

# **ENCOURAGING COLLECTIONS MOBILITY**

**– A Way Forward  
for Museums in Europe**

Edited by

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FINNISH NATIONAL GALLERY

ERFGOED NEDERLAND

INSTITUT FÜR  
MUSEUMSFORSCHUNG,  
STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN  
– PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ



With the support of the Culture 2000 Programme of the European Union.  
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This book forms part of the project *Collections Mobility 2.0, Lending for Europe 21st Century*.  
The partners of the project are Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, The Netherlands Institute for Heritage, General Directorate of Fine Arts and Cultural Goods of Spanish Ministry of Culture, Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Tourism – Directorate of Museums, Exhibitions & Educational Programmes – Department of Exhibitions & Museum Research, Finnish National Gallery, The Romanian Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony, Agency for the Arts and Heritage of the Flemish Community, Department for Culture Media and Sport of the UK, State Museums Berlin, Institute for Museum Research, and Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.

*Encouraging Collections Mobility – A Way Forward for Museums in Europe* provides information about the history of collecting and suggests different ways to approach museum collections and collecting related activities. It proposes that museums should rather be encouraged to build collection strategies of the 21st century than repeating the old pattern that is based on the idea of eternal growth.

Whereas most of the articles provide a philosophical context for the collections and their use, the book also addresses the practical issues concerning collections mobility, such as immunity from seizure, insurances, non-insurances and state indemnities, long-term loans, loan fees, and digitisation. It is also pointed out that standards, trust, and good networking form the basis for all co-operation. The book pulls together current good practice in developing loans procedures and sets it out in a clear format.

*Encouraging Collections Mobility* is the ideal text for students, researchers, and museum professionals who are determined to explore and research collections in order to open our rich collection resources and learn more about European heritage.

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## INTRODUCTION

Manfredo Settala (1600–1680), Milan, was one of the great collectors of 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. He had inherited the Cabinet from his father and continued the work of collecting with growing passion. His Cabinet included objects of every kind: minerals, stuffed animals, horns and skeletons, automata, pressed plants, clocks and weapons etc. The collection became widely known and a growing number of visitors came to see it at Via Pantano.

A catalogue, published in seven volumes, was organised thematically and presented an exact picture of his way of organising knowledge about the universe. Settala commissioned artists to draw and paint pictures of the highlights of the collection. When published in the catalogue, the illustrations enforced the meaning of each object as if creating a scientific aura for them.

A fine line drawing demonstrates how every inch of the four rooms at his residence, including the ceiling, were used to display the collection. In contemporary terms, we would probably talk about an installation: something that cannot be torn down in pieces since every item has its specific place and purpose in the collection.

Patrick Mauries explains in his book *Cabinet of Curiosities* (2002) that even Settala's funeral celebrated his life as a collector. When he died in 1680, his coffin was followed by a convoy carrying the most curious items from his collection.

The history of collecting is full of stories such as this one: they tell us about dedication and endless curiosity, a need to know more about the world around us. Private collections that are compiled with vision and passion often become part of other collections. Museum history would not be the same without the individual donators who sought to contribute to the building of national or regional collections. In the same way, it would not be the same if public bodies had not wanted to save the lifetime achievements of collectors by purchasing whole collections. This was also the case with Settala, whose collection was later acquired by Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

Contemporary collectors, both private and public, continue the saga by joining the line of collectors. The number of items in various collections all over Europe is constantly growing. Unlike during the earlier periods, all items are not necessarily being displayed or researched properly. Store collections grow and the objects turn into endless lists of inventory numbers and digital thumbnail photos. Museums might even be competing with each other from the same pieces or purchasing collections that mirror each other.

One of the key questions here is should we stop hoarding and start concentrating on the better use of the already existing collections? Should museums have easier access to those parts of each others' collections that are being underused? Should museums start thinking differently? Digital platforms can easily help museums to create ways to look for and find objects that the collection is desperately lacking. It is simply a matter of wanting to open those doors.

This book offers some starting points for working together and sharing collections. It provides information about the history of collecting and suggests different ways to approach the collections and collecting related activities. It proposes that museums should rather be encouraged to build collection strategies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century than repeating the old pattern that is based on the idea of eternal growth.

The book also looks into the value building process of museum objects and discusses some principles that determine the economic value of art and antiquities. It analyses the use of collections and suggests using them actively for the enjoyment of all who wish to have access to our cultural heritage. It explores the ways in which conservation and the care of objects affect the mobility of museum objects, and discusses, how the collections and their displays answer the needs of the contemporary visitor.

Whereas most of the articles provide a philosophical context for the collections and their use, the book also addresses the practical issues concerning collections mobility. The core questions were indicated at the European Union level during a long process and a great deal of work has already been carried out in order to make things easier for museums. Specific collections mobility issues, as discussed in the European Union Open Method and Coordination Expert Group on Mobility of Collections 2008–2010, have also been addressed in this book. These issues include immunity from seizure, insurances, non-insurances and state indemnities, long-term loans, loan fees, and digitisation. It is also pointed out that standards, trust, and good networking form the basis for all co-operation. The last chapter in the book provides a practical guide to the Collections Mobility process: it pulls together current good practice in developing loans procedures and sets it out in a clear format.

As the title of the book indicates, mobility of collections is a relevant way forward for museums in Europe and worldwide. This book is written for collection activists, students, and museum professionals who are determined to explore and research collections in order to open our rich collection resources and learn more about European heritage. Collections exist in order to be celebrated and shared.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the result of the European funded project, *Collections Mobility 2.0, Lending for Europe 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. We are particularly indebted to the project's co-ordinator, Frank Bergevoet and office manager, Dieuwertje Wijsmuller, for their excellent leadership and management of the project. Our thanks also go to the members of the project Steering Group (Hillary Bauer, Frank Bergevoet, Marjolein Cremer, Hans Feys, Leticia de Frutos Sastre, Henrietta Galambos, Ilie Ilonut, and Sofia Tsilidou) and to all others who participated in the Steering Group meetings for all the indispensable support and sound advice that we received.

We are especially grateful to Ute Collinet, Anastasia Lazaridou, Leontine Meijer-van Mensch, Susan Pearce, and Elizabeta Petrusa-Strukelj, as members of the Editorial Board, who provided us with good discussions, ideas, and suggestions for the book and who read and commented on various versions of the chapters. Our debt to them is enormous.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to Suzanne de Bekker, Flora van Regteren Altena, Hans Feys, and Diana Szécsi for their comments on certain chapters and to everyone else who has been involved in working on this book. Our special thanks go to Risto Ruohonen, Director General of the Finnish National Gallery, for his generous backing for the production of this book.

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PART ONE

THE HISTORY OF  
COLLECTING AND THE  
CURRENT STRATEGIES

**THE COLLECTING PROCESS AND  
THE FOUNDING OF MUSEUMS  
IN THE SIXTEENTH, SEVENTEENTH,  
AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES**

The emergence of what we have come to recognise as early modernity, roughly the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Western and Northern Europe, is intimately tied with the developing desire to accumulate collections of material that were considered to be profoundly significant. Through the practice of gathering things, and the arranging, studying, and simply gazing at them, the universe, and the condition of man within it, could be revealed. How this came to happen had its own curve of process, but the initial, crucial point is a simple one: the relationship between men and material objects started to be seen as one with infinite possibilities for the development of human understanding. The world of things became pre-eminent in the world of the imagination.

The range of things by which the imagination might be fired was rather varied. Men were interested in objects from the ancient past and from more recent history; they wanted fine works of artistic representation and excellent craftsmanship; they desired the odd, exotic, and strange; and they came to value the most mundane of natural plants and animals. We shall trace how and why people accumulated all these things, but first one important point, which relates directly to the new importance that is perceived in the world of objects, must be dwelt with at some length.

The decades either side of 1700 witnessed one of the genuinely critical moments in human history. In north-western Europe, particularly in the cities of London, Oxford, Edinburgh, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Leyden, and Paris, there took place a critical shift in the human vision of the world, which was to have fundamental consequences for the whole of humanity. For reasons that I shall try to explore in a moment, gentlemen suddenly began to interest themselves in the natural, material world around them in a new way. Up to this time, through the medieval centuries, gentlemen had been engaged chiefly with people, as governors, rulers, priests, judges, and landown-

ers, while the material world of earth and sea, food processing, textile weaving, and the working of wood and metal, had been left to the labouring classes. Quite suddenly, in one long lifetime, men of education became fascinated by the natural world in all its variety and potential. From this fragile beginning was to flow everything that we recognise as modern science, medicine, industry, and agriculture, with all their immense possibilities for both good and harm.

The essence of the shift, although it did not take place all at once, was the move from seeing an arbitrary universe, in which physical, material events could occur randomly without cause or effect as God thought best, to one that was patterned, in which material events were repetitive and reliable, with predictable causes and consequences. God did not work by creating miracles at whim, but rather by creating and sustaining a universe that worked in accordance with rules of behaviour. The medieval world, by contrast, was one in which anything might happen at any time and, as the result of all kinds of random actions, water could and did become wine if God wished it to be so. Repetitiveness meant that material evidence could be collected that could demonstrate the nature of things, and this could then be used as the basis for fresh explorations and for teaching what had already been ascertained.

It is worth remembering that human beings had come close to this revelation once before. The best minds of the classical world of the last centuries BC and the earliest AD had begun to realise that, since the stars followed cyclical movements other things in the universe probably did too, such as the processes of mathematics, through geometry, numbers, and architecture. In the same way, a dose of medicinal herbs had the same kind of effect on all humans, not just those who belonged to a particular group or worshipped one special god. However, as things turned out, these insights could not be pursued. The upheavals of the third century within the Roman Empire, most of which were self-inflicted, disrupted society to a profound extent; and when, around AD 300, the empire recovered, it could only do so by becoming rigid and autocratic, and by denying intellectual freedom. Its society was sustained by the Christian Church, which mirrored the organisation of the state, and that needed a wonderful universe in which God could and did intervene, usually through the operation of special pieces of material culture, such as the bones of holy men. This state of mind was to endure for well over a thousand years, and when it finally shifted, the classical example acted as an inspiration to enquiring thinkers.

Why did the prevailing mind set shift, and the gentlemen in north-western Europe around 1700 start to think differently? The kind of personal effort in the pursuit of salvation required by the Protestant churches is one reason; those who read their own Bibles to sort out for themselves what God intend-

ed, might start to scan the world with the same purpose. A corollary to this for the generation born about 1640 was disillusioned with the fighting over religion that had dominated the lives of their fathers (and often grandfathers), in all its destructiveness, and a determination never again to allow religious differences to be so important. Printing meant that, potentially, books could be produced in very much greater quantities than ever before. Gunpowder, too, meant that gentlemen were no longer required to spend their childhoods learning to control the heavy horse, armour, and lance on the battlefield, and so freed up their education to embrace more book-based study.

However, perhaps the most significant change had to do with the amount of wealth that north-western Europe was beginning to have at its disposal, and the larger middle class that the creation and management of wealth brings. The new philosophy was itself to turn out to be a key that could unlock a previously undreamt level of production and consumption, through the capacity that it provided to manipulate raw materials more quickly and to distribute them more easily, in a virtuous spiral of wealth creation. Its impact is easily visible when wills are compared. A typical will made by a well-off man in England in about 1600 would list perhaps a bed with its hangings, some coverlets, a few small items like three-legged stools, some tools and pots and pans, a cloak, and maybe a small piece of jewellery, like a ring. By the 1850s, such a man would be able to leave substantial furniture and furnishings, such as curtains and carpets, a good many clothes for different occasions, china, glassware, a clock, and a good deal of assorted metalwork. By 1700, northern Europe had been accumulating wealth, chiefly as a result of its textile production, for some five or six centuries. By that time, assisted by the early imperial ventures in the Americas and the East, a critical moment was reached. There were enough ships, enough land travel, enough book production and education, and enough scope for peaceful social gathering to enable crucial human interactions. This chapter will trace the story of these developments.

## **DISPLAYING THE GRANDEUR OF THE COSMOS**

The later medieval period had seen some significant accumulations of material. Suger became Abbot of St. Denis, the royal church of the Capet kings near Paris, in 1122. He re-built the church in what became, by that act, the famous Gothic style, and he gathered objects splendid enough to reflect the new architecture. Some of these, especially the hard stone vessels, were of Roman or early Byzantine manufacture, following an important trend in collecting, which would continue, and continue to link the contemporary with the classical past. Similar collections were made at much the same time

**Comparison as a means  
of creating classifications  
had become the new  
explanatory paradigm,  
one that is still with us.**

by men such as Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, and the brother of King Stephen of England who brought back from Rome antique statues that shocked his retinue with their nudity. The list of late medieval collectors continued with men such as the English William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester and the French Duc de Berri in the fourteenth century. The scene was set for the glorification of the ancient world, understood through its literature and art.

The collecting habits of men such as these led directly to the aspirations of Cosimo de Medici (1389–1464), who ruled Florence, gathered a similar, but huge, collection of antique carved gems, hard stone vessels, and gold and silver coins and medals. Cosimo was a ‘new man’, whose family had been bankers, and who would have been despised by the men of long pedigree who ruled most of Western Europe. He needed the prestige, which the possession of many beautiful and desirable things could bring, in a world where many of the northern courts were producing men who prided themselves in valuing such things. Cosimo founded the famous dynasty of rulers and collectors. By the time of his grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent (1448–92), the palace collections also included paintings, and rarities, such as the unicorn horn (probably the tusk of a narwhale), which was valued at 6,000 florins, one of the most valuable objects Lorenzo possessed. It was this kind of object that carried the seeds of the future, with a crucial interest in the natural, rather than artistic, world.

Lorenzo took over the classical word academy, with its associations with Plato, to describe the group of connoisseurs and scholars that he gathered around him; in the same way he appropriated the word museum from Greek Alexandria to describe the collection itself, and the way in which it was kept. Museum as a term thenceforward carried the prestige of the Medici court, with all that this implied. Well into the eighteenth century it was only one word among several others – gallery, cabinet, theatre, studio – but museum became the standard term for collections of natural and historical material, probably because it had been used in Florence. The use of Greek terminology takes us to the philosophical underpinnings of the entire enterprise. These drew primarily on Plato's teaching, which stressed the notion that each aspect of early things was but a pale and imperfect rendering of the true idea, the ideal essence of things, which existed in the cosmos and of which the earthly representative was but a pale shadow. Plato's own doctrines were used later in Alexandria to develop assorted systems called collectively Neo-Platonism, which greatly elaborated the connections between this world and that of the heavenly ideal. These notions were, obviously, capable of being made compatible with late medieval Christian theology. The savants who gathered at the Medici court took up Platonic teaching by seeing the Florentine court, and its collected treasures, as the earthly counterpart of the ideas in Heaven. It was in the style of a second, very important, contemporary thought, the great cosmos, the macrocosm, created in small, the microcosm; small but perfectly formed, for the microcosm was held to be as (or almost as) divine as the greater cosmos. On earth, as in Heaven ran the saying, enabling the ruler to appear as God below.

The Medicis inspired a number of famous collections made north of the Alps by members of the imperial house of Hapsburg, and these served as models for the hundreds of similar collections made by princes and lesser men across Christendom. These were the *Kunstkammer*, the German equivalents of the Italian collections. Samuel von Quiccheberg, who was employed by Albrecht V of Bavaria, set out the conceptual basis of these collections in his *Theatrum Amplissimum* of 1565. Here, he describes the ideal order of a comprehensive collection by setting down, and illustrating with examples, the desirable arrangement of material on display. The first displays are to be devoted to the ruler as the founder of the collection in particular, and as the centre of the early cosmos, around whom all revolves. The remainder of the displays should concentrate upon paintings and sacred objects, in the mid-sixteenth century still much the same thing, objects made of inorganic material, including jewellery, metalwork, woodwork and stone, organic material representing the three realms of earth, air and water, and artefacts from the past. Translated into modern terms, these categories mean fine art, applied art, natural history, and human history. The continuity of distinctions, in the organisation of materially based knowledge, between the sixteenth century and the present day is very striking indeed. It



still structures most universes, courses, and, of course, virtually all major museums. Quiccheberg's idea of a 'theatre' of knowledge was taken from a book by Guillo Camillo (c. 1480–1544) entitled *The Memory Theatre*, which gave a technique for remembering knowledge by imagining it laid out in order. The Memory Theatre was an actual construction, made of wood and big enough to admit two people, which Camillo built at the court of Francis I of France. It rose in seven steps, representing the seven planets, and the facade was covered in pictures, texts, and little boxes containing more information. All this was intended to present the cosmos as a mystical system held together by neo-platonic ideas into which the viewer could enter.

Collections such as these were intended to demonstrate the prestige of the collector, and to demonstrate the principle that in creating a microcosm of the universe, intellectual power over the whole, the macrocosm, could be displayed. These collections tended to favour works of art, both ancient and modern, arms and armour, coins, gems, and medals. Henry, Prince of Wales, whose early death in 1612 led to the eventual accession of his younger brother as Charles I, had a large collection of such things. The intention was to produce 'an Italian court at home' in order to demonstrate how fully the British royal family was participating in the key intellectual and fashionable paradigms of the time. However, in England, especially, this princely style of collecting was to be matched by a parallel urge to accumulate, which was to be accompanied by its own philosophy.

### **RARITIES AND CURIOSITIES**

The burgeoning Northern European middle class, 'men of the middling sort' as the age called them, equally desired to join in the new game of collecting, but they could not afford the major objects of art and craftsmanship that were to be found in the royal collections (Arnold 2006). However, the newly-opened trade routes into North and South America, West Africa, the Far East, and Russia offered opportunities for gathering excitingly exotic and strange material, to stimulate the imagination. In southern England, William Tradescant the elder worked all his life as a Head Gardener, first to a series of aristocrats and then to Henrietta Maria, the wife of Charles I. He accumulated a large number of rarities, things such as the lantern Guy Fawkes used in his effort to blow up the king and parliament in 1605 and a pair of Queen Elizabeth's riding boots. All of these things came his way through his aristocratic patrons, such as the Duke of Buckingham, who was able to let Tradescant have West African material through his connection with the Guinea trade. Tradescant's rarities were not top-of-the-range collecting items; they were amusing, interesting, or exotic pieces about which it was possible to tell stories. However, as the collection grew it became more

important, and by 1638 he had acquired a house in Lambeth on the south side of the Thames, set up his collection, which he called the Ark, published a catalogue of the whole, and was receiving visitors. At six pence per person, the Ark became one of the established sights of London. Through the prestige that he accrued, TreDESCANT was able to see himself as one of the gentry; in due course, he was buried in a chest tomb, with his son who inherited the collection and the fame, in the churchyard of St. Mary's (Lambeth) close to the London palace of the Archbishops of Canterbury.

The TreDESCANTS were not the only Englishmen who were forming significant collections of the kind that contrasted with the aristocratic desire for works of ancient and modern art. In Scotland, Sir James Balfour (1600–57) was assembling historical and antiquarian materials, and in Leeds, northern England, Ralph Thoresby had a famous museum, which its Catalogue, published in 1713 shows, contained objects such as the arm of the Marquis of Montrose, executed in 1650. John Aubrey, who had a finger in every intellectual pie of the time, formed a cabinet of curiosities; so did Thomas Browne who was also a notable writer; Robert Hubert created a very significant collection of natural history specimens and exhibited it publicly; and John Evelyn spent much of his time gathering his own material and viewing other collections, as well as writing his famous *Diary*. A very famous collection was formed by the Dane, Olaus Worm, and the engraved picture of the display at the front of the catalogue, *Musei Wormiani Historia*, published in 1655, gives us a fair idea what his, and other similar, collections looked like. Objects are placed on shelves and in racks on all the walls from floor to ceiling. Stuffed animals, such as crocodiles, are slung from the rafters.

Although some pieces in these accumulations were primarily there to be admired, the key word in the new vision was curiosity. A curious man was interested in the material he and his friends were collecting, interested in how it worked, or why it was so strange, or why it was like and unlike other similar pieces known to the group. This kind of collecting nurtured the capacity to look at specimens in detail, and began to draw attention to all the, apparently strange, phenomena that the natural world could produce. In 1642, the English Civil War had broken out, and collecting practices went into enforced abeyance; Hubert took his collection to Leipzig and Hamburg, and did not return to London until after the monarchy had been restored in 1660, and Charles II, son of the executed Charles I, safely on the throne. Charles II's reign was to see institutions of crucial significance founded in London and Oxford. Perhaps people had time to read during the long boring periods that are a part of any war; at any rate, the prime influence on their thinking was the work of Francis Bacon, much of which had been written before the war, but was not generally published until the early 1640s.

## COLLECTING KNOWLEDGE

Francis Bacon had been trained in the English tradition of the Common Law, and had risen to be at the heart of the government of King James I. For him, the courtly art-collecting culture was unacceptable because it conferred no public good (Arnold 2006). He could see that, properly pursued, the study of natural history could produce much that was useful and applicable, just as historical material, properly interpreted, could give substance to national history (a subject much debated in his lifetime, in part because the Stuart dynasty had originally been kings of Scots, who had inherited England through a long series of dynastic accidents; the new united kingdom needed to be given some kind of historical rationale). Bacon developed the idea that through the deployment of methodical enquiry, bodies of information could be built up from which reliable procedures could be deduced. These procedures, in turn, would open the way to both further discoveries and workable techniques that industry could employ to the general good. His crucial notion probably owed much to his legal training. Each piece of information was a piece of evidence that is a self-sustaining fact presented by a physical thing, which was not susceptible to undermining. Today, we are very wary of assertions of essence, knowing all too well the manipulations that can stand behind apparently pure facts, but like it or not, Bacon's assertion is still the fundamental premise on which experimental science is built, and, in the foreseeable future, will remain so.

In following his ideas through, Bacon came to see that a core collection of material evidence was essential to his project. He argued for a grand data-collecting project, which would bring in information from geography, geology, chemistry, magnetism, and natural history. Obviously, a major institution, effectively a national museum with all its appropriate facilities, would be necessary to house the material evidence, which was at the core of the undertaking. In a play, which he wrote in 1594–95, one of the characters proposes four inter-linked institutions – a library, garden, zoo, and aquarium, a 'still house' or laboratory, and finally

a goodly cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine hath made rare in stuff, form or motion; whatsoever singularity of chance and the shuffle of things hath produced; whatsoever nature hath wrought in things that want life and shall may be kept; shall be sorted and included (Arnold 2006: 23).

In his *New Atlantis*, written around 1617 but not published until 1627, Bacon envisaged a college, otherwise known as Solomon's House. This would include gardens and lakes, where every kind of field experiments could be carried out, and laboratories for every kind of research. There would also be two large galleries containing examples of inventions and statues of inventors. This is a good description of a museum, but it also takes on board the aristo-

cratic art collections and the rarities, produced by the 'shuffle of things'. In England, museums had been firmly identified as the spaces and places within which the accumulation and study of evidence-based knowledge would take place.

The new king, Charles I, crowned in 1660, seems to have seen himself as a part of the new philosophy of knowledge; even during his years in exile in the Low Countries, he had interested himself in chemical experiments. One of his first acts, in 1660, was the founding of the Royal Society, which held weekly meetings in London at which performances like the cutting up of a dolphin took place, and maintained a Repository, effectively a museum, where specimens were kept. By around 1663, Robert Hooke had been made Keeper of the Repository, and in 1669, the Society employed Thomas Willisel to go round the British Isles collecting material in order to make the collection more complete. The early members of the Society – men such as Sir Christopher Wren and Sir Isaac Newton – were all scientists of the very highest class, who in their speculations and their practical effects transformed the condition of humanity, and that of the planet as well; the gathering together of such a glittering group has only happened a few times in human history.

***Checking with the material  
gathered in the past  
is a crucial part of the  
contemporary process.***

From this milieu emerged what is generally reckoned to be the first public museum, founded by Elias Ashmole in Oxford, in 1683, with royal patronage. The original building is still on Broad Street, now housing the University Museum of Science. The museum had three floors, comprising a laboratory, an exhibition gallery in which the collections were displayed, and lecture rooms. The Ashmolean and the Royal Society Depository were both essentially collections of collections, all of which had their roots in the seventeenth century. The Ashmolean Museum had as its founding collection what was made by the Tradescants, father and son, which, after much acrimony, had come to Elias Ashmole, after his own collection had been largely destroyed by a disastrous fire at his house. The largest group of specimens in the Repository came when the Society acquired Robert Hubert's collection of natural rarities, and its Europe-wide reputation, in 1666. The British Museum, not opened to the public until 1759, also came from the same milieu. Its founding was possible because Sir Hans Sloane was willing to give it his own, very extensive, collection, but Sloane's own material was itself a collection of collections. Among others, in 1710 he had bought the famous herbarium of Leonard Plukenet, and in 1711, that of Dr. Herman, Professor of Botany at Leyden. Between 1688 and 1724 John Woodward, another significant member of this loose group, had amassed nearly ten thousand geological and natural history specimens, all of which were deposited in what ultimately became the Sedgwick Museum of the University of Cambridge. All this is important partly simply because the material itself was preserved, but even more significant was the sense of continuity. Some of Woodward's original fine wooden cabinets, probably commissioned in the 1690s especially to hold his material, still survive in the Sedgwick to this day. Science itself was building up a tradition and a pedigree, in which men remembered their masters, and were themselves remembered by their pupils.

It is no exaggeration to say that what is frequently called 'the late seventeenth century scientific revolution' was centred on a handful of men who came to the idea of uniting the carefully observed, concrete natural evidence that was in their collections, with that of the neo-platonic cosmos with its God-given structure, which they had learnt from the esoteric lore of the earlier generation. The significance of concrete evidence came, as we have seen, in large part from Bacon's view of evidence, while the working through of neo-platonic philosophy, with its stress on hierarchy and structure encouraged the working-out of connections and systems in the natural world. Moreover, all this could be placed within an acceptable natural theology. When Christian Daniel Major's book, on *Kunst- und Naturalien-kammern* came out in 1674, he was at pains to stress the idea that nature is a book in which the greatness of God can be read, and the study of nature can reveal the mind of God.

The first effort towards a comprehensive approach to these aspirations was made by the Royal Society: this was why it was so anxious to make its Repository as complete as possible. Nehemiah Grew was charged with the task of producing from the collection classified tables of natural phenomena, the whole enterprise to be expressed in philosophical language. Grew's Catalogue, *Musaeum Regalis Societatis*, duly appeared in 1681. Grew and his contemporaries were very conscious of what they were doing, and attacked the culture of rarities cultivated by the previous generation precisely because it concentrated on the odd and strange, which by definition could not (at that time) be incorporated into an overall system, rather than the normal, which if set amongst a whole range of similarly normal specimens, could be. As Woodward put it,

Censure would be his due, who should be perpetually heaping up of Natural History Collections, without design of building a structure of philosophy out of them, or advancing some Propositions that might turn to the benefit and advantage of the world. This is in reality the true and only proper end of collections, of observations and natural history: And they are of no manner of use or value without it (Arnold 2006: 220).

In the Preface to his Catalogue, Grew echoed the same view, by saying that, 'an inventory of Nature' should include 'not only things that are strange and rare, but the most known and common amongst us'. He also criticised the obscurantism and thinness of many existing catalogues, advocating a fullness and precision of description, which he then demonstrated in the Catalogue entries. When it came to the point, the Repository was too frail to bear the cosmic burden placed upon it. However, Grew did manage to organise some of the material, particularly the shells, into family tree type taxonomic diagrams, which expressed the relationship between their forms, something that would be the shape of things to come.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

As we have seen, by 1700 the gaze was no longer fixed on the rare and strange of the earlier generation, but rather on the similarities and differences between standard specimens drawn from across the stretch of the natural world in quantities large enough to enable comparisons. Comparison as a means of creating classifications had become the new explanatory paradigm, one which is still with us, because experience shows that it works, and that it is the key that can unlock both further understanding through 'blue skies' thinking and enable the resources of the earth to be exploited to what appears to be human good. By the 1730s, Northern Europe had accumulated very large quantities of collected natural history material, most of it sufficiently well recorded to be useful. There was enough to make possible the framing of grand, overarching, explanatory narratives.

The work of creating the over-arching system, which would explain the natural world, fell to Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus was a Swede, who made his first collection of botanical specimens in Lapland in 1733, and published it as *Flora Laponica* in 1737. *Systema Natura* followed in 1736, and Linnaeus's reputation was secure. Naturally, he had his rivals and detractors, notably the Frenchman, Buffon. Buffon accepted Linnaeus's names for plants reluctantly, adding them only to the underside of his own labels. However, it is apparently not true that Linnaeus retaliated by deliberately naming the toad *Bufoonia*. By concentrating on the outward appearance of, plants, especially their flowers, and then effectively counting up similar and dissimilar features, Linnaeus was able to create a series of categories of natural material, which could generate a twofold name establishing each type in its place in the whole. Linnaeus spent time in England, and one of the collections on which he worked was that of Sir Hans Sloane, which, as we have seen, became one of the principle founding collections of the British Museum when it opened to the public in 1759. His method of creating classes did not survive, but his names and the system of nomenclature that he used was, and is still, the basis of plant names today.

Natural history collecting, in all its aspects, became a passion in England, as one way in which the burgeoning middle class could demonstrate its modernity and its social credentials. As the eighteenth and earliest nineteenth century wore on, innumerable natural history societies and field clubs were founded, as the contexts within which collecting could be pursued and, as a very significant by-product, as the public square in which people could learn the political arts of managing meetings and handling committees. Such collecting was seen as morally fine. 'Nice', that is middle class, or those who aspired to be so, children began to be encouraged to form their own series of preserved butterflies or seaweeds, as part of their educational and ethical development, and this continued well into the 1950s, when the BBC's famous daily radio programme, Children's Hour, often ran collection related features (as I can well remember). Gradually, comprehensive flora and fauna were built up in which the living things of earth were identified, classified, named, mapped and published. Today, the only major area left incompletely studied is the Amazon rain forest, but anybody who wishes, for example, to discover possible new insect species there cannot do so without reference to the collections of the London Natural History Museum, because checking with the material gathered in the past is a crucial part of the contemporary process. The same is true of current, politically difficult projects, such as the efforts to quantify the effects of global warming, or of the impact of genetically modified crops.

Meanwhile, throughout the eighteenth century outside Northern Europe, collections of fine art retained their prime position. Gradually, in tune with the new desire on the part of rulers to educate their people, the princely col-

lections were turned into public museums by the princes themselves, although not the English royal collection, which remained, and is still, the personal property of the monarch herself. The Hapsburg collections moved out of the Stallburg and into the Belvedere Palace, in Vienna, in 1776; the Royal Collection in Dusseldorf and the Dresden Gallery were opened to the public in the middle of the century; and the Uffizi was donated to the state by the last Medici princess in 1743. Appreciation of the pictures in these art galleries came to be seen as the touchstone of spiritual excellence, and as a way into acquiring courtly manners, something the developing bourgeoisie much appreciated. However, they could also be turned into vehicles through which an historical depth could be achieved, often closely linked to the idea of national history, and hence the kind of nationalism that was to be major feature of nineteenth century Europe. In the Belvedere Palace, the imperial pictures were divided into national schools, and art-historical periods. They were put into uniform frames, and probably hung in a single line, rather being used to cover the whole wall, as had been the earlier style. A walk through the galleries was a walk through the history of art, as the accompanying Guide, written by Christian von Mechel made clear. 'The new museum,' he wrote, 'is a repository where the history of art is made visible' (quoted in Bazin 1979). The Dusseldorf collection had a similar arrangement from 1756, and the Uffizi from 1770. The Louvre, by then a public museum, adopted it in 1810, and it has been the usual scheme in art museums ever since.

However, what of older and less elevated tastes? Old habits die hard, and indeed are not yet dead. During the eighteenth century, there was a developing popular taste for shows, which concentrated on historical and exotic material, and in which old-style rarities and curiosities – the bearded lady, dwarfs, stuffed double headed lambs, animal skins from fabulous lands, the cloak of a famous murderer – were taken around the country and exhibited. While we concentrate on the respectable, high moral ground of collecting and displaying, its less genteel underbelly must not be forgotten. By the 1790s, no visit to York, the capital of northern England, was complete without a visit to the museum in the castle, then the county gaol. Here

are preserved the coining apparatus used by David Hartley,... a part of the skull of Daniel Clark, the victim of Eugene Aram; the knife and fork with which the rebels were Quartered in 1745 (Brears and David 1989: 7).

It seems that, quite apart from famous collections, like that at York, and the travelling freak shows that went round the country, it was fairly common for coaching inns and the like to keep one or two gruesome pieces with which to entertain their customers. However, the great shift in genteel taste is marked by the fortunes of the word curious. Throughout most of the seventeenth century it had been a term of great respect and value; a curious man was one interested in the workings of the world about him in a way, which redounded



to his credit. However, by the end of the century, the use of the word became increasingly uneasy, as the connotations of this kind of collecting became less secure. Gradually, curiosity descended the intellectual ladder, until by the nineteenth century it was being used by book dealers to mean pornographic literature, a use that it still retains. Curious collections were perceived to be what, indeed, in part they had always been, an undue interest in the distasteful and perverted.

By 1800, there were a number of well-known private collections, which, in some ways, bridged the gulf between the superior public museums with their art and, in England, natural history, and these popular sensational shows. That of John Calvert in Leeds, which opened to the public in 1795 and had a large collection of natural history specimens, is a good example of the type. They were commercial enterprises and, therefore, required a payment at the door, but they offered proper value for money in terms of knowledge gained and genuinely interesting things viewed. The most famous of these collections was that gathered by Sir Ashton Lever, a country gentleman of Lancashire, who assembled a very large collection that included natural history and material brought back from the Pacific by men who had sailed with James Cook, who had commanded three major voyages of exploration to the Pacific, Australia, and the north-west coast of Canada in 1768–71, 1772–75, and 1776–79. In 1774, Lever decided to open the collection in London at Leicester House, charging an entrance fee, partly to offset expenses and partly to discourage undesirables. A letter from Susan Burney to her sister, Mme d'Arblay, dated June 16, 1778, gives a good account of what visiting the show was like. She mentions, among other things, birds, beasts, shells and fossils; a roomful of monkeys; the complete dress of a Chinese mandarin; and a suit of armour said to belong to Oliver Cromwell. Burney's account shows how collections like Lever's combined the sensational worlds of the rarities with the more recent understanding of how knowledge could be gained from the ordinary.

By 1806, the museum had exhausted its popularity, and the material in it was disposed of. Much of it came into the possession of William Bullock, another, but more significant, north-country museum entrepreneur. The Bullock family seemed to have been engaged originally in the travelling wax works business, a branch of the rarity collection trade. William himself collected natural history and toured his collection through Yorkshire towns like Wakefield and Sheffield. By 1801, he had opened the show in permanent premises in Liverpool, and he was able to add to his collection by buying exotic material and animal skins from sailors in the port. He published the first of what was to be many editions of his *Catalogue* in 1808, and by 1812 the collection was substantial enough for Bullock to make the brave decision to move the whole operation to London. He found a site in Piccadilly, which he had done over in Egyptian style. The façade onto the street was modelled

with a battered doorway based loosely on the temple of Dendera, and one of the two main rooms inside was decorated with Egyptian motifs. In the Egyptian Hall, as the building came to be called, Bullock set up his material, listed in the published catalogue. Much of the collection was displayed in the usual style, but the animals and plants were different. Bullock had many animal skins, which were treated with preservative made up to his own recipe (probably mostly arsenic, but baking specimens also seems to have been involved), and stuffed. These were mounted in naturalistic positions within mock-ups of their natural habitat created out of rocks, probably made of painted papier mache, and appropriate vegetation made of wax; the wolves, for example, were in a cave within a rocky knoll, while the seals were on a sea shore. The trees had been made by consulting Sir Joseph Banks about the appearance of tropical flora, and Banks had allowed Bullock to use his own collections and his library, a signal favour. These proto-dioramas made Bullock's museum something special. They offered a new experience, which combined the genuine knowledge embodied in the displays, with the sensation of being transported in imagination to another world. The collection was sold in 1819, although exhibitions continued to stages at the Egyptian Hall (Pearce 2008).

