing so, I am aware that my remarks may not align with the types of presentations that may typically appear at ICOM conferences; nevertheless, I hope that what I have to say may still contribute to your discussion and debate.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of tribal museums—their staff, vision, commitment and expertise. I could not share their perspective with you all if they were not out there doing the hard work of cultural maintenance and on-going expression.

Let me begin by sharing briefly my experience with tribal museums so you will know how it is I can speak about them. I began my professional museum career

at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. I was charged with developing and implementing museum training programs for tribes. The programs were held on different reservation communities throughout the United States and parts of Canada. As a result, I was able to meet and learn from a variety of tribes regarding their museum development. My work with tribal museums continued when I left the Smithsonian Institution and began work at the Arizona State Museum. During my time there, I managed a grant that was co-developed by 5 state libraries in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and the Heard Museum in Phoenix and the Arizona State Museum in Tucson. The goal of that project, which was funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, was to increase the services available to tribal libraries, museums and archives. That project lasted approximately 8 years and the work that was accomplished laid the foundation for the creation of an organization dedicated to serving the needs of tribal libraries, archives and museums. To make it more brief, I have had over 20 years of experience working with tribal communities on their cultural heritage organizations and projects.

I think it is important to lay out several factors regarding tribal museums before I can share my definition of their next phase. I will provide some background information on their history, and purpose and use some examples of several tribal museums to further illustrate. I will share how tribal museums are different from non-tribal ones, and I will also discuss how in some ways they may share commonalities.

## **Background**

Let me begin by providing you with some context regarding tribal museums in the United States. I am not sure of the exact number of tribal museums there are currently in existence, but I would hazard a guess of approximately 75 to 130 based on how strict the “museum” nomenclature is defined. Tribal museums can be identified as cultural centers or repositories; they may be affiliated with educational institutions such as tribal colleges and they may be a nonprofit or a tribal government controlled institution. The fluidity of definition speaks to how tribal communities regard the museum as an institution. Since the foundational concept of a museum is so far removed from traditional cultural practice, it is no surprise that there is still some variance on what to call it. While the presence of a tribal museum in the community has become more prevalent, there was a time when the idea of a museum was met with resistance due to the colonial nature and predatory role that museums played in the collecting and control of indigenous material culture.

## **Tribal Museum History and Federal Impetus**

Tribal museum development was initially fueled in the 1970s by government block grants designed to promote tourism and generate economic development for tribes. While there may have been a few private, family-owned museums



in existence before then, the bulk of initial development occurred during this time (Cooper & Sandoval, 2006). The idea of museums and Native communities further took shape when federal legislation for the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) Act (United States Senate 1989a) and the National Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (United States Senate 1989b) was enacted by Congress within one year of the other. The NMAI Act passed in 1989 and NAGPRA in 1990. The NMAI Act and NAGPRA at their core, forced mainstream museums to rectify past injustices committed by archaeologists, curators and collectors. For those of you unfamiliar with the NAGPRA legislation, the law requires all the museums in the United States that receive any kind of federal funding to provide inventories and summaries of sacred objects, objects of cultural patrimony and human remains and funerary objects to all the tribes in the country that may have a cultural affiliation to those objects. Based on the information that the museum sends to tribes, the tribes then, request a consultation with the museum to begin the process of returning the objects or human remains back to the tribe. I was able to witness first-hand the implications of both congressional acts to tribal communities because at this time I also began working at the Smithsonian Institution. I worked under the auspices of the Office of Museum Programs even though the initiative came from the newly created NMAI. There was so few staff at the NMAI since it had just been created so the work fit easily under the Office of Museum Programs since that office had already had a history of providing training programs to tribal museums. One other initiative that was occurring during this time period came out of the National Park Service at the Department of the Interior, another federal agency. The Park Service had been directed to report to Congress on the funding needs for the protection of historic properties and cultural traditions on Native lands. An in-depth report entitled *Keepers of the Treasures* (Parker, 1990) was produced that indicated many tribes were very concerned about the protection and revitalization of sacred sites, language, oral history, traditions and lifeways. To quote from the report, "Tribes seek to preserve their cultural heritage as a living part of contemporary life" (Parker, 1990, p. i). The report was published in 1990. For several years after that, the Keepers of the Treasures emerged as a loosely organized group that held an annual conference bringing together tribal cultural workers from an array of categories. This was a unique organization but unfortunately its existence was dependent on funding and personnel from the National Park Service, and it eventually ceased operations.

I share this history with you to give you a sense of the magnitude of activity that was occurring around tribal cultural heritage as a result of federal interest and legislation. There was heightened awareness of tribal material culture due to NAGPRA that enabled tribal cultural practitioners to come face to face with sacred and ceremonial objects that had been put away in museums apart from tribes and out of context for generations. There was an increased awareness of spiritual knowledge as tribal cultural practitioners had to painfully consider how to conduct appropriate reinternment ceremonies for human remains that had been exhumed and desecrated. There was opportunity to envision how the new National Museum of the American Indian would develop as tribes were

consulted on the building design, exhibitions and programs. And there was the training opportunity made available to tribes from the Smithsonian Institution that I was privileged to direct.

## **Purpose of Tribal Museums**

Why would tribes want to have a museum in their community, especially since the idea of a museum, for many Native people is associated with a history of disenfranchisement and colonial suppression? As I mentioned earlier, the federal government through economic development block grants provided an opportunity to establish museums on reservations, and as with other federally imposed opportunities, tribes reacted to the promise of funding by obliging the purposes of the funding agency—in this case to establish museums. Many, but not all of the museums established then, were virtual shells without any regard to providing training or education for the staff (Abrams, 2002). As mentioned previously, the Smithsonian Institution has provided training since the 1970s, and other organizations followed suit up until present day. Similar to other programs that have been influenced, mandated or imposed on tribes by the federal government, tribes have learned to make them work for their particular situations. Adapting western models with tribal sensibility has been occurring for decades; but recently a renewed focus to reclaim or to “Indigenize” institutions is gathering momentum, and tribal museums are also part of this energy.

I have established that the federal government in the 1970s and national legislation in the 1990s influenced the development of tribal museums. Particularly in the 1990s, the purpose of the tribal museum continued to be economic development but also included the need to instill pride in tribal communities, especially for children and youth (Sadongei & Norwood, 2016). More recently, the purpose of tribal museums has evolved to actively support tribal sovereignty, and to be the hub or repository of all cultural material (including culturally related records and documents) related to one specific tribe. In other words, if information is sought regarding a particular tribe, one should be able to go to the tribal museum to access all culturally related material.

How do tribal museums express this purpose? They do it through exhibitions, programs, research and collections just as mainstream museums but increasingly these functions are indigenized. Managing and interpreting tribal culture by tribal people is the overarching goal. What does this look like?

I will spend some time describing to you the Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC) located in Neah Bay, Washington because, in my opinion, they have endeavored to make the museum institution their own since its inception.

The Makah Tribe has had a museum since the 1970s. In their situation the museum was not established with a government block grant, but the impetus was a major storm. The storm exposed an archaeological site on their reservation that had some 500 years previous, been covered by a mudslide. The Makah Tribe built the Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC) for the contents of the

houses that had been preserved by the mudslide. Guided by regard and respect for the material culture that was remarkably preserved in what archaeologists call a wet site, the MCRC created a center or rather another house to exhibit and care for the collection. Perceiving the museum as a house provides the appropriate context for the objects that were used by their ancestors. Taking the house context even further, the staff chose to manage the collection similarly by storing objects together by the house in which the objects were found thus keeping the household intact. They also chose to use their heritage language in cataloguing the households. By using the language, the staff created their own collections management system that uses their language thus re-awakening Makah ways of thinking and re-enforcing Makah world view. For example, traditional canoes in their language means a container for people. As a result canoes are catalogued among other containers such as baskets and boxes. Makah sensibilities also inform the make-up of the governing board. Adhering to customary governing methods, the board is made up of representatives of certain families. When the MCRC was created the founding staff thought broadly about the purpose of the institution and took into account that they were tasked with honoring their ancestors. The MCRC includes archives, and a language program and promotes community access to the collections—collections that have direct association with their ancestors. This ability to think broadly or holistically about what should be included in the MCRC differs from the mainstream museum practice that relies heavily on categorizing events and genres.

## Collections

While the MCRC and other tribal museums offer standard museum tours, and education programs, even gift shops, in my experience, the one area that has been indigenized the most would be in the area of collections management. Because tribal museums focus on only one tribal culture, it is somewhat easier to incorporate what is called traditional curation methods that are tribal specific. As I mentioned earlier, managing and interpreting and I would add caring for tribal culture by tribal people is the overarching goal for tribal museums. Re-claiming authority to tell one's narrative and to care for objects in culturally relevant ways is essentially a political act and an expression of cultural sovereignty (Cash Cash, 2001).

I would like to elaborate on the term, **traditional curation**. Historically, in mainstream museums, the voice of authority came only from the curator. The curator's knowledge of the object was then subject to the standard museum method of analysis, interpretation, and cataloguing. As tribal museums strive to care for, manage and interpret their own tribal material culture, there is room now for the tribal museum to establish curatorial roles and practice that are aligned more with Native ways of knowing. For example, the concept of being in relationship for Native people includes not only people and family but includes how an individual stands in relationship to the natural world around them. The natural world is itself a living relative so great care is taken to respect the land, air, sky, oceans, rivers, clouds, animals and plants. *For some tribes, particular*

*cultural objects are imbued with life and may at times, require social interaction by a caretaker or keeper to either refresh the spirit of the object or to ritually retire it. The idea then that objects exist in a social realm of relationship, would be incomprehensible to the historical curator, thus curatorial practices have not addressed it. Since the passage of NAGPRA, some mainstream museums have tried to incorporate these traditional curation methods but they fall short, lacking the lived experience that guides such care.*

As tribal museums evolve to include more traditional curation practices for their collections, this becomes easier to implement if the care is determined by tribal members working in concert with traditional cultural practitioners. To go back to the Makah Cultural and Research Center, their practice of using language, organizing the collection by household and applying gender restrictions for handling are all examples of traditional curation methods. Other examples of traditional curation used by tribal museums.

An example of this is to allow tribal members to use regalia and other items from the collections in ceremony, returning them after use. Another example is to allow for knowledgeable cultural practitioners to ritually cleanse certain objects and to interact with them if they are even in a tribal museum collection. A more practical application of cultural relevant care is to allow tribal members to store family heirlooms or regalia at the museum. The key word here is **use**. I would say that tribal museums value use of the objects as much as mainstream museums value attendance numbers.

## **Facilities and Operations**

In the area of facilities and operation, tribal museums share the same concerns as other museums. Since the 1990s, more tribal museums have been developed, and those that have been around for a while are seeking to refine, refresh and update their long-term exhibits. But tribal cultural heritage as defined by tribal people is holistic and encompasses ceremony, ritual, memory, language and lifeways. It is living and changing and not limited to one institutional category such as a museum or cultural center. As a result, many tribal museums give as much weight to including a language program or having a traditional garden, elders' center with kitchen facilities, or artist studios as part of their museums as they do having an exhibition space or a collection; therefore, the name for the museum must also be broad. It almost seems standard now for tribes to use their own heritage language in naming their museum which is a great method that had not been used as much when I first entered the field.

I mentioned earlier that tribal communities are fluid in their own definition of a museum and using Native language to convey the purpose of a museum further emphasizes that. For example, the Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in eastern Oregon, roughly translates to mean Interpreter. The AH-TAH-THI-KI on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation in Florida means “a place to learn, a place to remember”

(AH-TAH-THI-KI Museum, 2018). The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways means “by the river” (A walk through history, 2008). The Ak-Chin Him-Dak Eco-Museum means “way of life.”

The name of the place where tribes celebrate and share their culture resonate with a much larger scope than mainstream museums. Their audience is primarily tribal community members that include young children and elders as well. Some tribal museums have dedicated space for community gatherings. In the case of the Suquamish Museum in Washington State the very presentation of cultural information is done in a way that honors the passing on of traditions through the generations and seeks to dis-engage from western linear understanding of history.

Unlike mainstream museums, tribal museum construction and general operations are typically funded by tribal gaming revenues (if the tribe has a gaming operation—not all of them do) and supplemented by grants or other income generating sources. Since tribes have been able to offer gaming facilities on reservations in the United States, the economic outlook for many tribes has increased and tribes have been able to support their museums. Museums built after the mid-90s, in particular are beautiful structures, and the architecture in many instances also reflect tribal cultural symbols, colors or are new interpretations of traditional design motif and materials. Over the last several years, some tribal museums have made the decision to promote energy saving, resource conservation methods into their facilities maintenance. To pay attention to resource conservation is also another acknowledgement of Indigeneity.

This is best illustrated at the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute where a wind turbine and solar panels were installed. According to press releases (“Wind turbine,” 2014; “Solar carport,” 2016):

*Tamástslikt’s solar energy project is called “Húsemtuks” in Nez Perce, meaning the sun (as well as moon or luminary).” Last year’s construction of a wind turbine and the current addition of the solar panels recognize how the sun and wind helped our ancestors preserve traditional foods for storage. Now these same two resources are helping us care for the planet and reduce our electric bill.” In the really big picture, the tribes care about salmon, we care about water quality, we care about air quality,” said Tamástslikt’s director Bobbie Conner. “We are taught to care about everyone that lives here. On another level, (the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation) have specifically adopted energy policies, land use codes and tribal goals to exercise sovereignty by achieving economic and energy independence.*

## **New Directions**

My experience with tribal museums has given me the opportunity to comment on their history, purpose, and their unique ways of managing collections and operations. There are so many tribal museums that are beautifully constructed,

and that raise awareness of tribal culture to tribal members and visitors alike. My hope is that tribal museums continue to evolve. I don't see every tribal community having one but for those who determine that one would be useful they have many tribal museum models to fashion into their own unique institution.

I recall a comment I heard when the Tohono O'odham Culture Center and Museum, the Himdag Ki (which means Way of Life House), was celebrating its opening. The museum is state of the art and reflects a desert palette of colors. A child was wide-eyed at seeing the exhibit spaces, library and meeting rooms and asked one of the staff incredulously, "This is for me?" to which the staff replied, "Yes, this is yours," and the child beamed with pride.

My definition of a tribal museum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be for them to continue to instill pride for the young people who face increasing threats to their very survival due to the encroachment of drug use, gang violence and other social pressures. Recent studies have shown that those with knowledge of their language and culture are better able to withstand and to recover from social ills and the lingering effects of historical trauma that have been passed down through the generations (Stringer, 2018). Indeed, the ties to tribal ways of being have served to sustain, energize and guide our people and it will continue to do so. Tribal museums can serve as a valuable resource and as an entrée to increased knowledge and exploration of tribal culture. I would not, however, like to see the transmission of cultural practice in a tribal museum. My hope is, that expression occur in community and ceremony, unbound by the confines of a museum. The tribal museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will offer exhibits that reflect not only the needs and issues of the local tribal community but the larger world around them like the Ak-Chin Him Dak Eco Museum in central Arizona. They have responded to the health issues of their community by mounting an exhibit on diabetes, and they have also recently opened an exhibit that draws attention to their heritage language that is also under threat. The Zwiibing Center of Anishnabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan used their gallery space to invite artistic expressions of support for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline as well as to other threats to the environment.

The tribal museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will increase the use of their heritage language in managing and cataloging collections, thus re-awakening tribal cognition.

The tribal museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will continue to be guided by their regard and honor of ancestors and will encourage the application of cultural practice in as many ways as they can.

Perhaps, the mainstream museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can reflect some of these definitions as well thus making their institutions more holistic, welcoming and relevant.

Aho.

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# **Nation- Building in Museums in the United States**



# In Lieu of Objectivity: Defining Advocacy in the New Museum

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In September of 2017, I attended the annual conference of the Association of State and Local History in Austin, Texas. With my registration material, I was handed a button that had two sides—one said “we should be ADVOCATES” while the other said “we should be NEUTRAL.” The buttons helped drum up interest in a workshop called “The Advocacy/Neutrality Showdown,” billed as “an open, honest, energetic set of conversations about the pros and cons of mixing historic interpretation with advocacy work” (AASLH, 2017, p. 36). The topic of advocacy was one that popped up in numerous sessions throughout the conference. I noticed people happily taking sides on whether or not they thought cultural institutions should be advocates or remain neutral on a bevy of topics including Confederate War monuments, immigration, LGBTQ rights, and so on. While the debate was lively and mostly good-natured, it raised a few questions for me. How do museums maintain a role of objectivity while advocating for a better world? Can museums be both advocates and objective? And which role, if either, should be highlighted in ICOM’s new definition of “museum”?

When looking to define what a museum is, museologists must look at the way U.S. citizens use museums to define themselves. While it has been argued that U.S. national museums use the past to create a framework for understanding and debating the present, this very nature of museums still relies on an objective presentation in order to ensure that each and every citizen is represented and can participate equally. Because U.S. museums represent a “multicultural nation that is for the most part and with some exception, welcoming to people from around the world,” (Chung, Denning, & Fennessy, 2018) special attention must be paid to how museums function within the communities and this nation. As museums continue to change their focus and practice, they must remain diligent to the high ethical standards that call for objectivity. And as they help U.S. citizens to define themselves culturally and politically, they must remain reflexive about the role they play in society.

As a public historian, my first inclination is to take a historiographical look at the way in which U.S. society used museums to create a singular identity for peoples of different regions, cultures, values and socio-economic backgrounds, and how this practice has evolved over the last century and a half. By tracing the ways in which museums have evolved in the United States, the field can gain

a better understanding of how U.S. museums use authority to help create and reinforce the idea of what it is to be a U.S. citizen. A greater understanding of this concept highlights the need for museums to remain objective despite the pull to become advocates for any one perspective.

## Museums and the Past

The idea of heritage tourism flourished after the Civil War when U.S. citizens (much like their colonial British parents) began creating places of historical pilgrimage. Sites like Mount Vernon, Monticello, the Alamo, Gettysburg, Grant's Tomb and others associated with the positive mythology of the American Spirit became popular destinations for U.S. citizens in the early 1900s. In his work, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, historian Michael Kammen gives numerous examples of sites and publications from this period that illustrate how nationalism combined with religious overtones created "the sense of stability that comes with continuation tied to rootedness." (1991, p. 204).

Kammen's examples also highlight how early U.S. citizens began using a language steeped in a religious identity to describe what it meant to be a citizen. Kammen cites various publications and articles from the early 1900s that use words like "pilgrimage," "relic," and "sacrifice." This language creates a quasi-rite of patriotism, or a way for Americans to participate in a civil, public life.

This is also reflected in the works of sociologist Robert Bellah. Using the language of Rousseau, Bellah outlined what he called the "American Civil Religion," suggesting Americans modeled a contract for civil life after the same dogma and symbols of Christianity. Bellah defines "civil religion" as the merging of the spiritual and the political in American culture. Bellah's work first appeared in 1967, and is more contemporary than historical, focusing mainly on the 1950s and 1960s. He argues, "What we have then, from the earliest years of the republic, is a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things, and institutionalized in a collectivity" (Bellah, 1967, p. 8). The language of worship (and not specifically Christian) has since become a common metaphor for the ways in which U.S. citizens derive a collective identity through both cultural and heritage institutions.

Kammen suggests that post-World War II era U.S. museums began creating a "national memory" in order to create nostalgic traditions. These traditions were formed as a process of "selective memory" which "gave Americans splendid memories and star-spangled amnesia" (Kammen, 1991, p. 103). This was done as a means of coping with a difficult present. As the last half of the twentieth century unfolded, the term "heritage" became almost interchangeable with "selective memory" as a whole industry of heritage tourism popped up to help U.S. citizens learn about "their golden past" and what it meant to be a citizen in a complex and not-often democratic democracy (Kammen, 1991).

Maybe it is no small coincidence that at about the same time the stories that museums told began to change, so too did the museum world's perceptions of

their own authority. The early 1970s marked a period of museum critique and self-reflection wherein the field acknowledged that public expectations were for the “message” or interpretation of the objects to reflect the morals and social norms of a broader cross-section of society. The institutionalization of museums created “temples” where “those responsible for organizing and structuring the collection were members of an academic, curatorial elite” (Cameron, 1971/2004, p. 66). The problem lies in the fact that “the value systems that determined not only the selections of material but also the priorities for its presentation tended to be the value systems of the middle class if not an upper-middle-class elite” (Cameron, 1971/2004, p. 66).

Cameron (1971/2004, p. 67) argues that a museum “must be steadfast in its insistence on proved excellence, on the highest possible degree of objectivity in selection, organization and interpretation.” This creates a second type of institutional identity for museums—that of forum, where society can “confront established values and institutions” (Cameron, 1971/2004, p. 68). The forum is accessible and inclusive to all members of society, providing an opportunity to criticize and reinvent perceptions about the past and the present.

During this era, museums also began changing both whose stories they were telling and how they were telling them. For American museums, Hans-Martin Hinz (2006, p. 18) names the “protracted civil rights movement” as a catalyst for change, arguing that the need to tell the story of the “other” is a turning point for institutions like The National Museum of American History. This trend follows larger historiographical trends at a time when narratives shift away from what Tereza Cristina Scheiner (2006, p. 68) called “formal narratives” or Kammen’s (1991, p. 549) “golden past”. As the objects and stories of museums became more inclusive, audiences and their expectations changed as greater segments of the population began to identify and recognize themselves in these narratives.

As the scope of the narratives grew for museums, museologists and historians recognized the need for a more “pluralistic” institution (Gable & Handler, 1994, p. 119). Museums have long recognized that meaning was created from what objects were collected and how those objects were grouped and exhibited. Historians also recognized that there is meaning in not only the stories they tell but also in the parts of the stories that do not get told. However, as audiences became more sophisticated, so too did the messages they were receiving from the museum. Gable and Handler (1994, p. 120) argue “If a generation ago [1980s] the ameliorative task of the history museum was to teach patriotic values, today, in the eyes of many museum educators, it is to teach interpretive skepticism”. Both museums and museum goers began to understand that exhibits were constructed narratives, and that the narratives were edited.

By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, museologists went from acknowledging this relationship to actively questioning the cognitive dissonance produced by the fact that the museum profession aims for neutrality but also recognizes the impossibility of objectivity. The idea of the historical narrative in the museum became much larger than a matter of how objects were presented to the public.

In an article about museums and transparency, Jennifer Harris (2006, p. 260) explains the dichotic relationship between history, museums, and the political, arguing, “Most museums have not understood that they are political institutions which are necessarily engaged in the production of history and not merely the reflection of it. Museums rarely understand themselves as constituting an historical force”. Instead of merely “showing” history to a captive audience, museums craft narratives about the past through collecting and presenting history. This practice makes them active participants in the shared pasts of their communities and audiences. But how and why does this participation create an U.S. identity?

## Museums & Identity

Museology has long held that the politic has played a large role in both museums and the creation of national identities; one of the early *ICOFOM Study Series* explored the roles of museums and identity in 1986. A major theme of this study series was the definition of identity. Josef Benes (1986, p. 46) defines identity in relation to museums as “reflecting permanent and substantial features of a national culture.” Benes (1986, p. 46) contends that “in museology identity is first defined, then documented and finally utilized for the development of the society by linking the future with the past, which is important for the social awareness of people”.

This definition is important because it highlights the role of the past and how it “orients” people to the present and future. In his definition, Benes (1986) stresses the importance of differences in his discussion, but argues that it is the sharing of the past that will overcome these differences. He explains that it is the “relation” between objects, collections, and people that create identity. Museums can highlight this relation by reflecting it in their own work. By illustrating how objects of the past are connected, museums illustrate how all people of the present are also connected by that singular past shared experience (Benes, 1986).

Notably, one question raised in 1986 was whether or not museums should “serve as mirrors for living civilizations” (Desvallées, 1986, p. 74). The idea of “reflecting” the past to influence present and future were also brought up in Vиноš Sofka’s “Identity in space, in time—and in ICOFOM.” Sofka captures the relationship between “reflecting” the past and the future when he argues that museums “glance back and preserve the past—and they have the ambition, recently more and more expressed, to participate in forming the futures of their communities” (Sofka, 1986, p. 8). This fits with Jennifer Harris’ argument that museums are “engaged,” “political” institutions, defining the traditions and characteristics of the national culture (Harris, 2006).

The main reason that museums interpret the past in a way that creates identity is to help individuals come to terms with their present circumstances. Both Sola and Martin capture this notion in their essays about identity in museums. Sola argues that “identity problems” are a product of change, and that this societal angst is prevalent in every age. However, Scheiner (2006, p. 72) best sums it

up with her observation that “museums offer a possibility of recreating, amidst chaos and permanent change, an orderly world, where identities cease to be ‘fragile, vague and instable’”.

## **Advocating in Museums**

In the United States, the largest issue with this is the question of who gets to decide what the identity is and how it is represented in museums. As both the identity and industry of heritage-ism grew in the latter part of the 20th century, so did its institutionalization. Certain aspects of sites of U.S. heritage have always been institutionalized thanks to the Roosevelts—both Theodore Roosevelt who created the National Parks Service and Franklin Roosevelt who made preserving these sites a part of his public works programs. These programs helped to establish a federal system of guarding, protecting and presenting an “official” U.S. past as the suggestion of “the Government” lends an idea of legitimacy and authority to these sites.

National Museum of American History curator James Gardner suggests that the “what” that is reflected should be decided by curators who are trained to do good research and insightful exhibitions, with a mind for inclusion. What the reflection means should be decided by those who view the exhibitions on the condition that they are made part of the interpretive process. To do this, museums should educate their audiences about the work that museums do and the processes by which they do them. National museums, or official institutions, have the added burden of legislated transparency and partisan politics to contend with as well (Gardner, 2004).

Gardner encouraged these institutions to be “advocates” for their visitors, but laid out five very specific criteria for this. First among them is the idea that visitors must understand how the process of history and interpretation happens in museums. They need to be educated on the fact that the past presented is constructed but that construction means that it is open to re-interpretation based on perspective and not necessarily on “facts” (Gardner, 2004, p. 16). Gardner (2004, p. 19) concludes that advocating for visitors means sharing authority: “We must also make space in our museums and exhibits for our visitors to share their experiences and memories”. To do this, great care must be made to ensure that the past that is shared with visitors is a balance between being accessible enough for them to grasp, but is still a complex, nuanced narrative that is inclusive.

This inclusiveness should not only reflect the many backgrounds, traditions and cultures of all that make a shared past. It is also an inclusion of memories that reflect both the highlights and the low. Museums cannot be afraid to present the past from all sides even in its most base or raw forms. For it is in remembering as many parts of the past as is possible that audiences can find solace and relation.

## Conclusion

While it is easy for those in the field to get drawn into current events and popular debate, the job of the museum must remain to educate people about similar situations in the past—to make our history relatable to current events for as much of the population as possible. Advocating can be done, but museums must be conscientious about it. As ICOM starts to re-evaluate what a museum is, attention needs to be paid to the larger roles that museums play within both their communities and their nation. Both the museum field and the public history field have openly debated the role of museums as advocates for social change in the last few years. While I believe there is room for advocacy in museums, it must be done carefully—reflexively and with an eye on how this will help draw audiences together.

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# Legal, Equitable, and Ethical Perspectives on Heritage in Museums

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Like many other countries, the United States does not have “museum law” as a single source of law generally applicable to all domestic organizations with museum functions and characters. Various museums across the fifty states, the District of Columbia, tribal nations and U.S. territories do not operate exclusively under a uniform law or under the same legal definition. A definition of the term *museum* is provided within the text of codified federal legislation, the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996. This act does not determine whether a certain legal entity is a museum or not, other than for specific purpose of administering federal programs. Its applicable section defines the term *museum* as a public or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes, that utilizes a professional staff, owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for the tangible objects, and exhibits the tangible objects to the public on a regular basis (20 U.S.C. § 9172). Further, the term includes “museums that have tangible and digital collections.” This last portion was added in the 2010 amendment to expand the scope of the definition in recognition of an increasing use of advanced digital technology in the museum field. This statutory definition narrowly applies to eligibility for federal grants, primarily those funded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (“IMLS Eligibility Criteria,” 2018). However, it is by no means intended or has been adopted as the single most authoritative definition of American museums in a museological context.

That being said, museums in the United States are regulated by and subject to a complex set of laws as expounded by Malero & DeAngelis (2012) and Phelan (2014). Federal, state, tribal, and local governments constantly make, amend, implement, and enforce statutes and administrative rules. More often than not, subject matter a government intends to regulate is either much broader or substantially different than museums, such as a federal tax reform amending tax rules on charitable giving (Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017). However, if museums happen to fall under the scope of these legal reforms, they can directly affect museums’ core operations and budgets, and may even mandate them to change the way they normally operate at their own cost, just to keep up with regulatory compliance. In addition to typical laws on the book, museums are also routinely controlled by numerous private laws under the freedom of contracts. Museums

enter into legally binding agreements with individual donors, artists, scholars, funders, other museums, and vendors. To advance its institutional missions and expand its geographic reach, a museum may sign a contract involving a matter or a party overseas, potentially triggering laws of foreign jurisdictions. Treaties are another type of international law, which can broadly affect the museum community by adding to the existing complexity of domestic laws and regulations.

To complement a body of law, the principle of equity has developed in English common law jurisdictions (Equity, 2014). Courts of equity, which award equitable relief to legal disputes, underwent separate historical development from courts of law, but even without special knowledge of equity, the concept of fairness and justice has been deeply ingrained in people's lives in modern democracy. This is particularly true in the United States. Under the U.S. Constitution, people historically have fought for their civil rights—fundamental right to be free from unequal treatment, while they exercised their civil liberties—basic freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Such social climate allowed museums to be vocal rather than being a static cultural element of built environment. Museums have provided a safe, peaceful public forum for community members to exercise freedom of speech and expression. As agents of social change, many organizations have stood up to foster equity in their communities and advocate for the underprivileged. To some extent they are tolerant of provocative discourse concerning social and environmental injustice as well as racial, ethnic, and economic disparities, as long as activities are ethically permissible. As a nationwide museum trend setter, the Center for the Future of Museums, an initiative under the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), recently issued a call for a “Museum Manifesto for a More Equitable Future” (Merritt, 2018). Its theoretical framework underscores human rights to “Universal Basic Assets,” a concept originally proposed by the Institute for the Future. Universal basic assets refer to a fundamental set of resources that every person needs access to. These are classified into eight categories: natural resources, infrastructure, capital, data, know-how, communities, and power (Institute for the Future, 2017). The AAM is currently developing a model to help museums redress inequity in their communities relating to these categories of universal basic assets by utilizing museums' tangible and intangible assets held in public trust. If the re-definition of the museum is to focus on exclusivity instead of inclusivity, it may be too ambitious and progressive to view a role of promoting equity in society as a common attribute of museums all across the country, let alone the world. Nevertheless, the declaration of what the museum is and how it relates to everyone's life should be inclusive in nature. The idea of equity would certainly inspire community audience and bolster museums' relevance to today's society plagued with unfairness and injustice.

Equity is an important theme that impacts the role of museums at the international level as well. The recent situation surrounding a multilateral treaty known as the Nagoya Protocol illustrates how change in law may collaterally impose new legal and ethical obligations on museums. The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising

from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2010) is an international agreement established under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Nagoya Protocol is intended to implement one of the core objectives of its parent treaty, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), namely fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol has been in force since October 2014, and as of October 2018, 109 states including the European Union are Parties to the Protocol, whereas the United States is a non-Party.

This treaty operates on several basic premises: (1) states have sovereign rights over their natural and genetic resources within their territories; (2) genetic resources as components of biological diversity and ecosystems, have economic value; (3) moderated access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of economic value derived from such resources are key incentives for the conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity; (4) indigenous and local communities hold traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, where traditional knowledge may be oral, documented or in other forms; (5) traditional knowledge reflects rich cultural heritage relevant for sustainable use of biodiversity; and (6) indigenous and local communities have the right to identify the rightful owner of their traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources within their communities (Nagoya Protocol, 2010).

In essence, the Nagoya Protocol concerns source countries, source communities and individual users of genetic resources. With respect to a particular genetic resource, individual users enter into a license with a source country or source community on economic and non-economic terms. The treaty is aimed at keeping track of foreign users' activities conducted under such a profit-return/benefit-sharing/cost-sharing agreement, making sure that the economic benefit will return to source countries and communities. At the same time, it is aimed at facilitating access to untapped genetic resources in biologically rich countries. This access and benefit-sharing (ABS) scheme purports to be accomplished through users' full performance of contractual duties created under Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT) along with regulatory compliance with the Nagoya Protocol and its implementing domestic legislative measures (Nagoya Protocol, 2010).

With respect to traditional knowledge, it has been recognized by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and by a growing number of jurisdictions as a type of intellectual property (IP) ("Traditional knowledge," 2018). On the one hand, indigenous peoples have historically accumulated wisdom and techniques as to how to utilize native plants, animals, microbes, and other biological resources available in their habitat as a way of living to the benefit of human health and sustainable development of local communities. They have contributed to the creation and transmission of such traditional know-how, skills, and cultural expressions through many generations. On the other hand, IP practitioners, which conventionally specialize in patent, trademark, copyright and trade secret, gradually begun to recognize a need to legally protect these

undervalued, community-owned IP assets that have existed in various forms. Accordingly, the international IP and humanitarian sectors decided to call this category of IP traditional knowledge. Not surprisingly, museum professionals have worked closely with local communities with a keen recognition of the value of their traditional wisdom as a part of intangible heritage since long before IP lawyers added “traditional knowledge” to their common vocabulary. Despite that museums have a proven history of documenting, safeguarding, studying, and communicating heritage and also amassed experience in building a trusted partnership with community members, nowhere within the treaty’s text museums are mentioned or implied.

On the contrary, the development of the Nagoya Protocol has been largely motivated by a growing political tension caused by repeated acts of bio-piracy incentivized by foreign businesses, including American corporations. Bio-piracy generally refers to unauthorized appropriations of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge by claiming exclusive IP rights to them for profit (Shiva, 2016). Bio-piracy is a particular concern to biologically resourceful countries, which largely coincide with developing nations. Accordingly, the treaty established a mechanism for policing for-profit users to ensure they return a portion of profits they make back to source countries. In other words, the treaty is designed to have an overall effect of equalizing biodiversity-derived wealth distributions without compromising fair exchange of resources. The treaty also is intended to strengthen developing nations’ human resources and local capacity for sustainable development, which ultimately supports nation-building (Kageyama, 2018).

Pursuant to the Protocol’s broadly defined language, any person or organization involved in cross-border transactions of non-human genetic materials, i.e., tangible property of biological origins from wild plants and animals down to bacteria and viruses, as well as associated IP belonging to local and indigenous communities, come under the purview of the new rules. Because the treaty as it currently stands does not allow for blanket exceptions for noncommercial entities, a certain types of activities by heritage institutions are likely subject to the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol. In particular, those collecting and transporting biological, ethnographic, or folklore collections overseas as well as those actively building working relationships with indigenous communities would be potentially affected, whether they are aware of it or not. The complex international rules not only place unreasonably heavy regulatory burdens on museum staff and researchers, but also elevate legal risk of a breach of a contract and noncompliance. This inevitably leads to reluctance in getting involved in any international projects that may implicate the treaty.

Over the last two centuries, heritage organizations in the U.S. and other Western nations have developed sizable collections of an extensive geographic coverage. A number of institutions hold cultural and natural history collections that originated in regions well beyond their national borders, as exemplified by the Smithsonian Institution. Developing collections representing flora, fauna,

peoples, history, and human environments of various regions of the world has supported an institution's mission and collection policy. Through years of fieldwork, museums also have contributed to documenting otherwise disappearing traditional practices and knowledge attributable to particular communities. Further, such historical assets stored in museums are in principle accessible to broader public. Audience can appreciate global heritage by actually seeing a cross section of cultural and biological diversity. In retrospect, Western colonialism in the previous centuries wrongfully justified otherwise unethical or even illegal acts of encyclopedic collecting. However, a vast majority of specimens, artifacts, and records held by U.S. museums in the modern era lawfully came into their possession following legitimate procedures, at least until when legal and ethical uncertainty has escalated recently due to the Nagoya Protocol.