The increased visibility of the east, the material of which was pouring into Britain, and the historical, steadily being brought before the public by the activities of the Society of Antiquaries among others, created a craving for the ancient and the strange, which sparked off major acquisitive passions in those who could afford them. The classical had become too pure a taste for those who required stronger stimulants, while both the past and the Orient were becoming eroticised into what can be called the Gothic and the Romantic visions. The creation of such visionary 'other worlds' was the main-spring of some collecting that aimed at producing a private space within which a particular life could be led; this was at the highest end of what we might call lifestyle collecting (Herrmann 1999). Wealthy men, such as William Beckford, Horace Walpole, and the Prince of Wales in his exotic pavilion at Brighton, created palaces to their own tastes. At Fonthill Abbey, his country house in southern England, Beckford created his feverish dream of Gothic, and it was much admired. A surviving account of 1817 talks of rooms full of minerals and precious stones, Italian bronzes, doors covered in purple velvet embroidered with gold, a chapel – an important element in the Gothic – this heaped with golden candlesticks, vases, and jewel studded chalices, and much, much more. The major-domo of the house was a dwarf, clad in embroidered gold. Eventually, of course, Beckford over-reached himself and, in 1823, most of the collection had to be sold off. Walpole, son of a British prime minister, created a similarly famous house at Strawberry Hill, probably the most influential of all early Gothic creations, and this, too, ended up under the hammer.

## COLLECTING THE CLASSICAL

While all these developments were taking place, the world of Greece and Rome, and in particular the statuary, which they had produced, was not being neglected. The Medicis had, of course, possessed statues of this kind, which were valued for their own sake and for the inspiration that they could provide for the great sculptors of the day, including Michelangelo. By the early seventeenth century, perhaps the most significant of the classical collectors north of the Alps was the English Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, who amassed a very considerable collection, which is now in the Ashmolean Museum. Arundel went abroad first in 1612 and, a year later, he set off again with the architect Inigo Jones, who was to create the hugely influential Banqueting Hall at Whitehall for Charles I. Here, Arundel found his appetite for Italy past and present, and through his network of friends and agents, he amassed the collection of statues, busts, inscriptions, coins and gems, which transformed his home into an Italian palace.

During the period 1618 to approx. 1650 or a little later, France, Britain, and the German lands were all enmeshed in fighting local wars, sometimes very destructive wars, and little collecting of southern material could be undertaken. However, as the eighteenth century dawned, the subject became compelling again. Italians, notably Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692–1779), accumulated very important collections. The English aristocracy developed the practise of the Grand Tour, which had started in the previous century. This took young Englishmen of the upper class travelling in Italy, often spending over a year on their travels. They visited Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples, looking at temple sites and museums, and taking part in the local social life. As part of the polite education that it was hoped that they would acquire while travelling, they purchased pictures and sculptures along the way (Black 1992). Most of these acquisitions simply went to adorn the ancestral stately home, now usually re-worked in a classical style, when the traveller returned home, and the results can be seen in properties owned by the National Trust all over England. A few men, and Sir Richard Worsley is a good example, made collections of real significance. In the second half of the century, Worsley took himself abroad following a very scandalous divorce, so when he made his important tour, he was older than most, and had a point to prove to society. He gathered classical marbles, as well as a significant collection of classical gemstones, all of which were displayed at his home at Appuldurcombe on the Isle of Wight.

By the middle of the century, a substantial superstructure had developed to enable Englishmen to travel (reasonably) comfortably and to buy what they wanted. In Rome, both Gavin Hamilton and Thomas Jenkins acted as local brokers in purchases of classical art. Two men, who owned property in Lancashire, Charles Townley and Henry Blundell, both acquired substantial col-

lections. The Townley Marbles purchased for the British Museum in 1805, was one of the principal acquisitions made by the Museum in the period, and the Blundell Marbles were used to create a classical ambience at Blundell Hall, which eventually went to Liverpool City Museum, now National Museums on Merseyside.

A rather different type of collection was made in Italy, mostly in Rome, by Charles Tatham, between 1794 and 1796 (Pearce and Salmon 2005). Tatham was a young architect, who had been sent out by his employer, Henry Holland, to further his artistic education, and to make a collection of architectural fragments, which would be used in the office in London as inspiration and models for contemporary work in the architectural practice. Tatham made a substantial collection of over a hundred pieces, comprising a very mixed bag, all of which are now in the Sir John Soane Museum, London. In 1796, Tatham had to flee Italy because Napoleon was marching down the peninsula, who was the new Corsican general that the French now have, as Tatham put it in one of his letters home. Northern and central Italy was to be closed to the English for nearly twenty years, and attention turned to the home of classical sculpture, Greece herself.

Lord Elgin is the most famous, and the most controversial, of the Britons who gathered up very important temple sculptures in Greece, and brought them home to Britain. Elgin was appointed Ambassador to Constantinople in 1799 and this appointment enabled him to strip off important sections of the exterior of the Parthenon, on the Acropolis in Athens, together with some architectural members. He carried these back to England, where in 1816 they were purchased for the nation, and eventually they were properly housed in the British Museum (Jenkins 1992). Elgin was not the only such acquirer. In 1811, Charles Robert Cockerell, another young London architect, was travelling in Greece with a group of companions, some English, some German. They went to Aegina to make detailed drawings of the temple there, and in the course of the work, stumbled over the fragments of the temple facade, which had perhaps fallen in antiquity. A few months later, when Cockerell himself was in Sicily, lightning struck twice: the group was drawing at the isolated rural Temple of Apollo at Bassae when again they found substantial quantities of sculpture in the rubble on the site. The two temple collections were sold off at Zante in Greece. The Aegina Marbles were bought by King Ludwig of Bavaria, who built the Glyptothek at Munich, especially to house them (finally completed in 1830). The Bassae group were bought for the British Museum.

In the same way, Egyptian material was not neglected. It, too, had been the subject of earlier collecting, and in Italy Athenasius Kirchner, a Jesuit priest, had begun to study hieroglyphics in 1628, and eventually gathered a substantial collection of Egyptian antiquities. The famous English Café in Rome had

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been decorated in the Egyptian style, and as this style was made more popular by its fashion in Napoleon's early empire, following his Egyptian campaign in 1798–1801, it was used in a number of famous interiors, notably in London, which was created by Thomas Hope, and of course for the Egyptian Hall already mentioned. By 1817, Henry Salt, appointed British consul in Cairo, was collecting ancient Egyptian material, which ended up in the British Museum, and his associate was an Italian from Padua, Giovanni Battista Belzoni. In 1817, exploring in the Valley of the Kings, Belzoni discovered the hitherto unknown tomb of Seti I (Pearce 2000). The tomb had been robbed of all its contents in antiquity, except the fabulous royal sarcophagus, which Belzoni took, and which ended up in the Sir John Soane Museum. However, it was covered in wall paintings, brightly coloured in red, blue, white, and gold. The style of the paintings was of the characteristic type now familiar to us from a thousand reproductions, but this was the first time they had been seen by modern European eyes. Belzoni painstakingly copied the paintings throughout the tomb. Back in London, he mounted an exhibition of the copies in the Egyptian Hall in 1821. The exhibition also included a mock-up of two of the most impressive of the tomb's rooms. The effect, with the figures of the exotic gods emerging in the flickering light cast by the candles was sensational. The exhibition was the event of the season, and, as with Bullock's animal displays, a new kind of museum experience had been born. Belzoni quarrelled bitterly with Henry Salt, and also with the authorities at the British Museum, who did not treat him well, probably because he was poor and a foreigner. However, a substantial number of the painted copies still survive in the City Museum, Bristol, in the west of England.

These exhibitions, and others, in which the natural world and, especially, the historical world, seem to have contributed substantially to a major shift in perception, which occurred in the years either side of 1800. The eighteenth century collections had been dominated by the twin concepts of connoisseurship and taste. These values were achieved by concentrating on the outward, visual form of an object, which could then be judged by those whose taste had been cultivated by much experience of fine things. It followed that many pieces were used primarily to furnish contemporary rooms and gardens, as in the classical landscapes created at Stow In Buckinghamshire, or the rooms produced by Worsley. In same way, fashions in furnishings and dress were derived from the appearance of ancient material, as in the Roman hairstyles that were fashionable for men around 1800 or the Egyptianising furniture designed by Hope. However, as reconstructions of earlier worlds began to be created, it began to seem that objects held within them the special characteristic of bringing the past into the present, regardless of what the piece looked like, and how it gratified the viewer's idea of good looks. Because a thing was genuinely of the past, because it had truly been handled by ancient Greek men or ancient Egyptian women, that past was forever within its essential nature, and consequently it brought the true past with it wherever it was in time and space thereafter. We of the twenty-first century do not believe in the existence of essential characteristics, but the nineteenth century did, especially in relation to the objective – note that word – existence of the past. Huge consequences flowed from this kind of historicising. The development of the discipline of archaeology is an obvious one, but the new vision also inspired much historical writing, a new wave of historical fiction, and a taste for pictures depicting historical events. We may not now believe in its premises, but the religion of the object continues to inspire much popular entertainment in the areas of film and television.

### **SOME FINAL REFLECTIONS**

The early history of collecting, as this chapter shows, is not a steady progression of practice from a simpler to a more complex form, or from a primitive to a more sophisticated form, and still less from an ignorant form to that of true knowledge (Pearce 1995). For one thing, we no longer believe that such progressions exist: each age must be taken on its own terms. Equally, when collecting is under review, it is the way in which, although styles may go out of fashion, they do not cease, that is so striking. People today are still forming collections of rarities and curiosities; they are still playing with interiors, which create a vision of the East or of the past; they are still accumulating snail shells or lichens, laid out in taxonomic order; and, of course, they are still buying pictures, clocks, and classical sculpture. The reasons for this lie well beyond the operation of reason. People collect firstly for emotional rea-

sons to do with self-identity and self projection, and what they do, and how they do it, are matters of taste and opportunity. Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the trigger behind the appearance of the collecting habit in Europe in the fifteenth century had to do with the steady accumulation of wealth, which produced a virtuous cycle that, eventually, sucked in the material of the world. This generated an increasingly important middle class, who needed significant occupation, recognition, and the prestige that comes from making a good show and telling a good, knowledge-laden story. Cosimo de Medici is typical of this process at its beginning, and the Getty family is a characteristic contemporary manifestation.

However, historical progression is never a simple matter of one cultural moment inevitably following another. Put in a different way, individual men of brilliance could see how the materially embodied philosophies of their immediate predecessors could be re-worked to produce a new and different outcome, which might come closer to the nature of the universe and, therefore, in the simplest way 'work better'. It was these insights that yielded the new scientific practices of those few years around 1700 that I stressed at the beginning, and here we do strike a progression of thought. Sixteenth century neo-platonic ideas that a collection could represent the macrocosm here, below, quickly came to be seen in Northern Europe as an inadequate way of representing a universe now being perceived as much more complex, and governed by physical rules. The following passion for the collecting of rarities was also soon seen to favour the peculiar over the norm, and as natural history collecting and philosophical thinking enriched each other, the idea of the norm was recognised to have great explanatory power, particularly when narratives were constructed by comparing and contrasting one norm with another. A crucial point here is the fact that this kind of understanding depends upon setting out your material – say ammonite fossils – side by side and line by line in a kind of chessboard, and then moving individual pieces so that the whole in turn comes to form a satisfactory taxonomic lattice work. When the results are put for permanence within glass cases, necessarily set up in the same way, we have the characteristic museum arrangement, with which we are all deeply familiar. Such knowledge is embodied in the very specimens and their positioning itself; if the display did not exist, the knowledge could not do so either.

This underlines the point with which we started, the mental shift that put the material world at the centre of human understanding of ourselves, and of the universe. As the nineteenth century began to unfold, the narrative was sustained, and showed itself to be capable of very significant developments.

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**FROM DISCIPLINARY CONTROL TO CO-CREATION**  
**– COLLECTING AND THE DEVELOPMENT**  
**OF MUSEUMS AS PRAXIS IN THE**  
**NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY**

The history of museums is, first of all, the institutionalisation of collecting. Even though some contemporary practices may point at a tendency of de-institutionalisation, collecting practice in the twenty-first century is still highly institutionalised. This article will explore the institutionalisation of collecting as it becomes visible in professionalisation, specialisation, and the canonisation of museum practices.

It may be argued that collecting as such did not change very much throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. What did change was the approach to collecting development, i.e. enhancing the use value of the collection (in relation to the institutional mission) by adding and removing collection items, as well as documentation and conservation, but also the organisation and structure of the collection. As will be shown, the discussion about collecting is foremost a discussion about collection profiles. Contrary to common belief, collections are dynamic. The history of museums in the nineteenth and twentieth century shows a continuous shaping and reshaping of collections, following disciplinary and political agendas.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of a public museum had taken root throughout Europe. During the second half of the century, the museum model became more or less standardised. At the same time, some basic concepts of museum work as a profession were being formulated and widely shared through new channels. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a sophisticated professional infrastructure contributed to the canonisation of processes and procedures. During the second half of the century, this canonisation was increasingly being challenged by internal and external developments. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the term Museum 2.0 became the symbol of a new museum model, involving new concepts about museum work as a profession and the new canonisation of processes and procedures. The keywords of this transformation are participation and co-creation.

## TOWARDS PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

During the second half of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth century, 'open to the public' developed into 'public ownership' along two lines.

In the course of the eighteenth century, princely collections gradually obtained a more autonomous status, as described by Susan Pearce in the previous article. The Vatican museums in Rome, such as the Museo Capitolino (1734), the picture gallery in the Palazzo dei Conservatori (1749), and the Museo Pio-Clementino (1772) are early examples of princely collections that gradually developed into public museums and early examples of museums where the concept of 'public' became attached to the concept of 'national'. A decisive step in this respect was taken in Paris. On 27 September 1792, the National Convention decided to create a national (art) museum in the Louvre, based on expropriated royal collections, and collections taken from noble families and religious institutions. The French example was soon followed throughout Europe, as a 'tidal wave of activity', as Germain Bazin wrote: 'the flood coursed through a Europe which at first resisted but then saw itself constrained to adopt certain ideas propagated by the Revolution. The museum became one of the fundamental institutions of the modern State' (Bazin 1967: 169).

In the redefined political structure of Europe, the emerging (as well as the old) states felt a need to create national museums either in response to the ideological threat – or potential threat – of the French Revolution. Art and archaeology were perceived as the most suitable for this task, because, as Prussian minister Von Altenstein wrote to the king: 'the fine arts are the expression of the highest condition of mankind', thus it is the duty of the state to make them accessible to everyone (Duncan and Wallach 2004: 59). By following the model of the Louvre, these museums were national in the sense that they were state institutions, but also because they reflected a national pride, even patriotism. They were much less national as to the content of their collections.

In a similar way the founding of the National Museum at Warsaw (1862) needs to be seen within the context of Polish nationalism. The museum was partly based on the art collection of King Stanisław August. In Poland, divided by Prussia, Habsburg and Russia, King Stanisław August (1732–1798), who was the last King of Poland and Grand Duke of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, served as symbol of national unity and national pride.

A large-scale nationalisation of princely and other private collections happened again in Russia after the Revolution of 1917 and in Germany after the First World War (1914–1918), when the empire became a republic. The state

took control over the collections as a self-evident national responsibility. Important (art) collections should by definition be owned by the nation.

The creation of the British Museum by Act of Parliament in 1753 foreshadowed a new concept of public museum. Even though the initial collection of the museum might be based on private collections, the initiative itself originates from one person – or usually a group of persons – expressing a concern for public education and the advancement of science. This type of museum took root in Central Europe during the early nineteenth century as Landesmuseum. With an emphasis on cultural history (including folk art) and natural sciences, these museums expressed the nationalistic pride of the autonomous regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The first of its kind was the Hungarian National Museum (Budapest). Started as a national library (founded in 1802), it soon developed into a national museum (1808). Its focus was national with a collection documenting the prehistory, history, and natural history of the country (Korek 1977). The museum founded in Graz in 1811 by Archduke Johann – hence called Joanneum – became the model for a series of Landesmuseen in the Austrian Empire, such as the ‘national’ museums of Brno (founded 1817), Prague (founded 1818), Ljubljana (founded 1821), and Innsbruck (founded 1823) (Wagner 1977). The collections cover the natural history, ethnology, archaeology, and cultural history of the region. As documents of the natural and cultural characteristics of the regions, the collections were instrumentalised in the process of achieving national autonomy.

Elsewhere in Europe, similar tendencies can be observed. The Norsk Folke-museum at Oslo (founded in 1895) was said to be ‘a monument erected to the evolution of our race, to the development of national thought and culture’ (quoted in Bazin 1967: 195). It is no coincidence that the museum was founded shortly before Norway separated itself from Sweden. Finnish resistance to the policy of Russification was behind the creation of a national museum in Helsinki, founded in 1893 and opened in 1916, just before independence.

In the course of the nineteenth century, following the creation of the national museums, new museums were established on a provincial level and in major cities in many countries of Europe according to the model of the Landesmuseum. By the foundation of these museums, an important role was usually played by local or regional learned societies. In the 1820s and 1830s, many English antiquarian, philosophical, or natural history societies decided to turn their collections into a public museum. The ideal-typical learned society museum was constructed around four basic components: lecture hall, library, collection, and laboratory (Mellinghoff 1977: 87). One earlier example is Teylers Museum (Haarlem, the Netherlands), established in 1778, and opened to the public in 1784. The museum, now a museum of the history of science, was created as a science centre *avant la lettre*, focussing on

contemporary concerns as to natural sciences and technology, but also on contemporary art. Part of the present collection consists of instruments that are designed for conducting research and giving public demonstrations, for example about electricity.

## **AWAY FROM ENCYCLOPAEDIC IDEALS**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the museum field was basically dominated by two types of national museums: more or less specialised art museums and encyclopaedic museums covering a wide range of subject areas, combining cultural history and natural history. One century later, the encyclopaedic ideal was declared obsolete. Many encyclopaedic museums had been split up in a series of more specialised museums, a tendency that would continue during the twentieth century. At the eve of the twenty-first century, however, the encyclopaedic ideal witnessed a revival. The classical encyclopaedic museums proudly present themselves as ‘universal museums’, while large numbers of specialist museums seek cross-disciplinary collaboration. New museums have emerged with an integrated, multidisciplinary profile.

In discussing the creation of a national museum in the 1790s, the revolutionary government in Paris deliberately decided to break away from the model of the encyclopaedic museum. Visions of transforming the Louvre into ‘a physical encyclopaedia of knowledge’ (McClellan 1994: 92) were not adopted. Encyclopaedic schemes remained paper proposals as ‘last gasps of an Enlightenment dream’ (McClellan 1994: 93). The new Musée de la République (created in 1792) did not follow the model of the British Museum. Instead, in the early years of the new state, four specialised national museums were established: the Musée de la République (in the Louvre), the Muséum National d’ Histoire Naturelle (1793), the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers (1794), and the Musée des Monuments français (1795), all in Paris. The French example was followed in many countries. Despite increased specialisation, in many publications even today a basic distinction is still being made according to the French scheme: art museums, natural history museums, museums of science and technology, and history museums.

The specialisation and branching off collections involve complex disciplinary and political issues. This will be explored for two types of collections: art and anthropology.

Throughout the nineteenth century, it was not common practice to include the works of living artists in the collection of major art museums. In Paris, the Musée du Luxembourg was transformed into ‘a sort of novitiate for the

Louvre' in 1818 (Bazin 1967: 216). In the Netherlands, a museum of contemporary art was created in Haarlem (1838). Other examples of nineteenth century contemporary art are the Neue Pinakothek at Munich (opened 1853), the Nationalgalerie at Berlin (opened 1876), and the Tate Gallery at London (opened in 1897).

The tension between museums and contemporary art resulted, in the early twentieth century, in the creation of museums of modern art, following the model of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Many museums started to neglect their nineteenth century collections. The last decades of the twentieth century showed a revival of the museological interest in art of the nineteenth century. Former nineteenth century contemporary art museums were revamped, such as the Nationalgalerie at Berlin (re-opened in 2001). In addition, new museums were created to fill the gap between Old Master collections and Modern Art, such as Musée d'Orsay at Paris (opened in 1986), and the Neue Pinakothek at Munich (opened in 1981). At the same time, tension grew between the concept of modern art and contemporary art. New museums were created to host the newest developments in art, such as Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart (Berlin 1996), Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (Helsinki 1998), Palais de Tokyo, and Site de Création Contemporaine (Paris 2001). After the allocation of Palais de Tokyo (Paris) as a site for contemporary art, the question was raised as to whether there should be a clear demarcation line between the profiling of this site in relation to the Musée National d'Art Moderne. The idea of becoming a museum of the twentieth century, i.e. a museum of the past, was unacceptable for the staff of the MNAM.

A mixture of pragmatic, opportunistic, scientific, ideological, and even nationalistic criteria was used to legitimise the demarcation line between the collections. In London, it is simply the year 1900 that separates the collections of the National Gallery and Tate Modern. The same pragmatic solution is used in Stockholm for the Nationalmuseum and Moderna Museet. The creation of the Musée d'Orsay (1986) in Paris, however, brought about serious discussions about its chronological boundaries, involving the country's leading intellectuals including President François Mitterrand. In considering the position of Classicism and Romanticism in the Louvre, it was clear from the start that the Musée d'Orsay could not be the museum of the entire nineteenth century. But where to start? The reference date became 1848, which is a political and not an art historical key date. The Musée National d'Art Moderne starts its collection with Henry Matisse and the Salon d'Automne of 1905 when the nickname Les Fauves was introduced. The date automatically became the end date for the collection of Musée d'Orsay, but the museum increasingly tends to use 1914 as reference date, which again is not a date with any art historical relevancy.

The definition of Modern Art is not without nationalist connotations. Whereas the French Musée National d'Art Moderne starts with Les Fauves, the Spanish Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia at Madrid (opened to the public in 1990) starts with the presentation of surrealist painting as new phase in art history. The German Pinakothek der Moderne (Munich) starts with German Expressionism.

The second example concerns anthropology collections. Many anthropology collections were once connected to natural history collections (and some still are). For example, part of the collections of the Musée de l'Homme (1937) originated from the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Paris). Thus, the museum combined physical and cultural anthropology, which was reflected in the theme of its exhibitions, such as *Tous parents tous différents* and *6 milliards d'hommes*. When the natural history collections of the British Museum were moved to a new building in South Kensington in order to form the Natural History Museum (1883), physical anthropology moved with the zoological, botanical, and geological collections, while cultural anthropology stayed behind to be branched off later as Museum of Mankind (1970). The profile of the Musée de l'Homme was, therefore, very different from the profile of the Museum of Mankind.

In 1968, the ethnographic collection of the Musée de l'Homme was branched off to form the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires. In 2005, this museum was closed to become a part of a new ambitious project: the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, to be opened in 2013 at Marseilles. The re-organisation of collections reveals a political agenda. More than in many other countries, the presidential political agenda sets the parameters for museum policy in France. It was President Chirac who wanted to develop the Musée du Louvre into a real museum of world cultures. The Musée du Quai Branly is the result of the resistance of the director and staff of the Louvre to accommodate part of the collections of the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie. As a consequence, Egyptian archaeology in the Louvre is shown alienated from its African context, as in most archaeological museums. As a compromise, a few rooms in the far end of the south wing show the 'Arts d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Océanie et des Amériques'. On the website of the Louvre, no information can be found about these rooms. It is even almost impossible to find the rooms on the interactive map on the website. The British Museum makes a completely different statement. By recalling the Museum of Mankind in 2004, the British Museum was able to present itself as a museum where cultures from all parts of the world are presented at an equal level: 'a museum of the world for the world' (the museum's tagline in 2010). The plan to reconstruct the former Stadtschloss in the very centre of Berlin and to bring the ethnographic collections from the suburb of Dahlem to this building, show a similar ambition: the extended Museumsinsel as the museological centre of world cultures.

## IDENTITY MUSEUMS

The Landesmuseum was the model for the documentation and (re)presentation of the own region. Knowledge of the natural and cultural characteristics of the region served as a vehicle of regional identity. During the nineteenth century, this concept was further decentralised. A new generation of an encyclopaedic museum emerged: the local history museum. The archetypical continental local history museum is the German Heimatmuseum. By the end of the twentieth century, the Heimatmuseum concept was actualised (and, in fact, revolutionised) in rural areas in the idea of an ecomuseum, while the concept was transplanted into an urban context as a neighbourhood museum. In Germany, urban neighbourhood museums are in a sort of self-irony called Heimatmuseum. It appears that decentralisation (i.e. geographical specialisation) resists disciplinary specialisation. This is also the case with museums that represent specialisation beyond territorial specialisation. Such museums are often referred to as ethnic specific museums, but this category also includes identity museums such as Jewish museums, women museums, gay and lesbian museums, etc.

The Landesmuseum concept offered, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a model for the documentation of the regional and local identity. A specific concept for presentation was offered by Alexandre Lenoir's Musée des Monuments français. This model became increasingly influential, even though the museum itself was abolished in 1836. Lenoir's synthetic approach by creating assemblages of works of art and decorative art to evoke the spirit of historical periods was refined in Alexandre du Sommerard's Musée de Cluny (1833), which is also in Paris.

One of the first museums outside France with a national ambition emphasising national identity, using the synthetic approach of Lenoir and Du Sommerard, was the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nürnberg. This museum became the model for a whole generation of cultural history museums realised around 1900. Examples of such 'agglomerierte Museen' (Joachimides and Kuhrau 2001: 12) are: the Schweizerisches Landesmuseum at Zürich (opened to the public in 1898), the Bayerisches National Museum at Munich (1900), the Märkisches Museum at Berlin (1906), and the National Museum of Finland at Helsinki (1916). The museum building is a pastiche of several national, regional, or local building styles and building types in order to achieve harmony between the building and collection: religious objects should be shown in a chapel, arms in a weapon hall, etc.

When the new Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam) was built in the 1880s, the ground floor was reserved for the Nederlands Museum voor Kunst en Geschiedenis (Netherlands Museum of Art and History). Its collection profile resembles the Germanisches Museum. The architect of the Rijksmuseum,

Pierre Cuypers, designed the galleries according to the architectural schemes of the 'agglomeriertes Museum' (Van der Ham 2000: 184). Hardly twenty-five years later, the concept of a cultural history museum was rejected. The newly appointed director of the Nederlands Museum in Amsterdam, Adriaan Pit (1897), decided to whitewash the rooms, remove plaster casts, and focus on art rather than history (Van der Ham 2000: 203–204). His decision echoes the opinion of Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy one hundred years before. Quatremère de Quincy did not like the *Musée des Monuments français* because it 'kills art to make [art] history' (McClellan 1994: 195).

Even though period rooms remained popular throughout the twentieth century, it was not until the end of the century that local history museums re-introduced evocative approaches in their exhibitions. These evocative approaches did not fall back on earlier nineteenth century models, but rather connected to models developed in a new type of museum that emerged in the late nineteenth century: the ethnographic open air museum. The first ethnographic open air museum was Skansen near Stockholm, which was created by Artur Hazelius and opened to the public in 1891. Open air museums introduced a new approach to collecting and exhibiting. As in the nineteenth century 'agglomerierte Museen', open air museums use evocative contextualisation but emphasise a high degree of authenticity. Ethnographic open air museums can be considered as offshoots of the International Exhibitions phenomenon. Rural houses and furnished rooms symbolised nationality based on folk sovereignty (Stoklund 1993: 111). The attractiveness was enhanced by costumed persons, preferably persons from the same rural area as represented by the houses.

In the United States, the European ethnographic open air museum concept developed into historical open air museums. As 'living history', the American approach started to in turn influence ethnographic open air museums and history museums throughout Europe.

The development from evocative assemblages to detailed, naturalistic representations required adapted collection policies. When living and acting persons are introduced, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between 'objects belonging to the collection' (not to be used) and objects that have been acquired or made to be used. The collection policy of a museum needs to deal with both kinds of objects.

The youngest generation of identity museums may not even want to acquire tangible objects. Increasingly, the emphasis is placed on personal stories. To share these stories, museums may not need exhibitions in the traditional sense. In this respect, websites challenge the idea of museums as frameworks for collecting, preserving, and communicating intangible heritage.



*Contrary to common belief,  
collections are dynamic.  
The history of museums  
in the nineteenth and  
twentieth century shows  
a continuous shaping and  
reshaping of collections  
following disciplinary  
and political agendas.*

## PROFESSIONALISATION

Specialisation cannot be isolated from the increasing disciplinary control of professionals. Even though princely and other wealthy collectors may have employed professionals already as far back as the sixteenth century, the emergence of the public museum resulted in the creation of a new professional field: museum work. Museums were increasingly run by hired staff rather than persons who considered their employment as an honorary position. In art museums, the first professionals were artists who were gradually replaced by art historians. For example, the first director of the Kaiserliche Gemäldegalerie in Schloss Belvedere (Vienna), Christian von Mechel, was a painter, as were his successors. An art historian was not appointed until 1911 (Haupt 1991: 9). The same practice can be seen throughout Europe.

At the time of the creation of the national art museums, there was no consensus about their profile. Art critic Jean Clair referred to the discussion of the early nineteenth century by using the dichotomy between an intensive museum and extensive museum (Desvallées 1992: 62). This dichotomy acts on two levels: the level of disciplinary specialisation (art museum versus encyclopaedic museum), and the level of selection (masterpieces versus contextual approaches). The first arrangement in the Louvre was intensive; the paintings were organised 'deliberately to dazzle the beholder, to create a spectacle revealing the full extent of the nation's artistic wealth' (McClellan 1994: 106). After renovation between 1797 and 1799, the museum reopened with an art historical arrangement according to schools (McClellan 1994: 139).

Taxonomic arrangements became the standard way of organising collections in museums, thus contextualising individual objects from an academic point of view. In fact, taxonomy, i.e. the practice and theory of classification, was considered the essence of museum work. George Rathgeber, director of the ducal museum at Gotha, may have been the first to use the term museology for this (Desvallées and Mairesse 2005). In a preface to his catalogue of the numismatic collections of the ducal museum, he defined museology as the study of the proper arrangement of works of art in collections. As such, museum work made essential contributions to the development of science. While working on private collections in Italy, Johann Joachim Winckelmann developed a classification model for antique sculpture. His masterpiece, the *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), formed the basis of the arrangement of most of the European collections ever since, by replacing thematic schemes as in the Museo Pio-Clementino (Rome). Winckelmann inspired Christian von Mechel to develop his classification model, based on the distinction between schools. Von Mechel successfully arranged the collection of the Imperial Picture Gallery in Schloss Belvedere at Vienna in 1781. Von Mechel's arrangement became the standard model for art museums. Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus worked on several private natural his-

tory collections in the Netherlands. His rich knowledge of animals and plants resulted in *Systema Naturae* (1735), a classification model that was very soon adopted by all natural history museums. As the curator of the antiquities department of the National Museum at Copenhagen, Christian Jürgensen Thomsen developed the three-age system in archaeology: stone age, bronze age, and iron age, which was published in 1836.

The examples show that Christopher Whitehead's observation 'that the curatorial act to representing art history in museum display... was actually constitutive of certain intellectual approaches and practices of art history as a discipline' (Whitehead 2007: 48) holds true for many other disciplines as well. As such, the specialisation of museum collections supported the development of many disciplines, but also contributed to the boundaries of disciplinary study by isolating groups of objects from other forms of material culture or nature (Whitehead 2007: 58).

The second time the term museology was explicitly used to refer to museum related practice and theory is in Philipp Leopold Martin's *Praxis der Naturgeschichte* (1869–1870). Martin's textbook discusses collecting, preservation, and exhibiting in natural history museums and zoological gardens. Part Two is called 'Dermoplastik und Museologie' and describes how to mount animals for display (taxidermy) in realistic poses and settings (Dermoplastik). The term museology is not defined, but it is obvious that Martin uses the term in a similar way that the term 'muséographie' is used in France, referring to the practice and theory of making exhibitions.

The two different uses of the term museology illustrate how the profession is in search of its identity. While by the 1870s the museum as an institution had established itself, the profession had not. The third documented use of the term museology, however, indicated that some widely shared opinion emerged concerning the definition on the museum work as a profession. The *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Museologie und verwandte Wissenschaften* (later *Zeitschrift für Museologie und Antiquitätenkunde sowie verwandte Wissenschaften*), was the first journal promoting museology as an academic discipline. It was published in 1878 by J.G.Th. von Graesse, director of the Grüne Gewölbe at Dresden. The journal was discontinued in 1885 when Von Graesse died (Hilgers 2005: 7). In 1905, a new professional journal was again published in Dresden, *Museumskunde. Zeitschrift für Verwaltung und Technik öffentlicher und privater Sammlungen*. The publisher was Karl Koetschau, director of the Historisches Museum Dresden. In 1917, the journal became the official journal of the Deutscher Museumsbund, founded that year by Koetschau and others (Hilgers 2005: 8). In the meantime, in the United Kingdom, the Museums Association was founded as the first national association of museums and museum professionals. In 1902, it started to publish *Museums Journal*.

With regard to its concern for the duties and rights of the museum professionals, the Deutscher Museumsbund was the first national organisation to adopt a code of ethics. In 1918, it published a code of behaviour towards art-dealing and the public: *Grundsätze ueber das Verhalten der Mitglieder des Deutschen Museumsbundes gegenueber dem Kunsthandel und dem Publikum*. The code can be seen as an expression of a tendency to find a balance between techniques and professional behaviour, on the one hand, and to service and society, on the other hand.

This search for a balance is a part of the authorised and hegemonic discourse that has been described by Laurajane Smith as the ‘Authorized Heritage Discourse’ (Smith 2007: 5). Professional associations, their code of ethics, their journals, handbooks, and training courses provided the parameters of this discourse. This discourse was very much influenced by two American museologists: George Brown Goode (assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution) and Benjamin Gilman (director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston). Their publications inspired many European museum directors. In some respects, Brown Goode and Gilman represent two conflicting views on the purpose and method of museums. In his *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method* (1918), Gilman explains why he does not agree with Brown Goode. ‘The essential nature’, Gilman writes referring to fine art museums, ‘is not that of collections of abstractions illuminated for us by examples [as in science museums], but that of collections of concrete things introduced to us by ideas’ (Gilman 1918: 80). As a consequence, ‘a museum of science is in truth a collection of labels *plus* illustrations; but a museum of art is collection of objects *plus* interpretations’ (Gilman 1918: 81). Gilman refers here to Brown Goode’s frequently quoted statement: ‘An efficient educational Museum may be described as a collection of instructive labels, each illustrated by a well-selected specimen’ (Brown Goode 1895: 40).

Despite their differences, both authors agree on the principles that define the modern museum, i.e. the museum that has emancipated itself from the sphere of dilettantism and connoisseurship. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the principles, as outlined by Brown Goode and Gilman became canonised as ‘Authorised Museum Discourse’. This canonisation process was more or less completed by the publication of the proceedings of the *Muséographie* conference, organised in 1934 by the International Office of Museums. This study conference was held 28 October – 4 November 1934, in the Académie des Beaux-Arts (Madrid). The seventy participants (mostly museum directors) discussed the architecture, installations, display, organisation of collections, etc. Since the emphasis was placed on the practice of museum work, preference was given to the term *museography*. The term stood for an inventory of contemporary best practices.

Gradually, the term museography started to be used for museum practice in general, as opposed to museology referring to museum theory. Even though this terminology is not used in a consistent way throughout Europe, museum professionalism developed within the framework of the triangular relation between practice, theory, and ethics. In the profiling of the museum profession, the increasing number of museum related university programmes played an important role. The first museum studies programme was offered by the Ecole du Louvre (founded in 1882). This programme was most of all a curatorial programme with a strong subject matter orientation. By the mid 1970s, the role of the curator as a leading professional in a museum was increasingly being challenged by the so-called new professionals. The professional profile of these new professionals reflected the emancipation of the museographical disciplines i.e. collections management, conservation, exhibition design, and education. The organisational structure of museums changed accordingly. Collection based, curatorial departments were replaced by a functions oriented structure. One of the first regular training programmes preparing students for this new situation was the Dutch Reinwardt Academie (founded in 1976 in Leiden and, since 1992, in Amsterdam). The programme does not focus on curatorial responsibilities, but offers specialisations in the field of collections management, conservation, exhibition design, and education.

The danger of a fragmenting profession in turn brought about a (re)new(ed) interest in a museum related theoretical framework as well as a general code of ethics for all museum workers. It is no coincidence that the International Committee for Museology of the International Council of Museums was founded in 1976. In addition, it was also no coincidence that during the first years, museologists from Eastern Europe played an important role in this committee. Due to the specific political situation in Eastern Europe, museum studies programmes were forced to develop museum related theoretical frameworks to underpin a genuine Marxist-Leninist museum practice. Important centres of museological training and research were Zagreb (Ivo Maroevic) and Brno (Zbynek Stransky). The Brno school of museology met with international recognition (mainly in Eastern Europe, but also in Western Europe) thanks to the publications of the International Committee for Museology, but in particular due to the International Summer School of Museology (founded in 1987). The model of Brno was followed by the Baltic Museology School (based in Riga, Latvia) and the International School of Museology (based in Celje, Slovenia).

## INTERNAL EDITING

One canonised principle of the modern museum is the bipartite concept (Bazin 1967: 263), the separation between a collection for the public and a collection for researchers and connoisseurs, which is usually referred to as a reserve collection. Brown Goode (1895: 38–39) proposed to separate exhibition series (the People’s Museum) from study series (the Student’s Museum). Gilman spoke in this respect of a dual arrangement (Gilman 1918: 401). However, whereas according to Brown Goode the study series should not be accessible to the general public, Gilman suggests that, as in public galleries, reserve collections should also be ‘open to anyone wishing to enter’. This agrees with the concept of open storage, visible storage, or study collection as a part of a tripartite museum model.

The principle of internal editing was one of professional principles discussed during the *Muséographie* conference (1934). Even though the conference focused on the architecture and installation of art museums, a separate chapter was dedicated to the concept of ‘collections d’études’. By distinguishing between study collections and storage, the tripartite model was followed.

At the end of the twentieth century, new interest was shown to the role of open storage (Pes 2002). George Henri Rivière modernised the concept in the *Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires* (Paris, 1972) by adopting a mutually complementing thematic approach in the ‘galerie culturelle’ and the ‘galerie d’étude’. An updated version of Rivière’s ‘galerie d’étude’ is the collection centre. An example of this is the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum at London (built 2006–2009).

The report of the 1934 *Muséographie* conference mentioned a fourth category of collections: the ‘collection didactique’, a collection of copies. The Cast Courts of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (created in 1873) are a good example of such an educational collection and, at the same time, a good example of the changing popularity. In the mid-twentieth century, the collections were considered obsolete. Because of overdue maintenance, the rooms were closed to the public. In 1982, however, the casts were cleaned and the rooms restored. Similar renewed interest in cast collections are seen in Berlin (*Abgussammlung antiker Plastik*, re-opened in 1988) and Paris (*Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine*, opened in 2007). This renewed popularity in collections of copies also shows in the foundation (in 1987) of an International Association for the Conservation and Promotion of Plaster Cast Collections ([www.plastercastcollection.org](http://www.plastercastcollection.org)).

## MUSEUM EDUCATION AND IDEOLOGY

To Brown Goode as well as Gilman, museums were educational institutions by definition. Their publications present an elaborated ideal model for museums of the twentieth century. Both authors were aware of the fact that the reality was often different. As Gilman wrote: 'Museums of fine art began by subordinating their role of showing to their role of keeping.... This was the magazine era of museums, when they were built and arranged with chief preference to the preservation of their contents' (Gilman 1918: 309). However, Gilman is equally opposed to the contemporary practice of 'subordinating their role of showing to their role of teaching.... To the magazine era has succeeded... a school era'. 'The primary aim of exhibitions of art' according to Gilman, 'is to bring it about that certain artistic intentions shall be apprehended by the spectator' (Gilman 1918: 310). In this respect, Gilman's ideals were shared by a number of leading museum directors of the early twentieth century. Gilman for his part was influenced by the German museum director Alfred Lichtwark. As director of the Kunsthalle at Hamburg, he was one of the founding fathers of museum education. He believed that the German schools emphasised knowing facts about art at the expense of understanding how to look at and appreciate art. Lichtwark made it his life's work to change the German educational philosophy and system and, therefore, to change the Germans themselves. In 1903, he was one of the speakers at the 'Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätten' conference at Mannheim, organised by the Centralstelle für Arbeiterwohlfahrtseinrichtungen (Central Bureau for Welfare-Work, Berlin). The conference was an important step in the development of the social museum concept. Social museums, or also called people's museums (Volksmuseen), were museums that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century with the special purpose of educating (and emancipating) the lower class. A part of these museums was founded by social-democratic inspired persons and organisations, but another part had a strong conservative-nationalistic signature (Kuntz 1980).

During the early twentieth century, the concept of a social museum radicalised, basically in two directions. In the Soviet Union, a network of local social museums was created. The profile of these museums was not very different from the most common German version of a social museum: the Heimatmuseum, even though their political orientation was different. In both countries, social museums became the backbone of the ideological museum infrastructure, but the ideologies (communism and national socialism) increasingly affected the work of other museums as well, from natural history museums to art museums, from history museums to anthropological museums.

The lasting impact of state ideology on art museums has been the subject of many academic studies, but also still plays a role in collection research in individual museums, and not just in Germany and Russia, but also world-

wide. Concerning Germany, two issues should be mentioned here: the removal of 'entartete Kunst' (degenerated art) from museum collections and the looting of museums in Nazi occupied countries, as well as the confiscating of Jewish cultural property.

'Entartete Kunst' was a term used by the Nazi regime to describe almost all modern art. These works of art were banned because it was considered un-German, and dangerous as being cosmopolitan, deranged, negrified, and inspired by Jews and Bolsheviks (Ginzkey Puloy 1996: 202). 'Entartete Kunst' was taken out of museum collections and was first put together for a traveling exhibition that started its tour in Munich in 1937. After this exhibition, most of the works were sold through Swiss art dealers for the disposal of foreign currency. Therefore, the works of art became widely dispersed over the world, leaving painful gaps in German museum collections. From any museums in occupied territories, important objects, sometimes even whole collections, were transported to Germany. However, most of all, Jewish private collections and museums were confiscated or at least acquired by forced sale. All of these looted materials were either sold in Switzerland, added to the private collections of Nazi leaders, or selected for the to be newly built huge art museum in Linz, the Führermuseum (Anderl and Caruso 2005).

In 1945, the American forces collected all the looted works of art that they could find in Collection Points to be restituted. National committees started the process of the recuperation of national treasures. The restitution of private (Jewish) cultural property and the property of (former) Jewish museums was not always properly dealt with. Many works of art ended up in collections of national museums. Other works of art ended up in museums in Israel or in the ownership of Jewish institutions elsewhere in the world (Gallas 2008: 214). It was a complex situation: who was the rightful claimant especially when the actual owner did not survive the concentration camps? In 1995, in his book *Le Musée Disparu (The Lost Museum)*, Hector Feliciano drew attention to the unsatisfactory way in which the restitution of Jewish private property was handled in France. This prompted governments, museums, and descendants of the former owners to reconsider the procedures followed in the years after the war. Provenance research, in particular concerning acquisitions in the 1933–1945 period, has become standard procedure in many art museums all over the world.

At the end of the war, the Soviet Army annexed many cultural treasures of museums in the part of Germany that they controlled, including cultural property that was stolen from Soviet museums, which the German authorities had expropriated from Jewish private collectors and that was 'bought' from Jewish art dealers. The Cold War complicated any discussion about restitution. Collections originally coming from the territory of the German Democratic Republic were little by little returned, but even after 1990, much is still unclear.



## WHO OWNS HERITAGE?

The discussions around restitution and the return of looted and expropriated cultural property essentially circle around the basic question: who owns heritage? From the late 1960s onwards, public ownership was no longer by definition ranked higher than private ownership, national collections were not automatically considered to be more important than regional or local collections, and capital cities of former colonial powers should not, by nature, be the rightful location to show world heritage.

The political changes in Central- and Eastern Europe since the late 1980s created new dilemmas. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia brought about difficult discussions about ownership and mutual heritage. The new independent states claimed treasures that they considered to be theirs for their own national museums. New nationalism also gave rise to claims that referred to the political geographies of a much earlier date. The political map of this part of Europe did considerably change in the course of the twentieth century, in turn initiating the re-invention of national identities. At the same time, the role of the state as the owner of all the nation's heritage is being challenged. Monuments and other heritage that was confiscated after the creation of the socialist states are now increasingly being claimed by the former owners, private owners, and institutions such as the Church alike.

On a local level, respect for ownership – individual or collective – was one of the cornerstones of the concept of an integrated museum. The concept was proposed at the Round Table on the Development and the Role of Museums in the Contemporary World, which was organised by UNESCO in Santiago, Chile in May 1972. Integration refers to (1) the integration of the academic disciplines that are related to the subject matters' fields, (2) the integration of the museographical disciplines, and (3) the integration of museum and community.

The principles of the integrated museum reflect the principles that are outlined by the UNESCO *Recommendation on participation by the people at large in cultural life and their contribution to it* (1976). According to the *Recommendation* 'participation by the greatest possible number of people and associations in a wide variety of cultural activities of their own free choice is essential to the development of the basic human values and dignity of the individual' (UNESCO 1976, Preamble). This awareness has led to significant developments in the following decades, from the more politically engaged grass roots initiatives, such as ecomuseums and neighbourhood museums, to the constitution of a critical museology or a reflexive museology.

The concept of an ecomuseum (formulated in 1971 by Hugues de Varine and George Henri Rivière) is about the relations – and the development of these relations – between people, their heritage, and their environment. It became one of the most important concrete expressions of an integrative approach. Heritage is very close to the notion of place, including the history of inhabitants and things, what is visible and what it is not, tangibles and intangibles, memories and the future. The emphasis is placed on the availability of these resources, and not on assembling them in storehouses. In other words, ecomuseology is about shared responsibility, and respecting the existing ownership.

New demands created by, for example, policies on social inclusion (which brought the work with community development closer to traditional museums), by emancipation movements and by the growing multiculturalism, contributed to the opening of a new chapter in the relations between museums and society. It is possible to say that the 1990s represent a turning point in the application of a new participation paradigm in the museum and heritage field. Following the disappearance of the distinction between users and producers on the Internet (Web 2.0), the new paradigm in museum work has been referred to as Museum 2.0.

***Museum professionalism***

***developed***

***within the framework of***

***practice, theory, and ethics.***

Collection development according to this new paradigm can be described as ‘new collecting’ (Kok 2009: 55). Three forms of ‘new collecting’ can be identified:

- The museum does not collect objects, but interactions;
- The museum participates as an equal within a heritage community;
- The museum acts as a platform for individuals and groups to collect their own heritage.

The first form of ‘new collecting’ starts from the assumption that, in certain fields, private collectors have achieved a high level of sophistication. The role of the museum is to support these collectors, for example by taking care of storage, conservation, and restoration, but also to create new meaning by using the collections for curatorial exhibitions.

The second option refers to museums as functioning in networks of private and institutional collectors, but the owners of objects are also still in use. In 2005, in its *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (also known as the Faro Convention), the Council of Europe introduced the term heritage community for such a network. According to the convention, a heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage that they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.

The third approach emphasises the role of source communities. Most ‘new collecting’ projects are self-documentary; these projects intend to give people the opportunity to share their stories, providing a platform for the attribution of meaning. However, in more recent projects in the Netherlands and Germany, ‘new collecting’ also means working with the public as a co-curator. In these projects, museums take on the role of a facilitator, rather than authority. Laurajane Smith’s ‘Authorised Heritage Discourse’ refers to the dichotomy between professionals and source communities. Participation projects illustrate the contemporary practices of liberating culture from this discourse (Kreps 2003). The ‘New Heritage Discourse’ advocates co-creation and co-curatorship. ‘By identifying and naming the material and non-material elements that constitute their environment, people realize their right to their world and gaining control over it’ (Kreps 2003, 10).

## **RATIONALISING COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT**

In the second half of the 1980s, the influence of the rapidly rising art prices on the collecting policies of museums received quite a lot of media attention. There was, however, little understanding of the true acquisition costs, or the long-term financial consequences of acquisitions. In 1988, the British Office of Arts & Libraries commissioned an enquiry into the costs involved

in the developing and managing of museum collections. The results were published in a report in 1989, *The Cost of Collecting*. Besides for mapping the different kinds of costs, it also tried to gain some information as to the height of these costs and the respective differences related to the kind of collections and the type of museums.

This approach to collecting and collection development is an example of an increased rationalisation of museum work from the end of the 1980s onwards. This is also shown by the discussion about developing rational criteria to raise the use value of collections. The example of a rationalised collecting policy that is quoted most often is the SAMDOK project in Sweden. This collaboration of Swedish museums was started in 1977 to record contemporary Swedish society methodically and systematically by means of collections and documentation. Its starting-point is to distinguish a number of sectors in society and to divide these sectors into areas for special study. A number of aspects from each of these areas is scrupulously documented by some of the collaborating museums.

Collecting leads *ipso facto* to a growing collection. Contrary to what has happened in the library world, little research into the nature of collection growth has been conducted in museums. Obviously, until the middle of the 1980s, the museum world did not feel – or refused to feel – growth to be a problem. After a number of surveys, notably the investigation into cultural history collections, the Netherlands Museums Association devoted a meeting in 1988 to the issue of quality and quantity. It was the start of a national debate on de-accessioning. In the meantime, most of the museums in the Netherlands have accepted deaccessioning as a tool for collection development, not in the least because clear guidelines have been developed. In the United Kingdom, similar discussions, with similar outcomes, have taken place. This illustrates an important shift in perspective concerning the theory and practice of collecting. Not collecting but rather collection development is the main focus in contemporary museology.

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## **COLLECTION STRATEGIES**

### **NOW!**

Most museums appear, for the public, merely as collections. The museum field has changed, museum collections have evolved drastically, especially the relation between collections, museum professionals and the public, but museum people are still mostly seen as collection keepers and collectors. The psychiatrist Henri Codet (1921) assesses collecting as an occupation that does not 'necessarily' represent a mental defect. Whilst good care has generally been taken to draw a clear distinction between the 'noble' activity of the collector or the museum and that of the mentally ill, it must nonetheless be recognised that 'healthy' collecting can get out of hand and come across as a symptom of mental deficiency. Compulsive hoarding is thus one of the symptoms associated with obsessive compulsive disorders (Neziroglu, Bublick and Yariura 2004; Tolin, Frost and Steketee 2004; Mertenat and Girardin 2009). The house of a compulsive hoarder bears no resemblance to a home, most of it having been invaded by collections of papers, boxes, rubbish and the most incongruous of objects. The hoarder has been taken over by his or her collection, which he or she is no longer able to manage, but to which he or she cannot prevent him or herself from continuously adding. Some museums cannot escape this risk, as their galleries, and even more so their storerooms, sometimes bear a striking resemblance to pathological collections.

There is no denying that the development of the collecting practice, which was dealt with in the previous articles, is not devoid of a certain number of problems.

## COLLECTION ISSUES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Along the same lines as the general situation of the 1950s, it has essentially been the 'unlimited growth' type of museum scenario (like Le Corbusier's architectural model) that has tended to prevail, leading to the major extension of most of the existing museums of the 1980s and, more generally speaking, to a two-fold increase within a quarter of a century in the number of museums worldwide. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, five specific issues would appear to be emerging as a result of this development, raising questions for the institution and its collecting practices.

### The museum – an obsolete technology?

The major investment pumped into museums, as well as their relative current popularity, is no immediate guarantee of their continued development. As a technology inherited from an eighteenth century model based on the material study of collections, the way in which museums operate now finds itself challenged, particularly by new technologies and architecture.

For some, the emergence of new information and communication technologies marks a radical turning point in the way in which we read images, with many observers wondering whether museums can survive the shock of the advent of the Internet and the digital age (Deloche 2007). The creation of new *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memory), to use the expression coined by Pierre Nora and picked up on by Peter van Mensch (2005), swings in with this movement towards more or less immaterial, more or less authentic and more or less scientific collections. It is clear as to what sway television and the new media hold over the younger generations. Whilst museum visitor numbers are obviously related to their potential to adapt to these new modes of reading, we have to admit that their very 'raison d'être' as places for preserving collections and conducting research is also being challenged by the digital revolution. We could even go so far as to ask whether the physical presence of collections in museums does not perhaps hamper systematic scientific analysis: sometimes, digital databases seem more beneficial than the classical study of objects, as computer analysis produces stronger statistical results (Deloche 2001).

The great extent to which museum popularity now depends on their relationship with architecture should also be pointed out, as it has major consequences on the future of museums and their relations with collections. Tourist activity has established itself within post-industrial societies as a major branch of the economy, which is so brilliantly reflected by the spectacular new constructions intended to house museums that have emerged in the wake of the 'Bilbao effect' and the success of the beautiful building conceived by Frank Gehry for Guggenheim undertaking (Werner 2005). How-

ever, the success of these new venues has much less to do with their actual collections than with their superb architecture and their ability to offer the passing tourist a pleasant visit. The Jewish Museum of Berlin (conceived by Daniel Libeskind) was inaugurated empty. Visitors used to come to see beautiful objects and collections; except some landmark cultural relics such as Mona Lisa, Van Gogh's sunflowers or the Rosetta Stone, they almost do not see them anymore. If these new museums are supposed to represent the future of the museum field, aren't the collections themselves sometimes superfluous?

### Too much stuff, too much technique

Compulsive hoarding stalks museums, as consumption society produces more and more objects, and encourages the feeling of an unlimited museum growth – as the global economy is mostly based on this axiom. The recent economic crisis and, even more so, the measures to be taken against global warming are also an invitation to revisit the collection issue from a different angle. Seeing as we have gotten as far as imagining a de-growth economy, should we not also be considering 'de-growth museums'?

The museum/sustainable development relationship does not simply boil down to saving energy or organising exhibitions on climate change (Brophy and Wylie 2008; Museums Association 2008). It raises questions about the very cornerstone of the museum, in other words the collection and the principle of accumulation. Generally speaking, museum collections tend to follow a continuous growth curve from the moment of their creation (around 1–2% per year (Lord, Lord and Nicks 1989)). This growth principle has long dominated the Western world, its economy in particular. Nonetheless, many scientists concerned about environmental issues are starting to wonder about the limits of such growth prospects, which require ever-increasing amounts of energy. Whilst sustainable development demands a rethink of our patterns of consumption, there can also be no denying the fact that current-day modes of operation in the museums (and their principle of accumulation) are also at issue. Isn't there just *too much stuff*? (National Museum Director's Conference 2003).

This general principle aside, there is also the fact that the techniques for preserving and conserving collections are also becoming increasingly expensive. The emergence of a new category of museum professionals, during the 1980s – museum registrars – and its regular development, linked with the development of museum preventive conservation methods, might explain the much better standards for collection care, but also the higher costs that such methods represent. Even if the size of the collection remains constant, the cost of managing collections is shooting up, whether in terms of storage equipment, maintaining the hygrometric climate, filtering the air, light, re-



**Why should  
all the objects  
be preserved  
when they can  
perfectly well  
be documented?**

ording and describing the collections or even curative conservation and restoration techniques. What is more, collection management funding is difficult to find, as public gratitude remains weak for such invisible investments. Whilst 'heritage is recognizable by the fact that its loss constitutes a sacrifice and its preservation demands sacrifice' (Babelon and Chastel 1980), the question of the sacrifices to be made in order to maintain it has reared its head again – sacrifices that not everyone is prepared to make.

**Collections as assets**

For some years now, the appointment of MBA-qualified managers in museums has to some extent boosted the possibility of collections being seen as 'assets' like any other (Miller 1997; Heal 2006). 'There have been several cases in the United States where museums have used their collection as a guarantee against a loan. Against this backdrop one wonders whether, with the current practice of disposal, there is not the risk of over-stepping a limit', sums up Peter van Mensch (2008). This is probably one of the most controversial issues as far as museum management is concerned. The sale of major works from the collections of the Jefferson University in Pennsylvania or the Abright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo has sparked criticism within the museum world, which has enjoyed wide press coverage (Morris 2007). The current financial crisis, which is hitting US museums full force, has rekindled tensions. 'Collections are not just any assets!' proclaim not only museum

directors but also a certain number of US political leaders. Some economists would claim, however, that they are (Grampp 1989). The thought that some political leader or another might pick up on such an idea, however ridiculous it may be, represents a more major concern for many museum directors.

### **Poorly managed collections**

Therefore, with collections becoming ever more expensive, what is their pay-back if they cannot be sold without sparking controversy? This is a question that arises for museums as a whole: if they bring in no money (since they are non-profit making), what do they actually yield and how can it be measured? Generally speaking, the performance indicators (Ames 1990; Weil 1995) and economic assessments (Hendon 1979; Martin 1993), which attempt to provide an answer to this question, focus on the museum's activities. However, what of the collections? If there is a preference for not taking their market-estimated monetary value as the sole criterion, how can their 'activity' be estimated? Whilst their main purpose, at least for the public at large, is to be exhibited, the fact is that a mere 20% of their collections are on display, and for some science museums that figure drops to less than 1% (Lord, Lord and Nicks 1989). So what's the point of the rest? Not everyone is satisfied with the answers provided by the professionals (studies, research, subsequent reassessment, etc.), one of the major objections being that reserve collections are relatively useless since they are often badly managed (Heritage Health Index 2005; Richert 2003). The general trend on investments gives priority to visible aspects and events, two characteristics that are not easily applied to storeroom management. It is difficult to provide convincing answers on the use of collections if it is not possible to demonstrate familiarity with them and ensure their management.

### **To whom do the collections belong?**

At first sight, museum collections belong to the public domain (national, regional, etc.) or the museum itself where it is set up as an association. The demands of the Native Americans in the United States or Canada, but also those of societies living in Australia, New Zealand or the Far North, have nonetheless given rise to a relatively important policy of returns, a major milestone being the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA), signed in 1990 (Mihesuah 2000; Robson, Treadwell and Gosden 2007).

Witness also the calls of several countries for the return of objects collected under questionable circumstances. The case of the Parthenon marbles or the bust of Nefertiti are just two highly publicised examples of what is a much wider controversy (Cuno 2008), and the response from the major museums, which hinges on 'the importance and value of universal museums' (ICOM 2004), is far from convincing all parties.

Sometimes the public also become involved, for example over the sale of an object from the collection (Dercon 2001). Museum staff long believed that once the collections were bought, the museum took full ownership of them. However, nowadays, this hypothesis is being increasingly challenged in the face of lobbying groups and social networks – ever more easily mobilised through the Internet.

## THE EMERGENCE OF NEW STRATEGIES

Obviously, most of these issues are not of particularly recent date (Fahy 1995), but they are being expressed ever more forcefully. Various strategies have gradually emerged in the face of all the questioning.

### The immaterial collection

Why should all the objects be preserved when they can perfectly well be documented? Can digital documentation solve the problems created by museum collections? New technology for developing museum databases and creating cyber-museums has allowed remarkable progress to be made (Hemsley, Cappellini and Stanke 2005; Kalay, Kvan and Affleck 2008; Parry 2010). The practice of documentation obviously goes back much further; it relates to substitutes and pure documentation. There is a whole continuum of possibilities between the original work and its indirect description by writing: moulding, copying, photo, etc.

Paul Otlet is one of the fathers of librarianship and documentation. At the turn of the twentieth century, this Belgian scholar launched the idea of a systematic compilation of all the library catalogues around the world before gradually turning to the entire range of information supports, including museum collections (Otlet 1934; Gillen 2010). Using all of the collections available worldwide (books, archives, photographs, museum objects), Otlet thus designed a fully organised form of documentation, a *sine qua non* condition for the development of the science. The launch on the Internet (of which Otlet is often quoted as one of the forerunners) of massive databases such as *Europeana* or *Google Books* is part and parcel of this desire to collect all manner of objects, more or less well digitised and described. It has been some thirty years since the possibility of shaking off the fetishist reasoning of the material collection in order to retain only the most essential information started to be discussed (Deloche 1985).

However, through its simple presence, a collection of material objects allows for a different perception, linked to the senses rather than to understanding. Through its very presence and its *aura* (Benjamin 1939), the ‘real thing’ still

differs in quite obvious fashion from the digital copy. However, the differences between these two worlds are getting smaller, as witnessed in 3D films and other holographic methods, for example. A few years down the line, will it not be possible to satisfactorily (or more satisfactorily) digitally capture an object to the extent that retaining it in material terms becomes superfluous?

Digital collections, in place of material ones, present some interesting features: space savings, easier management potential, digital analysis or modelling, etc. It should however be stressed that, far from providing a panacea, digital material is still also very fragile (much more so than an archaeological potsherd!), requiring highly sophisticated and expensive conservation protocols in order to ensure its preservation. In any case, digital collecting may well prove to be equally compulsive: as digital documentation appears sometimes as a bright solution for space and money saving, the temptation exists to develop a collection on unlimited perspectives, exactly in the same way as the unlimited growth scenario that used to be preeminent in the museum sector. However, within a couple of decades, some people might ask again if there is not 'too much stuff'.

### The sustainable collection

Technology is definitely not a solution in itself. This means, therefore, that the answer is largely to be found in man's attitude towards the collection issue. Thus, many museums have already taken measures on an individual and responsible basis to ensure the long-term management of their heritage, avoiding any compulsive tendencies.

By way of tribute to a great British museologist, Tomislav Šola gives the name of 'Hudson's law' to the relationship between the size of a collection and its poor management – the bigger it is, the worse it becomes (Šola 2004: 252). It was in full awareness of the shortcomings of its reserves that some years back the Smithsonian Institution published a study on collection management in handbook form, which has become a reference in its field (Neves 2005). Two essential points are addressed at length therein: planning methods and the direct link between acquisition and disposal. More than any others, the questions relating to collection management require a strategic long-term vision, based on an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses relating to collections and on an analysis of the general context within which they evolve. There is not much difference between these principles and general strategic planning rules (context analysis, SWOT, vision, mission statement, defining strategic lines, operational plans, performance indicators, etc.). 'There is an emerging consensus in the United States that museums ought to have formal, written, board-approved collection plans that create a rationale for how they shape their collections' (Merrit 2008: 17). Whilst such procedures may sometimes not produce any results – simple rhetoric on the

part of the manager – there is no denying that they can also act as a backup for the implementation of a genuine collection management policy.

As a forerunner of this reasoning, the written collection policy on the acquisition, protection and use of collections, which every museum is required to draw up under the ICOM's code of ethics, could very well morph into a genuine 'collection management plan' as already exists in a large number of museums (Van de Werdt 2009). Somehow, such a management plan gives the occasion to all museum stakeholders to share and present a common view on the collection. The board and sometimes public authorities might be tempted to sell the 'useless stuff in storerooms', when curators and, mostly, conservators would sometimes protest to dispose even but one of them. However, conservators and registrars also know that (following the Hudson Law) the standards of collection care might also depend on the size of the collection. The task of the collection management plan appears thus useful for reaching a global balance between acquisition wishes, collection care technology development, collection costs mastering and sometimes disposal issues: different points of view that are not at first sight shared by all museum people.

The prospect of the global management of collections implies not only enriching them but also the possibility of 'refining', thus disposing of them. The principle of a responsible collection is based on the need to make choices, not being afraid to tackle the tricky issue of disposal. The principle of disposal, which has been accepted in some countries (generally of Protestant origin and maybe as such less influenced by the cult of relics) including Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and the United States, is banned and widely contested in many other countries that are fervent supporters of inalienability, such as France, Italy or Spain (Sénat de France 2008). The recent move to bring the principle of collection disposal into French law met with tough opposition; the bill was doomed to failure (Rigaud 2008; Clair 2007).

In *Concern at the Core*, a single chapter deals with both acquisition and disposal policy; thus the two are intrinsically linked. Besides for 'traditional' acquisition policies, several other alternative methods are also examined (shared acquisition, rental, acquisition by the community, documentation, etc.), and it is within this framework that disposal appears as the logical continuum of a consistent acquisition strategy. If it is to be accepted across the board, disposal policy somehow hinges on demonstrating that the collection is completely under control (showing that one knows what has to go and for what reason). The main objection put forward as a barrier to disposal is, therefore, a practical one – sometimes it proves too expensive, because it is less a case of selling or destroying than of documenting, assessing, removing from the inventory, transferring and, doubtless in the not-too-distant future, ensuring object 'traceability'. However, only thus is it possible to con-

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that used to be preeminent  
in the museum sector.*

stantly maintain the trust the public places in the museum institution. There is no doubt that disposal matters are more easily dealt with when they affect multiples (manufactured objects, common natural specimens) rather than unique objects. Indeed, there are actually few radical opponents to the disposal of cheap objects, of which several copies are known to exist. As far as the actual physical removal is concerned, destruction or exchange, in particular prevail over public or private sales. Such methods are regularly used in libraries (the term *weeding* is used) and archives (for which rather specific sorting methods have been implemented).

In Europe, the Netherlands is one of the most advanced countries on the disposal front. Following a national conference organised on the subject in 1999, the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage was appointed to draft a new code of ethics intended to regulate any sort of deaccessioning procedure and setting out in detail how objects are to be selected, the method of transfer (priority being given to the object remaining in the public domain), documentation of the procedure, the possible use of sale income, etc. (Bergevoet 2003; Bergevoet, Kok and de Wit 2006; Kok 2007; Timmer and Kok 2007). The *LAMO* – the guide that emerged from this approach – has become a widely used tool over the years for the profession. Great Britain has also long been tackling this issue as it considers its long-term collection policy (Wilkinson 2005; Wilkinson and Cross 2007), and has adopted an active mobility strategy (loans, exchanges, etc.), and a disposal practice, as shown by the guide intended for this purpose (Museums Association 2007).

In any case, the idea of a lasting and responsible collection is based on the need to possess in-depth knowledge of the context and the will to make choices. Knowing the context involves recognising the aforementioned problems; and as for the choices to be made, disposal definitely does not always look like a panacea. However, there is no doubt that the museum, just as in the world, is not of unlimited growth.

### **The national collection**

Whilst every museum strives in some way or another to responsibly manage its own collections, and some public initiatives have also been taken in order to jointly manage this type of issue.

The economies of scale to be achieved by sharing premises have incited several authorities to come up with joint collection management solutions. Obviously, it is often the national museums that come under the same organisation that have benefited first and foremost from such an infrastructure. The first shared operations initially focused on photographic documentation, analysis and restoration before the collections themselves were actually physically transferred. The idea of physically grouping reserves together

really took hold once the museums themselves, spatially challenged, had exhausted all other more or less temporary solutions. The first step in the case of a museum was to construct a building bringing the reserve store-rooms, inventory, restoration and loans teams, which are often scattered across various different locations, together in premises adapted for the purpose. This led to the emergence of several specific construction projects, such as in Paris (National Conservatory of Arts and Trades), Zurich (Swiss National Museum), Quebec (National Reserve), etc. The possibility of pooling and sharing between several museums can obviously only be considered in the second stage. Thus, the Louvre and the Ministry of Culture recently launched a project for a reserve and restoration centre in the Parisian suburbs that is intended to bring together the reserves of several of the capital's museums. Such initiatives are likely to develop in the future. From a practical point of view, the legal set-up (ownership of collections in particular) is of the essence as concerns the joint management of collections. It is obviously more difficult for museums to gather their reserves under one roof when they are supervised by different authorities.

Logically enough, this train of thought has gradually been furthered at the supranational level. It was with this prospect that the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (Icrom) was set up at the ninth session of Unesco in 1956. European competence (jurisdiction) on cultural matters is known to be quite limited, so it is hardly surprising that European policy in this field is thin on the ground. It would appear that, at a national level, it is from thinking about documentation that the idea of a European collection might emerge. At the moment, documentation is also necessarily considered from the essentially digital perspective. Indeed, the *Digicult*, *Minerva* and *Michael* programmes, and then *Europeana*, the portal that brings together highly diverse digital documents (films, books, engravings, photos, etc.) from European heritage, currently only provide a rather timid response when compared with the major work being carried out by Google on its digital library or for *Google Earth*.

As such, public instigation looks to be the logical route for seeking solutions. The regional or national level will doubtlessly long remain the driving forces behind most policies for jointly settling issues such as the creation of joint reserves and common collection management teams. However, the regional and national levels in a global world are definitely not the ultimate decision authorities any more. Following national libraries' last developments, it appears that regional or national solutions will not prove sufficient, and that multinational, European or world solutions are being found via Internet and public (or private) initiatives. Acquisition policies are evolving in order to reduce redundancy among libraries, and exchange standards have been adopted for a long time. Although it will no doubt take longer and prove more difficult, it appears equally that it is at this supranational level that cer-



tain museum collection issues such as restitution demands, exchanges, the standardisation of loan conditions (the Network of European Museum Associations or NEMO has an important role in this respect), long-term loans, etc. in a nutshell, collections mobility, can be dealt with optimally.

### **Franchised collections**

In some ways, the phenomenon of setting up franchised museum branches as an offshoot of some major museums is part and parcel of the same reasoning that is aimed at improving the management and use of collections. Playing a role that is comparable to that of multinationals in the face of small-scale producers in the private sector, some seriously big museums – the Guggenheim, the Louvre or the Hermitage – have embarked in a blaze of publicity upon an extension and brand-franchising policy in all four corners of the earth. The phenomenon goes back much further (as witness the branches of the Tate Gallery), but the arrival of Thomas Krens at the head of the Guggenheim Foundation in 1988 marked the start of a new era.

The implementation of these projects, as well as the resounding echoes that they receive in the press, is revolutionising former practices. ‘If the Guggenheim Bilbao adventure appears as a success story, why not us?’ seemed to think some museum directors but, moreover, public governments. As former branches were launched with educational and outreach goals, new ones were mostly initiated in a touristic, diplomatic and economic perspective. Thus, within the space of just a few years, whilst a branch of the Hermitage had been set up in Amsterdam, the mining town of Lens in Nord-Pas-de-Calais was chosen in 2004 as the site to host the Louvre 2. Two years later, a three-year partnership was established with the High Museum of Atlanta for the staging of temporary exhibitions of several of the Louvre’s masterpieces. Discussions then got underway towards the setting up of a Louvre in Abu Dhabi, including making the ‘Louvre brand’ available for thirty years, assisted by collections from other French museums.

This special collection strategy, adopted by a restricted but very well-known group of major museums, is highly controversial. As certain economists and politicians see it as a wonderful opportunity to valorise underused collections (Levy and Jouyet 2006), many curators or scientists comment on it as a real threat, a ‘something rotten in the kingdom of museums’ that put the institution in total contradiction with its previous educational and preservation aims (Clair 2007; Rykner 2008). Even without any deontological consideration and from an objective point of view, would it really be possible to make better financial use of under-exploited collections? Actually, all museums are far from being equal in this game, which is essentially based on wagers concerning hypothetical economic income from tourism, and the game seems restricted to a couple of dozens of *superstar museums* (Frey and

Meier 2006). Not everyone has Tutankhamun's mask, the Elgin marbles or the bust of Nefertiti – which also makes it easier to understand why the latter are being demanded with such insistence.

### The network collection

On their own initiative, many museums did not wait for the public authorities or the lure of the market before striking up numerous partnerships between themselves or with other establishments, even with the public itself.

The pioneering attempts at joining forces and mutual assistance through the creation of forums for discussion and exchange should be credited to the first museum associations, which date back to the late nineteenth century. The many reports (*Collections for the Future*, *Making collections effective*, *Guide to collections planning*, etc.) drafted at the initiative of the Museums Association, the American Association of Museums or the ICOM, to name but three, show the role that such associations can play at the national or international level. When associations and public authorities get their heads together, organisations specifically dedicated to collection management (*Collection links*) or inter-museum meetings are regularly set up in order to facilitate exchanges or long-term loans. The *Museums Journal* circulates proposals for disposal or for exhibition circuits. The *Museum loan network*, founded in 1993 in the United States and housed in the John Nicolas Brown Center, proposes a catalogue of almost 20,000 objects from 400 museums available for long-term loan. The method developed by *Samdok*, created in 1977 by the grouping together of cultural history museums with the aim of documenting Swedish society, also deserves particular attention (Samdok 2007; Fagebörg and Unge 2008).

The launch of the Internet gave collaboration a tremendous boost. The development of alternative worlds, like *Second Live*, has led to the creation of new sites on the Web, some of them started by institutional museums (Science Museum, Exploratorium, Newseum, etc.), others at the initiative of DIY surfers (Davies 2007). A large number of digital collections have also been assembled thanks to the joint contributions of institutions or amateur surfers. All of these hybrid networks ascribe to the principle of exchange, mainly based on a community initiative as expressed on the 'web 2.0'. It is common knowledge that the 2.0 operates largely on the basis of highly advanced participatory elements: it is no longer up to the webmaster to circulate the information on his or her own, but rather up to each individual surfer to react to or produce content as the writer of their own blog or as a more or less anonymous collaborator in a joint project. The nature of *Wikipedia*, from the name of the famous collaborative encyclopaedia, represents a remarkable challenge for the institutions hitherto seen as the guardians of 'knowledge', such as museums, universities or libraries. The changes in the relations of authority, the principle of a research community that no longer

***The principle of  
a responsible collection  
is based on the need  
to make choices,  
not being afraid to tackle  
the tricky issue of disposal.***

extends exclusively to established scientists but instead includes everyone according to a more or less sophisticated corrective mechanism, represents an upheaval, the consequences of which will only gradually be revealed to us.