Today's natural history museums are facing unique challenges that have emerged under the Nagoya Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol will not retroactively apply to events that had occurred prior to the date of entering into force, 12 October 2014, and therefore it is unlikely that source states or communities will demand repatriation or bring a claim of rights infringement or violation of the ABS regulations over pre-Nagoya acquisitions. However, even if that is the case, under the presumption that each state has sovereign rights over its natural resources and that each community has the right to identify the rightful owner of its traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources within its community, inevitably the legal landscape has significantly changed. A conventional understanding was that after obtaining permits for collecting activities, clearing customs, and complying with existing domestic regulations, in most cases museums could lawfully obtain property rights and have intellectual control over objects and data of foreign origin. Institutions did not bother to go back to seek further permission from source countries and communities for future activities such as shipping DNA samples of a certain species of fungi to outside researchers on a scientific loan or digitizing cultural artifacts to be shared online with broader audiences around the world. In light of the Nagoya Protocol, collections are viewed as ex-situ genetic resources and knowledgebase in contrast to genetic resources in their native habitat and traditional wisdom as inherited by contemporary communities. Even if museums are allowed to physically possess collections, they may not legally own them or may not have all the intellectual property rights necessary to freely conduct collections-based activities. Museum scientific staff and external researchers are probably labeled as "users" and direct beneficiaries of genetic resources, whereas repository institutions assume a role of intermediaries between source states, source communities, and end users, although nowhere in the treaty such intermediary function is elaborated.

As stated earlier, the Nagoya Protocol stipulates that decision-making authority over access and benefit-sharing of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge is primarily in the hands of sovereign states and communities where they originated. This reflects a major shift in perspective over heritage, as pointed out by Blake (2018). A previously dominant view used to be that heritage is global commons of humankind irrespective of where representative heritage

is translocated, reassembled and utilized, as far as its long-term preservation and public access are ensured. Such heritage collections of universal value have benefitted numerous people through not only public exhibitions but also comparative learning and study of cultural and environmental diversity. In contrast, in the twenty first century, considerably more emphasis is given to special significance and meaning of particular heritage to source communities than its value appreciated through its systematic assembly. Moreover, a bundle of legal rights including ownership in these assets now essentially belong to source groups. The resulting change is, in a sense, a more equitable solution to sustainable heritage management in conformity with the goals of United Nations' treaties. At the same time, the emergence of the concept of community ownership does not necessarily mean abandonment of the idea of heritage possessing universal value for humankind. The recent fire in the National Museum of Brazil painfully reminded us that it was not only a tragic loss to Brazilian people but a loss to the entire world (Gorman, 2018; "ICOM statement," 2018). On the other hand, in this changing paradigm, long-standing institutions in the U.S. and elsewhere will rapidly come to realize that they owe increased legal and ethical responsibilities to the global society as ex-situ holders and trusted intermediaries of heritage that was removed far off from original sites, as well as associated intangible and digital assets. In this context, it seems more appropriate to understand a museum as an institution to which people entrust heritage instead of one which "acquires" heritage of humanity and its environment, as currently defined by the International Council of Museums ("ICOM Museum Definition," 2007).

How should stakeholders approach the Nagoya Protocol after all? Of course, if a given state is already a Party to the Nagoya Protocol, its national government should be able to advise its people how to proceed according to its domestic implementation scheme. But even if a museum is in a member state, how should the museum behave if the interests of a source indigenous community over certain traditional knowledge conflict with the interests of the central government? The Nagoya Protocol is not written with a museum's role in mind, but can the ICOM definition of the museum possibly shed new light on such ethical matters? In the case of the United States and nearly 90 other countries that are likewise non-Parties to the Nagoya Protocol, will the ICOM definition help to justify or defend a museum's decision-making over access and benefit-sharing even if their jurisdictions are not bound by the treaty? Will the ICOM definition deontologically urge museums' voluntary compliance with the treaty to advance its overarching goal of fairness and equity, even if the costs of adherence outweigh the benefits? On the one hand, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History was one of the first U.S. museums that had made a formal announcement of commitment to the Nagoya Protocol ("Access and benefit sharing policy," 2012). On the other hand, scientists are expressing a growing concern over the stifling effect of the treaty on international research programs as well as free and open exchange of scientific data (e.g., Deplazes-Zemp et al., 2018). Should stakeholder museums revise their collection policy to be consistent with the Nagoya Protocol or should they try to defend the interests of noncommercial groups of scientists, or both? Regardless of differing reactions to these



contentious issues, the revised ICOM definition of the museum is expected to serve as an ethical stronghold for heritage institutions in the evolving international legal framework affecting the fundamental relationship between heritage, communities, sovereign states, and beneficiaries of heritage, as epitomized by the case of the Nagoya Protocol, as well as other legal instruments governing international cultural heritage, in particular, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) (see Blake, 2015, 2018).

Even though museums are expected to be adaptive to changing global trends, in reality, they occasionally find themselves rather passive, defensive and resistant to change especially if such change is not driven by our professional community itself. On the other hand, a self-defining process under the leadership of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) is reaffirming of museums' *raison d'être*. The contemporary definition of the museum is expected to aid us communicate effectively common attributes and core value of museums to policymakers, even in the absence of its legal force. It will also remind community members that museums are here to serve them with the highest level of professional integrity. Finally, the ICOM definition will empower the entire museum community and unite the voices in its ongoing efforts toward building consensus in the areas of multiculturalism and sustainable heritage stewardship, which museums are entrusted to lead.

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# Commemorating the Civil War in Border States: The Case of John Hunt Morgan

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The commemoration of Confederate generals is a divisive issue that spans more than a century. Efforts to honor the leaders of the Confederacy occurred in two large waves — the first in the early 1900s and the other during the Civil Rights Era. This paper investigates Confederate General John Hunt Morgan and his Raiders as a case study for how evolving attitudes continue to urge careful examination in the field of historic preservation. Much of Kentucky's heritage has ties with Abraham Lincoln, for the state proudly preserves his birthplace and original homestead. By contrast, Morgan represents the rebellious actions of some living in border states during the Civil War. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the glorification of Civil War leaders on both sides stimulated heritage tourism, yet commemoration efforts often highlighted contemporaneous issues of racial discord. The task of preserving and presenting this type of history for educational purposes is one that can often stir some controversy, and given recent decisions to remove commemorative statues of Confederates, it may be time to question why these markers were ever even erected to honor certain leaders. The current ICOM museum definition explains that as permanent institutions that serve the public, museums are responsible for acquiring and conserving the “tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purpose of education, study and enjoyment” (ICOM Museum Definition cited in Mairesse, 2017). As museums progress and evolve in the twenty-first century, grappling with celebratory aspects of Civil War heritage will influence the national narrative of this most recent chapter of US American history.

General John Hunt Morgan's statue once stood on the south side of the courthouse in Lexington, Kentucky. On the west side stood another statute of John C. Breckinridge, a pro-slavery presidential candidate in the 1860 election. On the north side of the building, a plaque still memorializes an area where slave auctions were once a common occurrence. Lexington's city council voted to remove Morgan's statue along with the statue of John C. Breckinridge in 2017 (Eads, 2017; Sayers, 2017). The removal of the statues was a reaction to anti-Confederate sentiments that spread across the country nearly a century after many efforts to memorialize those who pledged their loyalty to the Confederate States of America began. The city's decision exemplifies the lengths that some

officials are willing to go to address civic concerns and make public spaces more inclusive (Goodman, 2017; Kozłowski, 2018).

John Hunt Morgan and his Raiders attract the attention of military enthusiasts who study his tactics, those interested in the complexities facing border states during the war, and people wishing to study the paternalistic attitudes of slave owners. While presenting Morgan and his views toward slavery are controversial, his own life and family provide an example of the wealthy landowner class who stood to lose financial prosperity with the dissolution of the institution. Morgan was willing to risk his own property and the safety of his family to fight for the Confederacy (Holland, 2008). His story is one that is bold, egotistical, and tragic – much like the war.

John Hunt Morgan formed a rifle unit that was sworn into the service of the Confederacy shortly after the war began. A native of Kentucky, a neutral state, he used his Raiders to destroy infrastructure, supply lines, and to pillage towns. Morgan eventually took his soldiers across the Ohio River, launching one of only two invasions into the North in 1863. After his capture by federals, he escaped from prison and returned to the South where he was shot and killed by a Union sympathizer. Along the way, the soldiers in his service destroyed property, confiscated horses, and killed civilians (Brown, 1959; Ward, 1992; Hattaway, 1985; Alonso, 1981; Dwyer, 1999; Keller, 1963; Sanders, 1999; Smith, 1983; Still, 1957). The recent trend of removing statues and other monuments dedicated to those who engaged in this sort of behavior necessitates an examination of why efforts to maintain a nostalgic connection to the Lost Cause occurred for some after the war.

In the past century, some efforts to commemorate the activities of Morgan's Raiders provided an overly romanticized version of his endeavors. Some Confederate sympathizers viewed his soldiers as heroes, willing to strike directly into the heart of the Union, or as raiders who gallantly rode through towns, often receiving a public reception from onlookers (Duke, 1960; Edison, 1975). Representing the actions of Morgan and his men, however, requires a great focus on the damage sustained by their victims. The fact that the Raiders often boasted of their feats and the amount of damage they inflicted on civilians attests to their destructive nature. It also sheds light on the brutality of the raids, since some civilians lost their assets and lives. As one Ohio farmer described Morgan's Raiders, "There was much loss sustained by the train of thieves, which always follow Armies in the disguise of soldiers." (Funk, 1961, p. 246).

Determining how to portray the actions of Morgan's Raiders presents a number of challenges, for he was a slaveowner who was a threat to the Union, the border states, and to a certain extent, the Confederacy. Although he intended to advance the Southern cause, Morgan's use of guerrilla tactics often had negative ramifications for Confederates. He sometimes disobeyed direct orders from his commanding officer, and he led several unsanctioned raids. The Raiders' attacks on railroad depots and tracks caused damage and prevented the trade of not only munitions but also other goods that sustained communities. As a neutral

state, Kentucky traded with the North, and the destruction of the railroads and bridges hindered many from earning their livelihoods (Bearss, 1974). The question of how to present a person who inflicted so much damage in his own state, yet for some maintained the status of a hero, poses a major obstacle for heritage professionals.

Several attempts to commemorate Morgan's Raiders that took place during the mid-twentieth century illustrate the complexities surrounding them. Although it is difficult to assess the significance of Morgan's Raiders in their entirety, a study done on behalf of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) provides some insight into the legacy of Morgan's soldiers on the people of Ohio. In July 1935, Ross Lockridge, Sr., Indiana's first FWP director, organized a reenactment of Morgan's Ohio Raid. A festival commemorating the raid drew people who were children almost seventy years prior to when the Raiders plowed through their state. Lew O'Bannon, the editor of a local paper, heavily publicized the event which featured speakers all along Morgan's route. Members of the Civilian Conservation Corps even set off explosions to recreate the sound of a military skirmish near Vernon. Crowd sizes varied between sixty and three thousand. In a review describing the festivities, Lockridge wrote that the event was "an unqualified success in every particular" (Blakey, 2005, p. 29).

In addition to the festivities, Lockridge ordered his county supervisors to contact the elderly people who reminisced at the festival and "collect on paper those memories." All were children in June 1863, but many felt a personal connection to the raid and recalled vividly the events that had transpired. Greenville Johnson was plowing a field when the Raiders rode by and he recalled climbing up on a fence to watch them. They asked him to fill their canteens with water, and he remembered having so many to fill that it nearly drained the well. Another man remembered showing some of Morgan's men to the field where the local militia hid. Perhaps the most important account is that of Maston Harris, the only African American to record his memories. He remembered how frightened his mother was and how she forced all her children to escape. They did not return for two weeks (Blakey, 2005).

The memory of Morgan's Raiders was so profound, that the story of the Ohio Raid eventually made it to the big screen. Director William Wyler directed a movie about Morgan's Raiders around the centennial anniversary of the Civil War. Based on a novel by Mary Jessamyn West, *Friendly Persuasion* starred Gary Cooper, Dorothy McGuire, and Anthony Perkins. *Friendly Persuasion* centered on a Quaker family who was staunch abolitionists, but their pacifist beliefs prevented the father, Jess Birdwell, and his son, Josh, from joining the Union Army. When Morgan's Raiders approached their Indiana home, Josh joined other members of the community in mounting a defense. The elder Birdwell stayed at home until Josh's horse returned without him. A Confederate soldier tried to ambush Jess, but he foiled the attempt, choosing to let the raider go rather than shoot him. Jess found his son holding the hand of a soldier he killed during a skirmish with the Raiders. All the while, Eliza Birdwell was left

to protect the farm from Morgan's Marauders. The movie provides the viewer with some insight into the damage and disruption Morgan's Ohio Raid brought to a benevolent Quaker family.

Although the actions of Morgan's Raiders against civilians were very brutal, Morgan's attacks on supply lines slowed the federal advance on Kentucky and Tennessee during the initial stages of the war (Dyer, 1942). These attacks made the Raiders an important part of Confederate defenses, but they also earned them the reputation of being bushwhackers who used guerrilla tactics. Many of Morgan's soldiers did not wear uniforms, which was common in the Confederate military. Civilians, as well as federal troops, often encountered them believing they were a benign presence. Morgan used this to his advantage, attacking people who had little time to flee (Schiller, 2001). During the Ohio Raid, while pillaging Corydon, Indiana, Morgan's soldiers shot John Glenn in both thighs, accusing him of killing one of Morgan's men with a shot fired through a fence. The Reverend Peter Glenn came to his son's defense. The Raiders set their house on fire and shot Peter as he tried to run into the house, killing him. The Glenns were unarmed when the retribution occurred (Ewbank, 1918; Peter, 1976; Smith, 1971).

For many decades, the promotion of heritage sites related to Morgan's Raiders has enhanced local economies, and for the most part, these sites present a balanced view of his actions. The John Hunt Morgan Heritage Trail marks the route that he and his men took during the Ohio Raid. Numerous plaques indicate the spots of major skirmishes while describing Morgan's strategy as well as the casualties inflicted upon civilians (Vinton County Travel, 2017). A marker even stands on the site of the former penitentiary he escaped from in Columbus. In addition to the trail, the home of Morgan's mother is a museum dedicated to several influential members of the family.

The Hunt-Morgan house, built by Morgan's grandfather John Wesley Hunt, is located in the heart of downtown Lexington. Morgan's mother, Henrietta, inherited the home when her parents died. Listed as a Civil War Discovery Trail Site, the home presents its original décor and form dating to 1814. The house has an entire room dedicated to the "Thunderbolt of the Confederacy." Attached to the west side of the home is a two-story building that quartered the family's slaves. In the Alexander T. Hunt Civil War Museum, located on the second floor, a case in the middle of the room contains a saddle used by Morgan. Another case displays a Union uniform next to Morgan's Confederate uniform. A portrait of Morgan hangs above the fireplace, while a photograph on the mantle shows his mother sitting. To the side of the fireplace, shelves display Civil War memorabilia. Most of the Morgans' biographers downplayed how Morgan used slave labor, instead focusing on his ability to recruit men and lead his mounted infantry during the war. However, sitting next to the fireplace is a small photograph of a man named Wesley Hunt. A short description explains that Hunt belonged to Thomas Hunt, a relative of Morgan, and worked for some time in John Hunt Morgan's hemp mill. Wesley Hunt joined Union forces after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect (The Bluegrass Trust for Preservation). Hunt's



loyalty to the Union placed him at odds with his former owners, and especially those fighting on behalf of the Confederacy. Placing a display about Wesley Hunt helps put the Morgan family's loyalty to the Southern cause in perspective, for as Morgan fought to prevent emancipation, his family member's formerly human held property fought to ensure a Union victory.

The removal of Morgan's statue from the courthouse in Lexington, as well as statues of many other Confederate officers, signals a new era in the commemoration of Civil War heritage in the South. The location where slave owners sold and bought humans on an auction block outside the courthouse, perhaps even some by Morgan, will continue to be displayed for visitors. In 1860, nearly one-fourth of Lexington's population were slaves. As heritage professionals and public historians continue their efforts in the twenty-first century, it is important to note that Morgan represents a time when divisions within the state drove some people to fight on opposite sides of the war. Acknowledging the Raiders exposes the complexities surrounding divisions within border states. Their importance to both the Union and Confederacy added to sectional tensions, and Morgan represents the desperation felt by some who believed that preserving the institution of slavery was worth paying the ultimate price. Morgan is one of a number of cases that continues to underscore past wounds — those sustained before, during, and after the war. The decision to remove his statue suggests that the door is open to facilitate a healing process that is centuries in the making for the United States. In this respect, the topic parallels several of the main summary points of the Latin Experience symposium, in particular, the importance of inclusion and emancipatory education (Brulon Soares et. al., 2018). Some of the statues taken down in recent years may end up at *ex-situ* sites where curators will have to determine how to place them into proper context with other artifacts. The examination of the removal of commemorative markers and efforts to interpret them for the public has the potential to enhance the educational aspects of ICOM's definition in regard to the U.S. experiential perspective of museums and heritage in the twenty-first century.

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# **Collecting Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Museums in the United States**



# The Artifacts of Cultural Change and Their Effect on the Museum

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## Introduction

Oral and narrative histories are a major part of what it means to be a museum today, but the meaning of those intangible artifacts profoundly affect the definition of a museum. At the same time, the collecting and understanding of those intangible artifacts vary by the individual museum, particularly in relation to cultural change. Native American history, as an example, is deeply rooted within oral history, but museum collectors and archaeologists once solely concentrated on indigenous material history without much consideration of living Native Americans. A common conundrum within the United States museum now is in rectifying questionable collection practices of the past with the more empathetic practices of the present. Museums may broadly be defined by visitors through material collections, but intangible collections like oral and narrative history provide deeper meaning for the interested museum visitor via exhibits, public programming, and general research.

## The Shifting Collecting Practices of Intangible History

The artifacts of cultural change may be seen through the lenses of oral and narrative history. So how should history museums handle narrative and oral history as a view into cultural change, and how does the collection of those histories affect the overall understanding of the museum? To answer that question for at least the United States, the first step is to examine the evolving and differing museum goals. The United States, not unlike the rest of the world, has museums with a variety of overlapping collecting aims such as local history, art history, archaeology, and national history.

Local history institutions have deep roots in the collecting of the intangible. Like historical societies, as the name implies, local history represents hyper-focused institutions. They often have roots in United States patriotism and nostalgia. As such, their very DNA is deeply rooted in dynamic amateurism. Their amateur explorations were often achieved through a kind of narrative history of the specific people involved, presumably via the available oral histories. Yet, the late twentieth century saw a dramatic shift toward the more material collections

practices toward the professionalism of their more broadly focused counterparts. The definition of the historical society came to the overall museum concepts almost independently out of necessity by the late twentieth century.