The 2.0 principle also produces repercussions in terms of collection management. The idea of sharing management between the entire community is nothing new and lies at the very heart of the new French museology. 'The museum as we see it gradually taking shape cannot have curators. It only has players – all those who live in the community. Individually or jointly, it is they who own the museum and its collections.' (Varine 1973: 246) This type of programme, utopian in part, has not always been followed and most ecomuseums have developed collections. Some museums, however, have drawn on a similar logic to propose programmes that include the people. The 'Heritage at Home' initiative developed by the Quebec Museum of Civilisation suggests that individuals who might wish to donate an object to the museum should document it and include it in a general database on the condition that the families retain it, following the advice of the museum professionals. In some ways, the idea of jointly managing heritage (professionals/ community) has something of the reasoning of any museum faced with the heritage of native peoples (American Indians, Aborigines, etc.) and for some years now this model, which is tending to assert itself (in Canada, the United States, Australia or New Zealand), has been drawing on the sharing of traditions and management. Are such procedures not going to be envisaged in most museums on an ever more regular basis?

## LOOKING FORWARD

Museums are undergoing considerable development. It is true that the world is also facing upheavals, the influence of which is being genuinely felt on their collections. 'It has been understood that museums are made for collections and that they should be built from the inside out, so to speak, shaping the container to fit the contents', wrote Louis Réau (1908:158) a century ago. That type of statement is no longer accepted. It is now the public, visitor or consumer, depending on the point of view one chooses to adopt, who stands at the heart of the museum. The visitor's knowledge or experience could also take that place, but the material collection sometimes seems to be conveyed here and there outside the museum. The classical museum, a legacy of the Enlightenment, sometimes has the air of an obsolescent technology in the face of the new experiences proffered by the new technologies, but also in the face of changing views on heritage.

Although many collection-related issues exist, some museums, organisations or public authorities are coming up with fresh solutions. There is no doubt that all of the attempts described here and linking-in public, market processes as well as donations, will give rise to future methods of collection management. These will probably take account of two essential elements: the audience for which they are intended, and the objects. In addition, both are becoming increasingly intelligent! Minority demands (native peoples, small states, pressure groups) in terms of managing a heritage that they believe belongs to them is no doubt just the visible tip of a similarly enormous whole, of which it would appear that the museums will have to take increasingly regular account, particularly through digital social networks, both as regards exhibition content (Dubin 1999) and for collection management. Some years hence, objects could also be deemed increasingly autonomous, even talkative (Sterling 2005). Admittedly, they will never be more than the outcome of human activity, but this human activity is constantly enriching them. Since most manufactured objects are currently linked to a barcode that provides information, particularly from the Internet, and the new RFID chips to be attached to them could connect them directly to portable terminals (computers or telephones, GPS systems, etc.), it would seem logical that a few years down the line storeroom reserves could also enjoy these technological advances and, therefore, through their own site archive their past, their condition and their journey around the world.

Technology opens up some amazing prospects, but it does not do away with choice. When all is said and done, humankind – people, the community, the planet – still has the upper hand; for better or for worse.

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PART TWO

MUSEUM OBJECTS AND  
ACTIVE COLLECTIONS

## **PROMOTION TO HERITAGE:**

### **HOW MUSEUM OBJECTS ARE MADE**

The English expression ‘museum piece’ has two meanings. Its overt and straightforward meaning is that of an object that is, or that deserves to be, preserved and made available to an audience for their edification and delight. The other meaning is ironic – that the object is no longer of any use, and that it is old-fashioned, dysfunctional, and needs to be disposed of. What is interesting about the phrase is that in both senses – the overt and ironic – it emphasises the non-utility of the object: in the straightforward sense, it is something to be removed from the everyday and placed in the care of an institution whose task it is to preserve it for posterity; and in the ironic sense, it is to be discarded. This expresses the special nature of objects in museums: that they leave the functional everyday environment of use and are placed in a special environment where they serve an entirely different purpose, are treated in a very different way, and are consequently thought about and understood in a new way. The process is one of removal from the mundane world, in which things decay, to a special realm where things exist in perpetuity.

### **PROMOTION TO MUSEUM STATUS**

Studies of museums that emphasise the visitor, tourist, audience, and customer response to exhibitions and displays rarely address the preceding question: why do people visit museums at all? Rare attempts to answer this question in turn founder on the complexities of the educational differences between social categories and degrees of relative poverty. Nick Merriman’s important UK study was able to establish that even non-visitors to museums

displayed an interest in the past (albeit a different one from frequent visitors: Merriman 1991: 22 and 127–129). However, he was unable to identify the source of that interest. This section will attempt to address that question by taking as its starting point an idea that I have addressed elsewhere (Carman 2002: 96–114) and that has been reasserted by Merriman (2004): that the public nature of museum collections is precisely its separation from visitors and tourists. Such an idea is usually interpreted to mean that museum objects have been appropriated from the public and put to selective use at the service of a social elite (e.g. Smith 2006). There is, however, an alternative way of understanding this: that museum objects instead represent something beyond the individual, which is not reducible to mere questions of individual or sectional ownership. It is instead a form of corporate saving by the community, and such saving, as Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1979: 37) put it, develops ‘a full-fledged otherworldly morality, for the [community] outlives its members’. In drawing on ideas about value from anthropology, philosophy, and sociology, a different way of understanding museum collections can be derived.

### **Michael Thompson and Rubbish Theory**

Thompson (1979) introduces the notion that there are three categories of value into which any material can be placed: *transient* things are those of which the value is decreasing over time; *durable* things are those of which the value is increasing over time; and things with no value are *rubbish* (Thompson 1979: 7–9). At some point in their career, transient items are likely to find that their value has dropped to zero, at which point they become rubbish. Rubbish is interesting material because, in general, it is a category of objects deemed by cultural convention to be invisible. Rubbish consists of all the unpleasant and nasty things that we do not wish to think about or to discuss and that, when we do encounter them, we look away or pretend that they are not there. Those rubbish objects that force themselves onto our consciousness despite our best efforts are upsetting and dangerous: they are materials out of place, which challenge our conceptions of how things should be arranged (Thompson 1979: 92). This makes rubbish doubly interesting, for items that were once transient and have become rubbish can re-emerge from invisibility, challenging our assumptions about the world and forcing us to reclassify them and accordingly re-ordering our world (Thompson 1979: 45).

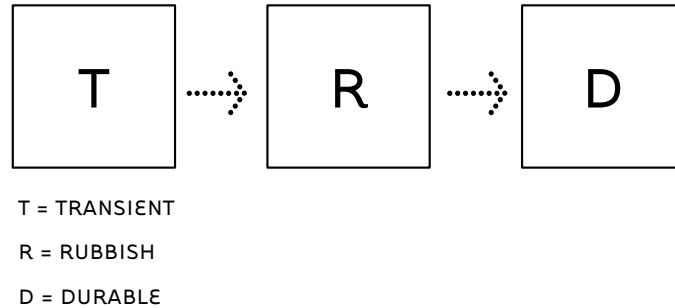
Thompson’s insistence on the strict application of his narrow definitions of the three value categories are important to the scheme, for they determine the kinds of movement from one value-category to another that can and cannot take place (Thompson 1979: 45). Since durable objects have a constantly increasing value, they cannot become either transient or rubbish, both of which require falling value. Transient items are decreasing in value and so can become rubbish, but they cannot become durable, which de-

**Museums make  
the objects that they hold  
just as much as the  
holding of collections  
makes a museum.**

mands increasing value. Rubbish has no value, and accordingly the value cannot fall: rubbish cannot become transient objects. Transient items, however, can become rubbish since their declining value can ultimately reach zero; and rubbish that does not, by cultural convention, exist can become durable if it is manipulated and reworked to re-emerge from invisibility into our consciousness so that a new value can be placed upon it. Thompson lists several examples of this process: an old car, inner-city housing (transformed from a slum to a period townhouse by the actions of ‘Knockers Through’), Stevengraphs (a kind of Victorian kitsch decoration), and the country house at Grange Park in Hampshire (Thompson 1979: 13–18, 19, 40–50 and 96–98).

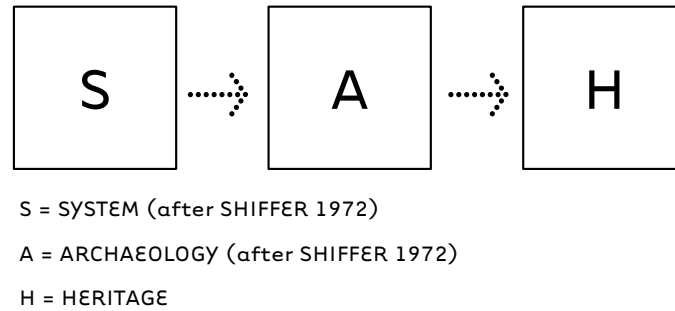
In its delineation of transfers from one value category to another, Thompson’s theory of the role of rubbish in turn mirrors the route by which material enters the concern of the museum curator. In the particular context of archaeological material, Michael Brian Schiffer (1972; 1987) outlines the process by which objects cease to be part of a ‘systemic context’ in the past and enter the ‘archaeological context’ as refuse, from which they are retrieved by archaeologists in the present: such material may then become part

Figure 1: THE RUBBISH THEORY TRANSITION TO DURABLE



of an archive (frequently on deposit in a museum) or part of a display in a museum case. This process is identical to the transition from transience to durability via rubbish delineated in *Rubbish Theory* (Carman 1990: 196). In the past, 'systemic context' objects have a transient use value: they are made, used, re-used, and disposed of. Once disposed of as refuse, they may be classified as rubbish; at some point, they will in any case *become* rubbish in Thompson's terms since they will cease to be visible. This may be because of the physical circumstances of disposal (what Schiffer calls an 'N-transform', by which natural processes affect the physical fabric of the object, causing it to be damaged or buried) or because of deliberate deposition in a location in which it is invisible (such as a grave) and subsequent forgetting (*per* Schiffer a 'C-transform', or cultural process) (Schiffer 1972). Once invisible and forgotten, the object is part of Thompson's *rubbish* category. Upon retrieval, the ancient object is given a new value in a new context. It becomes important as a means of approaching the past. This is the transition from rubbish to durable, from ancient remnants to something that we call heritage (Carman 1990; 1996).

Figure 2: ARCHAEOLOGY AND RUBBISH THEORY



### **Jean Baudrillard and The political economy of the sign**

Baudrillard identifies four contemporary ‘codes of value’ that he designates by convenient abbreviations (Baudrillard 1981: 125) and which, he argues, occupy spaces in the different socio-economic realms of production and consumption (Baudrillard 1975). Use value (UV) and economic exchange value (EcEV) represent values operative in the realm of production, and also the realm of traditional political economy, where ‘objects are primarily a function of needs and take on their meaning in the economic relation of man [sic] to his environment’ (Baudrillard 1981: 29). Sign exchange value (SgEV) and symbolic exchange value (SbE), however, represent values operative in the realm of what he calls ‘the political economy of the sign’, representing ‘the value of [the] social prestation of rivalry’, which he distinguishes from that of *economic* competition (Baudrillard 1981: 30–31, emphasis in original).

Baudrillard further identifies twelve possible conversions from one value code to another, all of them occupying spaces in one or other of these realms or providing for the transfer between them (Baudrillard 1981: 123–125). Of these, only two (UV–EcEV; and its reverse EcEV–UV) represent the processes of political economy – the conversion from use value to exchange value and back, which is the equivalent of the commodity phase in an object’s life cycle (Appadurai 1986: 15). A further conversion (UV–SbE) represents the promotion of material to the symbolic realm: this includes such processes as the gift-giving of special items such as engagement-rings (Baudrillard 1981: 61–69), public and official presentations, the potlatch, and the art auction (Baudrillard 1981: 112–122); it coincides with the notion of the movement of items into the space of the museum as in *Rubbish Theory* (Thomp-

Table 1: AN EXTRACT FROM BAUDRILLARD'S CONVERSION TABLE

Value transformation	Description	Realm of activity
<b>UV – EcEV</b> <b>EcEV – UV</b>	Use value – economic exchange value Economic exchange value to use value	POLITICAL ECONOMY
<b>UV – SbE</b>	Promotion to symbolic value	
<b>SbE – UV</b> <b>SbE – EcEV</b> <b>SbE – SgEV</b>	Return from symbolic value	COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

VALUES

UV = use value; SgEV = sign exchange value; EcEV = economic exchange value; SbE = symbolic exchange value (Source: Baudrillard 1981)

son 1979). Three further conversions (SbE–UV; SbE–EcEV; and SbE–SgEV) represent the reconversion of symbolic value to economic/use value: this is ‘the inverse of consumption: the inauguration of the economic, a “cost [benefit] analysis” of the various codes of value’ (Baudrillard 1981: 125). It will be evident from this that the conversion of values between the economic and symbolic realms and within the symbolic realm is a much more complex process than that in the economic realm, which reflects the difficulty of understanding cultural heritage as a public phenomenon, which is the aim of so much research in the field (Carman 2000).

It is in the conversion of use value to symbolic value that the museum object is created. Things promoted to a special status such that they require to be treated differently from other classes of material occupy space in the realm of symbolic value. The realm of symbolic value – that of Thompson’s (1979: 103–104) ‘durable – withdrawn from circulation’, ‘eternal object’, and consequently the ‘heritage’ – is ‘not the sanctification of a certain object.... It is [always] the sanctification of the system [i.e. the category into which the object is placed] as such’ (Baudrillard 1981: 92). It represents a radical rupture of the field of value in which all other value codes are negated (Baudrillard 1981: 25). This is a realm of a generalised code of signs (Baudrillard 1981: 91), a ‘transgression of use value’ (Baudrillard 1981: 127, emphasis in original) so that any one object at once stands for any other object and simultaneously stands for the entire class of all actual and potential objects. This is a description of the symbolic power of the museum collection as a modern public phenomenon, unlike that of traditional political economy, which is the antithesis of the public realm of symbolic value representing the private domain of everyday life.

## Pierre Bourdieu and Distinction

In criticising Kant's philosophy of aesthetics, Bourdieu's (1984) *Distinction, a social critique of the judgment of taste*, attempts to relate the kinds of material world that are inhabited by different classes of people in France to their social and economic position. He defines the latter in terms of various kinds of capital that they have acquired by birth or during their life – economic (financial), cultural, educational – and relates this to the kinds of houses they live in, the work they do, the films and music they most admire, the kind of food they eat, and finally the newspapers they read and the politics they subscribe to. From this perspective, the two meanings of the term culture ('the restricted, normative sense of ordinary usage [on the one hand], and... the anthropological sense [on the other hand]') (Bourdieu 1984: 1)) are brought together and the appreciation of art and culture generally becomes a function of social position. For Bourdieu

the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of those who can be satisfied with the... distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed... to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences (Bourdieu 1984: 7).

Economic and cultural capital can be acquired in a number of ways: by birth, gift, or work. Together they represent aspects of one's *habitus* (or habitual way of acting in the world). Those born to wealth and privilege inherit not only economic capital in the form of money and property, but frequently also a seemingly natural sense of good taste and culture. Those born to the educated may inherit a sense of good taste and a knowledge of culture but not necessarily a great deal of economic capital. Those born to the rural poor are likely to inherit little of both. The process of formal education can increase the stock of cultural capital available, but this acquired taste and culture is (or at least in 1960s France, was) considered less worthy than that inherited at birth; the same often applies to the new money wealth of the tradesperson compared with that of the aristocrat. The least valued is the acquired cultural capital of the autodidact or self-taught person, which can claim neither to be the product of birth nor of conventional formal education (Bourdieu 1984: 85).

In the same way that some forms of personal wealth can be considered more worthy than others, such as inherited versus earned wealth, different forms of cultural capital are also often held to be more legitimate than others. The two forms of capital are thus alike. Moreover, they are convertible into one another. A person with wealth can purchase a greater measure of cultural capital by taking part in expensive cultural pursuits. Here, Baudrillard's designation of the art auction as a 'social prestation of rivalry' that he distinguishes from that of a realm of strictly economic competition (Baudrillard 1981: 30–31, emphasis in original) finds its referent: and of course the mu-



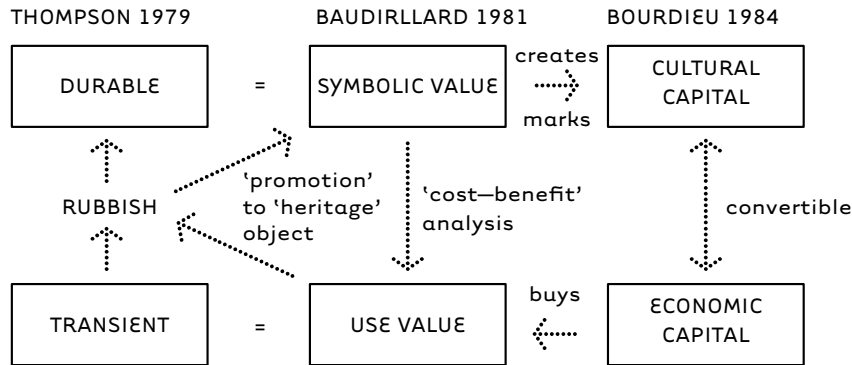
seum curator who purchases objects in the market is also actively presenting their ability to judge cultural significance to the world, not their wealth. Alternatively, wealth can buy a child's entrance into a prestigious educational establishment where legitimate good taste and culture can be acquired. At the same time, a high social position and its attendant stock of cultural capital but which carries no financial benefit may lead to employment with high earning potential and little actual labour. While the internal dynamics of each form of capital is identical, they nevertheless represent very different material expressions; but the relations between forms of capital also allow for their mutual transformation.

### Museum values

There are certain structural similarities between all three of Thompson and Baudrillard's ideas on value and Bourdieu's on forms of capital. Each scheme distinguishes at least two forms of their object, which represent different spheres of activity. At the same time, each scheme allows the transformation of one form into another. Since museum collections are here considered as material transformed out of the ordinary realm into that of another, special domain, it presents an opportunity to combine these schemes into a single system that aims to say something about the nature of museum objects. Central to this combined scheme is the notion of promotion, since museum objects have effectively been promoted out of the everyday world into that of the museum. In Thompson's scheme, 'durable' items are of higher status than 'rubbish' or the 'transient', since durable items are those with constantly increasing value. The more complex and abstract 'symbolic' realm of Baudrillard stands apart from that of economics, and is a space not of competition between equals but rather of 'tournaments' between rivals for social status (Baudrillard 1981: 30–31). From the perspective of cultural capital, mere economic capital represents the tawdry everyday rather than the higher appreciation of things of taste. In each case, the placing of an object in the category of the durable, symbolic, or cultural represents its promotion to a higher realm. These values are equivalents in terms of the categorisation of objects, and represent the status given to art and culture, the components of public heritage, including, at their heart, museum collections.

Cultural capital is the measure of appreciation of the symbolic value carried by the museum object, while economic capital allows the purchase of economic utility. The 'durable' and 'transient' values of *Rubbish Theory* (Thompson 1979) equate with Baudrillard's (1981) 'symbolic' and 'use' value realms, and the dynamic of *Rubbish Theory* provides a model of the process by which the conversion is achieved (see also Carman 1990). Objects with symbolic value both mark and serve to create a stock of cultural capital, and the conversion of cultural capital to economic capital is the process by which the symbolic value of the object becomes (by Baudrillard's 'cost-benefit

Figure 3: PROMOTION TO MUSEUM STATUS



analysis’) converted to use value that is capable of purchase. Economic capital (as financial wealth) allows the purchase of any commodity, including those with symbolic value. Here, the link between the various elements – capital and value – is access to either the capital itself or to the object carrying the appropriate value and representing the store of that capital. This extended model of the value schemes not only provides for the identical internal dynamics of each component and their mutual conversion within each scheme, but also their conversion across schemes of value. It is the transfer from one value-realm to another that lies at the heart of the creation of the museum object: and emphasises the fact that these objects are indeed *made* (albeit cognitively rather than materially) rather than merely *recognised*.

### ACQUIRED VALUES

If we accept this process whereby objects are promoted into the museum out of the ordinary, everyday world and their acquisition of new values, the question arises as to what these newly-acquired values are. This chapter suggests that there are three such values, each of which interrelates to the others in order to provide the aura that museum objects acquire.

#### Authenticity

Museum objects are held to be, in some sense, real. That is, it is deemed that they represent what they purport to represent, that they are proper versions of the class of object that they claim to be, and that they were not manufac-

tured simply to be mounted in the museum case (the latter would be replicas; and while it is not the purpose of this chapter to argue that replicas have no place in the museum, there are few – if any – museums in the world that will present replicas without admitting that they are not the ‘real thing’). In this sense, they are held to be authentic – not false, not fake.

As Tim Schadla-Hall and Cornelius Holtorf (1999) demonstrate, however, the notion of authenticity is a variable one and differs depending on context. They point out, for instance, the different measure of authenticity applied in aircraft circles from that of archaeology: a modern reconstruction of a now-disused aircraft from original plans and perhaps incorporating parts that were made at the time, but never included in a flying aircraft, will be considered perfectly authentic by aircraft enthusiasts; but to an archaeologist, such a reproduction is merely a flying replica, since an authentic such aircraft must have flown at the time such planes were current (Schadla-Hall and Holtorf 1999: 238–239). On the other hand, they emphasise the role of experience in establishing authenticity as a characteristic (Schadla-Hall and Holtorf 1999: 230, 236), reflecting Baudrillard’s (1981) discussion of simulacra: that the experience of a simulacrum is a real experience, but not an experience of ‘the real thing’. The experience of the museum object in the museum, of course, is just that – an experience of a museum exhibit, not of the object in its original context of production, use, or discard. Accordingly, while one can have an authentic experience in a museum, it is not an authentic experience of what the museum purports to demonstrate.

### Age

A related characteristic of the museum object is that of its supposed antiquity. As discussed above, museum objects have left the realm of utilitarian existence and entered a realm in which they are considered no longer available for use. In that sense, they always represent the past in some form – even though the object itself may be one otherwise still in common use. Both David Lowenthal (1985: 242) and John Tunbridge and Gregory Ashworth (1996: 8–9) point out that it is the assumption of age that is the critical factor, not actual longevity. The same principle applies to the museum object as to ancient monuments, which (at least legally) in Britain can be of any age: what matters is the ascription of other value (archaeological, historical, aesthetic, etc.) that allows the monument to be classed as ancient – and, therefore, worthy of preservation (Carman 1996: 112–113); on this basis, material from a mere few decades ago have been preserved as ‘ancient monuments’ alongside those from several millennia.

In a similar vein, when I was the curator of a small museum in the Fens of Eastern England in the early 1990s, the collection of ditch digging equipment that was on display – some of them representing types of tools that

were still in use – were described by a visiting schoolteacher as similar to those seen on television in a programme about African farming: the clear implication was that these were obsolete objects that were fit only for use by those living in the past. This is an example of what Johannes Fabian (1983) has called the ‘temporalisation’ of space, whereby those more distant from us geographically are rendered further back in time. The museum object is separated from us by being removed from the ordinary world of familiarity and use: placed in a museum case or on a museum wall, or in the reserve collection away from visitor contract altogether, it becomes something different and alien and, therefore, removed from us in space and time. Museum pieces – as in the ironic use of the phrase highlighted above – are inevitably deemed old.

### Cultural significance

Objects in museums are held to be of some cultural, archaeological, historical, or aesthetic significance. The reasoning, however, is a distinctly circular one: only those objects of such significance are held in museums; it, therefore, follows that a museum object must have this particular characteristic. Elsewhere (Carman 1996), I have argued that objects are given value rather than represent those that are immanent in them, and that is especially the case with archaeological material (an opinion generally shared by other archaeologists: see Briuer and Mathers 1996). It is the idea that lies at the heart of the model of value as presented above, whereby objects are promoted out of the everyday realm of functional utility to a place where they are preserved, kept away from those forces likely to result in their damage (such as exposure to air and light, and regular handling) and cared for in perpetuity. It is this special treatment that gives them the value they are ascribed, rather than the value they possess that requires this special treatment. Museum objects, therefore, acquire cultural status rather than merely represent it: here again, we see the active creation of heritage as a contemporary process.

### **THE MUSEUM OBJECT LAID BARE**

What, then, distinguishes the museum object from any other thing that we might encounter in the world? Essentially nothing distinguishes them – except the existence of one in the location of the museum and the other’s existence beyond its walls. By entry into the museum – by becoming ‘a museum piece’ – the object acquires characteristics and qualities that it previously did not possess: it becomes authentic by virtue of its eligibility for entry into the museum collection; it is rendered old by its removal from everyday use; and it acquires cultural significance by being placed among other such objects in the museum collection. This process of promotion from one

realm of thought and practice to another is what happens to all objects that find their way into public collections: even those objects specifically made for the purpose (such as art objects) go through a process of entry into the collection, which marks them as worthy. The specifics of the process are those that serve to define the institution making the collection: museums are known by the activities that take place within them: the holding of collections for research and education, the making of displays, and the public exhibition of those displays. Museums make the objects that they hold just as much as the holding of collections makes a museum. However, the unpacking of the museum as an institution, and interpreting its practices, is the task of others in this volume and elsewhere.

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**VALUE, VERITY, AND VALIDATION:  
THE INTERPLAY OF LEGAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS  
ON THE SECURITY AND MOBILITY  
OF ART AND ANTIQUITIES**

In recent years, legislators and lawyers have developed an increasing interest in the qualitative nature of cultural objects. A common question to arise from this development concerns the legal remedies that should be available to the owners of such objects. There is a mounting conviction that claims relating to objects of art and antiquity are worthy of special treatment and should be governed by principles distinct from those that regulate generic things.

The fruits of this scrutiny are often statutory in form. Many countries now possess, for example, legislation that prescribes the ownership and destination of discovered portable antiquities, or grants legal immunity from seizure to works of art imported for the purposes of temporary public exhibition, or commands the return by national authorities of unlawfully removed cultural objects to the countries from which they have been removed, or penalises the secondary offence of dealing in cultural objects that have already become tainted by illicit removal. Much of the modern mass of legislation is aimed at either equipping legitimately held cultural objects for global travel or raising the international drawbridge against works of imperfect lineage. It is an index of the social importance of cultural objects that legislatures in almost every part of the globe now dedicate such close attention to them, and that the protection and management of the material culture attracts so voluminous a body of specific legislation.

However, legislation is merely one of the forms in which the modern fascination with cultural objects finds expression. Case law also provides increasing recognition, in a variety of contexts, that such objects have a distinct if not unique character. To many judges, identifying the value of such objects may be a more subtle and complex exercise than a simple essay in economic assessment and the redressing of wrongs to such objects may attract special remedies or sanctions that would not ordinarily attach to everyday commodities.

The nature of art has engaged the attention of philosophers as well as jurists. Prominent critics in this regard are Immanuel Kant and Count Tolstoy. Professor Stephen Guest has suggested in (2002) *VII Art Antiquity and Law* 305 at 307 that the value of art:

... is to be found in the value of its own existence, *independent* of its doing *anything* for us. We admire art *because* of this independent value, and so admire it as 'art for art's sake'. Looking at art this way introduces us to art's *austere* quality, through which we respect art, not for anything it 'does' for us, but because understanding it properly requires understanding something of importance, perhaps *great* importance about the world. And so we say that we want to look at a painting by Van Gogh *because* it is wonderful, not that it is wonderful because we want to look at it. This way of looking at art borrows from the great German philosopher Kant, who not only asserted art's independent value, but took the point even further. The appreciation of art, he thought, was akin to moral appreciation and capable of expressing our highest aspirations.

In legal terms, perhaps the most obvious sphere within which the special character of art manifests itself consists in the remedies available to a claimant who complains of having been wrongfully deprived of a cultural object. If the court finds in the claimant's favour as the party entitled to the object, should it order the return of the object or simply require the possessor to pay compensation?

The answer depends on the nature of the object and its meaning to the claimant. In general, the court will grant the remedy of specific restitution, or specific delivery, against the wrongful possessor wherever damages would be an inadequate remedy. Where the contested object has a unique value that surpasses its mere economic worth, or is otherwise irreplaceable, or possesses some peculiar subjective value to the claimant, the court may decline the wrongdoer's invitation to compensate the claimant merely by an award of financial compensation, and will instead require that the specific object be delivered up. In the case of cultural objects, there are several classes of claimant who may be able to show the necessary special relationship with the chattel.<sup>1</sup>

A similar policy can be detected in the granting of remedies to the buyers of rare and distinctive cultural or historical objects. Whereas the normal remedy for a seller's failure to deliver, say, an agreed quantity of industrial commodities will be a judgment for damages, the seller of a distinctive cultural object may be required to deliver the exact object. This will be accomplished through a court order for specific performance. The rationale for the grant of such a remedy would be that damages alone could not adequately compensate the innocent party in question. A modern example is the Australian decision in *Smythe v Thomas* [2007] NSWSC 844, where the seller had agreed to sell to a private collector a 1944 Wirraway Australian Warbird aircraft. Rein AJ rejected an argument that the seller should be liable only to pay damages, saying 'in my view the nature of the subject of the bargain, which is not only a fine looking aircraft... but is a vintage and unusual item, leads me to conclude that the case is one in which... the relief of specific performance of the contract sought should be granted.'

Even where a court is compelled for some reason to award damages for the neglect or maltreatment of a cultural object, the peculiar relation between the claimant and chattel may justify the granting of a special sum, above the mere market value, to reflect its subjective importance to that claimant. Deliberate and perhaps even negligent wrongs to chattels that possess sentimental or 'heirloom' value may attract an additional amount, above and beyond the market valuation, to compensate for the distress, vexation and injured feelings suffered by the owner.<sup>2</sup> It would be interesting to see whether the public interest could be reflected in such an award, and whether a logic similar to that in the 'subjective distress' cases might persuade a court to grant a state or national museum a special compensatory sum, over and above the market value, to reflect the national iconic status of an object of vast public significance (such as the Crown of Saint Stephen) following its theft or destruction by an identifiable wrongdoer.

Other cases addressing other areas of obligation, both civil and criminal, reflect a similar sensitivity to the distinctive value of cultural objects. Three examples are offered in this paper, though many others could be cited.

In the landmark decision of the Court of Appeal in *Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran v Barakat Galleries Ltd* [2009] QB 22, [2007] EWCA Civ 1374, the fundamental question was the effect that the English court should give to the provisions of Iranian law that purported to confer on Iran the ownership of and the right of possession over antiquities that were allegedly buried on and illicitly excavated from Iranian territory. Inherent in this question were critical matters of international policy concerning the respect that a nation's heritage – the 'keys to its ancient history' – should command from its fellow nations. At para 2 of the collective judgment, Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers CJ expressed the Court's opinion thus:



**All museum practitioners  
should be equipped  
to anticipate and avert  
legal problems.**

The unlawful excavation and trafficking of antiquities has become very big business. In 1970 the signatories to the UNESCO Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property (ratified by the United Kingdom in 2002) recognised not only that it was incumbent on every State to protect the cultural property within its borders against the dangers of theft, clandestine excavation and illicit export, but also that it was essential for every State to become alive to the moral obligations to respect the cultural heritage of all nations and that the protection of cultural heritage could only be effective if organised both nationally and internationally among States working in close co-operation (recitals 3, 4 and 7). In the Supreme Court of Ireland, Finlay CJ said that it was universally accepted that one of the most important national assets belonging to the people is their heritage and the objects which constituted keys to their ancient history; and that a necessary ingredient of sovereignty in a modern State was and should be an ownership by the State of objects which constitute antiquities of importance which were discovered and which had no known owner: *Webb v. Ireland* [1988] I.R. 353 at 383.

In *Aerospace Publishing Ltd v Thames Water Utilities Ltd* [2007] EWCA Civ 3 controversy arose as to whether the proper redress available to the owner of an archive for the substantial destruction of the archive by flooding should take the form of a financial payment to represent the diminution in value of

the archive or should rather consist of a sum of money to reflect the cost of reinstating the archive. Both in principle and in quantum these two measures of assessment were significantly disparate. The judgment of Longmore LJ at paras 50–52 again reflects a significant regard for the identity of this collection of historically significant material as something distinct and distant from a mere assemblage of commercial goods:

(T)he present case is not a case of a readily marketable asset, nor yet of a unique chattel like a rare manuscript, a Picasso painting or a Stradivarius violin. In the first sort of case little difficulty will arise; reinstatement will not usually be appropriate as it would not be reasonable to reinstate if an article can be bought in by the claimant at a lower cost. In the case of a unique chattel it may be reasonable to reinstate but it will not be too difficult, by reference to past auction prices, to assess realistically a market value even though the chattel is itself unique. It will then be easy to compare figures for reinstatement and market value.... Here, by contrast, while cost of reinstatement is calculable (and is in the event largely agreed), market value is problematic to assess. Plutarch... regarded the human memory as an archive. In a similar way the archive in the present case represents the companies' memory and, as such, is an asset whose value could in conventional parlance be described as 'priceless' and whose actual value can only be calculated with considerable difficulty. The relevant experts agreed that it would be impossible to acquire a similar archive within a reasonable time and that, even if one were to sell the archive, it would have to be done through a number of auctions over a number of years in order to achieve the best reasonable price. In these circumstances it was submitted by [counsel for] for the claimants that the court should lean towards reinstatement unless the cost is prohibitive especially when as in this case the only way in which a resale value... could be realised would be by destroying the very characteristic (namely its unity and comprehensiveness) which gives the collection its true value in the first place.... In general terms, I would be minded to accept this submission on the facts of this case since it is difficult to regard what may be called the strictly economic value of the archive (what the authorities call the resale value) as being the sole value of the archive. It was a labour both of love and dedication to build up and then catalogue the archive in the first place. The fact that it has an economic value, in the sense of a commercial utility, should not blind one to the further fact that its value to the owner may be (and, in this case, is) greater than such sum as can be obtained by selling it at spaced-out auctions. Moreover, the fact that not every item in the archive can be precisely replaced does not mean that the cost of reinstatement is not, in general, the measure of damages to be preferred. If the archive of a famous and long-established art dealer such as the Fine Art Society Ltd or an auctioneer such as Christie's or Sotheby's were destroyed, it would be mealy-mouthed in the extreme to confine recovery to the re-sale value of individual items.

The third example concerns a criminal case. In *R v Hakimzadeh* [2009] EWCA Crim 959 (noted by Warner in (2010) XV *Art Antiquity and Law* 94), the Court of Appeal was called upon to determine the appropriate sentence

to be inflicted on a significant collector of ancient maps and manuscripts, who had violated the trust reposed in him through his membership of the British Library and the Bodleian Library by removing pages from bound manuscripts and books. Once again, the Court of Appeal accords substantial recognition to the notion that the acquisitive destruction of cultural and historic material differs qualitatively from other forms of malicious damage and theft. At paras 3 and 12, Blake J said:

The offences relate to theft and damage to books that the appellant removed from learned libraries in this country. Counts 1 to 9 and 15 relate to books taken from the British Library and counts 11 to 14 relate to the Bodleian Library. The common theme of these books was that they dealt with cultural contacts between Europe and what was then Persia from the 15th, 16th centuries and thereafter.... In our judgment, it is apparent that this kind of offending, where cultural property is concerned, is very different from offending where the seriousness can only be gained by the value in the open market of items which can readily be replaced and purchased, whether they may be goods in a supermarket or ordinary books which are still in print and available and it is simply the replacement value of items lost. Cultural property cannot be valued in the same way as cash or readily replicable items, and the gravamen is the damage to rare items of historical, intellectual and cultural importance, and that is why, in our judgment, a significant element of deterrence is always necessary to deter others from such crimes which diminish the intellectual and cultural heritage of the nation.

### **MONEY LAUNDERING AND THE PROCEEDS OF CRIME**

The estimable qualities possessed by cultural objects do not mean that the uses to which they are put are necessarily positive and creditable outcomes. Modern courts have also been quick to recognise the peculiar suitability of art and antiquities for use in the financing and the orchestration of criminal activity and as a medium through which to disguise and sanitise the fruits of delinquency. Recognition of the criminal possibilities of a misuse of cultural objects has begun to penetrate decisions in civil law. Two statements by Tugendhat J illustrate this concern. In *Rachmaninoff v Sotheby's and Eva Teranyi* [2005] EWHC 258 QB at para 2, he said:

There is a dark side to the confidentiality surrounding the identity of an auctioneer's principal. The public and the law have increasingly come to recognise the potential for abuse by criminals of works of art, and of those who deal in them (consciously or unconsciously), for money laundering, and for disposing of the proceeds of crime. The less the legal risks involved in committing a work for auction, the more attractive the market in works of art and manuscripts becomes for criminals. The policy of the law, both in this jurisdiction and elsewhere, is to look more sceptically than would have been thought proper in the past upon those who have very valuable property for which they give no provenance.