The most recent concepts of local history in the United States began to form in the late eighteenth century. These fledgling historical societies received government funding as early as the 1950s, and had founders considered “true disciples of the enlightenment” (Alexander, 1996, pp. 6, 87-88). As a specific example, the Westford Historical Society in Westford, Massachusetts, first met in 1958, and dedicated its museum by 1976, during the Bicentennial (“History of the Museum,” 2018).

Leading to historiographical disorganization, local history studies, especially those within historical societies, lacked professionalization into the 1970s. The organizations were primarily run by amateur historians, and some may still be today (Alexander, 2006, pp. 233-248). However, the professionalization over the past several decades led to work more closely resembling the output of their academically trained counterparts. More easily accessible research materials via the internet played a key role in the professionalization (“History of the Museum,” 2018). At the same time, oral history is still a major element of local history, with the work of New England local historian June Kennedy (2006) as one example.

Though research became more professionalized, the varied historiography caused issues for today’s researchers in the overall museum field. The need to update data, especially when updating older exhibits, can be difficult to present, because museum visitors might not accept the new interpretations (Kamen & Beaty, 2014, pp. 189-218). It can also be difficult to reconcile the new and old research for the visitor, who might not be interested in learning the historiography behind the research. Indeed, the author rarely sees historiography as a major element in the final form of exhibits and public programs. In its present form, the Native American Gallery at the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, Massachusetts, for example, does not directly apply historiography to the presentation, but does highlight the difference between archaeological research and Native American understanding of their past (Fruitlands Museum, 2018).

Perhaps the biggest historiographical shift in Native American studies -- and arguably the study of people as a whole -- came in the 1990s with the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (McManamon, 2018). Prior, issues of forced assimilation, scientific racism, and ignoring of traditional oral histories represented uncollected and often lost artifacts of oral history (Thomas, 2000). Grave goods were excavated, collected, and displayed without the consent of any possible descendants. At the same time, the lack of communication with those descendants created a skewed understanding of Native American history and culture, which is not wholly material traditionally. Such issues led to a dramatic rethinking of the ethics of collections practices, research, and presentation as a whole (Anderson, 2010). That rethinking arguably became more commonplace since, connecting with ICOFOM’s discussions on the evolving definition of the museum.



That loss of context is the most significant result of past collection practices. Voices of possessors were often lost, and “truth” became that of the collector (Maranda & Brulon Soares, 2016, pp. 13-20). Directly related to the professionalization of the historical society, museums must now rationalize those deprecated research and collection methodologies with present practice to give the visitor understanding of what was wrong and what is now known. Personal experience of the author suggests a push to fully disregard the inaccurate prior research in presentation, even though many visitors may still hold the deprecated understanding. Intangible histories such as oral tradition could fill that void, from how they were not always a part of the prior research.

Traditional museums, however, emphasized material history over folkloric or oral history (Chung, 2004, p. 21). Even today, it can be difficult in the standard history exhibit to present the intangible artifacts: there is the tangible object, the label with a brief history, and occasionally a guide with further knowledge. Living history museums are an example of moving past the traditional exhibit constructs, and can overcome any perceived issues of authenticity by essentially pulling the visitors into the exhibit (Chung, 2004, p. 22). Museums with extensive tangible and intangible Native American collections such as the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, Massachusetts, and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum in Mashantucket, Connecticut, do provide hands-on programs related to living history museums.

## The Use of Oral and Narrative History

One of the most significant issues with adapting intangible artifacts for the public, as opposed to material objects, is that they can be filled with paradoxes and inconsistencies, including with more recent history (Scheiner, 2000, pp. VIII-XV). Native Americans specifically tended to hold their culture together through oral history traditionally. This fact compared to a more recent fragmented culture directly shows the strengths and weaknesses of intangible artifacts. At the same time, those artifacts may also represent or reflect changes in a cultural heritage not difficult to adapt for public consumption.

Oral and narrative history are separate but interrelated concepts in the study, dissemination, and adaptations of history for the public. Both can have “point-of-view” issues, as the overall disseminated history can change from person to person. At the same time, oral history in particular may provide a view into overall understanding of cultural change, which can be supported with surviving material artifacts. Narrative history can be seen as a written application of its oral counterpart, but rectifying the narrative with artifacts is not necessarily the goal.

Narrative history is arguably an integral storytelling means within popular culture, especially when historical events are highlighted. As a breezy mix of popular culture and intangible history, *Ceremonial Time: Fifteen Thousand Years on One Square Mile* created a narrative history largely based on oral history (Mitchel, 1984). Not a professional historian, Mitchel was a naturalist associated

with the Massachusetts Audubon Society (Hoffman, 1987). In his largely positive review, New England archaeologist Curtiss Hoffman (1987) stated that, “[It] works extraordinarily well as art, but readers should not expect to find absolute historical accuracy in this book. Every historical fact Mitchell could glean has been transformed into legend in order to fulfill his artistic goal” (p. 31). Mitchell’s work can therefore never be described as “scholarly,” but can be interpreted as how one person sees a specific history, which may be an important datapoint in how a museum should present and collect intangible artifacts.

The more professional-minded local historians provide a more scholarly application of oral and narrative history. Local historian June Kennedy’s (2006) book *Westford Recollections of Days Gone By* represented a far less fanciful publication than *Ceremonial Time*. Indeed, the histories discussed are only as fanciful as those telling it. So, the museum professional must be careful in both the sources and how the history from those sources are disseminated to avoid the problems of sometimes inevitable subjectivity, which can be avoided through corroborated data and identified bias.

## **Finding Intangible History Lost in the Tangible**

With the shifting points-of-view and questionable prior collection practices of intangible history, striving for authenticity may be a difficult path when discussing cultural change. For Native Americans, traditional ways of life became unsustainable in Colonial America, including the maintaining of oral tradition. The museum, when discussing Native American history, must then decide to discuss a traditionally intangible history with one that was researched in a material way by historians and archaeologists.

One method created by the author for his 2017 Master’s thesis-project has relations to living history, but at an angle aimed to bridge exhibits and public programming, “Memories of the Valley: A Hands-on History of Native Americans in Colonial New England.” Given the dramatic material and immaterial cultural shifts of Colonial America, baskets and beadwork might not necessarily provide a deep understanding when presented in the standard exhibit format. Conversely, living history programs in the history museum context might not provide a deep understanding either.

An inspiration for the exhibit-program crossover project came from a visitor comment on an activity within the Fruitlands Museum art gallery. A puzzle for children was made based on Fruitland’s exhibited Albert Bierstadt (1862) landscape painting. While children indeed put together the puzzle, a parent specifically looked for historical information on the pieces, which had none. Although the activity was since removed, the visitor’s comment directly showed the disconnect between exhibits and other activities within the museum. The comment specifically showed how visitors may actively shape their own experiences within the museum, including the finding of gaps in their experience (Falk & Dierking, 2013, p. 132).

At its core, the resulting exhibit-program aimed to pull the visitors into a turbulent history by giving a deeper and intangible understanding. It not only provided hands-on activity with basket making (card stock and string) and beadwork (plastic beads and string), but also exhibit-like labeling with New England Native American history at a time of great cultural change. As there were no rules to cultural change, the visitors were allowed to make whatever they wanted with the materials provided. Particularly in the exhibit-program's second incarnation in early 2018 as a free-standing activity, it was observed that the children would be engaged in the activity while the parent actively read the labels (vice versa was observed as well). Exhibits and programs were not always presented from a single point of view, so overcoming that issue can be done through encouraging the visitor to build their own experience through both activity and known history.

### Improving ICOM's Definition of the Museum

Museums were historically defined by their material collections, but intangible histories, which may provide a deeper meaning for the visitor, were inconsistently applied toward exhibits and public programs. Historiographically, collection practices in museums of the United States leaned toward material objects, while the facts behind those objects were not always interpreted accurately by the collector. This issue led to some inaccuracies in the presentation of indigenous history in North America, particularly in how Native Americans traditionally maintained a strong oral tradition. While cultural change can indeed be seen reflected in the material objects a museum might present, that reflection was not the whole story. That gap between retrospective reflection and presentation may be bridged through associating hands-on activity and well researched history to pull the visitor into an intangible mindset of the discussed history. In terms of the ICOM definition, a museum's own history, however, is not an integral part of the present definition.

The ICOM definition suggests that museums should be fully extroverted beings that aim to preserve and teach for the public, as personal experience of the author suggests an avoidance of publicly discussing or studying their museum's varied historiography. Museums should be encouraged to think inwardly to develop a strong awareness of their historiography of collecting, research, and presentation. So, ICOM should incorporate wording such as, "**Have a retrospective awareness and openness of curatorial historiography to better understand if and how an intangible artifact fits within a collection.**" Adjusting the ICOM definition of the museum in this way may encourage progressive dialogue of museum professionals, provide a better understanding of collecting or deaccessioning intangible artifacts, and lead to more thoughtful offerings for the public.

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# Calling for the Inclusion of “Natural” Heritage in the New ICOM Definition of the Museum

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*When one tugs at a single thing in nature,  
he finds it attached to the rest of the world.*

John Muir

In her interview presenting the need to rethink globally the International Council of Museums' (ICOM) definition of museums, ICOM Chair Committee for Museum, Prospects and Potentials, Jette Sandahl, mentioned that the 1946 ICOM definition of museums, which set the first museum practice international standard, has been revised and adapted several times over the years. However, as of today, as mentioned by Sandahl, ICOM members recognize that the definition remains attached to values and social perceptions that do not fully identify the 21st century global embodiment of museums' potential contribution to society (Sandahl, 2017). While Sandahl's and ICOM committee members' statement is undisputable and has been demonstrated through the contribution of museum practitioners from around the globe at the ICOFOM "Defining the museum in the 21st century" symposiums held in various countries since 2017, one ought to acknowledge that the 2007 revision of the definition of museums was a major step forward towards the inclusion of recent multi-cultural societal paradigms. Indeed, the reconsideration of the focus of the mission of museums from material evidence, in other words collectible evidence, to tangible and intangible heritage demonstrated the commitment of ICOM to embed, in the core values of museum practices, the UNESCO recognition of "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise [sic] as part of their cultural heritage" (UNESCO, 2003).

As exciting and promising the 2007 museum definition changes were, the concluding note of the 2017 Paris ICOFOM symposium that launched the debate on the redefinition of the museum of the 21st century, suggested to replace "tangible and intangible heritage" with "heritage" (Mairesse, 2018). The ground for this change was based on a lack of consensus on the meaning of the concept "intangible heritage" among the museum professional community. Following the Paris concluding notes line of thought, this paper suggests that the concept of "heritage" as presented in the current ICOM definition of museum could be

revised. However, the suggestion made here is not based on the same premises than the one expressed at the Paris symposium. The base of the suggestion made here relies on the assumption that there is a need to review the preconceived idea that “there is a split between humanity and its environment” (Sandahl, 2017) and to consider recognizing that the concept of heritage is not limited to tangible and intangible human heritage but encompasses nature’s biodiversity. Henceforth, the suggestion made here vouch for the ICOM definition of museums to acknowledge or specify that the term heritage encompass the “natural” heritage as defined since 1972 by UNESCO:

*natural features, geological and physiographical formations and delineated areas that constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants and natural sites of value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty. It includes nature parks and reserves, zoos, aquaria and botanical gardens (UNESCO, 1972).*

The arguments supporting this revision will be provided by a context specific to the United States, namely the National Park Services (NPS) and its museum system.

The NPS museum system “provides broad representation of the natural and cultural heritage of the United States. The scope of the system is wider than that of most public or private institutions.” However, the NPS’s mission to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife therein, (.) for the enjoyment of future generations” is not acknowledged in the January 2016 update of the United States Code of Federal Regulations which in its definition of museum refers to a museum as:

*a public or private nonprofit institution which is organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes and which, using a professional staff: (1) Owns or uses tangible objects, either animate or inanimate; (2) Cares for these objects; and (3) Exhibits them to the general public on a regular basis (Code of Federal Regulations, 2016).*

Nor is it acknowledged in the NPS Museum Handbook which states in Part 1, Sections 3 and 4:

*Museums collect, preserve, study and interpret, and provide appropriate public access to natural and cultural materials that have been assembled according to a plan. With few exceptions, after their founding, museums continue to collect within their stated scope. All activities in the museum revolve around the collection. Collecting, and documenting the resulting collection, is the first responsibility (National Park Service, 2006, p. 1:2).*

The review of the museum definition of the Code of Federal Regulations and of the NPS Museum Handbook demonstrates that the United States has not yet integrated to its museum vision and mission ICOM’s 2007 inclusion of intangible heritage and remains focused on the concept of collecting material evidence. Consequently, the Code of Federal Regulations and the NPS museum system do



not recognize the museal activities performed by the NPS such as the preservation or conservation— to use ICOM terminology— research, communication and, to the best of its ability, presentation to the public of the “biodiversity of its lands and water” (Plumb, 2014), - a biodiversity by which its very essence can neither be objectivized nor collected and is versatile.

The later review highlights also that the NPS museums system does not second the NPS duty to “protect living resources from threats such as invasive species, disease, population pressure, and climate change” (Plumb, 2014). Lastly, while the importance of a collection presenting the natural and cultural heritage of the United States to the public is of undeniable great value, the NPS museum system does not take into consideration an observation made by former president of ICOM, Ann Davis: “Museums can’t keep collecting for the very simple reason that they are starting to lack space” (Davis, Denning, Fennessy, & Chung, 2018).

During her *Filibustering Museology* podcast interview, Alyce Sadongei, Program Manager for the American Indian Language Development Institute, reminded the audience of the intricate policies that regulate museums in the United States and how grant allocations can at times restrict museums to respond to societal changes. This may explain why the United States has not yet considered aligning its definition of the museum with the 2007 inclusion of ICOM’s intangible heritage and UNESCO’s living human heritage. Sadongei’s reminder will most likely forecast that an ICOM natural heritage recognition may not have an immediate impact on the well-established museal practice of the NPS. However, the ICOM acknowledgment of “natural” heritage as defined by UNESCO would recognize the entire spectrum of activities performed by the NPS and similar institutions pertaining to museal activities, highlighted here above, which support NPS and nature preservation institutions core duties and values.

Beyond the context of the United States and the NPS museum system, ICOM’s recognition of natural heritage would further support its 2007 stance which freed museums from the obligation of building a collection. By recognizing living human cultural experiences, ICOM opened the door to shift from the established perception of museums as education institutions in which the visitor plays a passive role to the inclusion of the public in the transmission and development of knowledge. This latter practice has been adopted worldwide by science museums and national parks which have included in their research programs the participation of “citizen scientists”. The engagement of people in the development of knowledge, whether physical, per the demonstration of living human heritage, or intellectual, per the inclusion of research evidence, calls into question the notion of visitor enjoyment. This questioning was raised in the concluding note of the 2017 Paris ICOM symposium, confirmed by the President of the International Committee for Museology, François Mairesse, during his *Filibustering Museology* podcast interview, and further developed in the concluding notes of the Leuven museum professionals’ workshop. At the Leuven workshop the word “awareness” was suggested in replacement of enjoyment (Defining the Museum, Leuven, 2018). In view of the aim of this paper, calling

for ICOM to acknowledge “natural” heritage in its definition of museums, the term “awareness” seems appropriate. While there is no doubt that every effort should be made for visitors of natural parks to enjoy their journey and learning experience, to make a significant contribution to society, museums must foster an awareness of the natural heritage in their visitors. This “awareness”, and its subsequent contribution to society, comes with the physical and, or intellectual engagement of the visitor with the natural heritage.

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# MUSEUM 4D

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*Real Museums are places where Time is transformed into space.*

Orhan Pamuk

Heritage of any known civilization is mostly presented in a museum. Exhibits of artifacts, naturfacts and documents are organized for the public to observe in entertaining and learning experiences and for the scientists to examine for research purposes. Dynamic exhibitions, in innovative ways, often try to merge the visitors to the “mood” or the time era of the presented artifact. Nonetheless, this physical representation would only be a small scale environment of the wanted time zone. How these environments of non-existing places could become more realistic using the tangible artifacts, without wrecking them? It is necessary for the general characteristics of any museum, exhibition and exhibit to be addressed, in order for an answer to be given.

Museums, though their value is presented throughout history, always had a special role in any society. A place, which could (and still can) have different morphological structures in places, but always carrying memories, pieces of human souls and fragments of societies and civilizations, like a protective cocoon, aiming in presenting them optimally to the public eye, but also in studying them by experts for better understanding of historical events. But what is the formal definition of the word “Museum”? Based on the ICOM (2007), museums are being identified as:

*a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (International Council of Museums, 2007).*

Every museum, as institutions, consists of exhibits (with historical, personal or societal meaning), with a dynamic timetable of their presentation to the public eye (temporary and permanent exhibitions) and a varying way of producing and presenting (tangible or intangible, physical or digital, though a catalogue of materials and their combination (e.g. wood, rock, marble, plastic etc.)). All the exhibits are the evidences of human civilization, “observers” of the human and natural history, and testimonies of examinations -of mind and soul- in an innovative way. As the role of the museum is to be the perfect host of every civilization’s heritage, it is undoubtedly that the same buildings, we identify as these hosts, are independent exhibits, as they are part of the world history like architectural “diamonds” of the city they grace. Outcome, usually, of a core idea,

which is product of the theme, the history and/or the possible exhibitions that are going to be presented, a museum traditionally is characterized by A-class architecture and mystical spaces ready to induct the visitors to new worlds and stories.

Theatricality is particularly well suited to the museum environment; it is a place out of the ordinary (Crawley, 2012). This well-designed environment is an empty canvas ready to welcome constantly new pieces of art, parts of a greater and steadily changing collage. Every exhibition succeeds a former, creating relentlessly a greater story with different chapters. In museums, the main matter of designed scenography is the representation of time and the traces of that process are the exhibits. In *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard (1954, p. 44) writes, “In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for.”

Like books, museums were built to tell stories: stories that need time to be prepared, to be read and to be understood by artists, scientists and the public. Although their skin is solid, specific and with strict presence in any city, their content is often soft, flowing, with few guidelines, presenting the truth through examination. Time is the only tool, one need for observing, understanding and thoroughly meditating. *Lectio Divina*, the “Sacred Reading” (Blythe & Wolpert, 2004), may be the perfect phrase which comprehends the museum process of inducting and teaching lessons towards the public. Basically, this is a method (mostly for religious matters) for delving into the deeper meaning of what you are trying to read, aiming for self-examination and reflection. Every requirement for the Museum’s *Lectio Divina* of the visitor, are included in the process of designing and organizing museums. Architects, museologists and historians, artists, and – nowadays – organizing teams for the digital parts, need to collaborate for a well-balanced and harmonious function of the museum for the better interest of the public.