Similar remarks were made by the same judge in the later case of *Aziz Kurtha v Michael Marks* [2008] EWHC 336 QB at para 140:

The impossibility of proving a purchase in good faith necessary to establish a limitation defence is not the only risk a dealer may face. A dealer in valuable works of art who pays in large amounts of cash, keeps no records, and asks no questions as to the provenance of his supplier, exposes himself, and those who buy from him, to other very serious risks. These risks include that the dealer will be unable to answer queries relevant to tax from HMRC. But they also include the risks that he may face a prosecution under the Proceeds of Crime Act ss. 327-332, and that, whether or not there is a prosecution, he may be liable to a civil recovery order under Part 5 of the Act.

### **ECONOMIC EVALUATION**

For all their distinctive character, cultural objects inhabit the same prosaic world as other assets. They can be bought and sold, owned and stolen, loaned and exhibited, valued and disparaged, like any other commodity. They can also become the subject of complex and sophisticated transactions between individuals and the state. Obvious examples of such transactions are the special taxation arrangements, such as conditional exemption, gift with reservation or acceptance in lieu of taxation that owners of art may negotiate with HMRC. Another example is the provision of public indemnity for travelling art, a realm in which the exercise of reaching agreement on the valuation of the work can provoke intense negotiation. State or public indemnity has of course become a common feature of modern art loans and a central element in the successful accomplishment of cross-border exhibitions. In its simplest form, it comprises an undertaking by a relevant authority in the borrowing state to compensate for harmful events occurring during the loan period. The undertaking may be given to the lender or owner of the work of art, or to the borrower. An undertaking to the borrower may be expressed to be for the benefit of the lender or owner. It need hardly be said that sound valuation principles are pivotal to the success of this process.

There are many reasons why the public authorities responsible for the management of cultural objects may require them to be valued, and many of these may have a significant impact on the mobility of the object. An object that has full clearance and unblemished credentials in matters affecting its valuation is a more confident and welcome visitor to foreign destinations than one whose proprietary and ethical identity is in doubt. Such doubt can indeed affect the value of an object and render the task of insuring it, whether by commercial cover or public indemnity, much more challenging.

## SPECIAL ADVISORY PANELS

Sometimes national authorities such as Ministries of Culture find it appropriate to enlist the assistance of outside advisers in determining the value of a cultural object.

### The Spoliation Advisory Panel

A case of such enlistment is the Spoliation Advisory Panel (SAP). This body is entrusted with the task of making recommendations to the Minister for the Arts concerning cultural objects whose owners ceased to have possession during the period 1933 to 1945. On several occasions the SAP has recommended that claimants seeking redress in respect of Holocaust-related cultural objects situated in UK museums be granted an *ex gratia* sum to reflect their former ownership and the circumstances of their loss. Such sums are recommended where the claimants' title has now ceased through the expiry of the limitation period or other legal event but where moral considerations are considered to necessitate a remedy. The Panel arrives at the recommended capital sum after taking the advice of professional practitioners in the art market. In the past, those whom the Panel have consulted have included senior personnel at Christie's and Sotheby's and a prominent fine art dealer who was for many years the Chairman of the Acceptance in Lieu Panel and a member of the Reviewing Committee for the Export of Works of Art.

In the Report of the Spoliation Advisory Panel on a Claim relating to a Painting by Jan Griffier the Elder, delivered on 18 January 2001, the SAP found it necessary to quantify the *ex gratia* payment that it should recommend for payment to the descendants of a former owner of the work in question. The work, which had a sufficient association with the Nazi Holocaust in order to persuade the Panel to recommend a remedy to the descendants of the former owner, had been since 1961 in the collection of the Tate Gallery, from which it could not be legally alienated without legislative change. The Panel emphasised that the claimant's title had long been extinguished and that there was no subsisting legal right to specific restitution or damages. For that reason, the Panel regarded it as inappropriate to recommend the conferment of that category of redress that is identified as compensation in the Panel's terms of reference, but did recommend an *ex gratia* payment. The Panel further decided that it was appropriate to recommend the payment of that *ex gratia* sum from general public funds rather than from the Gallery's own resources. In quantifying that amount, the Panel paid primarily in regard to its current market value, which it broadly assessed at £140,000. That figure was then adjusted to reflect (negatively to the claimants) the expenditure incurred by the Tate in insuring and conserving it and (positively to the claimants) the value to the public of having access to the work over the preceding forty or so years. '[W]e take into account the substantial benefit de-

rived by the Tate and the public from its possession of the work over the past four decades. This benefit would not have been enjoyed had the claimant and his family not been deprived of the work in the circumstances already described.’ (Paragraph 64 of the Report). The global figure that the Panel recommended to the Minister for the Arts (and which the Minister accepted) was £125,000.

### **The Treasure Valuation Committee**

The Treasure Valuation Committee (TVC) is the body charged by the United Kingdom Government with the recommendation of rewards to be paid to the finders of those portable antiquities that constitute treasure for the purposes of the Treasure Act 1996. Subject to possible abatement on the grounds of inappropriate conduct by a finder or landowner, the TVC essentially grounds its recommendations on the notional market value of the treasure item in question. Market value is defined for this purpose as the price that a willing buyer would pay to a willing seller, and is generally quantified by reference to the hammer price that would be achieved at a public auction.

The techniques and resources available to the TVC were subjected to particular demand in the case of the Staffordshire Hoard of Anglo-Saxon material, which was the subject of a valuation by the TVC in November 2009. In recommending a reward slightly in excess of £3,285,000 for this extraordinary collection of over 1,600 objects, the TVC drew upon expert assessments that it had commissioned from three independent valuers, all of whom had proceeded based on a detailed and systematic prior cataloguing of the material by a distinguished archaeologist and museum practitioner. In reaching its conclusion as to the quantum of the reward to be recommended (a sum to be divided equally between the finder and the landowner), the Committee took account of numerous factors, including the possibility that the renown that the Hoard had already achieved through media coverage might encourage individual one-off collectors to bid strongly for small individual items in order to gain a piece of this historic assemblage. Of course, the notion of a public auction of the Hoard was entirely hypothetical, but it was upon this hypothesis that the TVC reached its conclusion as to the proper measure of the reward. The Secretary of State accepted the valuation and contemporary emphasis has now shifted to the challenge of raising the required sum from charitable and other sources.

### **The Significance of the Foregoing Cases**

The practices exemplified, albeit perhaps in exceptional conditions, by the Griffier and Staffordshire episodes are significant in two respects.

First, they illustrate the occasional pragmatic resort by governmental authorities to panels of specialist advisers, whose own deliberations on value may in turn be informed by the opinions of expert valuers employed by commercial organisations or cultural institutions.

Secondly, they demonstrate the operation of the valuation process in a context that involves no legal wrongdoing or liability on the part of any of the participants, and in which the payment of the evaluated sum to the relevant recipients is, notionally at least, an *ex gratia* exercise. While the presence of these distinguishing features does not significantly detract from the value of these assessments as indicators of the general market worth of cultural objects, those features do indicate that assessments by bodies such as the SAP and TVC represent a narrow band within a much larger field of evaluation by public authorities.

### **LIABILITY FOR LOSS OR DAMAGE**

One of the commonest situations calling for a valuation of chattels arises where the owner of, or some other person entitled to the possession of, a cultural object seeks to recover damages for the loss or impairment of that object owing to the defendant party's alleged default. A clear example of such a case would be the claim of an owner of a painting or sculpture against a bailee (such as a borrowing museum, or a bank holding as security, or an art storage or transportation company) for some misadventure occurring to the object while in the bailee's possession.

In this context, the market value of the object may of course be a highly relevant consideration for several reasons. First, if the object is lost, stolen, or destroyed, the primary measure of damages payable to the owner will be the market value of the object. Establishing this can be highly problematic on a rising market where the object has not been seen or valued over a long period immediately preceding the misadventure and particularly, of course, where the object is now no longer extant and capable of direct assessment. Secondly, if the object is merely damaged or otherwise impaired, the primary measure of damages will be either the diminution in value as between the original worth of the object before the wrong was committed and its subsequent worth after the wrong, or (where this is a reasonable course to adopt) the cost of reinstating the object to the condition that it enjoyed immediately before the infliction of the wrong. Where reinstatement leaves the object in an irredeemably inferior condition compared to its state immediately before the wrong, the court may award damages based on that diminution in addition to the cost of reinstating the object to its present deficient condition.

In all of these contexts, market value plays a critical role and there are numerous modern decisions that illustrate the difficulties in which a claimant can become embroiled where concrete evidence of value is lacking. Two such illustrations are offered.

In *Scheps v Fine Art Logistics* [2007] EWHC 541 (QB), the claimant Scheps owned a sculpture by Anish Kapoor (*Hole and Vessel II*). He instructed Fine Art Logistics to take possession of it and deliver it to Kapoor's studio in London for restoration. Scheps did not insure the work, which he had bought in June 2004 for around US \$35,000. Between the collection and delivery, the sculpture vanished from the Fine Art Logistics' warehouse, the judge finding that an employee had probably jettisoned it in a skip while the premises were being renovated.

Scheps sued Fine Art Logistics for either the return of the work or its value in damages, which he claimed to be some £600,000. There was no question that Fine Art Logistics had broken both their contractual duty, and their duty as a bailee, to care for the sculpture, and Teare J also held that certain limitation clauses in their contract with Scheps had failed to successfully limit their liability to a specified amount. That being so, Scheps was entitled to damages equivalent to the value of the sculpture at the date of conversion (September 2004), plus any further consequential losses.

The figure of US \$35,000 at which Scheps had bought the sculpture in June 2004 was not a reliable indicator of its market value even as early as September 2004, because there was cogent evidence that Scheps had acquired it at well below the going market rate. There was a considerable range of expert opinion as to the value of *Hole and Vessel II* both in September 2004 and at the time of judgment, the reasons being the subjective nature of art valuation generally as well as the highly conjectural pricing of modern art in particular. In reaching a figure, Teare J relied (in line with the submissions of expert witnesses) on evidence adduced as to the sale prices realised by other sculptures by Kapoor in recent sales.

Comparing the price for a work from Kapoor's 'transitional phase' (named *Untitled 1984*, which had been sold for £80,000 in May 2004) and a more modern, and ultimately more marketable sculpture (titled *Mother as a Ship*, which had been sold for £47,500 in 1998), and taking into account that the market value was shown to be increasing between May and September 2004, the judge determined the value of *Hole and Vessel II* at September 2004 to be some £132,000 (£135,000 minus the £3,000, which Scheps would have incurred through the contemplated repair costs). Taking into account the notional increase in value since September 2004 (which the experts agreed was a multiple in the region of two or three), the judge held that the value of the sculpture at the date of judgment was some £371,250.



Having concluded that the proper date for the assessment of the value of the sculpture was the date of the wrong and not the date of the judgment, Teare J nevertheless held that the later rise in value that the sculpture would have experienced after the date of its consignment to the skip was recoverable as a consequential loss. He rejected an argument that the defendant could not reasonably have foreseen this increase in market value and, therefore, should not be liable for it.

One interesting feature of this decision is that, for tactical reasons related to the increasing value of the work, Fine Art Logistics argued that they had converted the sculpture by disposing of it early in the bailment, whereas Scheps was arguing that Fine Art Logistics still had possession of it and were liable for its value at the date of judgment. Teare J upheld Fine Art Logistics on the technical point but (as we have seen) went on to hold that the later increase in value was recoverable as a consequential loss.

In *Kamidian v Holt and Others* [2008] EWHC 1483 (Comm) Mr Kamidian claimed damages for the depreciation in value of an alleged Faberge egg clock, which he had agreed to bail to a US exhibition organiser named Broughton International Inc (now insolvent). The clock had been damaged in transit between London, where the claimant had placed the clock under the supervision of the exhibition's guest curator, and Delaware, the place of the exhibition. The damage affected a bud and two stems on the decorative foliage adorning the clock. The trial was marked by a sharp conflict of expert evidence, counsel calling into question the proficiency and credibility of certain experts. The claimant gave no evidence as to carriage and insurance costs associated with the repair. There was, however, a repair estimate from the respected firm of Plowden and Smith, dating from 2001, which pitched the cost of repair to the broken bud at £740–£780.

The claimant's only witness on the depreciation of the artefact gave no effective evidence as to the diminution in value that was attributable to the damage in transit, as opposed to diminution attributable to the rumour and innuendo precipitated by the present litigation. In the circumstances, the question resolved itself into the cost of repair. Much of the evidence turned on whether the broken parts of the clock had already been damaged and repaired on a prior occasion years before the exhibition bailment. Such earlier damage and repair would have weakened the clock's resistance to pressures in transit and would have affected its pre-exhibition value, a matter clearly relevant to an assessment of its depreciation. In holding that such prior damage and repair had taken place (probably before the clock was sold at auction in 1991) Tomlinson J further observed that the claimant had chosen not to effect the necessary contemporary repairs at any time between the discovery of the contemporary damage and the date of trial, a period of some eight years, remarking that 'There is of course no compelling reason why any defendant

herein should, if otherwise liable, pay more than what would have been the cost of repair in 2001 [*the year in which the damage was investigated after the clock returned from the US*].<sup>2</sup> The judge assumed for this purpose that the clock would have been repaired in London and that Mr Kamidian would have had to pay, and would not have been able to recover, VAT. In the event Tomlinson J held that £1,000 was the appropriate sum for the recoverable cost of repairing the damage to the bud. He further concluded that a misalignment in the clock (the slant) antedated the exhibition and was not attributable to it.

### **THE ARMORIE V DELAMIRIE PRINCIPLE**

An ancient principle of the common law, recently discussed by the Court of Appeal in *Zabihi v Janzemeni* [2009] EWCA Civ 851, offers some assistance to the claimant who cannot establish by direct evidence the value of an art object belonging to him that has been lost, stolen or destroyed.<sup>3</sup> In conventional form, the principle holds that where a person (such as a bailee) has committed a wrong upon another's chattel and by his fault deprived the innocent party of the ability to prove its value (or, presumably, in an appropriate case the amount of its depreciation), the court may resolve the lack of evidence by making any necessary presumption in the innocent party's favour. This principle was traditionally expressed in Latin through the adage *omnia praesumuntur contra spoliatorem*.

An early version of the principle was applied in the familiar case of *Armory v Delamirie* (1721) 1 Stra 505 where a chimney sweep's boy found a jewel that had been set in a socket, and took it to a jeweller for valuation. The jeweller's assistant only handed the socket back to the boy. In response to the boy's claim in conversion, the jeweller challenged the boy to prove the value of the missing jewel. Pratt CJ rejected this defence, saying that:

... unless the defendant did produce the jewel, and shew it not to be of the finest water, they [the jury] should presume the strongest against him, and make the value of the best jewels the measure of their damages....

In *Zabihi v Janzemeni* the Court of Appeal set some boundaries to the *Armory* principle. Those boundaries appear to be as follows:

1. If the court concludes that one party is telling the truth as to value, the presumption sanctioned by *Armory* has no place. *Armory* can neither compel the acceptance of evidence that the judge does not believe nor require the rejection of evidence that he finds to be truthful: [2009] EWCA Civ 851 at para 31 per the Chancellor, citing *Malhotra v Dhawan* [1997] Med LR 199 at 322. Any presumption indicated by the *Armory* principle must be consistent with the judge's findings of fact and the evidence before him: [2009] EWCA Civ 851 at para 51 per Moore-Bick L.J.

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2. Nor can the *Armory* presumption apply where, as here, the establishment of a true value is frustrated by the dishonest evidence of both parties, with the effect that any presumption against either party 'is matched by the equal and opposite presumption against the other.' A party who gives a dishonest and discredited version of the value of the goods cannot thereafter assert that it was the conduct of the defendant that disabled him from bringing the evidence necessary to establishing the true value. Such a party is hoist by his own petard.

3. Moreover, the *Armory* principle cannot, it appears, become engaged when the lack of underpinning evidence available to establish the parameters of value is so extreme as to make the application of the principle little more than guesswork. Such was the position in the present case, which differed sharply from *Armory* itself on this point:

... some facts must be established if the relevant assumption is to have any rational basis. In the present case all that the judge was told was that each set of jewellery comprised a matching necklace, earrings, bracelet and ring in diamonds and gold. In view of the evidence of the expert witnesses about the different characteristics that affect the value of diamonds alone, I agree that that did not provide a sufficient basis for making any assumption of about its quality or value. [2009] EWCA Civ 851 at para 52 per Moore-Bick L.J.

The exact scope of the residual territory governed by the *Armory* principle after these boundaries have been marked may still be uncertain. Moore-Bick L.J., at least, seemed inclined to think even some 'relatively imprecise' but credible description of the jewellery delivered to Mr Janzemini 'would probably have been sufficient to enable a valuation to be made...'; a position that could not be reached, however, where each party was 'equally responsible for holding the truth from the court.' However, Moore-Bick L.J. also suggested that the only clear field of operation for the *Armory* principle (and even here there may be doubt) exists where a defendant 'wilfully' suppresses evidence that would otherwise have been available to the claimant to enable him to prove his case. His Lordship had difficulty in accepting that a mere 'inability to make the goods available for inspection' would suffice for that purpose. He went on to observe at para 51:

In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it would seem more logical to assume that the goods were of fair average quality rather than the best or worst of their kind.

The position is not entirely clear, but it appears from the context of this observation that Moore-Bick L.J. was limiting his preference for a middle-range or 'fair average' value to cases where the defendant was guilty of a non-wilful failure to produce the chattel (or relevant evidence of its value). In fact, it is possible to detect in Moore-Bick L.J.'s judgment a lack of enthusiasm even for the core principle in *Armory*, which he described it as 'difficult

to reconcile' with two fundamental tenets of the law of damages: the indemnity rule and the rule that a claimant must prove his loss. Any principle that potentially granted a claimant the benefit of a presumption of 'facts most favourable' to him sat uneasily alongside those tenets (unless, one might suggest, the parties can be deemed to have agreed to that effect). What is clear is that the *Armory* principle is delimited at two extremes. At one extreme, it cannot withstand or controvert real positive evidence as to the value of the object, to which the application of the principle itself would run counter. Indeed, it has been held that where a witness gives positive evidence as to value (for example, by testifying that the lost object was gold), the judge should grasp the nettle and accept or reject that evidence, rather than fall back on the *Armory* principle. On the other hand, it seems that the principle cannot get to the starting line without some form of contextual catalyst or reference point.

### **LOSS OF EVIDENCE OUTSIDE THE REALM OF LEGAL CLAIMS**

It might be questioned as to whether a principle akin to that in *Armory v Delamirie* might justifiably be invoked to illuminate certain claims that do not base themselves on legal title. An example might be a claim before the Spoliation Advisory Panel, where the parties accept that the claimant's original title (if any) has been extinguished through the expiry of the limitation period. If the current possessor challenges the claimant to prove his original ownership, arguing that there is no sufficient contemporary evidence to that effect, and the claimant can show that reasonable vigilance and pertinacity on the part of the current possessor at the time of acquisition would have enabled such now-lost evidence to be brought to light, the Panel might in theory consider making an adverse presumption against the current possessor. However, such prospects belong, at present, solely to the realm of conjecture.

### **ANTI-SEIZURE LEGISLATION AND DAMAGES CLAIMS**

So far as can be determined, all the national anti-seizure statutes that are currently in force seek only to immunise a borrowed cultural object from seizure by court order or from some other legally-imposed restraint on its physical movement. Such statutes do not (at least explicitly) prevent the claimant from claiming some other form of legal remedy from the borrower, such as damages for conversion, or monetary restitution based on unjust enrichment. A claim for damages in conversion may offer a particularly effective way of circumventing an anti-seizure statute that debars only physi-

cal recovery. Since the primary measure of damages in conversion is the market value of the object, this again represents a zone where valuation could become critical.

### **PAYMENT FOR USE AND THE VALUE OF PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The monetary remedies provided by law do not aim solely to compensate loss: they may alternatively grant the victim of a wrong monetary restitution to reflect the wrongdoer's unjust enrichment. Such a remedy can be observed in the doctrine of the reasonable hiring charge that can apply in favour of an owner of goods against a party who has wrongfully detained them. Such a remedy may award to the innocent party a reasonable sum to reflect the outlay that the wrongdoer would have had to expend to gain the use and enjoyment of the object over the period of detention.

There are glimmerings of such a remedy in the first Report of the Spoliation Advisory Panel. In almost every case, the concern of the Panel has been to assess the capital market value of the work, and to adjust that value in the light of benefits conferred or expenditure incurred by the possessing museum over the period of its possession, at least where these forms of expenditure or benefit have worked to the advantage of the claimant or represent money that the claimant might otherwise have paid personally. In the Griffier case, however, the Panel made a further positive allowance in the claimant's favour, to reflect the benefit accruing to the public from the presence of the work in a major public collection. While the Panel operated with a broad brush, and while this was in no sense a legal case attracting a legal remedy, there were clear resonances between the juridical doctrine of the reasonable hiring charge and the inclusion of an *ex gratia* sum for public use and benefit in the Griffier case.

### **ILLICIT ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE VALUE OF INFORMATION**

Claims for loss of information (for example, damage to the context of a cultural object caused by illicit excavation) may offer a useful alternative or collateral remedy to claims for deprivation of tangible assets. Suppose, for instance, that the archaeological authority of a state having ownership and rights of possession over below-ground antiquities receives evidence that antiquities belonging to that state have been illegally excavated from a previously unknown site, and manages to apprehend the parties who converted them, only to find that the objects themselves have disappeared. The archaeological authority can prove only the place and dimensions of the excavation

and the broad historical nature of the site but cannot prove the specific character and value of the objects removed. The value of the context destroyed by the illicit excavation may have been beyond price: the primary loss will have been the deprivation of knowledge and not the financial value of the artefacts. A willingness on the part of the courts to treat the unlawful destruction of intangible information as attracting a liability akin to that in conversion, and to make creative use of case law relating to damages for loss of opportunity, might offer a remedy in this context. As the author has observed in the third edition of his treatise on Bailment:

The time may be fast approaching when a country whose national law confers on it the right to possession of previously undiscovered archaeological objects might sue for damages to compensate it for the non-material harm caused by an unlawful excavation. The basis of the claim would be the destruction and loss of irreplaceable contextual information about the country's historical identity: those 'keys to its ancient history' that a lawful professional excavation would have yielded and preserved for future generations. Such damages might be claimed in addition to the return of the tangible antiquities themselves and/or other damages for their conversion. Claims might arise on facts akin to those in *Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran v Barakat Galleries Ltd* [2007] EWCA Civ 1374, [2009] QB 22, or from the looting of archaeological sites in areas of armed conflict like Iraq or Afghanistan. It need hardly be said that the challenge of attaching a value to the lost information would loom large in any such inquiry.

The bringing of such a claim would require courage, not least in economic terms. However, given the willingness of states like Iran and Turkey to adopt an assertive stance on the recovery of looted antiquities, and given the creative reasoning adopted by modern courts in sympathy with states dispossessed of their material past, the occasion for such an argument may not be far distant.

### **SOME CONCLUSIONS**

The present paper has attempted to show that authoritative valuation can be a pivotal element in resolving the identity, reputability, security, marketability, and mobility of a work of art. The law has developed highly complex principles in order to determine value and to recognise the particular nature of art as a market phenomenon. Mastering these principles is no easy task, even for lawyers, but it can be vital to the successful management of art transactions, whether those transactions are sales, loans, or other bailments. Few museums could contemplate involvement in a case like *Scheps* or *Kamidian* with anything other than horror.<sup>4</sup>

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A number of further considerations underline the importance of knowing how to value a work of art. First, not all cases involve adversarial contests with the obligatory panoply of judges, advocates, and ‘win or lose’ solutions. Questions of valuation, and the selective transposition of valuation principles into situations outside the courtroom, can further the ends of justice and national policy even in cases where no legal claim or obligation lies: an example in England is the work of the Spoliation Advisory Panel. In certain contexts, moreover, an appreciation of the value of art means taking account of something more than its mere economic or market worth, as can be seen in cases about national treasures and family heirlooms.

Claims for monetary compensation following episodes of damage or loss have always been a commonplace in the art world, but they appear if anything more likely to arise in modern conditions. So much is suggested by the spate of modern case law clustered around the *Armory v Delamirie* principle. Claims for damages might help claimants to overleap the barriers on the physical restitution of art that are imposed by anti-seizure statutes, while the value of information squandered by irresponsible excavation or the abstraction of cultural objects may itself one day become a fit candidate for compensation.

In considering such innovations, it is important to appreciate that not all financial claims against museums need take the form of demands for the reparation of losses, as opposed to the restitution of unjust benefits. The time may not be far distant when we shall see claims against museums for a reasonable hiring charge to represent the museum’s benefit and enjoyment of a work of art during a period in which it had possession without the true owner’s consent. One wonders how many museums are prepared for such a claim.

The ultimate message advocated by this paper is a simple one. It is an appeal for greater awareness on the part of those who administer collections. All museum practitioners should be equipped to anticipate and avert legal problems. They should be trained to foresee potential disputes about matters of responsibility and value as well as to respond constructively to ominous signals before they degenerate to a state of legal gridlock. Such ability can be achieved through imaginative cross-disciplinary education and the development of a more positive instinct to think ‘outside the box’.

Few, if any, of the issues discussed in this paper are beyond the reach of careful and well-informed advance provision. Much of the litigation that has been discussed could have been neutralised or abated had the parties been prepared to predict risks and tackle potential misadventures at the pre-contentious stage. A deeper understanding of legal principle in this field might not only rescue museums and other collectors from corrosive controversy and massive cost, but also encourage new insights into the personality and worth of their own collections.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 The claimant may be a foreign state alleging that its domestic laws grant it superior rights of possession over undiscovered portable antiquities or other cultural objects unlawfully removed from its territory; or a museum having independent legal status and rights of ownership in its country of location; or a private collector whose premises have been burgled. Some claimants are victims of persecution (or their successors) whose loss may have occurred in circumstances of gross violation of human rights.
- 2 So much can be inferred from authorities on wrongs to pets and other animals: see Palmer and Hudson, Bibliography.
- 3 See generally Palmer, *Bailment* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, 2009) Chapter 37, paras 37–010 to 37–012, on which the following account is based.
- 4 Curators who remain sceptical only need to look to the *Blundell* case in New South Wales to understand the sorts of blunder that can occur in borrowing art and the advisability of keeping disputes out of court: *Blundell v New South Wales* (unreported, 18 June 1998, NSW District Court), analysed by Palmer (1998) 2 *Art Antiquity and Law* 417.

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**ACTIVE COLLECTIONS:**

**RE-VISITING OUR COLLECTION**

**FOR MORE AND BETTER USE**

We are going through a period of change in the way that we use our cultural collections. Museums are no longer static depositories for objects, as they now focus on outreach, access, and learning. Audiences, often regarded as passive participants, now look for interaction and seek to participate in new ways and to have greater access to stored objects. Online and interactive access has created new opportunities for museums to reach out and discover new audiences. At the same time, many museums are finding ways to show their collections outside the museum and to embark on fresh ways of enticing visitors inside.

The desire for sustainability and the need to reduce costs have come together to allow us to question whether the high-cost blockbuster exhibition is still the most effective way of sharing our cultural collections. In our national and regional museums and in our storerooms are thousands of unique objects with a story to tell, which can enrich the lives of those who see them. Museum professionals should see the new emphasis on sustainability and on sharing resources as an opportunity to contribute to the cultural life of our citizens. This chapter will suggest that there has never been a better time to revisit our collections, to view them in a new way, and to use them actively for the education and enjoyment of all who wish to have access to our cultural heritage.

## **POLICIES**

### **Remit and mission statement**

This is a good time to revisit the museum's policy, founding document, or mission statement. It could be that no such document exists, or that it was produced many decades ago. If a museum had as its objective to care for and preserve a collection, it may now wish to look again at the uses of the collection and to create a more dynamic policy with an emphasis on access and activities. The surrounding community in which the museum was built may have changed beyond all recognition while the museum itself is still rooted in the past. It is no longer enough to care for and preserve, we also have a duty to share the objects in our care and to make sure the widest possible audience has the benefit of learning from and enjoying them. A museum policy is a good way for staff to reassess what the collection is for, why it is unique, and how to use it.

Museums need to develop a long-term strategy on the uses of their collections and have regular reviews of the policies to make sure that they are still relevant to the museum's purpose. There also needs to be follow-ups and regular assessments to make sure that we are best serving the needs of our audiences and of our collections.

### **Structure – why are things done as they are now?**

The structures of many museums have grown up over time and often without planning. Organisation is usually in departments divided by periods, schools, or classifications, e.g. a natural history museum may have departments of botany, entomology, mineralogy, palaeontology, and zoology. Was there any reason as to why the museum was structured in this way, and is this structure still effective? It may be a good idea to take a fresh look at the structure of the museum to see if this is still working well today. If curators are separated into departments without frequent communication, valuable opportunities for discussion may be lost. In an art gallery, asking a curator of contemporary art to change places with an expert in renaissance art for a year or for a day, may reveal new ways of looking at art. Inviting curators from different periods or schools to collaborate on a project may lead to new and exciting displays.

In the same way, having a collections department separate from the exhibition department is common in many museum structures. The exhibition organisers often look outside the museum to borrow objects rather than getting to know what they already have within their own walls. Apart from the obvious embarrassment of staff in the same museum not knowing what they are lending and borrowing, close co-operation between collections and exhibition

teams is vital for both communication and the cross-fertilisation of new ideas. Restructuring to have exhibition and collections teams work together may not only make better use of resources but may also lead to more vibrant displays.

As well as looking at structure, it is important to make sure attitudes and behaviours keep pace with changes in the museum. Museum staff members have a wealth of skills and experience and should be encouraged to think creatively and cross-departmentally. Curators and educators could consider their role. What exactly is in their job description and is it still relevant to the purposes of the museum? If it is to research or to educate, could there be a combination of the two? The benefits of devoting all one's time to one area of activity or a single research field could be assessed and brought closer in line with the museum's aims.

Making connections outside your own field can lead to new ways of seeing and of using collections. Changing the museum's structure can change attitudes and behaviours and refocus energy onto the collection.

### **Acquisition policy**

The acquisition policy is the basis of any collection and good collections are based on good acquisition policies. Acquisition and collection policies should be revisited regularly to see exactly what the museum is collecting and why and what it is that makes this collection unique. It could be that neither the staff nor public is aware of exactly what the collection stands for and what is and is not within its collecting remit.

An acquisition policy should be flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the museum in the twenty-first century. A museum that has in its acquisition policy 'decorative arts but not ceramics or glass' may want to begin to question this if a collection of glass is offered. It could be used to enhance the collection and widen the opportunities for creating comprehensive exhibitions. A fine art collection may want to reconsider the remit to collect original works of art and begin collecting photographs as fine art, if it has not done so before, in order to bring a historic collection up to date.

As well as a basic acquisitions policy, it may be a good idea to consider a collections development policy, suggesting areas into which the collection might want to go. It could also suggest ways of adding to the collection. These could include:

1. commissioning new items
2. advertising that you are looking for donations of a specific type
3. contacting local businesses or industries to ask for examples of their products

4. cultivating local collectors or dealers who may donate an item
5. sourcing cheaply, for example through online auctions.

For fine art museums that believe that purchasing new items is beyond their financial means, it is not impossible to begin to establish a fund and to publicise the intent to do so. The New Art Gallery (Walsall, UK) set out from the start to commit to the purchase of new contemporary art as its basic remit and has shown remarkable creativity in devising new ways of attracting the funds to build up a collection.

It is important to make sure that your acquisition policy and collections development policy are up to date and that they define the types of objects that you need now for your collection. It is also vital that your policies look forward to the future so that they can continue to be flexible and adapt to changes in the museum, audience, demographic, and financial conditions. The acquisition policy should work alongside other policies such as collections, programmes, and strategic planning so that all the sections of the organisation understand the purpose of the collection and can work together. The main thing is to be very clear about what you want and to communicate that wish. The means to achieve it will inevitably follow.

#### **Deaccession and disposal policy**

A good disposal policy is the other half of a good acquisition policy. Well-managed collections also depend on a realistic attitude to retention.

Disposal is an emotive subject and many museums are forbidden in their statutes from disposing of objects. Most national museums are barred from disposing of items belonging to the nation. These rules were established with the best intentions to prevent the destruction of our great national collections. In the case of local authority or trust–status collections, such rules were designed to prevent managing bodies from selling cultural property in order to fund other parts of the organisation.

That being said, many collections are now in a position where they have many objects that they no longer feel are useful to the remit and purpose of the museum, which are never researched or displayed or that the museum can no longer care for (see *Too Much Stuff* 2003). It could be that there are objects that bear no relation at all to the museum's purpose and that they would be better placed in another museum. A portrait, for example, with little aesthetic merit and of a sitter unknown to the gallery, may be of relevance to the local museum in the artist's hometown. Research into the background of such an object could reveal useful information that could lead to its transfer from a collection where it is not valued, to one where it is of intrinsic worth.

Any disposal must be undertaken according to ethical standards, taking account of any state law regarding deaccession and of the museum's own statutes. There must be a thorough understanding of the issues around disposal before embarking on releasing objects from the collection. Any object under consideration for deaccession must be researched to discover its full provenance, paying particular attention to donors or their families and taking into account the wishes of the artist/maker or his/her descendants.

The museum should:

1. understand any legal or ethical codes relevant to deaccession
2. follow the museum's own policy and procedure
3. research the terms and conditions of the acquisition
4. fully research the provenance of the object
5. establish links with the donor or the artist/maker or their descendants
6. contact any funding bodies that contributed to the acquisition
7. be transparent in all discussions
8. keep records, even if the decision is not to dispose.

Once the research has been undertaken and the decision is made to dispose, there is a recognised step-by-step process towards final disposal:

1. approach other museums who may wish to have the object, e.g. a museum with distinct links to the artist/sitter or in a region where the object was created or manufactured
2. give or sell the object back to the donor/vendor
3. advertise the object on museum websites or in trade journals, art newspapers, and other publications read by museum professionals
4. if all the above reveal no recipients, sale at auction or by private treaty, but only if the museum has a clear title and is legally able to do so
5. document all decisions and procedures.

According to most codes of ethics, any proceeds from deaccession and disposal should be put back into the collection in order to further strengthen and develop it. In this way, disposal can play an active part in collections development. On no account should the money raised from sales go towards any other area of the organisation.

Many museums now have an active disposals policy as part of their overall collections development plan. The National Maritime Museum in London has been undertaking a thorough investigation of its collection with a dedicated team and has identified objects that no longer fit with the remit of the museum. This Collections Reform Project has been undertaken in a professional and transparent way and is a good example of how to deaccession with clear thought and openness for the benefit of the museum and its future (see The National Maritime Museum 2005).

***There is no point  
in hiding your collection  
in store or in  
unattractive galleries.***

There are many examples of objects or collections moving to homes that are more suitable. For example, a group of audio recordings from the Berliner Lautarchiv was recently transferred to the British Library. These were the oldest known recordings of English dialect speech with nothing similar existing in the UK. The two collecting institutions agreed that recordings in English would be better placed in London than in Berlin and the transfer was made.

There are many guidelines on responsible disposal such as the UK Museums Association Disposal Toolkit (Museums Association 2008) and The Netherlands Museums Association disposal guidelines (see [www.museumvereniging.nl](http://www.museumvereniging.nl)).

**Unclaimed loans and unwanted gifts**

As well as deaccessioning objects from the collection, most museums have works that they have not accessioned and have come into the museum in a variety of ways, many now unclear. They may be the result of over-active acquisition in the past, objects left by donors for research or valuation and never retrieved, or loans that were never returned at the end of the exhibition.



As part of a planned collections development programme, it is a good idea to look at these unaccessioned objects before considering deaccessioning from the permanent collection. Most of these objects will have information somewhere in the museum, perhaps on the object itself, or in the museum archive, or even in the head of a former curator. Items left for inspection, valuation, or consideration may still have the owner's details attached to the object. Research can be undertaken to find the owner or his/her descendants and to see if the object can be returned.

The steps outlined above can be used to go through a process of returning unwanted objects to their legal owners. The procedure is the same although in this case the works have never formed part of the collection and do not have to be formally deaccessioned. It is usually, therefore, easier ethically and legally to dispose of these works, but a clear and transparent procedure must still be followed, and all the decisions documented.

Museums must go through the process of:

1. researching the ownership of the object
2. publicising the object and requesting the owner to come forward
3. if no-one comes forward, consider transferring to another public collection
4. selling as a last resort, with the proceeds going back into the collection.

In the case of unwanted gifts, the best plan is never to have accepted anything in the first place that was outside the museum's collecting remit. As we know, however, museums in the past were less professional in procedures than we are today and, in addition, they did not have our storage problems.

### Sustainability

Sustainability is of major concern to museums today. The rigid guidelines of the past, the sealed box with energy-dependent heating systems, and the rigid rules of 18–24 degrees and 45–55% RH are being relaxed in attempts to be more realistic and to save energy. There are several initiatives, such as the EGOR Project, which is aimed at looking at how best to be flexible over the climate conditions in which we store and display our cultural collections.

Better insulation in our storerooms and the use of recycled energy is one way of reducing our carbon footprint. However, museums can also be creative in recycling display and storage materials or in sharing resources. Shared storage or collaborations over touring exhibitions are good ways of conserving resources.

Better use of collections can contribute to this movement. New and imaginative ways of using collections can make a major contribution to sustainability. Collections-based displays conserve energy in a way that more and larger temporary exhibitions cannot. Allowing visitors into our storerooms rather than always moving the objects to the visitor will increase energy efficiency and we can be more flexible in determining the conditions for storage and display.

### **Programming**

Museums should look carefully at their programming to make sure that the collection and its better use, is at the forefront of any strategic plan. If there is an overemphasis placed on borrowing objects rather than using items from the collection, it should be questioned as to whether it makes the best use of resources. It is fundamental that a museum knows and exploits its own collections before borrowing those of others.

If there are more temporary exhibitions of borrowed objects, this could be balanced with more collections-based displays, or displays grouped around a single significant object. A museum that mounts a new exhibition every three months could consider reducing this to one every year, with the remaining exhibition space for collections displays. If well publicised, this re-focus could attract equal numbers of visitors and would have the added benefit of leading to research and exposure of collection objects that otherwise would not be seen.

For many museums, the emphasis and most of the funding, is placed on temporary exhibitions of borrowed objects. There are enormous amounts of energy put into organising temporary exhibitions that are on view only for a few months. This energy and resource could be channelled instead into exploring what the museum already has and in celebrating it. It could discover those items that are not being used well and treat them with the same excitement and publicity as borrowed objects. As well as revealing new objects, the money saved from borrowing for a temporary exhibition could be redirected into more collections research or to a key new acquisition.

### **Marketing and publicity**

It is fundamental to know what you have and where to find it. It is just as important to let everyone know how great your collection truly is. There is no point in hiding your collection in store or in unattractive galleries. In the same way, you should not keep quiet about what you have but should seek maximum publicity for everything you have and everything you do.

It is important to communicate with your audiences to see what their interests are and how best to serve them. Contact local groups that may have an interest in what you have in your collection. It is also important to have a good relationship with your local press or radio station. Invite them in and keep them up to date with new developments. Get them to have a regular spot about your collection, e.g. object of the month and to publicise any event. There may be an upcoming event or anniversary in which your collection can play an important part. You may have objects in store that relate to this event. Any news about the event can also include information on your collection.

It is not just new exhibitions and displays that can gain good publicity. Make the most of a new acquisition or a newly conserved work in a special display. Anything can make a good story, even a refurbishment or moving a major piece can give interesting behind-the-scenes information for your audiences. When the Rijksmuseum moved *The Night Watch* during major building work, instead of maximising security and moving the painting as inconspicuously as possible, they put a life-sized image on the outside of the crate, invited a film crew and announced the move to the public. The resulting publicity attracted maximum attention to the painting, and to the collection. In the same way, the oversized French tapestries in the Burrell Collection in Glasgow could not be worked on in the conservation studio so it was decided to put them in the exhibition galleries where the public could watch the work being done. This delighted visitors and was a great success for the museum.

## **STORES – INVITING IN**

### **Re-visiting storage**

Stored collections are a great, underused resource. Many museums do not encourage access or recognise their collections as public resources, whether in person or online. However, there is a great public misconception that we are hiding thousands of objects away in our stores and they are never used. A study undertaken by University College London *Collections for People*, found that only 13% of stored collections in England and Wales actively promoted public access. Geology and ethnography collections were hardly ever visited and yet there is a huge interest in fossils and a growing appetite for ancient history.

The survey found that 52% of museums reported an increasing demand for access to collections but that there was no united approach to delivering this demand. Interestingly, the collections with the greatest access to stores said

this was because staff and management actively wanted the public to visit and did a lot to make this possible, rather than factors such as time and money. We need to create the idea that museum collections are just as much a public resource for research purposes as our libraries and archives.

The first step in making better use of stored collections is to create the optimum conditions for both objects and visitors. Objects should be easily accessible and visible if possible. For example, covering objects with melinex or plastic rather than storing in crates and boxes allows them to be both protected and easily seen. Storerooms should be light and attractive places to work for staff and visitors, bearing in mind, of course, the need to keep certain objects from the light for conservation reasons. There should be a logic about what to place where, and to not be dependent on where there is space. It is a good idea to have a rolling programme of reviewing storage as the collection grows or moves around so that access, design, and usage are always serving the museum staff and making their job easier. A collections review should be undertaken regularly. Objects should be revisited in order to ensure that they are at the forefront of consideration for research and display.

### Inventory

Better use of collections depends on knowing what you have and where to find it. It is fundamental to have a good, comprehensive, and up to date inventory of the collection. If no recent, in-depth inventory exists, make it a priority to create one. This does not need to be onerous or expensive. For a store survey, a simple template can be created listing the basic information and inventorying can be undertaken by volunteers or interns given the correct training in object handling and working under the supervision of museum staff. Sample forms can be obtained from a variety of sources such as Collections Link and could contain the following fields:

1. artist or maker
2. title
3. inventory number
4. description
5. dimensions of object
6. dimensions of frame/stand/base
7. type of stand or base
8. materials
9. condition

This is the minimum of information you have to record, but is sufficient for a basic survey. Your museum will know if you need more specific information that is relevant to your collection or if you are concentrating on a particular aspect. If you want to know what percentage of your collection is up

to display standard, you may wish to add more fields on condition. If you are looking for objects of a particular period or specific materials, you could concentrate on those questions.

For more ambitious projects, funding for in-depth or large-scale surveys can often be available to help museums improve their knowledge of their own collections. This will enable them to use their collections more frequently and improve collections management.

A comprehensive record of the objects in your care and an idea of their condition is a necessary starting point for anything you want to do with the collection. You cannot make better use of your collections without knowing exactly what they are and you cannot begin to make plans in programming or in conservation without knowing which objects are up to exhibition standard and which ones require conservation work. In order to plan or to raise funds for display, it is necessary to know the extent of the work that you have to do and how much it will cost.

If you know what you have and what it is worth, you can then make informed decisions on what to spend money on and what to save money on.

Depending on your collection and on your strategic plan, the inventory can have a particular focus. For example, it could concentrate on the most significant works so that time and funds can be allocated specifically to them. Alternatively, it could focus on condition in order to begin a conservation programme. In any case, the inventory will inform future decisions. You may even discover objects that you were unaware of that could lead to new research or a new display, or may discover parts of objects that could be brought back together again and used to create a key feature in the museum, and a good story for visitors.

### Open storage

Although most objects are kept in dark and silent storerooms, there is no reason why they should be invisible. Most museums have the capacity to display only a tiny percentage of their collection at any time; to open the stores to visitors is a good way to increase this access.

Not all types of collections are easily accessible to visitors. For example, custodians of high value collections, particularly of fine art, must take security into consideration when opening the stores, both for visitors and in publicising where high-value items are located. It is easier to open a social history or industrial collection where, if a display is well done, visitors can move around and see a huge variety of objects that are not on display in the museum.

Curators, registrars, and conservators have to be able to work unencumbered in storerooms so that any visit by the public must be carefully regulated. Many museums have set aside specific hours for public visits that take place as guided tours outside the hours when staff need to work on the collection. Such guided tours can be a part of the museum tour, a separate function after hours, or an in-depth study day or weekend. Whichever way the museum wishes to open its stores, the public inevitably enjoys the behind-the-scenes glimpses of objects and activities and is intrigued by the unseen workings of the museum.

Open storage and tours of storerooms fulfil our remit of giving maximum access to our visitors and increased use of our collections. It can also be an income generator. Access gives scope to education curators in devising new ways of interpreting objects that are not exhibition led. In general, the exhibition is organised first and then the education department plans its activities around the exhibition. In a reverse of the normal order, an open store can allow the education team to be pro-active in creating meaningful education programmes for its constituency in attracting new audiences and sparking off new research. There may be a group of objects with no plans for display that a curator wishes to make it the subject of a study day or tour. In this way, there is far more scope for the use of unseen collections than waiting for a suitable opportunity to come up in the display galleries. Moreover, some visitors prefer the un-curated experience and scholars can benefit from greater access to the objects without the usual interpretation.

Open stores can be as various as the types of collection they house. For example, the store of National Galleries of Scotland has guided visits to the building with many less fragile and lower-value objects on display in corridors and public rooms. The rooms housing the paintings collection are viewed through glass, thus allowing the public to see the collection without any environmental or security risks. The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, UK, has a special visitor suite for items not on display. Visitors can open drawers to view stored objects. Each drawer is topped with a sheet of glass so that the objects can be clearly seen without being touched or removed. In other parts of the store, industrial objects are packed close together in storage, but again behind glass, allowing close inspection without endangering the object. Upplandsmuseet, a regional museum storage facility in Uppsala, Sweden, allows visits from the public to its store and also has a digital museum where viewers can see objects online and plan their visit to view the actual items.

Access to stored collections should be publicised by the museum and advertised on its website. Visitors need to be able to find out easily as to how to access objects that are not on display. Museum staff should be creative in ways of opening their stored collections to visitors and offer a range of

means of access from the group tour to individual appointments for researchers. Many museums have created the post of collections access officer. This allows one dedicated member of the staff to act as a liaison with potential and actual visitors to stored collections and ensures the best experience for visitors to stored objects.

### **Engaging the local community**

Your local community is as wide as you want it to be. Find out what your constituents expect from their museum and invite them in. If there are any artists that you know, consider asking them to create work inspired by the objects that you have in your store, or to curate a display of their own work alongside the museum objects. This will reveal a new perspective on the objects that you may not have considered before.

If you have schools or colleges nearby, establish firm links for them to hold classes in your store and to use your collections. Local schools can make use of handling collections in their lessons. University students can be encouraged to study objects in more depth and can even learn by volunteering or work-study options.

Inviting your community in will enable them to tell stories and to engage with objects in a non-curated way. Make friends with local businesses, sports clubs, other arts organisations, old people's homes, and day-care centres. Each of them can have a specific input to your collection and has something to contribute to your knowledge, experience, or just enjoyment. By encouraging visitors to your stores, they will come to see your collection as a resource. They may have knowledge of the objects or of the local area that you do not. Ask them for ideas, memories, and contributions. Start recording oral history. The museum should be seen as a fundamental part of any community and as a centre not just for storing objects but for generating activities and ideas.

### **Different types of collections**

Using stored collections can be very different depending on the type of collection. Fine-art collections may be less accessible due to their high value and the need for good climate conditions, but there are still ways of inviting in the public if visits and tours are managed well and security is good. Decorative art collections are always of interest to local collectors. A museum with a decorative arts collection could cultivate local collectors and dealers and invite them into the stores, either as a part of a long-term friends programme or for special events. Local collectors often have in-depth local knowledge and the museum can draw on this.

For archaeology, there are often many similar items in the collection with little scope for putting them on display. In this case, duplicate items can be used easily in storage for telling stories or re-creating the past. There is a large constituency of the public interested in found objects with many amateur archaeologists and metal detectors. These 'finders' can be cultivated and invited in to look or perhaps to contribute something of their own to add to your collection. If the area of your museum is particularly rich in history, this could be exploited by your museum by focussing on the surrounding area, what has been found there, and what is still to be discovered.

Natural history collections are also under-displayed in the museum and have many duplicate samples. They often rely on visits from researchers for scientific purposes rather than from the general public. Although these collections often require the expertise of the curator to explain them, this can be used as an advantage as visitors enjoy meeting an expert and asking them questions. The expert need not necessarily be one of the museum curators. Local celebrities or tutors from a local college or university may enjoy having access to your store and will be happy to talk to the public. Learning outside the classroom and lifelong learning are both huge growth areas.

Local groups such as ornithologists may also enjoy access to stored collections and may even be able to help with cataloguing or basic collection care on a volunteer basis.

Social history has been the great growth area in past thirty years. It was the first of the museum disciplines to be a ground-up movement rather than the traditional top-down field such as art history. Although museums have always collected local and vernacular objects, there has been a huge increase in people seeing their local museum as the repository for their own personal history and that of their friends and families. Social history museums depend on the input and memories of the local community and require donations from local people who know that their object will be valued and used by generations to come. There is a real sense of ownership and local pride in these museums and they must cultivate strong links with their constituents in order to keep those connections alive and to constantly refresh the collection with new objects.

Social history collections can be easily accessible as there are often duplicates and large numbers of similar mass-produced objects. There is usually less need for the preservation of such objects and they can be more robust. These collections can be used by a variety of visiting groups as handling collections, or even sent outside the museum into schools, colleges, or community groups. All of this is important for encouraging close local participation.



The museum has to be rich in the quality of its objects and make sure that all aspects of local life and history are well represented. Any local museum must ensure it reflects the local community in both its history and in its current interests, activities, employment, and ethnic mix. The collection must keep up to date with any changes in the local community. Ethnographic objects in the collection could benefit from the knowledge of local people who may come from those countries and may have an understanding or experience of certain objects. Many objects in ethnographic collections have little information. An object labelled African may be interpreted by a local visitor who can shed light on its provenance or could help research the history of the object in the museum archives or ledgers. Such collections can be used to build bridges.

For science and technology collections, local knowledge is again paramount and is likely to be from local industry. Many scientific, technological, and industrial collections have little information on what was the purpose of the objects and how they worked. The curator in charge may be a historian with no first-hand experience of the industry. There may be a pool of retired local workers with expert knowledge of machinery, tools, or scientific equipment. These experts should be cultivated by the museum so that their knowledge of the industrial world is documented and passed on to post-industrial generations, otherwise it will be lost. Many scientific and technical objects need to be interpreted and this can be done by guest curators, local experts, or by a series of talks or lectures. For example, the Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds, UK, holds a lecture series on the history of medicine as well as on current medical ethics issues. In this way, a collection of scientific instruments, which may appear mysterious or difficult to interpret, has become the focus for history and learning.

Local schools, churches, or community groups often have links to other parts of the world or can be twinned with a city in a developing country. The local museum collection can be active in forging these links and in developing collections to reflect both cities. Local groups can be invited into the stores and encouraged to use them in their exploration of the world. Museums can actively promote their collections as opportunities for learning beyond the classroom and could form the centre of this movement.

## **EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS - REACHING OUT**

There have been huge changes in the way that we display our collections. We are much more aware of interpretation, lighting, signage, and making our collection galleries attractive places. We have moved a long way from objects crowded together in glass cases with little information. There is, however,

*Many museums say  
the single greatest barrier  
to the better use  
of collections  
is insufficient knowledge  
of what they have.*

*All museums  
need to establish  
a research programme.*

still a long way to go to make our collections displays the very best they can be and to look at the future of displays. Our visitors are more demanding and expect interaction and activities around our displays. We must find better and more imaginative ways of interpreting our collections and of showing them, either in our own galleries, or in other suitable non-museum spaces.

### Long-term loans

Long-term loans are a good use of collections that may otherwise stay in storage. No museum can display all of its objects at any one time and we should be looking at new ways to expose what we have. Objects not on display for whatever reason, may be of exceptional interest to another museum or venue. The *Long-term loans best practices report* by the Collections Mobility Working Group 2008–10 (Jyrkkiö 2009) lists many of the advantages of long-term loans and gives examples of loans that have worked well throughout Europe.

The UK Museums Association's *Effective Collections* programme has set up a scheme to allow major collections to identify works that have not been on display for some time and then to seek suitable recipients to take them on long loan. There is a 'find an object' database as well as funding to support collection surveys and long loans.

Programmes such as this reveal countless objects that have not been seen by the public for many years and investigation into underused parts of the collection contributes to research. A long-term loan can reunite an object with its original partners; it can combine with others of the same type to complete a display or show a variety of the same item; it can be returned to its original setting, site, or home; it can add to scholarship or understanding of a different culture; it can complete an unfinished story or fill in a missing link. Long-term loans often act as a centrepiece for a display in the borrowing museum and attract much attention to the borrower's own collection. As well as all these benefits, long-term loans can free up space for the lender and all of this is more cost-effective than short-term exhibition loans.

There are huge benefits to both lender and borrower in long-term loans:

For the lender:

1. an object that was unseen or seldom seen is given exposure
2. a duplicate object can be used by another museum
3. an object is released from storage and frees up storage space
4. the object can be seen from a new perspective
5. it may be used for scientific research by the borrower
6. it may be conserved by the borrower

7. new information can be gathered
8. the lender does not lose any rights of ownership
9. the lender generally does not have to cover costs
10. the loan gives the lender the chance to rotate displays.

For the borrower:

1. the object can enhance the profile and significance of the existing collection
2. a star piece can be the centrepiece of a collection-based display
3. new audiences can be attracted
4. there can be scholarship and new research
5. events or educational programmes can be built around the loan
6. the work involved in the loan has long-term effects
7. a long-term loan is more economical than a short-term loan or an acquisition
8. new techniques of care of handling can be learned
9. a long-term loan can be an alternative to restitution
10. a long-term loan may be a chance to upgrade conditions in the gallery.

Moreover, for both the lender and borrower:

1. the work involved has long-term benefits
2. the object is seen in a new context
3. fresh research may be undertaken by the borrower
4. new publications and programmes are created
5. knowledge and trust between the parties are built up
6. common forms, standards, and procedures can be created
7. links can be established that lead to new projects and more loans
8. resources are shared
9. long-term loans are more energy efficient
10. long-term loans can be a practical alternative to restitution.

Any long-term loan must be of mutual benefit. Any long-term loan should be agreed after discussion between the parties and have a written contract. A long-term loan must have the same standards of care and shared responsibilities as a short-term loan. The fundamental difference is that although title remains with the lender, the loaned object becomes a part of the borrower's collection for the length of the loan period and to all intents and purposes, is treated as a part of that respective collection. This allows borrowers the freedom to use the objects as they wish without frequent discussions or negotiations. Lenders are relieved from continual monitoring in the knowledge that the loan is the responsibility of the borrowing institution and that it will be treated as well as any object in the borrower's own collection.

A long-term loan contract is usually for a period of three to five years, and is renewable if both parties agree (see Collections Mobility Long Term Loans and Loan Fees work group). As well as costs, long-term loans make better use of resources and staff time as the benefits continue over a greater period of time and are, therefore, more cost-effective.

One of the major barriers to long-term loans is the cost of insurance. Lenders and borrowers can reduce or dispense with insurance costs by using a state indemnity scheme if it exists, rather than commercial insurance. For states where there is no indemnity scheme, museums should encourage their department of culture to consider introducing one. In the same way, states that have indemnity schemes only for exhibition loans should be encouraged by museums to extend this to long-term loans. As cultural objects are at greatest risk when on the move, a long-term loan represents a far lower insurance risk than an exhibition loan. If there is no alternative to commercial insurance, a realistic valuation should be agreed between lender and borrower. If appropriate, coverage may even be waived during the time that the object is on the borrower's care and only used during transit, if both parties agree.

As mentioned, examples of long-term loans are listed in the *Long-term loans and best practices* report, and loans can be made across state boundaries. Museums should actively pursue a long-term loans programme. Museums who wish to forge connections with other states should be bold in offering objects on a long-term basis and those who know of objects that are relevant to their own collection should make moves to approach the current owner for a long-term loan. Museums could think outside their own state or even outside Europe. Organisations such as the Asia-Europe Museum Network (see [www.asemus.org](http://www.asemus.org)) facilitate shared knowledge and collections of Asian objects. In this way, we can have the long-term enjoyment of our cultural collections rather than only short-term exposure.

#### Loans to non-museum spaces

Lending objects to non-museum spaces is a good way to create maximum exposure and to encourage visitors to the museum. The Rijksmuseum's gallery at Schiphol Airport has huge exposure to the millions of passengers passing through the airport every day, many of whom will follow up with a visit to the museum.

Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam, is the first airport in the world to host a museum. The joint collaboration with the Rijksmuseum allows passengers to enjoy a moment of calm during their travel schedule and has proven extremely popular. For the museum, there is exposure of some of their finest works of art and valuable publicity to a far larger audience. The museum, opened in 2002, benefits from airport security and climate control and has a small shop selling museum quality merchandise.

The airport is an ideal exhibition venue as it has high security and full climate controlled conditions. However, other non-museum spaces can be equally valid for exhibits that are robust and do not pose particular security or condition-sensitive problems.

Apart from the particularly sensitive objects that we are very aware of, many of our objects do not need special conditions. Archaeological or social history collections can be placed in secure cabinets in a variety of public places. The Museum of London has a series of found objects placed all over the city in colleges, public buildings, and even underground stations, which show the spot where these objects were found. These objects such as Roman pots or tiles, are not light or temperature sensitive and are not unique and are, therefore, highly suitable to lend to non-museum spaces. This venture, though low-risk, is highly successful in allowing people to see where the objects were found, to encourage them to learn about their history, and to visit the museum.

We are developing ways of no longer being overcautious about our cultural objects and of taking some of them, after careful consideration, outside their former strict environmental parameters. This freedom allows us to be imaginative in the spaces where we can place samples from our collections. Public spaces such as government buildings, cultural organisations, or universities and colleges benefit from vast numbers of visitors and generally have a high profile and good security. They can serve as attractive areas to place display cases or stands. Objects need to be carefully selected and any loan must be carefully thought through, but many of our objects are robust enough to lend to such spaces.

Museums should think boldly about how to get their collections out of the museum and into public spaces. Many cities have 'art in hospitals' programmes with amazing results for patients. There have been loans from the Danish National Museum to various cultural centres in Barcelona and to a monastery in Santiago. The Crafts Council (UK) actively promotes short-term loans from its collection to healthcare and corporate venues and long loans to galleries, museums and universities, which enhance the interpretation and display of permanent craft collections or inspire new areas of craft collecting.

Any public space with good security, good lighting, and relatively stable conditions can be considered and can lead to long-term relationships with the owners of the venue. The social benefit of such exhibitions can be great.

Many museums also have lease schemes to local businesses where objects are placed, for a fee, in the public areas of the company. These can work very well as a means of releasing the object from store, exposing it in the public spaces of the company, and thereby raise funds for the museum.

### Collections-based exhibitions

The best way to raise the awareness of your collection is to put on a brilliant display. Many museums focus on temporary exhibitions of loaned-in works to the detriment of their own collection. However, having a collection of its own is the main thing that lends the greatest credibility to a museum.

The best way to make the most of your collection is to have a planned programme of what to put on display and how to display it. You can make the most of new events, of course, such as a recently conserved object or a new acquisition, but these should be planned into a strategic programme of collection-based displays. Otherwise, such displays become reactions and can take staff unawares, may put the plan out of sequence, or take up more budget than was intended.

Continuously refreshed displays keep visitors coming back as there is always something new to see. Curators should be encouraged to reimagine collection displays and put more focus on them. Displays can be rotated more frequently to keep the museum always in the public eye.

Three criteria can be kept in mind: cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and flexibility. Even with limited budgets, displays can be interesting and stimulating. Displays, signage, and display furniture can be reused to minimise the effect of wasting valuable resources

Make the most of key pieces. There could be a much-loved and well-known piece that attracts the most audiences. This should be made the most of and highlighted in different ways. It could be used over and over again in a variety of new displays exploring different aspects.

Many famous artists have been inspired by a particular painting or object in their local museum, which they visited repeatedly. Just because they are familiar, you should not take these works for granted as they can have a far-reaching influence that you possibly cannot imagine.

If you wish to borrow works to enhance your collection or to complete a display, choose them sparingly and select one or two pieces carefully that will make the most of your own objects, rather than resorting to borrowing-in everything. In this way, you will emphasise the highlights of your own collection and show it to the best advantage. A collections-based display can be enhanced with one careful loan rather than mounting an entire exhibition.

### Touring exhibitions

Touring exhibitions are a good way to get your cultural objects seen and to increase the awareness of your collection. If you have the time and funds to put together a collections-based display in your own museum, it might be a good idea to consider touring it around similar galleries. This is a cost-effective way of mounting exhibitions for the creator, as the costs can be spread over the number of participants. The borrowing institution has no start-up costs, can share not only the objects but also the accompanying materials, and only has to cover the packing and transport costs.

As well as shared costs, a touring exhibition is an opportunity to find out what is in other collections and may lead to long-term loans, more touring exhibitions, and a variety of other shared projects. It is worthwhile to conduct some research into which other museums have objects that might complement your own. Tour partners can build up trust with shared knowledge and ways of working that will have far-reaching benefits. If connections are established with similar museums, then a shared vocabulary and standards can be quickly put in place that will save repeating terms or conditions every time a loan goes ahead.

Some of the considerations for touring are:

1. dates
2. title
3. content
4. key personnel
5. responsibilities
6. sponsorship/advertising
7. catalogue/list
8. gallery requirements
9. transport packing
10. insurance/indemnity
11. costs/budget
12. education events
13. evaluation

Exhibitions for touring should come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and themes and be flexible in format to have the greatest number of potential receiving institutions. Educational programmes, supplementary materials, exhibition furniture, and signage can all be shared on a tour, in turn making a large impact across a number of venues for the minimum outlay.



## COLLABORATIONS

### Joint purchase and ownership

Due to the significant cost of fine art and high-value objects, many museums now find acquisitions out of their reach. Shared purchase and co-ownership is a good way for museums to acquire objects and to ensure that they stay in the public domain. If an important object is for sale, it is quite common for two or three museums who are all interested in acquiring the object to get together and make a joint purchase. None of the museums would have been able to purchase the object by themselves and it would inevitably have been lost into the private sector, or to one of a handful of world museums with huge purchasing power.

The museums in question are usually of a similar type, e.g. fine art museums for purchasing a work of art, or history museums for purchasing antiquities.

The British Museum, the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (Stoke-on-Trent) and Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery (Carlisle) collaborated in 2008 to purchase The Staffordshire Moorlands Pan, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD Roman vessel found near Hadrian's Wall in the North of England.

If an object is discovered in the ground and is of crucial importance to the area, several local museums could join forces to make a joint purchase, thus ensuring that the object stays near the place it was found and keeping it in the local and historical context. A locally found object is always a key piece in the collection and can be used to build up local stories.

For fine-art purchases, such as the collaboration between the Centre Pompidou, Tate, and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), high-value key works of art can be secured for the public domain.

Tate (London), Centre Pompidou (Paris), and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York) collaborated in 2002 to purchase *Five Angels for the Millennium*, which is a video installation by Bill Viola.

Each of the museums in the partnership benefits from having the object in their collection (or at least, part of the object) and can display it in rotation, planning in advance the best method and time of display. The public benefits from having the object more or less permanently on show in a variety of places. It can be seen in each of the participating museums and can be viewed in a different way in each of them.

Any potential joint purchase must be carefully considered to ensure best value for all the participating museums. They should decide as to what all the

parties want to achieve and have clear aims and objectives from the start. Purchasing any work can be a permanent investment and partners in co-ownership must take a long view. It is important that not just the price of the object is taken into account in the negotiations. The parties must also consider any packing, transport, and storage costs as well as any conservation required. They must be able to look into the future and envisage the long-term use and ongoing responsibilities of this new item and no area should be left without discussion. It is, therefore, important to have an agreement between the parties that contains all or some of the following:

1. agreed purchase price
2. share of price for each participant
3. costs of transport and packing and division of costs
4. any conservation/cleaning/framing and mounting  
– costs and responsibilities
5. any related materials or information
6. value, insurance/indemnity
7. long-term storage and packaging
8. period of loan at each venue
8. how to move between venues – costs and arrangements
9. credit line
10. copyright details
11. how to deal with loan requests

Successful co-ownerships are based on sound agreements where there are no surprises later. If the partnership works well, it could be turned into something more permanent such as a consortium to make joint purchases in future. In any case, a joint purchase is a clever way of securing important objects permanently for our collections.

### **Partnerships**

Many larger museums have set up partnerships with a series of regional museums. This allows major collections to be enjoyed by audiences at some distance from the home museum and is particularly valuable for national collections. These partnerships are highly successful but must be established with a clear view to benefit both parties and not just be seen as the national museum delivering a ready-made display to the regional.

The aim should be to collaborate and share ideas and resources and for objects to go in both directions. In addition to objects, the major museum can advise on the standards and procedures that will have long-lasting effects on the smaller museum. Many of our national museums have partnerships with four or five regional museums, which enable collections to be viewed outside the capital city. These partnerships usually take a few years to establish and to start working smoothly. Therefore, they should be entered into for the long-term.

There can also be partnerships with groups of museums, all acting equally to share collections and resources. No museum can expect to have all the expertise that it requires under one roof. Partnerships can pool resources and can share training, publicity, education programmes, and departments handling and technical skills.

These partnerships can be grouped around a collection with a similar theme, e.g. natural history museums in different parts of the country showing local objects could share with different regions; local history museums in one county or region that could build up an enhanced portrait of what is unique about that region; matching governance or history such as university museums; urban museums can band together to promote city culture in all its varieties; or museums of the former homes of famous people in one particular area could share resources. These groups are stronger than individual museums, as they can act as consortiums to attract greater attention with shared publicity and lobbying power.

Some of these museums could have been seen as rivals in the past, competing for visitors or for local funding. By joining forces, they both win, as a collaboration makes the best use of resources as well as adds more impact to funding, publicity, shared websites, or shared events.

Any partnership should have a signed agreement to make it clear as to what each party has committed to and what are the benefits for all. Decisions must be agreed and documented so that there is no doubt as to who should pay for something or who should do the work. It is not necessary for everything to be divided equally. For example, if one of the partners has a conservation studio and another does not, then it should be documented that all conservation takes place in the studio with agreements on how this is done, and how the costs are divided. Written records must be kept on what is done and what is decided and copies of all decisions must be circulated. It is important to agree on who does what, who keeps what at their own premises, and whether the responsibility is placed on one museum or equally on all. If a database or publicity brochure is shared, there must be agreement on who provides content and who produces the publication. If joint training sessions occur, costs and content should be a part of any overarching contract. If agreements are drawn up at the outset, then the details of displays, content, transport, display furniture, publications, publicity, etc. will be easily solved.

Shared storage facilities or services are increasingly common with several museums banding together in one building. This is the most usual for a group of national or regional museums with one governing or funding body. However, museums are increasingly seeing the benefit of shared storage premises. There is a move from expensive inner-city storage to newly con-

structed facilities on the outskirts. When planning and building such a facility, it pays to make maximum use of the new space by inviting a number of museums to share the store. As well as storage space, there can also be shared activities such as conservation and photography studios, fumigation chambers, or technical workshops. For example, the National Museum of Denmark shares storage with Rosenborg Museum and the regional store at Vejle incorporates, as well as object storage, conservation studios, photography, a cold store, and a packing workshop.

Partnerships and collaborations not only make better use of resources, by sharing knowledge and expertise, they also enable participants to take on more ambitious and imaginative projects that they would not be able to manage alone and to use their collections better.

### **Collaborations outside the museum**

Many museums work well with local businesses, industries, or other arts organisations. This use of partnerships outside the sector can increase the exposure of our collections in imaginative ways with more knowledge and greater access. Museums should regard the local constituency as vital to its goals and should invite in groups from local industries, clubs, societies, and organisations. If their buildings are suitable and objects are available, local organisations could be invited to choose something from the collection to display on their premises. In addition to getting objects out of storerooms, this increases enjoyment and encourages people to visit the museum. They may not have thought much about their local museum as a resource but will now see it in a different way. If the objects that they particularly want are too fragile to show outside the museum, invite them to help with a museum display and organise visits, events, or lectures around that display. This will give them ownership of the local collection. Time and resources can be contributed from the museum and local organisation with benefit to both. Local industries may become long-term benefactors.

Relationships can be forged with other arts groups such as theatre, opera, or music groups. These work well as the museum has the space and the other arts organisations have the people who can mount a theatre, dance, or music event. It is possible to commission or inspire a new performance using objects or stories from the collection. In this way, everyone wins with new art forms, greater use of the collection, shared costs, more publicity, and an event for the local audience.

These relationships can be long or short-term. Organisations could get together for a local festival or for a single performance or could establish long-term relationships over a period of time to work collaboratively across all the arts.

## RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

### Collections knowledge

Collections are the bedrock of our museums and having knowledge of the objects in our care is fundamental to what we do. Many museums say the single greatest barrier to the better use of collections is insufficient knowledge of what they have. All museums need to establish a research programme, no matter how small, in order to have credibility. This can be done in a variety of ways, on a part-time basis or in collaboration with a local college or university. Having a researcher on board adds weight to your institution. It is important that we continue to investigate our collections and to publish what we find out about them. No matter how much information we have on our collections, there is always more to find out and more connections to make with other objects and other collections. You need to have an in-depth knowledge of your collection before you can move forward with other projects such as conservation or fundraising. A benefactor will want to know about the collection before anything else.

It is important to take the time to investigate the collection more deeply, even if you think you know it well. Why is the Napoleon Cup called the Napoleon Cup? Is there a direct link with Napoleon or is it just a myth? Who is the lady in Portrait of a Lady? These are fundamental questions that need to be answered. Ask yourself if you have all the information that you need on your collection and where all the gaps are. Draw on local knowledge or subject specialist networks to help investigate works and uncover mysteries. Capitalise on key works by discovering different aspects, or investigate the underused parts of the collection and publish the findings. Objects you thought were copies may turn out to be originals.

We put a great deal of focus on our audiences and rightly so, but we cannot serve our audiences if we do not first discover all that we need to know about what we have and to exploit this as much as possible. If public programmes and events are based on the knowledge that was collected decades ago, they become rather thin. Visitors now expect a greater richness in the museum experience and more information on the objects. It is up to the museum to manage the right balance between providing in-depth information and the experience of engaging with the object. New technology, such as hand-held gallery guides, can provide more information to visitors in the way they want to receive it.

All other programmes depend on the research programme. If you do not investigate your collection, it is less likely that anyone else will. In addition, if you do not see your collection as a wonderful resource to be continually investigated and full of potential, then you may be in the wrong job. Your museum will be taken more seriously if you have more in-depth knowledge of your collection.

***Shared purchase and  
co-ownership  
is a good way  
for museums  
to acquire objects.***

**Publishing collections knowledge**

In many museums, the only publications for sale are exhibition catalogues. For the visitor however, learning about what makes the collection unique is fundamental to their experience of the visit. It is important that they can take home a book on the collection with illustrated highlights. If you do not publish what is in your collection, it is unlikely that anyone else will. Collection publications gain publicity for the museum as well as attract more visitors and potential funding. Any potential donor will need a publication on the museum in order to consider their support.

It is important to make the best use of images from your collection, both for publicity purposes and to make sure you keep ownership of the image. Protecting the reproduction of images can also help you generate income by selling images for a variety of uses. You need to be sure of copyright law and have licensing agreements for any usage of your images. That being said, a well-placed image can make a huge difference on the impact of your collection.

Publishing, either in print or on the Internet, is the most far-reaching way to show off your collection. If you have audio guides for your temporary exhibitions and none for your permanent collection, this sends a message that your collection is of secondary importance and your museum is dependent on loans to make it worthwhile. Publications are a lasting legacy from your museum.

## CONCLUSION

Better uses of our collections are an exciting invitation to discover what we already know and to expand our knowledge for the benefit of the public. By revisiting how and why we do the things that we do, and looking again at the wonderful objects in our care, we can make a difference in terms of social benefit, memory and identity, and learning. By actively encouraging access to stored collections, we open up new possibilities for research, education, and creativity for our audiences and ourselves for now and in the future.

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## **COLLECTIONS MOBILITY PERSPECTIVES**

### **ON CONSERVATION:**

### **EMPHASIS ON THE ORIGINAL OBJECT**

The present paper is about the ways in which conservation and the care of objects affect the mobility of museum objects, and whether objects are or are not lent to other institutions. It discusses the status and fascination of original objects; the role of condition in assessing the feasibility of loans and in monitoring the welfare of objects during loans; the conservation risks involved and the ways of working with them. Finally, it explores the possible future developments that may enhance collections mobility in Europe while preserving collections.

### **THE DESIRE TO BORROW (AND TO VIEW) ORIGINAL OBJECTS**

Objects are lent by one institution to another because they have value as original objects; indeed most visitors go to museums expecting to see 'real things'. We may value objects in many different ways because we each bring our own knowledge and expectations to an encounter with an object. For me, a shocking and thrilling experience was to enter a gallery in the Musée de l'Armée at Les Invalides in Paris and to face, quite unexpectedly and set among military splendour, Napoleon's severely plain greatcoat and hat, so familiar from portraits (and presumably resonant with meaning for many Europeans) (Les Invalides 2010).