The characteristics of such buildings and their areas have rules in common grounds. Like modern temples, museums have usually majestic architecture with vivid ornaments for the façade and the interior, perfect lighting and acoustics, well organized walkthrough for the visitor and, every needed condition for the best presentation of any exhibit.

On the other hand, exhibits’ creation and defining them with highly philosophical and stochastic meanings, is an everlasting process of humankind. Objects of everyday use for the people of thousand years ago, in combination with oral stories, urban legends and written documents that have survived through time, create tremendous stories and scenarios about different periods of the past. All these products are treasures of information that need to be kept safe and in best possible condition, for the public’s amusement and constant research. These tangible - so called – artifacts carry memories that we need to discover. As Aristotle wrote, “ἔστι μὲν οὖν ἡ μνήμη οὔτε αἴσθησις οὔτε ὑπόληψις, ἀλλὰ τούτων τινὸς ἕξις ἢ πάθος, ὅταν γένηται χρόνος [Memory is not the feeling nor the thinking, but the possession or passion for them, when time goes by] (Aristotle, p. 73, 449b) concerning memories as objects of the past and as time-connected

tendency. Time decaying, apart from prominence of civilization's "transience" (Korres & Panetsos, 1996, p. 15) marks the natural phenomenon of corrosion and destruction as "exhibits" (Korres, 1993, p. 8).

Artifacts and naturfacts are results of evolution. Through the traces of time's layers and their specifically identified human actions, an exhibit (or monument) reveals in depth the plurality of historical thoughts and actions that are needed for it to be shaped the way it is. This is why exhibits carry treasures we need to unveil. Because memories are the poetic meaning of history, the structure of soul and the core of life: condense the physical and spiritual work of the previous generation (Korres, 1993). The maintenance of every exhibit as it was found and the right presentation to the public could create a unique experience for the viewer.

All the aforementioned issues form a basis of rules for every museum that desires the most suited way to overcome the challenges of delivering a whole and perfect result. This could be a "grammar" for museum making, as an abstract definition. Nevertheless, how could this "abstract museum grammar" evolve responding to the new technologies and honoring the existing exhibits? Maybe Malraux (1954, p. 65), in *Voices of Silence* writing that "if we could feel how the first viewers of an Egyptian statue felt (.) then, in haste, we would move them (any Egyptian statue) out of the museum of Louvre" is providing the answer.

The exhibition's next big revolutionary step for artifacts and naturfacts may be an exploration of the experience process that a visitor has when interacting with an exhibit of an exhibition, yet with new pioneering terms, using the infinite space of the virtual world (3d environment). Imagining virtual reality has been possible only recently, thanks to a significant increase in the intrinsic power of computers, especially the possibility of creating computer-generated images in real time (real time rendering) and enabling a future for real-time interaction between the user and the virtual world (Fuchs, Moreau, & Guitton, 2011).

This virtual environment, which displays existing or ruined sceneries (archeological sites, museums and monuments), exhibitions and collections, or built-from-scratch worlds of fantasy, routes and exhibits, allows the user to participate in new experiences, possible in auspicious ways, comparatively with the real world conditions: an original and infinite digital museum, where the exhibits are displayed in a "natural" environment in digital world. New ways of presentation will create new worlds. And new worlds will provide space for new stories. Every existing or non artifact could be used and presented as replicas, and the original would not corrupt. It is impossible to divide physical from digital artifacts, as they are equally important; combining them, though, will be the paramount form that museums in the United States (and elsewhere) could make. Imagine a place, where a network of museums exists, merging civilizations and providing spaces for the viewer, beyond the actual reality.

The physical museum will be a leading figure that will host such well-organized environments, where 3d-printed objects and detailed designed worlds combined,

will create a scenery for every civilization filled with symbolic meanings, dynamic uses for the public and the research team, where the artists would make “alive” exhibits, the visitor would enter unimagined worlds, and the researcher would understand in simulated environments the examined civilization.

As it is already mentioned, museum designs are determined by several rules, mainly laws of nature that defy our reality. In an endeavor of inserting the logic of a “small world” like that of a museum in a digital 3d world, a question will be posed: “Which rules of our reality matter now?” On the virtual reality dimension, the user-creator of a digital museum is tempted to test different methods without having the fear of failing. In that virtual space, nothing is wrong, if it suits the vision of the creator. Basically, the only rule that is applied is the denial of any physical law of the reality, creating the ideal and proper scenery for the exhibit. That said, rules like “human presence,” “limit walls,” or “absence environmental aesthetics” could be changed based on what the scenery would be. The process of the aforesaid procedure could have many implementations, with different combinations. In parallel to oral stories, which are living heritage in a big everlasting journey from generation to generation, carrying values and traditions, the museums now is the same “alive” structure to transfer the ideas, the history, the innovations and the life of the aspiring cultural civilizations as a place of solely presenting the artifacts in a way of (re)discovering the knowledge as a dynamic process for the visitor. The next step of the museum’s evolution might be the metamorphosis into a Virtual Museum or a compilation of physical and virtual parts.

Ignoring the rules that defy the world’s reality and by using the database of the artifacts would deliver results that form – as a whole – a communication language, dynamically infinite consisted by a finite number of exhibits. The definition of the museum would still exist, as the place where any civilization’s culture is offered to the public for observation and learning but in a new and improved version, adapting to the new technologies.

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# Defining the Citizen within the Rural Museum: A Case Study in Programming

*Natalie Sweet*

*The Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, Tennessee, United States*

Across the museum community, there is a growing awareness that museums are political spaces - it is a myth that museums can be objective as the lives that museums narrate and interact with contain the everyday political. This is emphasized in the #MuseumsAreNotNeutral campaign, which has moved beyond Twitter to populate t-shirts, pins, and book bags found at museum conferences. As its founders, LaTanya S. Autry and Mike Murawski explain, #MuseumsAreNotNeutral is “an initiative that exposes the fallacies of the neutrality claim and calls for an equity-based transformation of museums” (Anderson, 2018). Museum associations are taking a closer look at who works and visits within their spaces, whose stories are told, and most importantly, who is missing (Schonfeld, Westermann, & Sweeney, 2015). For smaller, rural museums, it is easy to repeat traditional storylines, to avoid exhibits that challenge accepted narratives for the sake of not appearing “too political,” or to seek pleasing a small pool of regular donors with particular expectations. Nevertheless, small, rural museums can engage with the idea that #MuseumAreNotNeutral by critically examining and enacting programming that invites conversation tied to diverse opinions. Connecting the museum’s collection to current events through community interaction can create opportunities for diversification within the museum, proving that museums can also be defined as places that promote civic discussion of “the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment” for the additional purpose of community activism (International Council of Museums, 2007).

Since its founding in 1897, Lincoln Memorial University (LMU) in Harrogate, Tennessee, collected artifacts related to the life of the United States’ sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln, and the American Civil War. The university’s founding is tied to the story of an 1863 conversation between Lincoln and one of the university’s founder, Union general Oliver Otis Howard, to help the mountain people of East Tennessee who remained loyal to the Union when the state entered the Confederacy (Hess, 2011, p. 6, 22-23). The university would serve as “a living memorial” to Lincoln. In an effort to show post-war unity, many members of the university’s first board of directors were veterans from both sides of the war, and an original building on campus took the name “Grant-Lee Hall” to memorialize each side’s most prominent general. The first artifacts donated to

the school, too, came from these board members. As such, from the growing collection's earliest days, both sides of the war were celebrated.

As the university became financially stable, it built a manuscript collection. The collection moved from various corridors and attics into a third floor room of the newly built Duke Hall of Citizenship in 1928. The arrival of campus president Stewart W. McClelland in 1932 marked a new phase of collection development as he instituted the position of "Dean of Lincolniana." Among Lincoln collectors, Lincolniana is defined as the many books, artifacts, and other memorabilia that examines and interprets Lincoln's life. The school's first Dean of Lincolniana, R. Gerald McMurtry, worked with McClelland to double the school's scholarly works on Lincoln and to triple the primary source material. Special emphasis was placed on scholarly books, signed manuscripts, and works of art by prominent artisans. By 1945, the two engaged in talks with developers to construct a museum on the LMU campus (McMurtry, 1973). Financially, such a goal could not be achieved until 1973, when LMU Board Member Col. Harland Sanders offered a matching challenge to raise the needed funds. The Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum (ALLM) opened on June 4, 1977. The museum's collection now houses over 35,000 artifacts, books, pamphlets, and other ephemera related to Lincoln's life. It is maintained by a full-time staff of four and one part-time employee.

Although the ALLM is an autobiographical museum dedicated to the nation's most recognizable president, it is located in a rural, Appalachian town that is not directly connected to Lincoln's birth, life, or death. Likewise, although Harrogate is located in an area that largely supported the Union during the Civil War, a Confederate identity grew in the postwar years, much as Anne Marshall (2010) describes occurring in nearby Kentucky following the war. Visitors do not automatically think of Harrogate, Tennessee, as a Lincoln destination. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) lists the population of the town as 4,389. In a typical year, visitation to the museum reaches over 8,000. Despite its rural setting, however, there are various audiences to draw from for visitation and donations. There is the local community, comprised of many who trace their ancestry to the Anglicization of the area in the 1800s. The university community includes students from numerous states and multiple countries. Finally, there is the travelling audience, a group frequently comprised of out-of-state residents whose drive take them along the local interstate system. Museum staff recognized that these groups hold differing views of the American Civil War. They also acknowledged the differing views of modern day politics. Acknowledging these variances provided the opportunity to diversify museum programming and engage the community with a complicated past and present.

## **Of the People, By the People, For the People**

Following the 2016 presidential election within the United States, ALLM staff contemplated how the election revealed deep divides within the American populace. Topics such as immigration, national security, civil rights, and the separation of powers dominated the news cycle. The 2016 election also revealed

a desire by Americans to better understand and participate as citizens. With the acknowledgement that strong debate over the issues central to the 2016 election continued post-election, ALLM staff also considered how the museum could serve as a space in which both sides of the divide could gather together and talk as informed citizens. From their study of various public polls, staff realized that many Americans respected Abraham Lincoln, regardless of political persuasion. The sixteenth president's legacy was utilized by both sides in the election. In C-SPAN (2017) surveys of American historians on presidential leadership in 2017, 2009, and 2000, Abraham Lincoln ranked higher than any other president in "presidential" qualities. He also ranked well in a poll of political scientists (Rottinghaus & Vaughn, 2015). To many, Lincoln exemplified what it meant to be both a good leader and a good citizen. The ALLM decided to utilize its collection to promote constructive dialogue on the topic of citizenship.

The ALLM's location on the LMU campus provided the museum with an added benefit: the presence of its LNCN-100 and 300 classes. At the university, all students are required to take courses on the life of Abraham Lincoln and the context of citizenship as explored through his life. At the time of planning, each member of the museum's staff had served as instructors to these courses. Staff analyzed the course content and converted the material into six public discussions spread over a period of six months. To supplement the discussions, staff also created a primary source guide to facilitate discussion. Staff annotated copies of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence with Lincoln's words, which drew upon the many resources within the museum's collection.

The six sessions ran from October 2017 to March 2018. In *An Introduction to Lincoln and Leadership*, audience members received the opportunity to view primary source documents related to Lincoln's words on leadership in the 1850s, a period of sectional divide within the United States. Then, they together discussed how citizenship is viewed in the present. In *The Right to Vote*, the audience explored how Lincoln's view of voting rights for African Americans altered over time and discussed the subject of voting in the present. In *Citizenship at the Local Level*, the audience examined documents related to Lincoln's interest in local improvements to his home count, Sangamon County, Illinois, in 1832, and then considered the topic of public services at the local level. Another session, *Citizenship at the State Level*, examined documents related to Lincoln's time a representative dealing with state issues within Illinois and then, with a scholar's help, considered divisiveness that surrounded state issues in the present. The fifth session, *Citizenship at the National Level*, provided a primary source exploration of Lincoln's handling of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the audience was invited to discuss the modern, thorny issues surrounding the separation of powers. The final session, *The Citizen as Public Servant*, charted Lincoln's time and thoughts as a public servant through his famous Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural Address. The audience then explored their thoughts on expectation of public service in the modern day.

Audience members were encouraged to share their thoughts with one another, and to ask questions and voice observations about the primary sources provided. The format was designed for ease of comprehension; each of the three session parts (a scholarly overview, a document review, and audience conversation) were twenty to thirty minutes in length. The sessions were also themed so as to provide guidance to the audience and to be its own standalone session. Although staff hoped that each participant would attend all six sessions, the sessions were designed to stand independently.

Ultimately, the ALLM sought for the program to encourage thought on the meaning of citizenship and the role of citizenship within the community. The sessions taught that the value of studying history is developing an understanding of today's peoples and societies, and that the study of history promotes good citizenship. Participants were also taught how to evaluate evidence and consider past examples of change, all while using the museum's collection to fuel this exploration. Likewise, by talking about political issues together, the program provided an opening for constructive learning and conversation.

## **Results of the Conversations**

The overall goals of the program were met. The ALLM received funding from Humanities Tennessee, an independent affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. ALLM staff and LMU faculty led 178 individuals to consider citizenship in both the past and present. Children, college students, adults, and senior citizens attended the program. Some university staff and faculty occasionally joined in, as did community members. Likewise, some immigrants attended the sessions and shared their own experiences in the public talks. The result was a group of mixed economic, age, race, and gender backgrounds. Attendees with varying political beliefs also attended the sessions. Participants listened respectfully to one another and reflected on the questions presented. In some cases, individuals with differing political beliefs made connections; the sessions allowed for constructive discussions on participant experiences and how to achieve the safe communities, voting rights, and successful schools that many wanted.

Likewise, in an exchange across age groups, participants asked how they could become better informed citizens. Discussions were held on how to find information about town halls, school board meetings, join political parties, and learn about polling locations. Due to the mix of ages present, the group made connections about how the various age groups thought differently about how to access and interpret information. The group also discussed the citizenship process, as many were confused as to the requirements of that process.

The program also allowed the ALLM to further diversify its exhibits. Previously, a traveling exhibit encouraged visitors to think about Lincoln and the Constitution. With the exhibit now permanently in the ALLM's possession, the curator and programming coordinator worked together to make the traveling exhibit



part of a new exhibition on Lincoln's role as a citizen and his relationship to the Constitution. Visitors were invited to engage with questions concerning voting rights for African Americans, and how citizenship was defined before, during, and after the American Civil War. Working with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, the ALLM instituted a citizenship corner that not only taught visitors about the citizenship process, but which also provided free materials to those studying for the United States naturalization test. Included with this, an interactive whiteboard encouraged visitors to identify the immigrant journeys of their own families. A special display on immigrants who worked and lived in the White House stood nearby so that visitors could better understand Lincoln's thoughts on immigration. After reading Lincoln's opinions and the contributions of immigrants to American history, visitors were encouraged to fill out and post notes on a board that asked them to identify who the "we" in the United States Constitution's "We the people," are. These changes transformed the museum's exhibit space from an autobiographical area that focused on one president's experience of the war to an interactive area that challenged viewers to consider how his decisions affected a diverse group of people who both were, and who hoped to be recognized as, citizens.

Reaction to both the programming and the new exhibits was positive, and the program received attention beyond the immediate area. In May 2018, the East Tennessee Historical Society recognized the program as a part of its East Tennessee History Awards. A community college in a larger city requested a presentation for its yearly senior citizen program. Visitors complimented the ALLM on the new, interactive citizenship elements, and participation with those elements was high. Diverse audience members who may not have seen their own story tied to the ALLM's narrative connected with the new exhibits. Local visitors who did not previously understand the expectations placed on those studying for United States citizenship regularly stopped at the front desk to voice their interest in learning about the citizenship process.

The ALLM's experiment in introducing challenging, politically charged conversations in a rural setting proved positive and doable. Despite reservations concerning such conversations, the utilization of the museum's collection to both guide conversations and provide reflections on exhibits anchored conversations. More importantly, in implementing "Of the People, By the People, For the People," the museum took the first steps in acknowledging that even small, rural museums are not, in fact, neutral: the programs presented, the exhibits displayed, and the audiences engaged matters. Museums, by definition, are settings for civic development and conversation, and thus serve purposes of activism beyond the museum.

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# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum as a Lab: Lessons Learned from MoMA's Educational History (1937-1969)

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When thinking of a 'Lab', the most common image that comes to mind is that of a special facility that contains beakers, burners and other tools and instruments necessary to carry out experiments. Regarding the concept of a museum, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines it as:

*a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (International Council of Museums, 2007).*

At the intersection of these two notions (the laboratory and the museum), working models of machines, devices for hands-on activities and invitations for people to help in gathering specimens for collections (Wittlin, 1949, p.155) have emerged. The underlying element that makes this intersection viable is that many museums no longer want to exhibit incontestable truths but want to provide an environment for ideas to be tested, challenged and co-created.

In 1939, in the catalogue of the exhibition *Art in Our Time*, The Museum of Modern Art's first director Alfred H. Barr (1939, p. 15) wrote, "The Museum of Modern Art is a laboratory: in its experiments the public is invited to participate."

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) under Alfred H. Barr was a laboratory for experimentation not only in the artworks on view, which included painting, sculpture, American Popular Art, photography, film and paintings by children, but also in the way they were displayed. Modern and contemporary creative processes involved a sense of experimentation, and MoMA was a risk-taker in hosting examples of modernism to a New York City audience that was relatively new to it.

Barr's view of participation envisaged a future MoMA being shaped by the public's response to the *Art in Our Time* exhibition. This wish for participation had been reinforced when in 1937 Victor D'Amico was hired to direct the Educational Project at The Museum of Modern Art. Victor D'Amico was a pioneer of art education who championed ideas of art as experience, learning by doing and teaching as a modern art practice. D'Amico's tenure, from 1937 to 1969, was characterized by the persistent effort to design modern art laboratories within the

museum where people could explore art processes through a personal creative experience. These spaces were targeted at different audiences, such as young people and adults, and were designed by D'Amico in collaboration with architects like Frank Vitullo and Philip Johnson, known for their works in Modern and Postmodern architecture. This research looks at these laboratories with an aim to extract elements that may inform the museum of the 21st century: decentration of curation, motivation and experimentation, responsiveness to social needs, long-term programing and the consideration of the museum beyond its walls

## **Decentrating curation at the Young People's Gallery (1937-1957)**

The Young People's Gallery opened in 1937 and was an "educational experiment" with the intent of "making the Museum's collection more accessible to New York schools" (D'Amico, 1940, p. 2). Decentralizing curation at The Young People's Gallery took the shape of an exhibition of works selected and hung by high school student juries. Material for the exhibition was assembled from the permanent collection of the Museum, as well as loan exhibitions from private collections and art galleries. The project sought to foster a curating experience while simultaneously producing art exhibitions. The exhibitions were visited by individual students and class groups and were later discussed with teachers and D'Amico (D'Amico, 1940).

The Young People's Gallery was a lab in two different ways. On one hand, the high school students were encouraged to experiment with different ways of presenting original works of art while curating exhibitions at the gallery. On the other, the aesthetic decisions the students made helped the museum to study the nature of appreciation and creative character of the adolescents. For both research threads to be successful, the design of the spaces was of great importance, to guarantee the relevance of the data extracted. D'Amico designed special equipment in the Young People's Gallery so that it served both as gallery and art studio. This included community easels, a continuous chain of desks folded flat against two of the walls and a large screen which covered an entire wall of the gallery and could be opened to form narrow drop shelves. On these shelves paintings could be placed and easily removed to make way for more paintings during demonstrations and lectures.

The sample schools that took part in the experiment included "pupils from varied nationalities and racial backgrounds of a large metropolitan city" (D'Amico, 1939, p.1). The selected schools were both public and private and were defined as: "a fair representation of the wide variety of differences among our pupils, namely racial, national and religious differences, low and high mentality, gifted and average art ability, verbal and manual individuals, students trained and untrained in the arts" (D'Amico, 1939, p.1). The immediate goal of this study was to help develop a creative city individual, and the findings of the project were meant to throw light upon the nature of adolescence in all situations and localities.

The Young People's Gallery worked as a laboratory in taking the center of curating exhibitions outside of the museums' offices to a place in-between where decisions were negotiated with pupils of different backgrounds. Co-creating exhibitions at the Young People's Gallery relied largely on the use of motivation and experimentation as strategies.

### **Motivation and experimentation at The Children's Art Carnival (1942-present (ongoing)).**

The Children's Art Carnival (also called Holiday Circus, Holiday Fair and Holiday Carnival), organized since 1942 at the MoMA, introduced children to the fundamentals of modern art through play and creative techniques. It was a laboratory where the child's reactions to art were studied (The Museum of Modern Art, n.d.) and new media was explored in an informal way.

The child entered the Carnival through a gate shaped from the contour of an eight-year-old. Once through the gate, the child was surrounded by works of art and creative opportunities. The design was based on the principle that appreciation in young children is best developed through actual contact with works of art chosen for their particular interest in texture, color, and subject matter, integrated with creative opportunities. It used play appeal because for "the young child, play is an important element in learning, since the child's creative impulses are more acute and his sensitivity more alert in a play experience" (The Museum of Modern Art, 1949, p. 2).

The Children's Art Carnival's space was divided into two sections (D'Amico, 1960): a motivational area and a studio for direct experimentation with the materials. In the motivational area, the child found sculptures and playthings like the *Plastic Clown*, *The Fish*, *The Bird* and the *Wind Machine* designed by Toni Hughes. These hung from the ceiling, casting shadows on the walls. The *Furry Cat* that arched his back when stroked and a *Dancing Rooster* by Ruth Vollmar were placed on the floor so that children could touch them. *Color players* for "painting with light" – an elastic string design or a magnetic board for children to experiment with color and design – were also available (The Museum of Modern Art, 1957, p. 2).

The studio workshop gave children the opportunity to try out for themselves the use of color, texture, pattern and movement seen in the toys. Easels were set up around walls, equipped with large brushes, large sheets of paper, and poster paints (The Museum of Modern Art, 1950). In the center of the room was a large table on which a great variety of materials were arranged (feathers, pieces of tin foil, scraps of velvet, and silk). On the walls of this section of the carnival hung modern paintings selected to give the children an understanding of the variety that existed in the art of the time. It included African sculptures and paintings by Louis Vivin, Darryl Austin, Fernand Leger, Carol Blanchard, Camille Bombois and Karl Priebe (The Museum of Modern Art, 1955). The works

of art were selected on the basis of the children's interest and were hung at their eye-level, where they were able to experience them.

In 1957 the opportunity of testing the carnival in Europe came as part of the International Samples Fairs of Milan and Barcelona. For six months in 1958, the carnival was part of the US pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair. In 1963 the Carnival traveled to the major cities of India. In 1969 the Carnival was established in Harlem where it remains today.

The aim of creating spaces at MoMA had people's motivation and experimentation at its heart. Experimentation and motivation are two important components for the museum as a laboratory to foster participation around its contents. However, what happens inside the museum needs to respond not only to its own content but also to the social necessities of its audience.

### **Responsiveness to social needs at The Veterans Art Center (1944-1948)**

During World War II, MoMA responded to the so-called "war effort" and provided art materials to the Arts and Crafts Section of the Army's Special Services Division, held competitions for industrial design and for posters, and opened the museum facilities to members of the armed services.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, one of the founders of the museum, realized that MoMA could also help veterans in their transition to civilian life. She and Stephen C. Clark, a trustee of the Museum, jointly sponsored the founding of the War Veterans' Art Center.

In October, 1944, the Center opened its first classes for men and women who had served in the armed forces and Merchant Marine of the United States. Classes were offered in painting, sculpture and ceramics, jewelry, woodcarving, industrial design, design, graphic arts, silk screen printing, lettering and layout, wood engraving and book illustration. Orientation courses for those unsure of what to pursue were also offered. Meeting twice a week, for three hours each time, students were introduced to various art mediums and techniques. D'Amico wrote that the challenge this project posed was that "there was no precedent for the kind of instruction required of the staff of the War Veterans' Center" (D'Amico, 1948, p. 6). The Veterans Art Center was conceived as a laboratory with the aim of devising a new teaching method for this particular need. Classes were held on the second floor of 681 Fifth Avenue across the Museum main building. The classrooms were set up so that when not being used for veteran's classes, they could be used for the Museum's children's classes and new classes for civilian adults. D'Amico designed the classroom space and chose the materials. In the work areas he placed long tables, also of his design, with washable white tops. The legs of the tables could be adjusted to lower the work surfaces for children and raise them for adults. D'Amico also designed display and storage areas, and even paint boxes for adults.

Museums as laboratories have an element of responsiveness towards what is happening locally and globally. The Veterans Art Center was an example in which a whole new museum space was created to address a contemporary challenge: the reinsertion of II World War Veterans to civilian life. In June 1948, the War Veterans Art Center ceased its work. The rehabilitative purpose was considered to have been fulfilled but a broader necessity had been created: a permanent laboratory for all kinds of people to make art inside MoMA.

### **In the long run at The People's Art Center (1949-1969)**

In 1948, the People's Art Center took over the activity of the War Veterans Art Center. This time, the laboratory was set to be a long term laboratory. The aim was to create an Art School for all kinds of people to experience Modern art through studio practice during the school year. After-school and Sunday classes were offered to school children, classes to preschoolers were held weekday mornings and adult classes in mornings and evenings. The classes were designed to appeal to beginners. Most adult students were between thirty and sixty years of age, though students as young as eighteen were accepted, and a few students were even in their eighties.

Observation was an important element of the laboratory as it served for future art educators to see the development of the classes. However, space in the center was limited. In 1964 Philip Johnson designed a new People's Art Center. This one met D'Amico's fondest dreams (Gollin, 1995, p.5). Reached from 54<sup>th</sup> Street through the Museum Garden, it contained studios, workshops, a research center and an exhibition gallery. D'Amico designed all the furniture and the equipment himself and saw that Johnson added viewing rooms from which classes could be observed through one-way glass windows.

The People's Art center closed in 1969. During its long run, the Center had developed long-term relationships with its participants. The closing was met with discontent on the part of the students, who organized themselves to continue the laboratory independently from the museum.

The People's Art Center could not have produced the results it did if it had been conceived as a short-term project. The museum as a lab was part of the broader mission of MoMA that led to this long-term endeavor.

### **Beyond the walls of the museum at The Art Barge (1960- present (ongoing)).**

In 1955, the Museum had offered summer classes for both children and adults in Ashawagh Hall, in the town of Springs, near the Hamptons, on eastern Long Island. The summer classes grew and in five years, larger quarters were needed. D'Amico then designed an entirely different kind of laboratory.



After considerable searching for a suitable place he found an old disused navy barge, had it towed to nearby Napeague Bay, refurbished it, and turned it into a summer center. The renovated barge, named the Kearsage, accommodated as many as 100 students at a time over an eight-week season.

In time, the MoMA withdrew its support from the barge classes, which then continued independently. Today the barge runs as the Victor D'Amico Institute of Art. The necessity of finding an offsite place was a chance to get closer to a different community. This expands the scope of the museum as a laboratory that may not be just a building but a frame for action.

## Conclusions

The Museum as a Laboratory departs from the acknowledgement of a very basic issue: People need space to experience the museum in an individual way. MoMA's educational laboratories addressed the design of spaces where people could experiment with Modern art processes. With many museums currently undergoing expansions there is an opportunity to ponder whether these are allowing room for people's experimentation.

Architecture, design and furniture constitute the physical boundaries that can facilitate or hamper people's motivation and experimentation, but the challenge goes beyond the physical environment. Museums should question how responsive they are in providing a safe space for people to approach current issues that affect individual lives. A laboratory constitutes a place for people to experiment with collections' content but also a place to make sense of the challenges of everyday living.

None of the aforementioned is possible without allowing experiments to evolve over time. Present institutional demands make it difficult to set up any long term initiative. However, in laboratories it is acknowledged that relevant results can only come with time. Time allows the museum to transcend its institutional boundaries to become a flexible frame for action.

The ICOM (2007) definition of the museum is that frame for action. The question is whether this definition as it stands today can operatively respond and embrace the features of the museum as a laboratory. How this definition can convey the encouragement of experimentation, the motivation of its visitors, the decentration of curation, the response to social needs, the challenge of long-term endeavors and the understanding of the museum presence beyond its own walls is the unanswered question of this research. Challenging the ICOM definition to explicitly include these elements is an opportunity for collectively exploring a museum that does not yet exist, recognizing in its audience a central element to reimagine itself for an unknown future.



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# Toward Inclusive Museum Archives: User Research at the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives

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## Introduction

The National Anthropological Archives (NAA) at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) is the nation's largest archival repository dedicated to preserving archival materials documenting the history of the field of anthropology and the world's cultures. The NAA has some 18,000 cubic feet of material: it contains millions of valuable historical documents, photographs, audio recordings, and films; it also holds one of the world's largest collections of both American Indigenous languages, and ethnographic film. As part of the Smithsonian—the world's largest museum complex—the NAA is an important repository that communicates humanity's heritage and environment for the purposes of education and study. The NAA is the fourth-largest Smithsonian archival repository, and has the third-highest number of in-person researchers among Smithsonian archival collections.

While the NAA is open to the public, this paper investigates the nuances of access. Our current research will help the NAA to grow more inclusive of its audiences, and especially of the source communities from which many of the collections derive. We hope the research will allow the NAA to incorporate stakeholder feedback in its practices and information systems, and to more broadly understand how museum archives of the 21st century can be more welcoming and inclusive to researchers and, in turn, facilitate the return of knowledge to Indigenous communities.

Anthropological archives contain unique materials, often in the form of field notes (Sanjek, 1990), and originating from anthropology's diverse sub-specialties, in North America defined by the “four fields”—biological, archaeological, linguistic, and cultural anthropology (Silverman, 2005). All anthropological data is increasingly born digital (Boellstorff, Nardi, & Pearce, 2012; Sanjek & Tratner, 2016). Anthropological archives now include other records relating to Native American and Indigenous, or “source communities” (Peers & Brown, 2003).

Fieldnotes and other archival materials often include important information that never made it to publication, including general observations, additional raw linguistic, visual, or cultural data recorded by the anthropologist. These materials reveal elements of the anthropologists' methods and relationships in and out of the field, the complex professional networks in which intellectual ideas circulated, or the full context from which images or ideas were taken.

For the discipline of anthropology, the NAA's collections have been central to many studies, both in anthropological history and in contemporary cultural, linguistic, biological, and archaeological research. NAA collections are best known in studies drawing on the Bureau of American Ethnology records, the foundation of the NAA's collections (C. M. Hinsley, 1981; Parezo, 1985; Price & Price, 2003; Stocking, 1992; Thomas, 2015). But today there is higher stakes contemporary use where cultures have experienced major change or disruption due to environmental shift, resource extraction, diaspora, or conflict, and where archives offer critical documentation of the past (Galloway, 2006; Koester, 2003; Krupnik, Mason, & Horton, 2005; Schweitzer, 2003). For linguistic anthropologists, these remnants are particularly crucial to the reconstruction of sleeping or endangered languages (Goddard, 1973, 1979, 2009).

Furthermore, these collections are increasingly used by researchers outside of anthropology. As more materials are made available online, there is increasing reuse of anthropological fieldnotes in a range of contemporary and often unexpected projects. Outside of anthropology, archival materials from the NAA have been reused for projects in fields such as linguistics (Davis, 2010), environmental management (Anderson, 2005) and ecological history (Loring & Spiess, 2007), immigration studies (Schmidt, Seguchi, & Thompson, 2011), apparel studies (Marks, 2014), the history of science (C. Hinsley, 1994; Rich, 2012), musicology (Troutman, 2013) and ethnomusicology (Moon, 2010), English and rhetorical history (Applegarth, 2014), and art history (Naeem et al., 2018).

In addition, heritage professionals (in cultural heritage organizations, museums, archives, and libraries), textbook publishers, and filmmakers are reusing these materials for public outputs such as exhibitions, national park signage, and televised documentaries. Journalists have written popular non-fiction books, and other writers have produced childrens books written about the collections (e.g. Capaldi, 2009).

Perhaps most importantly, today many Native and Indigenous community members are using these collections along with others all over the country for their own research and community initiatives, particularly for tribal and legal histories (e.g. Lowery, 2009), artists projects, and language revitalization programs (Baldwin, 2017; Fitzgerald & Linn, 2013; Hinton, 2013; Roy, Bhasin, & Arriaga, 2011). The National Breath of Life Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages has taken place at the NAA every two years since 2011, bringing a group of some 30 Indigenous language speakers ("learner-teachers") and 20 mentors to the collections to research their languages (Sammons & Leonard, 2011, p. 214).

Because many of the NAA's records were collected from Indigenous populations and through colonial relationships, the NAA has an ethical obligation to ensure that these communities have access to their knowledge (Bell, Christen, & Turin, 2013a, 2013b; Christen, 2011; O'Neal, 2014, 2015). During its most recent meeting, the Council of the Society of American Archivists formally adopted the "Protocols for Native Archival Materials" as a professional standard, after 12 years in development. Thus for the NAA and similar archival institutions, inclusivity involves a mandate to proactively serve source communities.

Yet, as with all archival collections, only a small percentage of NAA's materials are digitized. Being located outside of Washington, D.C. in Suitland, Maryland, at the Smithsonian Museum Support Center, makes these materials difficult to physically access for many potential users, despite having open hours.

## **Project Goals**

Recognizing this problem, supported by an NSF grant, in 2017 the NAA launched a three-year postdoctoral fellowship project to increase the use, access, and discoverability of these collections.

This paper reports on the first year of this project, during which we undertook a pilot study to better understand current users and barriers to access. Coupled with hands-on work at the NAA serving researchers and working on an ongoing collections assessment, the project aimed to balance the needs of both archival practitioners and users in improving accessibility.

The research was driven by three considerations: 1) that despite the importance of NAA archival collections and their increased digital presence, usage remains below the immense potential that the collections hold; 2) a general institutional desire to see NAA collections have more scholarly centrality, overall circulation, and secondary use; 3) the hypothesis that collections discovery and access were hindered by current descriptive practices, discoverability tools, and interfaces.

## **Methods**

The first phase of the project included two main components: 1) an environmental scan of existing institutional and scholarly knowledge and resources and 2) a pilot study with fiscal year 2016 NAA researchers.

The environmental scan included: informal interviews with NAA staff about current users, uses, discovery tools, and barriers to access; compiling a project bibliography and reviewing institutional reports; and participating in a comprehensive collections assessment of the NAA's personal papers, or named collections—a major portion of the NAA's holdings. The assessment includes evaluating these collections' content, research value, processing status, intellectual access, and current use better understand overall scope of the collections and their strengths and weaknesses for use, access, and discovery.

The pilot study began by exploring existing NAA data. We conducted an analysis of available NAA FY2016 data from the NAA's remote reference log, visitor appointment database, and permissions database. With the help of two graduate students from the University of Michigan's iSchool, we also analyzed NAA website behavior via Google Analytics.

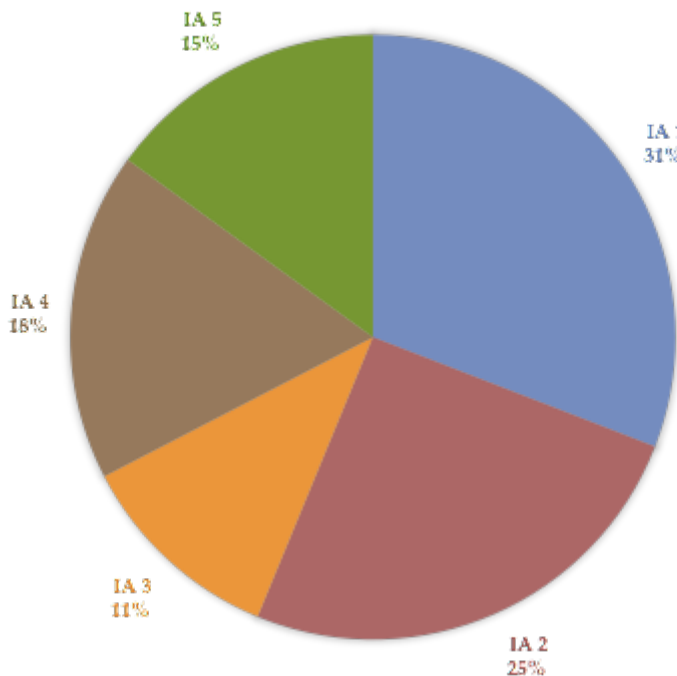
We developed an Interview Schedule and Information Sheet for qualitative interviews, which was approved by Smithsonian's Institutional Review Board, our project team, and our advisory board. We recruited interview participants from FY2016 from each of NAA's designated communities identified in analysis of NAA's FY2016 user databases, correlating the number of participants from each designated community to the number of total users from each group in that year. We conducted two pilot interviews with an anthropologist and a historian, and after editing the Interview Schedule solicited responses from 22 participants—six anthropologists from different subdisciplines, five community-based researchers, four heritage professionals, three historians, two filmmakers, and two humanities scholars (one an art historian and community member). In total, these researcher interviews include 19 audio-recorded semi-structured interviews, totaling 20 hours of audio .wav recording, and three written responses (Bernard, 2000). All interviews were transcribed for coding and analysis in the open source software TAMSAAnalyzer using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

## Findings

### Environmental scan findings:

From the ongoing collections assessment project, it is clear that NAA collections have major intellectual access barriers. Of 247 entered Named Collections, 206 (83%) do have some kind of catalog (MARC) record. However, only 39 (16%) have a fully keyword searchable, EAD Finding Aid (in ArchivesSpace) that comes up in all Smithsonian search platforms. Only 68 (28%) have a Finding Aid online, and only another 81 (33%) have Finding Aid in the form of a Word or PDF document (that would have to be specially requested and emailed to users). On a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is highest, only 15% of our assessed named collections are considered highly accessible.