Most people expect museum objects to not just be real but also to portray some of the values that we look for, or expect. Therefore, we may expect an object to look old, or beautiful, or to demonstrate technical ingenuity (or possibly all of these). Objects are often described as having lives, and the biography may be written in visible traces that indicate the events that have affected the object (wear, damage, repair, re-painting, and so on) (Silverstone 1994; Pearce 1994; Peers 1999; Pye 2001). Therefore, a well-thumbed



## **THE ADVANTAGES OF AGREED CONSERVATION STANDARDS**

### **Assessment of condition and condition reports**

The use of agreed checklists or proformas, and agreed terminologies, would make information more readily accessible to the lender and host. It would help to ensure that when examining an object the same features and factors would be checked and considered; and information would be recorded using standardised, understandable terms.

### **Packaging and transport of objects**

The agreed standards would go some way to ensure that art handlers use the appropriate types of packaging materials and methods, handling practices, and methods of transport (e.g. type of vehicle). There should also be agreement about the type and frequency of monitoring during lengthy periods of transit.

Note: It might be appropriate to set up some form of training for carriers that want to enter this market.

### **Installation of exhibits**

Adherence to guidelines would ensure that an appropriate period of acclimatisation would be agreed on and applied before the installation of an exhibition. It would also reassure the lender about the standard of unpacking and handling during installation.

### **Monitoring and maintaining the environment**

The use of guidelines would support the lender in stipulating reasonable environmental conditions, and would facilitate agreement on the equipment to be used as well as the frequency and detail of monitoring.

### **Monitoring of condition during a loan**

As with the environment, adherence to guidelines would reassure the lender and host about the frequency and detail of the monitoring of the objects, the use of existing condition reports as benchmarks, and the detail required when recording any changes.

### **Protocols for communication between the lender and host about conservation issues**

Guidelines would prompt the lender and host to agree on when and how to communicate and on who the responsible person is at each institution.

book, or a battered suit of armour may have greater significance left in that state than if they were rejuvenated through restoration. Such traces may link the object to people or events and thus enliven the object for the viewer.

That life [of an object] gains its meaning through the various social, economic, political and cultural environments through which it passes, and its passage can in turn illuminate those environments in the way that a flare or a tracer can illuminate the night sky (Silverstone 1994).

Unfortunately, these life-traces are vulnerable to deterioration and damage. Many traces are carried in, or on, the surface of objects, and may be quite subtle. Surfaces are vulnerable to physical damage from handling, moving, transporting, or to stresses caused by fluctuating humidity, or to chemical damage through exposure to high levels of light or pollutants. All of these problems may occur during a loan: the possibilities of physical damage are obvious, changes in relative humidity are a hazard of moving objects from one environment to another, light levels in an exhibition may not be sufficiently accommodated for the most vulnerable objects, and pollutants may be exuded from new display cases, fresh paint, and untested textile backings (Lee and Thickett 1996; Ashley-Smith 1999).

Conservation may be needed to prepare an object for loan. The aim of conservation is to modify the environment, or to remove or add materials in order to reduce damage or enhance stability (or both). Therefore, conservation may involve providing an improved storage mount for a fragile textile, or stipulating only a short-term display in low light levels to minimise fading on a watercolour painting; it may involve extracting salts from a ceramic dish because their crystals are damaging to the decorative glaze; or it may involve the local application of adhesive to reattach paint flakes on a panel painting. Thus, every conservation process has some effect on the object, and adds an event to the life of that respective object. Ill-judged conservation processes, however, may alter the traces that give life to an object. By cleaning a metal object, it is possible to eradicate all indications of age, by restoring a polychrome sculpture it is possible to mask all signs of successive repaints through the life of the object (Pye 2001).

Before any form of conservation, it is important to understand what is significant (what is valued) about an object so that, as far as possible, this is respected and preserved. Thus, the naval uniform coat that Admiral Nelson was wearing when he was killed at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805 (now in the National Maritime Museum in London) has been conserved so that the musket ball damage and blood stains are still evident (National Maritime Museum 2010).

## **COLLECTIONS MOBILITY AND RISK**

Why is conservation involved in making decisions about loans? There is undoubted risk in moving objects either within the institution or over the distances involved in loans and touring exhibitions. The conservator's role is to assess the current state of the object, assess the way it will be transported and used during the loan, and to evaluate the likely risk to the object itself.

Lending is usually linked to temporary exhibitions. Exhibitions are increasingly travelling from one venue to another, so that the objects may be away from their home institution for many months. Some objects are frequently requested for loan and, therefore, considerable stress may be put on a limited range of objects. Risks are involved in many of the stages of a loan: the increased handling involved in the assessment, preparatory conservation, photography, packaging, transport, unpacking, and installation. In general, the risks are reasonably well understood, which is why some objects will not be lent. The awareness of risks has prompted research into the effects of vibration and changing climate during transport as well as the development of improved methods and materials for packaging such as climate controlled packing cases (Mecklenburg 1991). Understanding risks has also led to the development of protocols relating to conservation, which have been adopted by many institutions as a part of their loans policies and procedures (Edson and Dean 1994; Horniman 2002; British Museum 2006). The Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) has developed a Standard Loan Agreement format that embodies these (NEMO 2010).

## **ACCEPTING RISK IN ORDER TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO REAL OBJECTS**

Conservation should be a means for facilitating (and even increasing) the use of objects. It should not be used as an excuse to limit access to them – refusing to lend an object on weak conservation grounds should be considered poor practice. Conservators have become much more aware of their responsibilities to make objects accessible; indeed, in 2008 there was a large international congress on this very topic (Saunders *et al* 2008). However, conservators also have the professional responsibility to protect and care for objects (collections are often regarded as cultural capital), so there remain tensions between the need to provide access and the need to conserve.

In the 1960s, an unnamed Swedish official caused consternation when (as reported by Jan Hjorth) he said that:

**Conservation  
should be a means  
for facilitating  
(and even increasing)  
the use of objects.**

**It should not be used  
as an excuse to  
limit access to them.**

He regarded collections as consumer goods, they existed for the general public, and if they stayed in storerooms they would, of course, be preserved for the next generation, and the next, and the next – but, in the end, no generation would ever see them. Better then to show them, tour them and risk them (Hjorth 1994: 106).

Half a century later, we know much more about the risks of touring and have researched and improved packaging and transport methods, so surely this attitude is the only sensible one to have towards the objects that are held in trust for us all? Surely we should adopt this attitude when we know that many museums have large parts of their collections in more or less permanent storage, representing many millions of invisible and unused objects across Europe (Keene 2005). Museum storage is expensive to maintain, objects are regularly added to collections and, in some museums, the storage of the archive is considered to be reaching a crisis point (Merriman and Swain 1999). The same Swedish official went on to express the view that:

If a few objects disappeared, or were damaged, there would still be objects enough left to satisfy everybody in the future (Hjorth 1994: 106).

Some people view heritage as a renewable resource, constantly being added to (Holtdorf 2001). This supports the argument that using collections, even if we risk losing some items, is not irresponsible, but it should be judiciously encouraged as it makes objects accessible. Although much debated, this also strengthens the argument for making more objects accessible through handling. Many groups benefit from being able to handle objects, particularly those who are blind or have some visual impairment, but the old 'do not touch' rule lingers on both in perception and in actuality (Pye 2007; Khayami 2007). This deters many people from visiting museums. For them, 'do not touch' equates to 'not welcome here'. More research is needed into the risks and benefits of handling but it is already possible to assess whether objects are in a condition that would allow supervised touch and handling (Munday 2002; Lamb 2007). Unused objects could be said to be effectively dead; being in active use extends their life.

### **CONSERVATION, CONDITION, AND VALUE**

Conservation is involved in assessing risk; it is also involved in assessing whether an object can withstand the risks to which it may be exposed. Whether or not an institution is ready to lend an object will depend to a large extent on the condition of the object and the risks inherent in a particular loan.

This assessment of condition requires experience since it is subjective – we may all have slightly different views of the condition of an object. Condition is also relative and, therefore, it is a slippery concept; it means little on its own and needs qualification. However, what do we mean by 'good condition' or 'poor condition'? To determine this we also need a context 'good condition considering it has been buried for thousands of years'; 'good enough condition to be put on display' (Keene 1996; Caple 2000; Pye 2001). When considering museum objects and particularly considering loans, the definition of condition must relate to the way the object is to be transported and used during the loan, so an object may be pronounced to be in a condition suitable to be lent to a short-term exhibition in a single venue, but not to an exhibition that will travel to three different venues over the following year. Thus, the condition assessment focuses on the object's fitness for purpose. Also to be considered is how condition relates to value: one person's damage (which implies poor condition) may be another person's valued evidence (for example, worn and crudely darned clothing may say much about the poverty and limited skills of the original wearer).

Highly valued objects may simply not be lent, for fear of the risks involved, but also because they are key features of a museum's collection that their own visitors will expect to see (British Museum 2006). During a loan, apart from total loss (through theft or disaster), the main risk is damage to an object, and damage can be defined as the loss of some aspect of value (Ashley-Smith 1999). Damage also needs qualification to be understandable, thus catastrophic damage would be considered to imply an irretrievable loss of value. It is also relative: a tiny amount of damage on a highly valued object may be considered far more serious than much greater damage on a lesser object.

It is impossible to eliminate all risks associated with loans because some are outside our control (road crash, earthquake) and this is generally accepted, for example the British Museum Loans Policy speaks of lending if the risks 'are considered reasonable' (British Museum 2006 Para 2.4). To deal with the risks that are considered more controllable, a range of processes is involved in assessing and maintaining the condition of a lent object. An important tool used during the loan process is the condition report (Caple 2000; Pye 2001). This acts as a benchmark against which to measure any damage during the loan. Reports must detail all the pre-existing blemishes or damage so that it is possible to identify any new changes. The condition will be monitored at each stage in a travelling exhibition and then compared to the most recent report. These reports are also important when agreeing on, or disputing, the extent of damage and levels of compensation.

To prepare an object for loan, conservators may need to undertake remedial work on the object itself. This may be necessary to strengthen parts in order to ensure it can withstand the potential effects of travel, or the work may be cosmetic because the object needs to be presentable for display. This exhibition-led work may be seen as unethical (particularly if it involves restoration), but if it makes it possible to exhibit an object this accords with the aim to make objects accessible, and it may also represent an improvement in the condition of that object (Ashley-Smith 1999).

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LENDER AND BORROWER**

Conditions required for the object during display will be stipulated by the lender and agreed by the borrower (Wilson 1992; Edson and Dean 1994). These cover both security measures, and preventive conservation requirements such as specific light and humidity levels and the quality of the materials used in display cases. It is obviously important that these conditions are maintained and not allowed to slip.

**Most people expect  
museum objects to  
not just be real  
but also to portray  
some of the values  
that we look for,  
or expect.**

The staff of the lending institution is often heavily involved in ensuring that objects are not put to unnecessary risk. This is time-consuming, particularly as it often involves specialist staff acting as couriers. They are involved because the lending institution has a moral (and normally also legal) responsibility to ensure the preservation of the objects it holds. Staff of the lending institution familiar with the objects (conservators or curators) normally accompany any major loan during travel, check the condition on arrival (using the condition report as a benchmark), and supervise the acclimatisation, unpacking and installation in the new context. Installation is a particularly risky stage in the whole process of creating an exhibition. Particularly when dealing with large, heavy or awkward-shaped objects it is crucial that the borrowing institution uses a team of experienced handlers – serious damage (to object and to personnel) can result from inexperienced and poorly controlled manoeuvring of such objects. It is also important that if any problem arises during the loan, such as accidental physical damage, or failure of climate control, the lending institution is informed immediately. It is unethical for the borrowing institution to attempt to deal with the problem without enabling the lender to send a specialist to inspect and rectify the damage, or at the very least to provide advice. This is because the borrower may not

know enough about the object (e.g. its significance and previous conservation history) nor about the conservation policies of the lender. On the other hand, unless previously agreed, it is not acceptable to lend an object in such condition that it requires conservation by the borrowing institution.

## **ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

What alternative approaches are there that may limit the risks to real objects, but still contribute to sharing knowledge? The stress on objects can be minimised by limiting the number of times that they are lent. A way to limit the exposure of any one type of object to the risks involved in loans is to spread the load across different types of collection and to use minor as well as major works. Fascination may be provided by seemingly ordinary objects such as the domestic equipment of past centuries, or of another culture. 'Social history collections ...are some of those that particularly engage people' (Keene 2005: 7). Blind and partially sighted people gain information and pleasure from exhibitions of objects that can be touched or handled. Some of the strengths and charms of temporary exhibitions are the new experiences provided by placing objects in new contexts, juxtaposed with new companions. More ordinary and robust objects would be easier (and less expensive) to send round as their transport could be handled by trusted professional art shippers, and their unpacking and installation could be dealt with by the staff of the borrowing institution. Drawing on collections across Europe would seem to offer rich possibilities here.

In some cases, models and replicas can be used to provide an understanding of the working objects. Modern imaging techniques have also increased our ability to make objects accessible (MacDonald 2006). Digital imaging has enabled many institutions to put their collections on line thus providing virtual accessibility throughout Europe and beyond. Imaging also allows for the virtual restoration of objects to show what they may once have looked like, showing faded colours as they once were, or reconstructing a damaged object by virtually replacing missing parts (Geary 2004). These processes limit the need to intervene on the object itself. In the case of temporary exhibitions visitors may be interested to know why an object that otherwise may have fitted the theme of the exhibition has had to be excluded for conservation reasons. Here, also, is the opportunity to use digital imaging, not only to display the 'missing' object but also to tell the story of its condition and conservation. Three-dimensional imaging and virtual handling are also being researched but do not yet provide a satisfactory experience (Prytherch and Jefsoutine 2007). However, technologies are developing so fast that these may provide a further aspect of virtual mobility.



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Some mechanical or motorised objects are displayed in motion in order to demonstrate their function; for this reason, many clocks in the British Museum tick, strike and chime (British Museum 2010a). However, these objects are difficult to lend to other institutions because of the specialised skills needed to run and maintain them. Animated images can provide alternative and excellent demonstrations of how objects function, such as ‘how does a mechanical watch work?’ as an animation on the British Museum website (British Museum 2010b).

### **COMMUNICATING ISSUES**

Many visitors are fascinated by the processes that go on behind the scenes at museums. Information about conservation is now frequently included in exhibitions – for example to show what may be learned about an object during the conservation process (such as understanding methods of fabrication, identification of pigments or metals), or to explain why it is necessary to display vulnerable objects in low light levels. Indeed, it could be seen as a deterrent to visitors if the need for low light levels is not explained (people tend to think museums are gloomy places). The addition of information about conservation issues can generate lively interest.

### **CONCLUSIONS: ENHANCING MOBILITY, MINIMISING RISK**

Encouraging the mobility of collections provides opportunities to widen knowledge, and pleasure, and to increase European collaboration. Conservation should not be used as an excuse unreasonably to obstruct loans. However, some measures could be taken to improve the current situation.

Given the risks, varying the range of objects included in touring exhibitions could have the beneficial effect of encouraging the loan of categories of objects that have, perhaps, been less mobile than major art works, thereby preventing the concentration of risks on a relatively small range of objects. Digital imaging and the ability to display virtual collections throughout the Internet can be used to alleviate the pressure on ‘real things’. These techniques can also be used not just to display objects that cannot be lent, but also to augment exhibitions and extend the understanding of individual objects.

The ways in which loans are organised rely to a considerable extent on trust between institutions and colleagues. To involve more institutions in lending or borrowing objects throughout Europe requires the extension of this trust. The NEMO Loan Agreement is a welcome development. Although addi-

tional bureaucracy is not often welcome, it would be useful to develop agreed European standards for assessing and reporting on condition, and for using condition reports. Exhibitions are costly in terms of the involvement of the staff of lending institutions, so it would also be helpful to draw up standards of practice for professional art shippers relating to the care of objects in transit. Agreed standards for installation, monitoring, and maintenance of exhibition conditions, and for checking the condition of displayed objects could also make it more possible for lenders to entrust borrowers with the task of unpacking and installing objects. Fortunately, many institutions have standards that they stipulate and/or comply with, and some relevant European standards are already under development through the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN 2010; see also CEN Conservation 2010 for a list of standards being developed).

Although achieving agreement on broadly applicable standards requires extensive consultation and discussion, agreed conservation standards could facilitate the mobility of many collections (though, of course, major and unique works would still require special treatment).

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**Col·leccions**  
**Colecciones**  
**Collections**



**Restaurant**

PART THREE

THE WAY FORWARD:  
COLLECTIONS MOBILITY

## **COLLECTIONS MOBILITY**

### **– STEPPING FORWARD**

Our collections are meant to be displayed, researched, interpreted, and kept for the audiences of today and generations to come. Museum collections flourish at their best when they are used and researched properly. In order to strengthen the use of collections, the museum community needs tools and practical guidance. Professional networks, such as the International Group of Organizers of Large-scale Exhibitions (known as the Bizot Group) and Registrars Group, already provide platforms for developing the practices. Developing the collections can also be initiated from the political level: the European Commission and the impact of the European Agenda for Culture have their say in harmonising the practices and creating innovative ways to respond to the growing need for co-operation between museums.

When museums were founded and private collectors contributed to nation building by donating their lifetime achievements to the public institutions, the driving force was to enforce the aims of enlightenment. Then, the public museums were a tool to educate the nation. Two hundred years later, the field is different. Museums form a great part of the culture industry and the number of museums is still growing. New museums and collections are being introduced and the number of objects is reaching new records. From billions of museum objects, only a fraction is displayed or used. Still, museums are making more purchases year after year. The accumulation of material is one of the great concerns for the museums of today.

The essential question is what are the museums preserving, to whom and why, and according to which strategy? Are the museums doing the right things? If yes, are they doing them right? On the other hand, are we just repeating a pattern of collecting that once created is never questioned again?

Therefore, we should be ready to ask questions such as has collecting, hoarding, piling, and preserving as an activity come to a turning point? Museums are sustainable by nature but at a certain point, when storages are filled with B- or C-category objects, they are in danger of becoming huge wastelands of



forgotten and unused objects – or cemeteries as was suggested in the famous *Manifesto of Futurism* by Filippo Tomasso Marinetti, published on the front page of the *Le Figaro* in 1909:

Museums: public dormitories where one lies forever beside hated or unknown beings.  
Museums; absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors ferociously macerating each other with color-blows and line-blows, the length of the fought-over walls! (Marinetti 1909).

Whereas museums are collecting and storing more, as if trying to master the Hegelian narrative, they are also competing with each other on the market. The more funds one has and the better networks, the more prominent collection one can build. Instead of trying to buy more items or missing links of the great master narrative to the collection, museums should seek alternative routes to strengthen the collection profiles.

Artist Robert Motherwell had already criticised American art museums in the 1960s for building similar collections for every city. You encountered the same selection of artists everywhere as if they were only one story to be told.

But as the general situation is, everywhere in America one sees the same Main Street, same Woolworth's, same Coca-Cola, same chain drugstore, same movie, same motel, same fried shrimps, and the same local museum reflecting in the same lesser way the same big museum. O sameness! (Motherwell 1961).

In order to understand the origins and character of the collections, the museums should put some more effort into collection research thereby enabling us to use the collections better and more effectively. The museums should encourage our staff to move around, study more, exchange experiences with other professionals, and strengthen the links to universities.

The academic world has reacted to this need by such initiatives as the *Making National Museums* – network governed by universities in Linköping (SE), Oslo (NO), and Leicester (UK) and resulting in a publication in 2010. Another initiative, a project called *Eunamus*, is mapping the collection history of the European national museums 1750–2010 and analysing the roles of the museums in contemporary society from various points of departures. The project aims to conduct a comparative study of the formation of national museums in Europe and deliver a rich picture of national museums in all their social, political, and intellectual complicity ([www.eunamus.eu](http://www.eunamus.eu)). Comprehensive museum and collection histories covering the development of the national museum field or individual institutions support these aims and objectives. In-depth research increases the general understanding concerning the value of the collections, and the use and existence of the museums (see the bibliography).

Whereas research creates the context and provides argumentation for the better use of the collections, the museum community needs practical tools for that to be realised. There are several steps that have already been taken on a national and European Union level, the most ambitious initiative being Collections Mobility – project.

## **MOBILITY CONFERENCES AND PUBLICATIONS**

Museum collections and their use became an issue within the European Union in the early 2000s. One of the key actors to promote the paradigm change was the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In preparing for its presidency of the European Union in 2004, the ministry became aware of the potential of culture heritage and European added value. After several twists and turns, including questions addressed to the European Commission, and answers provided by the Commissioner, the topic was taken to the European agenda. It was discussed for the first time in 2003 in Athens and Delphi where the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Receipts Fund organised a conference *Enhancement and Promotion of Cultural Heritage of European Significance* (see the CM timeline).

After the conference in Greece, debates have taken place in various conferences and seminars in Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, and Spain, just to mention a few. The overall themes of the conferences have covered the promotion of cultural heritage, management standards and models, increasing and encouraging the mobility of collections, as well as trust and networking. The central message has been very clear: all time and effort should be given to lower the threshold for co-operation between museums. The overall aim is to produce practical advice and guidance benchmarking of the good ideas that already being used.

The first key document, *Lending to Europe. Recommendations on Collection Mobility for European Museums* was published in 2005. Subject areas and recommendations have pointed out the general principles and museum expertise connected to lending and borrowing practices between museums. Separate issues were highlighted, such as valuation, different options for insurances, indemnity, immunity from seizure, long-term loans and loan fees, publication and copyright, as well as digitisation and trust. Substantial appendices covered the reasons to lend or not to lend, Work Plan for Culture 2005/2006, ICOM Code of Ethics for museums, general principles on loans and exchange of cultural goods between institutions, UKRG standard facilities report and value, non-insurance, as well as indemnity and insurance (*Lending to Europe 2005*).

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for that to be realised.**

The present set of recommendations aims to encourage collection mobility, both by stimulating a larger number of European institutions to share in cultural exchanges within Europe and by redressing the imbalance vis-à-vis financially stronger and better equipped partners outside Europe (*Lending to Europe* 2005, 1).

Recommendations were written by an individual expert group chaired by Ronald de Leeuw, director of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Members of the group represented different fields of expertise ranging from cultural history to art and from small organisations to large ones.

A year later, *Action Plan for the EU Promotion of Museum Collections' Mobility and Loan Standards* saw daylight. The general objectives were listed as well as the key areas that needed extra care and attention. The Action Plan aims to facilitate access to Europe's cultural heritage, make it available for all citi-

zens, and find new ways to improve co-operation, trust, and good practice for lending between museums. In practise, this means harmonising practices where it can be done easily or at least with reasonable effort, and offering tools for museums to use – special attention being placed on smaller stakeholders and new member states that might lack the basic set of agreements, facilities, conditions reports, etc.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the *Action Plan* required gathering the basic information concerning the collection practices in the member states. The work started in working groups that concentrated on loan administration and loan standards, state indemnity schemes, valuation, self-insurance and non-insurance of cultural objects, immunity from seizure, loan fees and long-term loans, building up trust/networking, and digitisation. Several inquiries were sent to the member states and results analysed. These groups worked in 2006–2007 and came out with a set of guidelines, recommendations, surveys, declarations, definitions, and model agreements. Examples include Loan Fees and Loan Costs Recommendations, Long-Term Loans Definition, Long-Term Loan Conditions, and *Bremen Declaration* on networking and trust between museums ([www.lending-for-europe.eu](http://www.lending-for-europe.eu)).

As it was stated in the *Bremen Declaration*, at the Collections Mobility Conference in Bremen in May 2007,

It is a key task in each European member state to recognize at the political level that the larger European museums have already developed extensive co-operation in a number of activities. These large museums are now called upon to increase their co-operation with smaller institutions within the museum community. Small and medium sized museums should also now be strongly encouraged to participate in the important activity of sharing collections between member states and making them available to all European citizens.

Implementing the *Action Plan* 2006 formed a basis for the second phase of the Collections Mobility work. The Commission Communication on a *European Agenda for Culture in a globalizing world* in 2007 launched a wider reflection on the role of culture as a key element of the European integration process. The Agenda listed three objectives: the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; the promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs; and the promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations.

In order to implement these objectives, the European Agenda for Culture introduced a new method for co-operation, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) that was supposed to respond to the need for a more structured system of co-operation between member states and EU Institutions. Four Expert Groups were formed, and then they started working with themes such as the links between culture and education, the mobility of artists and other cultural professionals, the potential of cultural and creative industries and museum activities, and the mobility of collections.

These working groups are intended to feed into the political reflections at the EU level and make concrete contributions through identifying, sharing, and validating best practices, preparing recommendations for specific measures for their implementation, making proposals for co-operation initiatives between member states or at the EC level and for elements of methodology to evaluate progress, as well as formulating policy recommendations (*Final Report and Recommendations to the Cultural Affairs Committee on Improving the Means of Increasing the Mobility of Collections 2010*).

OMC Expert Group on Collections Mobility, chaired by Hillary Bauer (UK) and Rosanna Binacchi (Italy), started its work in 2008. The Group aimed to continue promoting Collections Mobility by deepening the key themes and collecting more data concerning the better use of the collections.

Sub-working groups have covered themes such as state indemnity and insurances, immunity from seizure/illicit traffic, long-term loans, prevention of theft and illicit traffic, and exchange of expertise. The groups have produced new data concerning the use of the collections, outlined best practices, and written guidelines that provided an essential set of recommendations for the final report handed over to the Commission in June 2010. Some of the key documents and reports were made available at the NEMO (Network of European Museums Associations) website already during the process.

The OMC Expert Group on Collections Mobility Report covers a number of major themes that will help to increase the mobility of collections. Such themes include the value of co-operation and reciprocity, the need to reduce the costs of lending and borrowing, the need to explore new (non-traditional) modalities of mobility, and the importance of assessing the essential requirements for due diligence in researching the provenance of cultural objects. In addition, issues such as communication, raising awareness, and education through sharing the heritage and collections are being highlighted. A summary of the key recommendations from all the groups concentrates on promoting due diligence/prevention of illicit traffic, exploring possibilities of facing problems tied to immunity from seizure, promoting the use of state indemnity schemes on a reciprocal basis, promoting long-term loans, and promoting the mobility of professionals as an essential activity for the

mobility of collections by creating shared trust and knowledge between museums (*Final Report 2010*).

More detailed recommendations were addressed at different levels (commission, member states, museum community, professional groups, and networks). The recommendations are based on the reports and key findings of the sub-groups. For example, on the grounds of the experiences gathered from the member states, the potentially high cost for insurance against risk of loss or damage can be substantially reduced or even eliminated. Therefore, according to one of the suggested recommendations, the member states should eliminate all the obstacles for accepting state indemnities as an alternative to commercial insurance against risk of loss or damage to an object.

The OMC work has been strongly supported by the Collections Mobility 2.0 – project that obtained funding from the Cultural Programme in 2009. Whereas the OMC work concentrates on collecting data and harmonising practices on a political level, CM2.0 provides practical elements for promoting collections mobility through a training programme, collections mobility platform at [www.lending-for-europe.eu](http://www.lending-for-europe.eu) and this book. The overall aim is to help the museum professionals in their daily practices.

As stated in the fund application,

The Collections Mobility project is designed to ensure a change in thinking and in ways of acting by workers and others involved in European museums and other organisations that keep collections. The actions proposed under the project have enormous potential to support museum professionals in their daily work with collections both on a very practical and conceptual level. The instruments developed will provide a reliable framework for decision making and offer practical tools such as: standard forms for contracts and recommendations which will be recognised throughout the EU and can be used by all member states. The training material will be the basis of a permanent increase in the levels of expertise of the staff involved in the lending and borrowing of cultural objects (CM 2.0 application).

All collections mobility forums speak for the strong need to focus on collections and provide both information and tools for museums to use. They represent a new kind of support for developing museum practices. Whereas traditionally it has been the responsibility of the museum community, professional networks and organisations such as museums associations or ICOM, collections mobility has brought together museum professionals, policy makers and representatives of governmental agencies, ministries, and the like.

## VISION

European collection resources form a fundamental basis for understanding our culture and the history of past generations. Collections of natural sciences and culture history, visual and fine arts, architecture, archaeology, as well as many specialist fields establish a great platform for cultural adventures. The responsibility of the museum community is to work as hard as possible to ensure that the collections can deliver the message that they are intended to and for the widest possible audiences.

The better the museums know the collections, the better they can use them and the better they can work together. When there is a genuine professional and content driven reason and motivation to strengthen the collections by lending and borrowing, the obstacles should be removed. In addition, this is for what collections mobility is intended. It is a great facilitator when it comes to information, recommendations, and ways to lower the threshold of lending and borrowing.

Collections Mobility has grown into a key issue for any future work. It is fundamentally important that the ideas and practices developed will obtain back-up support from the Commission, member states, ministries, museum organisations, professional networks such as NEMO, the Registrars Group, and individual museum professionals.

At the very end of the day, it really is up to the museums to make the change. For the benefit of the public.

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**COLLECTIONS MOBILITY TIMELINE**

**2001**

2001 The Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science seeks a subject for the European Union presidency in 2004.

**2002**

25 June 2002 Council Resolution on a new work plan on European co-operation in the field of culture (2002/C 162/03).

19 December 2002 Implementing the work plan on European co-operation in the field of culture: European added value and mobility of persons and the circulation of works in the cultural sector (2003/C 13/03).

2002 MEP posed questions to the European Commission on indemnity. Written question E-3361/02 of Maria Sandersten Holte (ELDR).

**2003**

2003 European Commissioner Ms Reding answered the questions of the MEP on behalf of the commission E-3361/02NL.

17–19 March 2003 Athens and Delphi Conference, Greece. *Enhancement and Promotion of Cultural Heritage of European Significance*. Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Receipts Fund.

9–10 October 2003 Naples Conference, Italy. *Which Management Standards and Models for European Museums?*

24 November 2003 Council Resolution on co-operation between cultural institutions in the field of museums (2003/C 295/01).

## 2004

January 2004 French Memorandum on Cultural Co-operation in Europe.

9 March 2004 Brussels, COM (2004) 154 final, *Communication from the Commission, Making citizenship Work: fostering European culture and diversity through programmes for Youth, Culture, Audiovisual and Civic Participation.*

14 July 2004 Commission of the European Communities COM (2004) 469 final 2004/0150 (COD) *Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Culture 2007 programme (2007-2013)* (presented by the Commission) {SEC (2004) 954}.

October 2004 Study No. 2003-4879 ordered by the European Commission to inventory the national systems of public guarantees in 31 countries: Réunion des musées nationaux (RMN) établissement public à caractère industriel et commercial (EPIC) PARIS (FR) in collaboration with Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin (DE) (Paris) is presented.

28–29 October 2004 The Hague Conference, the Netherlands. *Museum collections on the move.* The Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage.

16 November 2004 *Council conclusions on the Work Plan for Culture 2005–2006* 13839/04 CULT 102 (which has been extended until the end of 2007)...in which the mobility of collections is one of the priorities. The Council also concludes the establishment of the Culture Programme.

## 2005

May 2005 *Lending to Europe* was published. This report, produced by a European working group of museum experts under the chairmanship of Ronald de Leeuw, director general of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, advises on facilitating European collections mobility. The report was initiated by the Dutch EU-presidency, and endorsed by European Culture Ministers on 23 May 2005, under the Luxembourg Presidency.

27–28 November 2005 Manchester Conference, UK. *Increasing the mobility of collections.* The meeting was organised by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the British Museums Association.

8–10 November 2005 Prague Czech Republic *The Museum and Change II.* The International Museology Conference was organised by ICOM Czech Republic and was connected to the INTERCOM Annual Meeting.

## 2006

23–25 May 2006 Madrid, Spain, Conference on *Museum Training, Museum Collections and Planning*, Spanish Ministry of culture.

20–21 July 2006 Helsinki Conference, Finland *Encouraging the Mobility of Collections*. The Ministry of Education and the National Board of Antiquities.

20–21 July 2006 *The Action Plan for the EU Promotion of Museum Collections' Mobility and Loan Standards* was published.

12 December 2006 Decision No. 1855/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Culture Programme (2007 to 2013).

2006 six Collections Mobility working groups were established during the Austrian presidency, (das Zukunftsministerium): Standards (AU), State Indemnity, Insurances, Immunity from seizure, Long-term loans and loan fees (FI), Building up Trust and Networking (DE).

2006– Collections Mobility becomes a popular issue and is discussed at various conferences throughout Europe. Thematic conferences on a national level start spreading, too.

4–6 October 2006 Budapest, Hungary *Anti Seizure and Legal Immunity*, The Art Law Centre Geneva and the Museum of Fine Arts at Budapest.

18 December 2006 Brussels, Belgium *Colloquium on state guarantees*, Vlaamse KunstCollectie.

13–14 November 2006 *V European Museum Registrar's Conference*, Madrid, Subdireccion General Museos Estatales, Museo del Prado, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Fundation Thyssen Bornemisza Espanolas.

## 2007

April 2007 Munich Conference, Germany. *Collection Mobility in Europe: Crossing Borders*. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, SMB Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien.

15–17 May 2007 Bremen Conference, Germany. *Collection Mobility in Europe: Building up Trust and Networking*. Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, Deutscher Museums Bund, Network of European Museum Organisations.

10 May 2007 *Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world*, Brussels, COM(2007) 242 final, in which circulation of works of art is a priority.

May 2007 Bremen Declaration on the *Mobility of Museum Collections* was published.

2007 the subject is mentioned in the communication of the European Commission (Brussels 10.5.2007 COM 2007 242 Final) and the work plan of the Council of the European Union (Brussels (2008/C 143/06).

2007 The Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; *Meer uitlenen, minder kopzorgen!* (more loans less headaches).

## 2008

2008 European Parliament, directorate-general for internal policies; policy department B; structural and cohesion policies; culture and education, publishes a tender for a Study on the ‘*Mobility of Works of Art in Europe*’ N°IP/B/CULT/IC/2008-107.

June 2008 Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the Work Plan for Culture 2008–2010 (2008/C 143/06). Mobility of collections is mentioned as a priority.

2008 OMC Expert Group for Mobility of Collections started working chaired by Hillary Bauer (UK) and Rosanna Binacchi (ITA). Sub groups were nominated: State indemnity and non-insurance (NL, HU), Immunity from seizure (DE, PL), Long-term loans (FI), Prevention of theft and illicit trafficking (FR), Exchange of experts – Mobility of Museum Professionals (IE, ES).

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## 2009

April 2009 *The mobility of works of art in Europe*, study on request of the European Parliament IP/B/CULT/IC/2009-005.

2009 Lending for Europe, Collections Mobility 2.0 project was founded. Partners; Netherlands Institute for Heritage (Erfgoed Nederland), CN (Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage), Spanish Ministry of Culture, Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Finnish National Gallery, Romanian Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, Agency for the Arts and Heritage of the Flemish Community, Department of Culture Media and Sport, United Kingdom, State Museums Berlin, Institute for Museum Research, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest. Associates to the project are Network of European Museum Organisations, National Board of Antiquities, Finland, Netherlands Museum Association, Amsterdam Historical Museum, European Registrars Group, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Greece, Collections Trust, UK, Hungarian Museum of Education and Culture, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, Swedish National Gallery and Upper Austrian State Museums. The project is funded by the European Commission/Culture Programme.

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## 2010

April 2010 Collections Mobility Group is established on Twitter.

May 2010 opening of the Collections Mobility website [www.lending-for-europe.eu](http://www.lending-for-europe.eu).

June 2010 CM 2.0 Madrid Conference *Lending for Europe 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Collections Mobility 2.0*, Spain.

June 2010 OMC Expert Group for Collections Mobility reports of the recommendations to the commission.

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## TRUST AND NETWORKING

‘Europe is a rich and colourful tapestry which is unique on a global scale.’ These words by the British historian Timothy Garton Ash perfectly apply to both the European museums’ comprehensive and diverse collections as well as to their high potential in a globalised world. Manifold museum collections not only keep record of a cultural heritage and cultural identity but also a record of the united Europe’s plurality. To ensure that this heritage is being highly benefited, it has to be ensured that European citizens have access to these cultural treasures. In this respect, the mobility of museum collections is a fundamental contribution on the way to a common European identity.