## INTELLECTUAL ACCESS (DESCRIPTION)



**Figure 1 Intellectual Access of NAA's Collections**

The NAA has a highly, and increasingly, diverse set of users. From central FY2017 SI data, NAA serves users from 49 US states and territories and 33 countries around the globe. From FY2016 NAA data, Native community-based researchers are now the NAA's second largest user group, and it has almost an equal number of academic (47%) and non-academic (46%) users. Preliminary data analysis of FY2016 visitor appointment database, reference log, and permissions data revealed primary NAA user communities to include: anthropologists (17%), community-based researchers (9%, 91/1004), historians (8.5%), heritage professionals (8.2%), filmmakers (4%), art historians (4%) and other humanities scholars or social scientists (3.2%).

NAA's website lacks discovery functionality. From Google Analytics, NAA sites have a 50-60% exit rate (percentage of users that leave the site from a page) and a 75% drop off rate (percentage who don't click through to a next page).

### **Pilot study findings:**

It is clear that the NAA holds "hidden gem" collections. Only three users described already knowing about the NAA before embarking on their specific research here. Users find out about the NAA through a combination of factors:

primarily 1) word of mouth (13/22) where nine said they heard via a program or fellowship and eight said they heard from a colleague or mentor, 2) (8/22) general online searching, or 3) (5/22) bibliographic references. These differ by user group. Academics and community researchers tended to find out about the NAA through word of mouth, either in a fellowship or directly from colleagues (and often while conducting research at NMAI or elsewhere). While three participants who noted online searching as a way they heard about the NAA were academics; all heritage professionals and filmmakers, and all who identify as photo researchers found out about the NAA this way. Only academics found out about the NAA through bibliographic sources. Two community members knew of the NAA because they knew their ancestors had worked with anthropologists and knew those collections were at the Smithsonian.

Discovery pathways differ by academic and non-academic users, although most users now make use of digital databases (17/22), most make use of a reference archivist or staff person (14/22), and a mix of users make use of broad Google searches to identify where relevant collections reside (10/ 22, 6 academic, 4 non-academic). Only academic users mentioned using a Finding Aid—the primary archival guide—to identify relevant collections. Academic users also make use of others' bibliographies (7 users—all either academics or researchers working with academics). Few users identified the NAA website as a relevant discovery resource (3 mentioned it, but not as primary source).

Search techniques also differ by user community. Many academic users (10/14) search by specific anthropologists'—or record creator—names or by collection; non-academic (all 8) and community-based (all 5) users tend to search by cultural group name or subject.

Current Smithsonian search platforms are not intuitive for users, even if they know what they are looking for. Multiple entry points at Smithsonian and nested nature of NAA exacerbates this problem, as does the general history of the dispersion of collections within the Smithsonian and across other archives. Users are confused about what systems they use or should use, and feel that they are at fault for discovery issues. Top barriers to collections discovery include 1) difficulties with retrieving desired results through online searching (even when the user knows the item/collection exists (8/22), 2) unsuccessful keyword searches (9/22), 3) the steep learning curve to use online tools/non-intuitive systems (8/22), 4) multiple and changing Smithsonian systems (4/22) (6 users specifically mentioned primarily using SIRIS, which is now shut down for archival collections); 5) problematic/incorrect catalogue/record information (8/22) where 4 community members specifically mentioned outdated, problematic, or racist terminology (and collections' description non-Native perspective) as an issue and 5/22 mentioned the lack of depth in collections description (to a lesser extent than expected and only among 4 academic participants and one community researcher who wanted to see more Native names).

User expectations are shifting: while a few seasoned researchers remarked that they expect many collections will not be digitized, in general users expect



more online and easily accessible digitally. The availability of digital surrogates (13/22) and lack of on-demand or on-site digitization (5/22) were listed as the top barrier to collections access. Other top barriers to use and access include difficulties with 1) the steep learning curve to use collections (7/22) 2) finding who and how to contact (4/22) 3) logistics of research visits: badge/security (4/22), appointment process (3/22), prohibitive cost and/or distance (9/22), where two academic users specifically noted restricted hours (closed Mondays). One community user noted that the security process evokes historical trauma. Another community user remarked on issues with bandwidth for accessing collections in remote communities.

Perhaps most poignantly, very few researchers (4/22 respondents (1/6 anthropologists, and only 3 of those 4 in graduate training in a relevant discipline) receive any training in archival research (the logistics of conducting archival research or how archives are organized), and describe learning “as they go,” even if they attended graduate programs in anthropology or history. This means that all of NAA’s researchers’ discovery process is hindered by a lack of intuition about where and how they might find the records they seek.

## **Future Work**

Future methods in years two and three of the NSF project will likely include:

### **A) Survey with relevant professional organizations**

The project team intends to launch a national web-based survey to members of major societies of relevance to current and potential users, likely including the American Anthropological Association (10,000 members), the American Historical Association (14,000 members), the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (500 members), the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (1000 members).

Our pilot study focused on current users. It is much more difficult to conduct research among potential (currently non-) users. A survey will allow us to gauge interest and access issues around anthropological archives among potential users, particularly because our pilot found that many current users found out about the NAA through collegial networks rather than through general online searching.

### **B) Remote Critical Inquiry Study**

In order to better understand the specifics of online access issues, we plan to conduct semi-structured interviews based on critical inquiry methods to interview and observe use of discovery tools and use of web platforms through live screen sharing. We will draw on a sample of users based on expert and novice status (using criteria such as number of visits, years of work with collections, ease of use with discoverability tools) and will recruit participants from across the user categories defined in the pilot.

## Conclusion

It is clear that the NAA's users are much more diverse than currently envisioned; they include large numbers of Native community researchers as well as many other non-academics such as photo researchers for museum exhibits and national park signage, documentary filmmakers, and many others who were not interviewed in our pilot study (lawyers, school teachers, textbook publishers, to name a few). Among academics, users include many researchers outside the field of anthropology, who were historically the collection's main users. Moreover, given the extractive history of anthropological collections, these archives are ethically obligated to make community users a priority.

Yet it is clear from this study that many NAA collections lack important discovery tools such as keyword searchable, EAD-encoded Finding Aids, and that many users experience major challenges when trying to navigate these collections.

The NAA needs to consider the specific needs of emergent users. Many "non-traditional" users search differently than academic anthropologists, for instance preferring subject-based keyword searches to names of anthropologists or collectors. Most users now expect to search and find collections digitally.

In order to become a more inclusive repository and to encourage inclusivity at all archives with Indigenous collections, we aim to bridge the disciplines of anthropology and archival science, and to forge cross-institutional collaborations that will allow the NAA to not only improve its accessibility, but inform methods, standards, and best practices for other museum archives seeking to be more inclusive to a widening array of researchers<sup>1</sup>. ICOM's new definition of a museum should thus not only consider access by being "open to the public" but should incorporate a much broader mandate to provide nuanced access (whether in-person or virtual) to collections, while responding to the interdisciplinary and cultural needs of a range of communities and users.

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1. Over this year the NAA began implementing preliminary improvements, including (with the help of a student at the University of Maryland iSchool) developing a new reference log database and appointment form for use by the reference archivist and other archival staff to allow the NAA to better track and understand its users and allow on-site researchers to self-identify research interests and subject expertise. We are also working to initiate more cross-Smithsonian collaborations to showcase NAA collections through initiatives such as Smithsonian's Transcription Center, which will allow online volunteers to transcribe, and thereby make keyword searchable, digitized collections.

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# Museums of Greater Consciousness

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## Introduction

At the International Council of Museums (ICOM) 1989 General Assembly in The Hague, cultural critic Neil Postman delivered a keynote speech for the session themed *Museums: Generators of Culture*. Postman (1991) presented a vision of the highest purposes that museums serve including three main ideas: Museums create a “portrait of humanity;” they can be “generators of counter culture;” and they embrace a multiplicity of social values and cultural narratives. While Postman focused on technology rather than multiculturalism, his talk was poignant and provocative, extending the concept of a museum. Today’s ICOM symposium, *Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Evolving Multiculturalism in Museums in the United States* considers, “What does it mean for a museum to be inclusive?” As ICOM now explores a revision of the museum definition, this article revisits Postman’s concepts for the insights they offer to present-day practices for evolving multiculturalism.

ICOM’s (2007) definition of a museum holds within it the social value of conserving and displaying humanity’s cultural heritage. Though not explicitly stated in the definition, in 2018 there is an expectation that a museum will be inclusive as possible in doing its work— by presenting the narratives of discrete cultural groups, local and regional communities, and sometimes specific individuals. Museums also increasingly take a stand on social justice issues, although this, too, is not explicitly part of the definition. Without doing so, a museum potentially faces a loss of relevance to its audiences, criticism for being elitist or tone-deaf, and condemnation for being neutral. As organizations in the public trust, museums are held to high standards, and rightly so, by their communities to responsibly demonstrate value, relevance, and inclusion in their missions, operations, exhibitions, programs, and leadership. Does evolving multiculturalism now require a new definition of the museum? This paper explores three fundamental principles related to the work museums do around multiculturalism, even while not explicit in the museum definition.

## Inherent Value

The first principle is the inherent value of museums. ICOM's (2007) definition recognizes that a museum is in "service to society and its development." Museums serve a variety of purposes, but Postman identified a unique and *inherent value* that museums provide to society. In the 1980s, museums experienced tensions in balancing the delivery of entertainment versus education, landing for a while in the compromised zone of "edutainment." Within this milieu, Postman discussed EPCOT Center and the promises and perils that technology proffered. In contrast, he proposed investing in museums that focus on human values, such as the Museum of Childhood, or a "Museum of Lost Virtues." Things have changed since Postman's time, and the field has seen a growing number of museums that embrace humanistic concepts such as the peace museums around the world, the emerging Museum of Humanity in Los Angeles, and sites of conscience; but Postman pointed to the inherent value of any kind of museum. In short, he said "a museum of any kind is an answer to a fundamental question. The question is: What does it mean to be a human being?" (Postman, 1991, p. 41). As Postman (1991, p. 44) defined it, museums each "create a living portrait of what it means to be human in a particular time and place." Each museum, he says, has a unique story to tell about humanity that is specific to its time, location, mission, and collection. It is very important for museums to remember this enduring value, but it is also informative for multicultural practices now. A central characteristic of humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is its diversity. A single museum cannot tell all the diverse stories of humanity. It seems that a specific museum, at best, can use its collection to tell some of the stories accepting that these may be directly relevant to only a local or limited audience; and/or the museum can use its unique specificities to extrapolate universals about the human condition that are relatable and meaningful to a broad audience.

Postman identified another purpose for museums that resonates today. He proposed that a museum "must be an argument with its society.. a timely argument" (Postman, 1991, p. 48). Even more so, these arguments should run counter-culture. He said, "that museum is best that helps to free a society from the tyranny of a redundant and conventional vision...The most vital function of museums is to balance, to regulate what we might call the symbolic ecology of cultures, by putting forward alternative views and thus keeping choice, and critical dialogue alive" (Postman, 1991, pp. 46-47). Increasingly museums now embrace social justice agendas—for example, dialogues about prison reform among penitentiary museums—and this has come to be a unique characteristic of museums in the 21st century.

This symposium questions whether museums should be venues for open forums to address these complex issues in the community. Some museums are doing the work that Postman (1991, p. 44) proposed thirty years ago of keeping critical dialogue alive, and some museum professionals believe they "set forth for the time in which they are living a moral agenda." Museum professionals today incorporate a critical point of view into the museum products they develop, are

keenly aware of the interests of their audiences, and connect their historical topics to contemporary issues. In social justice work, though, museums can be guided by their unique strengths—that is, doing social justice work *as a museum* and unlike other organizations that take on such causes. Museums are uniquely suited to inspire philosophical, intellectual, or emotional insights, for instance, as opposed to outlining assertive actions or advocacy plans for their communities. Postman (1991, p. 47) argued: “For it is essential to the survival of any culture that it maintain a dynamic balance in its symbolic environments. And to achieve that, its educational institutions must provide what its economic, political, and social institutions are not providing.” The more that museums aim to be like other organizations doing this work, the more they diminish their unique and inherent value in society.

A more pointed question is whether museums are *obliged* to do this work—and if so, should the definition of a museum be changed to require it? Multiculturalism and social justice are strong characteristics of the museum field in the 21st century, but they are not always characteristic of a museum. Museums help visitors to see the world—and themselves in the world—in new ways, and it is good to remember that sometimes this occurs through the quiet evocation of awe, beauty, and wonder from the objects rather than from a strong didactic or political stance. Adam Gopnik (2007) describes a mindful museum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as one that puts its best forward and does not always seek to explain. Whether a museum should provide forums to openly address complex issues truly depends on the specific museum’s mission and its underlying motivations for doing so. Some museums will choose not to open their gates to these debates. Postman (1991, p. 42) noted that by saying every museum provides a part of the picture of humanity, “I am not saying that every museum is equally useful.” Does the field regard those museums who abstain as any less qualified to be called a museum, or as any less useful, relevant, or inclusive?

## Relevance

A second principle for multiculturalism is relevance. A challenge with relevancy is it presupposes that the museum needs to be relevant to something or someone. A common understanding in the field is that a museum should have relevance to a culture, social cause, or community. Relevance is relative, and this is apparent by quickly looking at the various metaphors used to describe the museum. In the twentieth century, scholars and critics likened the museum to a temple, a cathedral, a storehouse, a department store, a café, a laboratory, and a machine or factory—among other things. These museum metaphors were useful in describing the strategies of displays, or the character of the intended visitor experience (Guglielmo, 2012). A scan of field literature in recent years reveals a different set of descriptors that speak to the values of the museum: the disruptive museum, the predatory museum, the empathetic museum, the convivial museum, the inclusive museum, the mindful museum, and the decolonized museum. André Malraux introduced the notion of the “museum without walls” in 1967, and today it is easy to conceive of replacing the monolithic

museum with the pop-up museum, community outposts, or the post-colonial global migratory mobile museum—all for good purposes. Looking holistically at these metaphors, what is apparent and commendable, is that the museum is malleable, changing with its society, striving always to be relevant at different times. What is also apparent is that the museum becomes a blank canvas upon which is projected the most pressing social values alongside the most pressing social needs. These metaphors, for instance, reflect the dominance of consumerism and the counterpoint of spirituality in the 20th century, and the call for diversity and inclusion in the 21st century. They point to the power museums possess to construct culture, and not just contain it. Museums create social constructs of what society values, while the value of the museum itself is a social construct at any given time.

The problem this poses is that the museum can become like a ship without a rudder—swaying to meet every trend and confront every social cause can result in mission drift, and the museum can lose its core. Moreover, those working in museums in the United States become trained to constantly justify the existence of a program, an exhibition, or the museum itself—largely because of funding structures. To stay grounded, museums can embrace their inherent value and take strategic actions that are authentic, balanced, and aligned with a given organization’s mission, collections, and audiences. Overreaching for relevance, however, or caving to internal or external pressures makes museums vulnerable to practices that are askew. A recent reinstallation in a New England art museum features text panels indicating which early American sitters in the portrait gallery traced their wealth to slavery. This was not an exhibition about slavery or slave owners. The portraits show the wealth and status of the sitters indicated by their clothing and setting—the by-products of their involvement with slavery. One may applaud this interpretation for filling the negative space with information about slave owners in colonial America, or one may wonder how an artwork becomes a prop to expose historic individuals within a complex social narrative that is pervasive in most American art. Yet, even if a museum does not present the stories of a cultural group or social-identity group, it is still relevant to individuals that visit.

Delineating the levels of analysis in the audience may provide further insight. Museums serve individuals, local communities, social-identity groups, and society at-large. Research and theory show visitors come to museums with different learning goals and motivations (Falk, 2006) or to construct and reinforce personal identity (Rounds, 2006), including identity shaped by ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and social status. Even while our museums are consciously striving to be relevant, one institution cannot be inclusive to all constituents. Museums en masse—the diversity of museums, however, have the capacity to cover a lot of ground. Postman (1991, p. 41) recognized a “great conversation among the museums of the world” in which “each museum seems to make an assertion about the nature of humanity, sometimes supporting and enriching each other’s claims but just as often contradicting each other.” He added, “It is not possible to have too many museums, for the more we have, the more detailed and com-

prehensive will be the portrait of humanity” (Postman, 1991, p. 42). In evolving multiculturalism, the field can harness the strength of individual institutions as well as the diverse and collective body of museums. Explorations can ask, “How might museums foster collaborations into the 21st century that evolve multiculturalism in ways beyond the capacity and impact of a single institution?”

## Inclusion

The third fundamental principle is inclusion—defined here as “I am represented, and I have a voice.” In the 1990s, the field was transformed with the insight that museums should move “from being about something, to being for somebody” (Weil, 1999). A museum about “something” could be relevant to society because the objects preserved were considered important cultural treasures within the time-tested value of its collection. Yet objects are everywhere; every material thing is an object. While some objects are arguably more important than others, this is only true because of the stories that museums tell about these objects, their provenance, a matter of aesthetic taste, or the good fortune or misfortune that has brought them into a collection. The shift to being “for somebody” was an important step towards inclusion. The legacy of this shift is the visitor-centered experience—the participatory model familiar today. This leads to another question posed in today’s symposium: “What role should the broader public and other stakeholders play in the design and interpretation of exhibits, programming, events, and communication?”

Within the current paradigm, museums constantly seek new methods for deepening audience engagement and meaningful interactions between the collections and visitors. In 2017, for example, while in the process of developing an exhibition about marginalized groups of the medieval world, manuscript curators at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles solicited public feedback on social media. They sought to encourage transparency and a dialogue on diversity and inclusion and connect European manuscripts to a contemporary multicultural audience. Among the cascading range of responses, art critic Holland Cotter called for the museum to, “Start telling the truth about art: about who made the objects, and how they work in the world, and how they got to the museum, and what they mean, what values they advertise, good and bad” (Dialogue, 2017). Postman would agree; in 1989 he proclaimed, “What we require are museums that tell us what we once were, and what is wrong with what we are, and what new directions are possible” (1991, p. 47). Museums do well to examine their inclusive practices, and to push the boundaries of their scholarly expertise and authority as they invite others into the conversation.

In probing the complexities of co-creating content, Philippe de Montebello, former longtime director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, cautioned: “The only thing is that the museum must never lose the sense of authority, not authoritarianism, but the sense of authority. That the visitors must always have the sense that what is presented to them is the result of deep thought, calculated actions, and expertise. Otherwise, you are left with no moorings and just

wondering ...should you have left your critical faculties at the door, along with your umbrella?" (LACMA, 2013). Once again, this rings true for Postman (1991, p. 47) who said we do not need museums in America "unless they frame what they show us from some critical point of view." It is difficult to disregard this wisdom backed by thirty years of experience. Alongside deeply layered interpretive approaches or collaborative processes, museums still have a professional obligation to curate co-created content, responsibly.

As museums seek to find their balance among the diversity of voices, the attendant question arises of who has the authority to speak on behalf of the museum—or any other cultural or social-identity group. The controversy earlier this year surrounding the hiring of a white curator of African Art at the Brooklyn Museum marks a crisis point. Are all constituents ready to accept inclusivity to the extent that all recognize every individual brings to the table a unique set of life circumstances, perspectives, and an identity, which can be as valid as the next person? Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2018) advocates to, "Go ahead, speak for yourself," and proposes that "not every opinion needs to be underwritten by your race or gender or other social identity." Invariably, when one story is told in the museum or one voice is heard in the galleries, others are left out. Museums should take heed in these processes that one dominant narrative is not just supplanted for another. The work requires that museums lead dialogues where all can listen with greater empathy and respect to the uniquely individual voices of others.

A final point on inclusion is that the museum field is full of professionals committed to evolving multiculturalism. Museum leaders from around the globe report that the greatest obstacles to inclusion are lack of communication across the organization and to diverse constituents; lack of understanding about diverse cultural sensitivities and perspectives; and lack of diverse staffing. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into these leadership challenges, but important to note that museums are not alone among American organizations facing these limitations. Reviewing the output of professional organizations such as ICOM, and by scholars and practitioners in the field, it is safe to venture that museums may be farther along than other organizations, at least with regards to their conscious awareness of the issues and their deliberate efforts to change from within. This is not to suggest museum professionals should be complacent and pat themselves on the back, but a reminder that museum professionals can be their own worst critics. Postman (1991, p. 48). offered this encouragement: "Those who strive to create such museums must proceed without assurances that what they do will be appreciated. But they may proceed with the conviction that what they do is necessary." In being overly self-critical about practices, museums can diminish their strengths and collective power to advance.

## **Greater Consciousness**

In the last thirty years, the field has awakened to the inherent biases and injustices in the objects that museums have collected, in the ways they are displayed, and in

the communities excluded. This work of evolving multicultural methodologies is the special craft of museum professionals, and it is an ever-evolving skill. While museums may never get it all right, the dialogue is always a vital reflection of what it means to be human at this moment. Sometimes the “portrait of humanity” museums create falls short and is painful to look at requiring amends, as with the case of Sam Durant’s *Scaffold* sculpture erected at the Walker Art Center last year. And sometimes the milestones should be celebrated—as with the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in 2016.

Museums can recognize the progress they are making towards greater inclusivity in the high moments—and with greater kindness find an opening for moving forward in the low moments. It is important to call out inequities of all kind so that museums can do better, and it is equally important to look back at how far museums have come since the 1990s. Without marking progress, the power down story and long history of exclusion never shifts into a contemporary vision and a new empowered reality about alliances and inclusion. Museum forums can host polemic conversations that put communities at odds with each other and call out dominant narratives in opposition to subverted ones—or instead, museums can choose to now shift into conversations that embrace a greater collective awareness of the ground that has been gained, and practice empathy within their communities, as well as towards each other in the field.

## Conclusion

In summary, this paper has explored three fundamental principles of value, relevance, and inclusion related to the work museums do around multiculturalism by evoking the enlightening spirit of Neil Postman from ICOM 1989. Among the ideas proposed are that museums have a unique and inherent social value in their abilities to tell the stories about what it means to be human in a specific time and place; museums can purposefully decide what social issues to take on that are aligned with their missions, collections, and audiences; museums can distinguish between their service to individuals, groups, and society—and leverage the diverse and collective whole body of institutions serving diverse audiences; museums can speak with authority even while everyone speaks for themselves and in turn, listen empathetically to others; museums are developing leaders that believe in changing from within; and museums should remember to mark their progress. Beyond all this, museums can remain critical and conscious about their efforts, knowing that as the definition of the museum evolves alongside evolving multiculturalism, museums can sometimes do better, but are certainly not doing wrong.

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# **Chairs' Statements on Panels**



# Statement on “Nation-Building in Museums in the United States”

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In 2002, Canadian ecologist C.S. Holling, who had observed the adaptive life cycles of forests, led an international group of experts to develop a theoretical framework they named “panarchy” to better comprehend the systems approach to connections between people and the environment, whether political or natural, in addition to the regenerative concepts. Human disruptions that do not consider these interlocking elements have frequently led to dire consequences for our environment and quality of life. In a book entitled *Remix: Changing Conversations in Museums of the Americas*, authors Selma Holo and Mari-Tere Alvarez apply the adaptive life cycle described above to museums. Forests, museums, and nations are never static. They are constantly evolving through the four phases of the adaptive life cycle. Instead of nation-building, which is defined differently depending on one’s life experiences, I would rather address how U.S. museums evolve the great experiment of democracy, in which “.all men are created equal” (Library of Congress, 2018).

Presenter Lara Hall (2018) refers in her abstract to Duncan Cameron’s call in 1971 for museums “.to evolve from authoritarian collections that reflected the unique or rare items of an elite to a ‘forum’ that reflected democratic ideals...” Hall (2018) ponders how today’s “.call for advocacy challenges the ability of museums to remain objective.”

Jillian Hartley (2018) tackles that challenge in relating how the exploits of General John Hunt Morgan’s Confederate mounted infantry regiment attest to the strong pro-Southern attitudes held by some Kentuckians during the conflict and discusses how those who maintain Civil War sites “.should continue to consult stakeholders to ensure that tangible and intangible heritage on display represents diverse perspectives.”

The statement posed to this panel is as follows:

*The United States began as a colony of immigrants who seized land from the native peoples, but it has evolved into a multicultural nation that is, for the most part and with some exceptions, welcoming to people from around the world (Chung, Denning, & Fennessy, 2018).*

Among the questions we will be addressing are:

*What does it mean to be a “nation” in such a historical context, and how do museums help play a role in defining the nation?*

*How will that role change for museums in the 21st century?*

*How can the new ICOM definition of “museum” address the political, legal, administrative, and funding issues of the museum in a nation with different state and local laws, ordinances, and standards? (Chung, Denning, & Fennessy, 2018).*

Mariko Kageyama (2018) discusses the legal and ethical obligations that museums have over indigenous community-based intellectual property and how they are uniquely positioned in the emerging legal landscape created under the Nagoya Protocol, which “.aims at facilitating fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge with source countries and communities.”

The underlying principle of the class I teach at Johns Hopkins University, “Museums of the Americas: Facing Challenges in the 21st Century,” is that we museum professionals in the United States could learn and adapt a lot from museums in Latin America, Caribbean, and Canada in such challenging areas as socioeconomic development, climate change, and cultural heritage preservation. Sometimes we need to look outside the box or over the horizon.

According to the World Bank, people need to come first in the development process:

*Poverty is more than low income—it is also about vulnerability, exclusion, unaccountable institutions, powerlessness, exposure to violence, and more. Social development promotes social inclusion of the poor and vulnerable by empowering people, building cohesive and resilient societies, and making institutions accessible and accountable to citizens.*

*Working with governments, communities, civil society, the private sector, and the marginalized, including persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples, Social Development translates the complex relationship between societies and states into operations. Empirical evidence and operational experience show that Social Development promotes economic growth and leads to better interventions and a higher quality of life. (World Bank, 2017).*

My students listen carefully to Colombians such as Andres Roldán, director of *Parque Explora*, and realize that a new paradigm exists in how we in the museum sector can view the world and the ability of people and communities, and countries, to transform themselves, as well as the conditions that can facilitate that transformation.

The diverse geography of Colombia boasts stunning natural beauty and allows for robust crops exported worldwide, such as coffee and roses, but also cocaine

production and camouflage for guerillas. It has a well-functioning urban infrastructure, a sophisticated health system, world-renowned artists and writers, and a thriving film and media industry. Much like how the United States still reels from the legacy of slavery and the Civil War of the nineteenth century, Colombia still feels the legacy of its violent past, including the War of the Thousand Days (1899-1903), the Massacre of the Banana Workers in 1928, and the recent decades of guerilla and drug conflict and violence.

Its city of Medellín was particularly renowned as the murder capital of the world, rife with corruption and drug cartels in bed with guerilla forces and militias, but a visit to Medellín today tells a new and compelling story, one that we all can learn from.

*Parque Explora* is part of that miracle of Medellín. Its mission is to:

*...inspire, communicate, and transform by means of interactive scenarios that contribute to the public appropriation of the scientific, technological, and social knowledge necessary to build a better society (Aguirre, 2016).*

As one example, *Parque Explora* developed their relationship with their neighbor, the community of Moravia, the site of an enormous garbage dump and the home of thousands of displaced people escaping the horrors of the countryside only to find more violence in their new urban home. With other entities and the full participation of women of Moravia, that garbage dump is now a beautiful garden, detoxifying what is in the ground, showcasing native plants, and providing crops for healthy eating. It is also the home of the women's cooperative that grows exotic plants in a hothouse to sell and benefit the cooperative and community.

It is exciting to think that a museum can play a role in making a real difference but even more intriguing is the role that the community played in partnering with the museum! The residents had much to offer and the museum staff welcomed them and their ideas; they admitted that they had to be more open and flexible than they had imagined. It is a partnership of sharing knowledge that we can use in our lives.

The ICOM definition of a museum adopted in 2007 is as follows:

*A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (ICOM, 2007).*

Based on what I have learned to date about similar museums to *Parque Explora* in the Americas, I would change the definition to be more inclusive and effective in building societies:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, com-

municates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment, and meaningfully listens to and engages its vulnerable and forgotten communities, for the purposes of education, study, enjoyment, and improvement of underlying socioeconomic conditions.

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# Statement on “Collecting Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Museums in the United States”

*David J. de la Torre*

*Community Arts International, California, United States*

I am pleased to contribute to the current lively discussion in the field associated with the issues of collecting tangible and intangible heritage specifically within museums in the United States today. It is anticipated that panelists presenting at this symposium will feed into and contribute to the worldwide discussions on museum definitions and will, in turn, help to articulate new definitions specifically on the nature of collections, if there is consensus that such a redefinition is deemed necessary.

By their nature, definitions are subject to periodic change and refinement. It is important to start this discussion with reflection on all existing and pertinent definitions.

The current International Council of Museums (ICOM, 2007) definition of a museum adopted in 2007:

*A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.*

The United States Code of Federal Regulations (2018) defines “museum” as follows:

*Museum means a public or private nonprofit institution which is organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes and which, using a professional staff: (1) Owns or uses tangible objects, either animate or inanimate; (2) Cares for these objects; and (3) Exhibits them to the general public on a regular basis.*

UNESCO (2018) defines intangible cultural heritage as follows:

*The term ‘cultural heritage’ has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors*

*and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.*

## **Panel II Symposium Questions**

### **Collecting Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Museums in the United States**

Through their presentations the panelists will address these questions:

1. How should museums prioritize physical and digital artifacts and *naturfacts* in the 21st century United States?
2. How should museums handle intangible or digital artifacts and *naturfacts* such as oral histories and Living Human Treasures?
3. Will physical museums continue to exist, or will we someday see only online collections of artifacts and *naturfacts*? (Chung, Denning, and Fennessy, 2018)

### **Panelists Summaries**

Jeffrey Max Henry's (2018) presentation, "The Artifacts of Cultural Change and Their Effect on the Museum," focuses on intangible collections such as oral and narrative history and how these artifacts provide deeper meaning for museum visitors through the vehicles of special exhibitions, public programming and institutional research.

Fabienne Sowa's (2018) presentation, "Calling for the Inclusion of 'Natural' Heritage in the New ICOM Definition of the Museum," proposes a revision of the definition of cultural heritage by adding "natural heritage" to tangible and intangible cultural heritage definitions. Furthermore, the author's theme "aims at demonstrating that the inclusion of "natural heritage" in the ICOM definition of museums would eliminate certain conflicts of interest and would support the World Heritage Center definition to protect World Heritage and Natural Heritage properties."

Alexandros Giannikopoulos' (2018) presentation, "Museum 4D," proposes that the current definition of museums "would cease to exist" because new technologies would provide new dimensions for redefining museum spaces. Heritage, therefore, would be preserved and presented in a "new and improved" manner.

### **Remarks**

I have worked for small, medium and large museums. My experience has been primarily with art museums, but I also have worked for a history and major archival institution. The permanent collections of institutions I have been associated with, such as the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Honolulu Museum



of Art, have been encyclopedic in nature with tens of thousands of objects in their holdings. I have worked for an ethnic specific art museum, The Mexican Museum of San Francisco, whose collection represents the material culture of the Bay Area and beyond. Other museums, such as the Triton Museum of Art and the Hawaii State Art Museum, have focused on contemporary regional art. Mission Houses Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii, is a combined house museum, historic site and research library with important primary source material. Tangible collections, therefore, have been the main focus of my work. Intangible collections, such as oral and narrative history, have increasingly become areas of interest for institutions I have been involved with, especially, for example, Mission Houses Museum.

In examining this theme, the panel today is asked to consider which types of collections, if any, should be included in the new ICOM definition of "museum," with respect to preservation and research. Here lies the distinction between tangible and intangible considerations we must take into consideration going forward.

Digital and *naturfacts* imply technology, I believe, as the platform for which these collections would be collected and stored. Practices and procedures for maintaining and caring for these new definitions of collections is ever evolving and requires new specificity for the procedures and protocol to acquire and preserve intangible holdings for preservation and research. Consensus in the field for the proper handling of intangible and digital artifacts *naturfacts* and oral histories needs to be developed further.

Specialized fields of study for living human treasures offers new horizons in the field. How museums handle these types of "artifacts" can initially rely on generally acceptable rubrics that pertain to physical objects, e.g. written collections policies, conservation of media, sound recordings and the like, in order to establish the new areas of collecting and refine practices for care and preservation. This new frontier, with a sound basis in technology, will be a work in progress with enormous potential for all types of museums.

Physical museums will and must continue to exist. Every physical object has a story to tell and represents our combined global heritage and patrimony. The proper care and maintenance of physical objects will continue to benefit all of humanity. An online collection of artifacts and *naturfacts* opens up a whole new world of virtual museums, acquisitions and educational opportunities for preservation and research. Collections in every discipline will continue to grow and be refined. What is kept for posterity and future appreciation may change and we must adapt to the needs of diverse audiences. What is valuable today may not hold the same kind of value for tomorrow. Careful choices will have to be made due to limited resources in terms of funding and physical space limitations. The collection of intangible collections will require education of the public for their intrinsic value and appreciation. Symposium panelists will surely shed new light in the field on museum collection definitions with their thoughtful presentations on oral, history and natural heritage as well as new technologies for defining museum space to accommodate tangible and intangible collections.

My approach on any new definition will need to be cautious, convincing and necessarily conservative in nature.

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**Debbie Disston** is the Director of the McIninch Art Gallery at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) since 2007. In addition to the McIninch Art Gallery, Debbie develops exhibition spaces throughout the university and began the SNHU Sculpture Program in 2010 which includes a rotating loan program, several purchased sculptures and one commissioned work for the front lawn of the university library. Debbie has grown this collection from 120 works of public art to approximately 520. In addition to the development of public art on campus, Debbie has curated 54 exhibitions for SNHU, written numerous catalogue essays, developed programming for the McIninch exhibitions as well as the SNHU Sculpture Park, and collaborated with various area institutions. She is a member of the American Alliance of Museum, College Art Association and the New England Museum Association and a former member of the Board of Trustees for Art Table. Prior to her 11 years at SNHU, Debbie served as the

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**Alexandros Giannikopoulos** is an Architect from Greece and currently working his post-Master's thesis on "The next step of exhibition's experience. Museum 4D". In a multi-diverse series of events in his life from CERN's research program about architecture and Autism to writing novels, he is enchanted by the worlds of Architecture, Cinema, Graphic Design, Music, Philosophy and Literature.

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Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Evolving Multiculturalism in Museums in the United States brings together a selection of papers presented in symposia organized by the International Committee for Museology and Southern New Hampshire University in the United States, as part of the international debate on ICOM's Museum Definition.

## Foreword by the President of ICOFOM

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***Defining the Museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Evolving Multiculturalism in Museums in the United States* brings together a selection of papers presented in the symposium organized by the International Committee for Museology and Southern New Hampshire University in the United States. The publication addresses the themes on “Nation-Building in Museums in the United States,” “Collecting Tangible and Intangible Museums in the United States,” and “Serving Nearby Heritage in Museums in the United States” evolved within the framework of multiculturalism into a collective as part of the international debate on ICOM’s Museum Definition. It also explains how and why the stages of the definition of the museum and particular museologists evolved in the U.S. and brings indigeneity when defining the museums in Native America into a special focus.**

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