As already stated in the *Lending to Europe Report*, the mobility of museum collections is ideally based on the principle of reciprocity. Nevertheless, there may be good reasons for preventing a specific object or a group of objects from travelling. However, common standards, trust, and professional networks can help encourage institutions to share cultural exchanges and to encourage the transnational circulation of museum objects. Establishing a common European cultural area should not only be based on legal guidelines or directives but also on a change of practice that is conducted by all the parties involved. On the one hand, a trustworthy framework and common standards are needed and, on the other hand, mutual trust is an essential tool for the mobility of collections. The German proverb ‘Trust is good, control is better’ seems to be simple and true. However, what if control, as a reliable instrument, fails?

Practical recommendations, guidelines, and common standards are tools that help institutions to share cultural objects. However, those tools can only serve their needs when they are published on the national and international levels. In addition, sharing cultural heritage means more than just following guidelines and standards: it is based on mutual trust, which again is based on cooperative and loyal teamwork. In this respect, professional networks play a significant role while discussing the mobility of museum collections.

During the German EU Presidency in 2007, the conference ‘Mobility of Collections – Building up Trust and Networking’ focused on this topic and served as an international discussion forum. The conference was concluded with the *Bremen Declaration on the Mobility of Museum Collections*. It stated that it is a key task in each European member state to recognise at the political level that the larger European museums have already developed extensive co-operation in a number of activities. The *Bremen Declaration on the Mobility of Museum Collections* also called upon these large museums to increase their co-operation with smaller institutions within the museum community: small and medium-sized museums were strongly encouraged to participate in the important activity of sharing collections between member states and making them available to all European citizens.

### **TRUST AND STANDARDS**

First of all, it has to be defined as to whether general and basic principles of trust exist – and, if yes, which principles these are. Do museum professionals in more than 30,000 institutions throughout Europe follow similar values? Since the educational background of museum professionals varies from institution to institution and from country to country, a general principle of trust has to be questioned. However, a framework for professional behaviour is the different ethical codes. The first one was published in 1918 by the German Museums Association (Deutscher Museumsbund 1918), followed by the first code of ethics by the American Association of Museums in 1925. It took until the 1970s, however, until many professional networks started to work on their own ethical codes and guidelines. ICOM, the International Council of Museums issued its *Ethics of Acquisition* in 1970 and a full *Code of Professional Ethics* in 1986. Like its precursors, the present *Code of Professional Ethics* that is available in 20 different languages, provides a global minimum standard on which national and specialist groups can build in order to meet their particular requirements.

A keyword within the discussion on the mobility of collections is communication. None of the classical museum tasks – from collecting, keeping, and researching to educating – can be fulfilled without successful communication. It is a prerequisite for co-operation, not only on a local or regional level but also especially with teamwork on an international scale. Communication has to be ensured between the staff members of large museums, which are already operating in international networks, as well as between small and middle-sized institutions that are partly run by volunteers but also eager to participate in sharing a common European heritage. As everywhere, communication has to happen at eye level, combined with information about proceedings and actions on an international scale. Projects that run in col-

laboration with other museums are a good opportunity to meet colleagues, build good personal relationships, and establish trust for the future. In addition, positive communication is also an indispensable condition for the understanding of different European mentalities and approaches. Trust within the museum sector may also be established by training courses as well as an exchange between staff members. This not only improves knowledge and communication but also helps to work on common standards – museologically and technically.

Nevertheless, human trust does not agree with mere logic: the museum world meets legal conditions with reluctance and scepticism, and lawyers in a museum are a rather rare species. However, dealing informally with the exchange of cultural assets, mainly based on trust, carries legal risks. This would be manageable and avoidable given proper legal consultation. Law can provide a reliable working basis for the mobility of collections. The trustful co-operation of the participating institutions and persons can profit from this if the legal framework is familiar, and if confidence in legal instruments is strengthened. In this context, the development of common European standards may be helpful.

## **NETWORKING AND STANDARDS**

As mentioned hereinabove, common museum projects encourage communication and trust between museum professionals and thereby serve as small networks. Even when the project has ended, personal contact between colleagues may persist and – encouraged by mutual trust – may be used as a starting point for future collaboration.

There is also a huge number of organised museum networks, operating on the regional and international levels. As associations or councils, they give advice, and are responsible for funding programmes, organising professional training courses and conferences, or developing standards and thereby encouraging the mobility of European museum collections.

In all actions related to the EU initiative of the mobility of collections NEMO, the Network of European Museum Organisations, was strongly involved. The network was founded in 1992, and comprises museum organisations within the EU as well as representatives from countries associated with the EU. It is supported by the European Union budget ‘Bodies Active at the European Level in the Field of Culture’.

Regarding the mobility of collections, NEMO contributed to the development of the Action Plan and to the different international working groups



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that were supporting the implementation of the paper. As lending and borrowing for exhibitions are core activities of museums, the *Lending to Europe Report* already recommended that NEMO should develop European guidelines to increase the mobility of collections.

In the summer of 2005, NEMO, therefore, carried out a survey within the EU member countries. Approximately 360 different loan contracts and best practice examples were collected, examined, and in turn resulted in the NEMO Standard Loan Agreement that was launched in November 2007. This document is applicable to all kinds of museums and seeks to encourage them to increase their activities regarding the lending and borrowing of works of arts throughout Europe. It covers information about the lender, borrower, as well as the objects being lent. Furthermore, it provides details about the exhibition as well as data on the insurance and cost figures. In order to make the handling of information easier for the lender and borrower, the Loan Agreement is accompanied by separate Loan Conditions. These are an integral part of the Loan Agreement and state the lender's stipulations for the loan(s) listed in the Loan Agreement. To facilitate the use of the document by every museum in Europe, NEMO has developed an online-toolkit that enables museums – both as lenders and borrowers – to create their individual loan document online, in accordance with the specific conditions and requirements of each museum and object ([www.ne-mo.org](http://www.ne-mo.org)).

ICOM, the International Council of Museums, is the largest network of the professional museum sector. Members in more than 130 countries participate in the national, regional, and international activities of the organisation. Regional alliances such as ICOM-Europe provide a forum for the exchange of information and co-operation among national committees, museums, and professional museum workers in the region for which they are established. The cornerstone of ICOM is its *Code of Ethics for Museums*. It sets the minimum standards of professional practice and performance for museums and their staff. In joining the organisation, ICOM members undertake to abide by the *Code of Ethics for Museums* (<http://icom.museum/ethics.html>).

Consisting of international members from museums and institutions, the Large Exhibition Organisers BIZOT Group is named after Irène Bizot, the former director general of the French Réunion des Musées Nationaux. This exhibitors' group was founded in 1992 and has continued to meet regularly since then. The group acts as an informal authority that deals with the every-

**Standards,  
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day problems surrounding exhibitions and strives for the harmonisation of processes and fosters co-operation on the international level. Until recently, discussions only comprised of questions concerning exhibition politics. Today, however, topics concerning museum politics such as new acquisitions, illegal purchasing of pieces of art, returning, long-term loans, etc. are also discussed. The co-operation of the group has strengthened the personal contacts amongst the directors. Due to the resulting trust, exhibition projects that were inconceivable in the past are now feasible.

Another international network is EMAC, the European Museum Advisors Conference. The volunteer and informal network started in 1992 on the initiative of the Area Museum Councils in the UK and of the Provincial Museum Advisors in the Netherlands. A first conference was organised with the objective to create a forum for the discussion and exchange of ideas for museum advisors and museum support organisations in Europe. Since then, other conferences have taken place, every two or three years, depending on the goodwill and finances of the organising institution. In between the meetings, the members of the network keep in touch on an ad hoc basis and cooperate on specific projects. Regardless of the fact that it is informal and cannot rely on funding, EMAC has achieved some significant goals and has proven to be an important arena where topics that are fundamental to the issue of trust are explored and discussed, such as quality in museum work, the development and application of standards, a broad strategic approach to the care, documentation, and conservation of collections, legislation, and organisational frameworks in the different European countries.

An important contribution to the mobility of European museum collections are the assets of the European Registrars Group, which provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and expertise between registrars, collection managers, and other museum professionals. The group emerged from the UK Registrars Group, which was founded in 1979. This strives to establish and promote standards of good professional practice through publications and seminars and to support the national and international standards in the relevant fields of work. Particular emphasis is placed on documentation and records, physical care, loans and exhibition logistics, and cultural sector legislation. The most valuable documents and widespread standards from the UK Registrars Group are the facilities report (accompanied by a display case supplement and a security supplement) and the courier guidelines. The facilities report enables lenders to assess the practicalities involved in making loans. It is intended to help both borrowers and lenders identify potential problems and reach agreement on how these can be resolved. The courier guidelines aim at all people who either organise or carry out courier duties primarily, but are also intended to be widely relevant to the care and transit of a range of objects for any purpose, whether they are loans or acquisitions ([www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/publications](http://www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/publications)).

Networking is carried out on a mutual, loose, or close relationship basis between a number of stakeholders on the principle of co-operation. The objectives are the exchange of ideas, capabilities, resources, or working methods. Co-operation between museum networks operates on different scales – on the regional and international levels. The different regional museum organisations (e.g. in the U.K., the Netherlands, Germany, or Austria) not only closely work together with each other but also with their respective national organisations. In addition, cross-border activities between regional museum associations are to be mentioned. National museum organisations are also members of NEMO and frequently cooperate with their national ICOM committees. Similar cooperation exists between national registrars or museum advisors' groups. In addition to networks, which are organised in structured bodies, the museum sector also has a large number of personal or social networks: groups of museum professionals that share common topics or objectives – often dealt with later on by organised bodies.

### **THE COMMON OBJECTIVE**

Standards, trust, and networking are key elements in sharing museum collections. Moreover, since common interests far outweigh the formal differences, there is a great opportunity for the development of European standards to be followed by small, medium, and large museum institutions. European-wide codes of practice, employment of specialist museum staff, transport arrangements, standard documentation procedures and forms, and indemnity/insurance and customs arrangements are all needed. In addition, what already has been developed has to be widely communicated on a national scale. This, together with a continual increase of trust, understanding, and networking, will be the challenge faced for the future.

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## PREVENTION OR COMPENSATION?

## ALTERNATIVES TO INSURANCE

Museums possess huge potential for the innovative use of collections. In order to be able to offer a rich variety of exhibitions to their public, museums often seek to borrow objects from museums abroad. This gives the public an opportunity to become acquainted with objects that would otherwise not be on show in their country. Museums that organise exhibitions by using loans have to deal with insuring these objects against risks of damage or loss. This can lead to considerable sums being spent on insurance premiums.

The risks can be covered in all sorts of ways. When this is done by using *commercial insurance*, expensive premiums have to be paid. Given the level of these premiums, museums are beginning to wonder whether such insurance coverage is sensible at all stages, particularly in light of increasing improvements in security systems in museums. In order to limit such premiums, museums sometimes switch from their commercially insuring parts of the loan process to sharing the liability for certain risks between the Lender and Borrower. This has led to the introduction of *shared liability agreements*. A third system for covering risks is a *state indemnity scheme*. This is a system under which the government supports the organisation of major exhibitions by taking on (part of) the risk liability from the organiser.

The two last mentioned systems, i.e. the state indemnity system and shared liability agreements, are reviewed in the present article. These are tools for dynamic development that reduce insurance costs and promote collections mobility.

## STATE INDEMNITY

### What is indemnity?

Indemnity is inextricably associated with museums, exhibitions, loan objects, and risk liability. Most European Union Member States have a state indemnity scheme. This means that the governments of the Member States decided to undertake the coverage of (part of) the risks related to exhibitions. If a borrowed museum object is damaged or lost during the course of an exhibition, the state guarantees compensation for (part of) the damage or loss. Indemnity is in fact the transfer of liability/risk from the borrowing museum to the state.

An indemnity guarantee significantly reduces the financial burdens of an exhibition, as the organiser of the exhibition does not need to take out insurance or only needs to take out limited risk insurance. Moreover, an indemnity guarantee provides the Lender with the certainty that it will receive compensation if anything were to happen to its property. This leads to reduced reticence in the lending of objects. Finally, an indemnity system contributes to raising museum standards, because the state will place certain requirements on the exhibition organiser.

Although there are criticisms levelled against this system, the claim reports published in the last European survey on indemnity schemes<sup>1</sup> speak for themselves: out of 5,605 applications accepted during the period 2003–2008 in 18 European States, the number of officially reported claims was seven. The total compensation paid was remarkably low as well, at only 79,981 euro.<sup>2</sup> These statistics suggest that insurers over-evaluate risks, which in turn leads to high insurance premiums. Furthermore, the statistics also suggest that it is absolutely worthwhile for a state to consider the introduction of an indemnity scheme, if it does not currently have one or, if an indemnity scheme is already established, to improve it for the sake of its widest possible acceptance.

The proper functioning of a scheme can be achieved best by

- clearly determining the responsibilities of the principal actors within the indemnity chain (i.e. the state, borrower, the lender, and shipper),  
and
- reducing the sources of risks to a minimum, while objects are under the control of any of the actors.

### **Indemnity, State aid, and European competition law**

The founding treaties of the European Union describe state aid as an advantage in any form whatsoever that is conferred on a selective basis to undertakings by national public authorities.<sup>3</sup> A company that receives state aid obtains an advantage over its competitors. Therefore, Article 107 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU) generally prohibits state aid. However, in some circumstances, government intervention is necessary for a well-functioning and equitable economy. Consequently, the Treaty sums up a number of policy objectives for which state aid can be considered compatible.

Up until now, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Competition has assessed the compatibility of several state indemnity schemes under the provisions of Article 107(3) of the Treaty.<sup>4</sup> Based on these assessments, the Directorate-General has in each case decided that the reviewed indemnity scheme constituted state aid that is compatible with the internal market under the culture derogation of Article 107(3)(d) of the TFEU.

### **The State's standpoint**

The state to which the liability for the loans is transferred must draw clear outlines for the scheme and set up a coherent and fair system of rules. In order to provide sufficient guarantees for the Lender, states often regulate their indemnity scheme by a formal Act of Law. This may cause a paradox because the legal framework has to be firm, while the content should remain flexible. When unexpected political, economic, etc. events occur, in turn influencing the risks covered by the scheme, it should be relatively easy for the state to adapt the scheme to the new conditions. The ideal form of setting up a state indemnity scheme would be, therefore, an Act that sets out the framework of state indemnity, which is supplemented by a regulation that is lower in the legal hierarchy and that can be made subject to quick modifications.

An interesting 'bypass' to this discrepancy between constantly changing circumstances and the requirement for stability in legal regulations is the 'Dutch solution'. The Dutch indemnity scheme is based on a combination of commercial insurance and a state guarantee. A specialised insurer establishes the form of the state indemnity, resulting in a scheme that is rather suitable for reacting to events affecting the risks that are to be covered.

When operating an indemnity scheme, it is of great importance to the state to get a clear view of the level of security and environmental conditions that museums and shippers can offer in order to reduce the possible risks of damage and loss to the objects. The state should seek assurances that these con-



***Funds that do not  
need to be spent  
on insurance premiums  
can be used to improve  
the security of a loan object  
or to raise loan standards.***

ditions are met before granting an indemnity. If a claim is lodged, the state should also require confirmation that these standards were complied with when the damage occurred.<sup>5</sup> A state-employed security adviser – as used in the United Kingdom and Sweden – may make further recommendations in individual cases.

According to the insurers' terminology, an 'all risks' coverage relates to any damage and loss except for that deriving from the excluded risks.<sup>6</sup> When setting up or revising the regulations of a state indemnity scheme, the state should not unreasonably exclude risks, but should only do so when a risk assessment requires such. The state should also try to provide coverage from the time of the removal of the work from the wall until its safe return to the same place or to the place indicated by the Lender ('nail-to-nail' coverage).

States should also consider as to whether they want to involve or exclude insurers from their scheme. In some countries, state indemnity exists only in combination with commercial insurance (e.g. France, the Netherlands). Others, such as the United Kingdom, claim as a general rule that no commercial insurance is to be purchased by public money because it weakens the purposes that the state indemnity aims to achieve.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Borrower's standpoint**

In a state indemnity scheme, most of the burden of making the system work rests on the Borrower which, above all, has to act with due diligence throughout the entire process. The Borrower is, in fact, the party that has to obey the legal regulations and principles (including but not limited to the security and environmental requirements) that are established by the state indemnity scheme.

Even if the Borrower managed to obtain state indemnity for a loan, it is often confronted with accessory insurance costs, as indemnity schemes might exclude certain risks or intervals that the Lender nevertheless wants to see covered before agreeing to the requested loan. This means that the Borrower has to make reasonable and responsible decisions on agreeing to spend public money on supplementary commercial insurance coverage for specific, excluded risks or time intervals.

Once the parties agree on how state indemnity and/or commercial insurance apply, the Borrower and Lender need to solve the question of 'who is going to pay for those losses incurred from excluded risks?' If there are no provisions concerning this in the loan agreement, logically the general rules of non-insurance should apply. According to the last OMC survey,<sup>8</sup> in 93 per cent of the cases, the Borrower should pay for any damage incurred, which means that the Borrower's liability was considered more extensive than the insurer's liability.

### **The Lender's standpoint**

Supplementary insurance coverage should only be requested by the Lender and provided by the Borrower if a risk assessment suggests such. The Lender should not oblige the Borrower to purchase supplementary commercial insurance for non-existing, or very unlikely, risks such as war risk in Europe. As it has been demonstrated above by the claim statistics, the Lender is deluded in thinking that the risks are reduced if the loan is insured against as many risks as possible.

A waiver of subrogation is a clause waiving claim – in the event of damage to an artwork or an object – against the organisers, curators, museum officials, official representatives of the Lender, transport companies, transit companies, and packaging companies, except in the case of wilful conduct and gross negligence.<sup>9</sup> There is an unfortunate tendency coming from Lenders overseas, as well as on the part of international shippers' organisations, to request the purchase of such a clause in favour of the Lender and shipper. Transport companies sometimes threaten to not provide the service if subrogation is not waived against them, and Lenders put pressure on Borrowers to buy complementary insurance coverage to protect themselves as well as their shipper.

It would not be ethically or legally appropriate to protect somebody that causes damage, by waiving the rightful interest of the state in seeking compensation from the institution or company that caused the respective damage.

The waiver of subrogation clause is highly discouraged for two reasons:

- it is expected that all the actors in a loan process will act with the utmost responsibility ‘nail-to-nail’, and not with the intention that the person who is responsible will be held harmless as to whatever damage occurs, and
- the premium for this single risk costs about 30 per cent of the entire insurance premium that has to be paid, even if state indemnity is otherwise accepted.

Indemnity is not about providing money, it is rather about reducing risk. For the proper functioning of the system, all the stakeholders need to be motivated so that no damage is caused during the time that the artwork, or an object, is under their control.

Outgoing indemnity is absolutely an excellent tool for enhancing collections mobility by promoting national cultural heritage abroad. It also makes it possible for states without a scheme to organise good exhibitions by benefiting from the Lender’s outgoing indemnity coverage. In Europe, only four countries provide state indemnity coverage for outgoing loans. Finland, for example, provided such coverage for outgoing exhibitions to Kumu Art Museum (Estonia), Kadriorg Art Museum (Estonia), and the National Art Museum of China in Peking.

## **SHARED LIABILITY SYSTEMS**

Research indicates that insurance costs contribute to approximately 15 per cent of the budget of those major art exhibitions that use foreign loans.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it is no surprise that museums look for opportunities to reduce the costs of insurance premiums. In many cases, this is done through using the indemnity scheme. However, the government does not always guarantee 100 per cent compensation for damage, theft, or loss of value. Practically every indemnity scheme has exclusions for specific risks, periods, types of loans, or types of museums. In addition, in 2010 seven of the 27 EU Member States did not have an indemnity scheme. If no indemnity scheme exists or there are risk exclusions within a specific scheme, a shared liability agreement may provide a solution.

Shared liability is an agreement between two museums with the objective of sharing liability as far as possible in respect of specific risks that are involved in loan transactions. The Borrower and Lender have agreed on the fact that the Borrower has a certain freedom in deciding whether or not he wants to insure its share of the liability. This implies a reciprocal relationship between the Lender and Borrower that is based on trust. These museums consider one another as equal partners that use comparable standards with regard to the organisation of exhibitions. The two parties are also in agreement that museum objects, by definition, are irreplaceable and are not a part of economic trading (*extra commercium*).

The permanent collections in most large regional and national museums are not insured. They are well protected and excellently cared for. Since the objects are, in many cases, irreplaceable, they cannot be, by definition, valued in terms of money. In the event of theft or loss, the region or the state assumes the loss of an object. If a museum does not insure its permanent collection when it is on its own premises, why should it want the same objects to be insured when on loan to another museum? If the Borrower applies the same professional standards as the Lender, there is in fact no difference regarding the situation at the Lender's premises. In such cases, an all in insurance does not seem necessary or appropriated.

Supporters of shared liability systems point to the reduction in costs that the systems involve. Funds that do not need to be spent on insurance premiums can be used to improve the security of a loan object or to raise loan standards. Moreover, an attitude that focuses on prevention is expected more from a museum than a concentration on reparation by paying high insurance premiums.

In view of this, the Lender may agree with the Borrower that the latter is not obliged to insure the works of art or other objects against all possible risks. Thus, it is possible, for example, to dispense with an insurance obligation in respect of loss in value, total loss, or damage caused by acts of war or nuclear disasters. Another possibility is to not oblige the Borrower to insure a long-term loan. The Lender may also decide to dispense with an insurance obligation from the moment that its property has arrived at the Borrower's premises. The Lender will dispense with this insurance obligation because it:

- knows that the Borrower will handle the loaned objects carefully using the same professional principles that it uses itself,
  - helps the Borrower to limit the exhibition costs,
  - knows that the agreement is reciprocal and that it will itself benefit from this agreement when organising a temporary exhibition,
- and

- realises that traditional insurance provides no security and offers no guarantee against damage or loss (or loss of market value). Insurance is only financial compensation, which cannot ‘cure’ the irretrievable loss or damage that an object has suffered.

One of the better-known examples of shared liability is the agreement between the Netherlands and Belgium with regard to the *Rijksmuseum aan de Scheldt* (Rijksmuseum on the Scheldt). Because of the major renovation that the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam has been undergoing since 2003, the Rijksmuseum launched the idea of housing groups of works in various museums in the Netherlands. The Royal Museum for Fine Arts (KMSKA), Antwerp was invited by the Rijksmuseum to join this project and to temporarily house a collection of works from the Rijksmuseum on the banks of the River Scheldt. From 9 October 2004 until 31 December 2007, no less than 33 sixteenth and seventeenth-century paintings from the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam were on show in the galleries of the Royal Museum for Fine Arts. The exhibition was entitled *Rijksmuseum on the Scheldt: masterpieces from the treasure-house of the Netherlands*. Both museums agreed not to insure the loans during their stay at the premises of the KMSKA, and only the transport of the works had to be insured.

Shared liability is very rarely used at the international level, however. This has to do with the widespread Pavlovian reflex among museums to insure all loans ‘nail-to-nail’. It gives museums a false feeling of security. The coverage of risks in the museum world is traditionally left to insurers and very rarely is the question raised of whether an all in-insurance is necessary or even sensible. Why not carry out a risk analysis for the journey and the period of stay of a loan and then decide if and what kind of insurance is needed?

Legal and statutory restrictions are another reason as to why shared liability is hardly ever used up until now in connection with international loans. In some EU Member States, works of art are not allowed to leave the country uninsured. This is the case, for example, in Hungary and Romania. In other countries, such as Germany, museum statutes make shared liability impossible. In the UK, museum trustees have such a large personal responsibility for the care of loan objects that they will not easily decide to give up the obligation to insure loans.

The lack of knowledge about shared liability is another reason for reticence. There are still a few museums that have international experience with this phenomenon. There are only a few schemes, and there are no statistics available to demonstrate what the risks are and what advantages the schemes offer. In addition, there are no detailed protocols setting out the party that is liable, the cases in which it is liable, or the part of the risk for which it is liable. Further work needs to be carried out on this point.

While frequent use is made of a form of shared liability within national borders, museums do not (yet) dare risk doing this on an international basis. The fact that shared liability is frequently used within the borders of many EU Member States is an important reason to explore whether this is also possible at the international level.

The most elaborate shared liability schemes are those in the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders). These schemes contain the following main points:

- The Borrower is responsible for misplacing an object entirely (going missing, theft, or total loss) during its transportation to and from the Lender (all risks insurance is, therefore, obligatory for transport operations between the museums in the Flemish agreement).
- The Borrower is at all times responsible for any damage to an object that can be repaired (to a maximum of 500,000 euro per object in the Flemish agreement).
- No compensation for a loss of market value due to damage incurred to the object.
- No compensation in the case of loss caused by the theft, disappearance, or complete destruction of the object. It goes without saying that the Borrower is obliged to make all reasonable efforts to preserve the object and, if it goes missing or is stolen, to recover it.

Shared liability is mostly applied within the circle of regional and national museums, which – as a general rule – do not insure their collections. Municipal collections, on the other hand, are often insured.<sup>11</sup>

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The community of museums is an important depository of keeping universal cultural heritage. As Museums act in trust of the society, they are responsible for granting access to the widest possible public. This aim must be a common objective for museums all around the world. Collections mobility is considered to be a highly efficient tool for distributing common knowledge of our cultural heritage. For nearly ten years already, various levels of professionals from the cultural sector have worked together in Europe to minimise the legal, financial, and administrative obstacles from the increasingly more dynamic exchange of cultural goods in Europe. We truly believe that there are still many new ways to discover within this domain, in which new approaches will attract further developments in the various aspects of collections mobility.

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## ENDNOTES

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- 2 Exchange rate March 2010.
- 3 Official Journal of the European Union (2008) *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, Article 107, C 115/91. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0047:0199:EN:PDF>> (accessed 23 March 2010).
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- 7 However to secure important loans, commercial insurance can be bought in the UK but with severe restrictions: the purchase must meet 'value for money' criteria. The only case specified in the GIS Guidelines for buying supplementary insurance coverage is when 'top-up' insurance needs to be bought due to a disagreement over valuation. UK Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2005) 'Government Indemnity Scheme. Guidelines for National Institutions'. Online. Available HTTP: <[http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/cultural/objects/~media/Files/pdf/2005/gis\\_guidelines\\_nationals](http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/cultural/objects/~media/Files/pdf/2005/gis_guidelines_nationals)> (accessed 23 March 2010).
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- 9 Gross negligence (*luxuria*) is a conscious and voluntary disregard of the need to use reasonable care, which is likely to cause foreseeable grave injury or harm to persons, property, or both. Wilful conduct is conduct that is reasonably considered to cause injury. Farlex (2010) *The free dictionary*. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Gross+negligence>> (accessed 23 March 2010).
- 10 This figure is based on research that was carried out in the Netherlands. It relates to the costs that a provider of a loan object has to pay in premiums for commercial insurance. No account has been taken in this of a no-claim bonus, the prospect of which is held out by many insurers if no damage or loss is claimed after the end of the exhibition.
- 11 This seems to be particularly due to the closeness between the local authority (the owner of the collection) and the citizens. When an incident takes place, it seems to be difficult for local authorities to explain to citizens why damaged or lost objects are not financial compensated.

## IMMUNITY FROM SEIZURE:

### A LEGAL EXPLORATION

The mobility of museum collections is a decisive factor in the dissemination of knowledge, experience, mutual inspiration and cooperation in the cultural sector.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1963, American-French connections, fuelled by the friendship between Jacqueline Kennedy and the French Minister of Culture, André Malraux, led to some very exciting developments. It had been agreed that Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, the *Mona Lisa*, would be loaned to the United States,<sup>2</sup> where it arrived by ship on 19 December 1962. On 8 January 1963, the painting was unveiled at the Washington National Gallery, and on 7 February 1963, it went on show at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. This was an unprecedented event and one that had raised a number of issues: how to pack the *Mona Lisa* for travel in order to minimise vibration that might render fragile the preparatory layer of paint; how to handle and transport the packing case; how to make sure that the maritime law concerning salvage rights relating to property retrieved outside territorial waters would not allow the painting to be removed from the possession of France; how to secure the painting. However, there were no concerns about immunity from seizure. Nobody seemed to worry that an individual or a company might think of seizing the painting.

It would not be long, however, before such concerns arose. Only a few years later, the United States was pressed to enact immunity from seizure legislation.<sup>3</sup> Since then, the issue of immunity from seizure for travelling cultural objects has become a real concern for states and museums. This is mainly due to increasing legal disputes over the ownership of cultural objects, particularly as a result of claims made by heirs to those objects expropriated by communist regimes in Eastern Europe (including the Russian Federation), as well as Holocaust claims.



## WHAT IS IMMUNITY FROM SEIZURE?

Let us first determine what immunity from seizure is and why one would want to seize cultural objects.

The following description of immunity from seizure is quite adequate:

The legal guarantee that cultural objects on temporary loan from another state will be protected against any form of seizure during the loan period.<sup>4</sup>

In practice, there appear to be two main situations in which someone may wish to seize a cultural object that is temporarily on loan. Firstly, if there is an ownership dispute over a cultural object on loan (allegedly stolen or wrongfully appropriated). A claimant may attempt to file a claim in the borrowing state and to try to seize the object if he or she believes that his or her chances in the country where the cultural object is temporarily on loan are better, legally speaking, than in the country where the object is normally located. Secondly, if an individual or company is of the opinion that the owner of the cultural object on loan owes a debt (not necessarily related to the object) to the claimant, and this claimant has concerns regarding the enforcement of a judgment or arbitration award in the state of residence of the owner. However, there may be other situations. For instance, in the context of a criminal investigation, law enforcement officers may wish to seize certain cultural objects in order to preserve evidence.

Let me give some examples of the two first situations as described above. The first situation is relatively easy to imagine. An heir of a Holocaust victim, or an heir of a collector under Tsarist Russia, is of the opinion that the lending state expropriated a cultural object that belonged to his or her family. The heir may be of the view that the chances for restitution under the jurisdiction of the borrowing state are bigger than in the jurisdiction of a lending State. He or she, therefore, may try to seize the cultural object concerned, after which he or she will initiate legal proceedings for recovery. I shall highlight an 'early case': *Romanov vs. Florida International Museum*.<sup>5</sup> From January 1995 until June 1995, one of the largest collections of Romanov treasures ever was on display in the Florida International Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida. The exhibition *Treasures from the Czars: From the Moscow Kremlin Museums* consisted of 272 items from the reign of the Romanov tsars. Highlights included the Crown of Monomach<sup>6</sup> and a tercentennial Fabergé Easter Egg of gold, silver and diamonds that Nicholas II presented to his wife Alexandra on Easter 1913. In the course of the exhibition, an alleged heir of the Romanov dynasty, calling herself Princess Anastasia Romanov and stating that she was the surviving granddaughter of the Tsarevich, made an action against the Florida International Museum, claiming the Fabergé Egg. However, federal immunity had been granted to the exhibition; therefore, the court dismissed the claim on the grounds of the United States immunity legislation.

With in-depth provenance research, one could be able to trace the history of the cultural object, and one could possibly predict whether ownership claims are likely to be expected or not in individual situations. In addition, the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*<sup>7</sup> states in Article 2.2 that ‘no object or specimen should be acquired by... loan... unless the acquiring museum is satisfied that a valid title is held.’ And Article 2.3 goes on by stating that ‘every effort must be made before acquisition to ensure that any object or specimen offered for... loan... has not been illegally obtained in or exported from its country of origin or any intermediate country in which it might have been owned legally. Due diligence in this regard should establish the full history of the item from discovery or production.’ Therefore, to a certain extent it could be calculated as to whether ownership claims may be expected, although this may not always be watertight.

The second category of cases is much more insecure, and this category has nothing to do with an ownership dispute or necessarily with the cultural object concerned. The *Noga* case in Switzerland illustrates quite well the second situation in which someone may wish to seize cultural objects that are temporarily on loan. In November 2005, the Swiss company Noga tried to seize a collection of 54 French masterpieces belonging to the Pushkin State Museum in Moscow, Russia.<sup>8</sup> The masterpieces had been exhibited from 17 June 2005 to 13 November 2005 in the Fondation Pierre Gianadda gallery in Martigny, Wallis, Switzerland. Noga claimed that the Russian Federation owed it hundreds of millions of dollars in alleged debts and compensation. In 1997, the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce ruled that the Russian government had to pay Noga USD 63 million. In order to execute that ruling, Noga obtained an order from the court in Wallis authorising the seizure; the paintings were subsequently seized as they were leaving Switzerland to return to Russia. On the initiative of the federal authorities, the Swiss Federal Council ruled on 16 November 2005 that the cultural objects would be allowed to leave the country and would be sent back to the Russian Federation.<sup>9</sup> The ruling went into immediate effect with no possibility for appeal. The ruling of the Swiss Federal Council emphasised that ‘in international law, national cultural treasures are public property and are not subject to confiscation’.

The claims in this category are more difficult to predict. When loaning objects from a certain state, it is unfeasible to (fully) investigate whether the lending state has unpaid debts and/or whether it would cross the mind of the creditor to try to execute its rights in a foreign state under the jurisdiction of that respective state.

*There is no best  
or preferred way  
to address immunity  
from seizure.*

*It can be concluded  
that different states  
follow different approaches,  
which may work best  
for them individually.*

## WHY PROVIDE IMMUNITY FROM SEIZURE?

There are a number of international agreements relating to the topic of immunity from seizure. These include agreements aiming to promote the mobility of collections, agreements with anti-seizure provisions, or agreements aiming to guarantee the safe return of a cultural object to the state of origin. Many states have committed themselves through international legal instruments to supporting the exchange of cultural objects. In addition, the United Nations Charter<sup>10</sup> attaches importance to international cultural co-operation as helpful for the creation of conditions of stability and well-being, which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations.<sup>11</sup>

Basically, the reason for providing cultural objects with immunity from seizure is to provide security or assurance to lenders that cultural objects loaned by them will not be subject to judicial seizure while in the borrower's jurisdiction<sup>12</sup> and thereby to prevent cultural objects on loan from being used as 'hostages' in trade and/or ownership disputes. 'The effect of immunity from seizure would be to suspend a claimant's ability to be granted a particular form of relief<sup>13</sup> for a strictly limited period of time, rather than removing it. However, in practice, immunity legislation is likely to prevent claims being made on cultural objects that are temporarily in a particular jurisdiction while they are in the jurisdiction, when, from the point of view of a claimant, it would be most useful to bring such a claim.'<sup>14</sup>

As the issue of immunity from seizure for travelling cultural objects has only relatively recently become a real concern for states and museums, and the relevant legislation in various states is comparatively new. Immunity from seizure legislation facilitates the lending of cultural objects for temporary exhibition by guaranteeing that they cannot be seized when on loan abroad. The purpose of such legislation is to overcome the reluctance of lenders to send their cultural objects into a foreign jurisdiction where they might be subject to some form of judicial seizure.<sup>15</sup> It seems that the reason for this legislation is twofold: on the one hand, states simply do not want to risk any acts of seizure. Therefore, they try to act as pragmatically as possible. This implies safeguarding your position as a state by ensuring that you (and your institutions) are considered to be a safe and attractive location for international art loans. On the other hand, states seemingly also act in this way because they feel that there is a legal obligation to do so.

In 1965, the United States was the first country ever to enact immunity from seizure legislation. France was the first state within the European Union in 1994, followed by Germany (1999), Austria (2003), Belgium (2004) and the United Kingdom (2007). In addition, the Netherlands has immunity from seizure legislation, although not specifically referring to cultural objects but to objects intended for public service (which could include cultural objects as

well). Currently, legislation is in development in Finland, Hungary, Poland and Italy.

Although the number of states with immunity from seizure legislation is growing, there is as yet no uniform approach. Some states only immunise from seizure cultural objects belonging to foreign states, whereas other states have a broader approach and protect all foreign cultural objects, including privately owned, on loan for a temporary public exhibition. In addition, the procedural approaches differ: some legislations grant immunity from seizure automatically when established criteria are met, whereas other legislation requires advance application, after which the application is assessed by a government body. Moreover, some states provide ‘immunity from seizure declarations’ or ‘letters of comfort’, in which they state that in accordance with international law and domestic law they will do everything within their power to ensure that the cultural objects loaned by a foreign state or institution will not be encumbered at any time while they are located on its territory. However, whatever approach states have chosen, it goes without saying that the security, legal and otherwise, of international art loans has become a central issue for them.

#### **IMMUNITY FROM SEIZURE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Since the beginning of this millennium, the notion of immunity from seizure (as an element of the overall theme mobility of collections) is on the European agenda. In the years 2003/2004, an extensive study was carried out on state indemnity systems at the request of the European Commission. On the subject of immunity from seizure, the study group stated that ‘it is better for both borrowers and lenders to be protected from any third party action. It therefore seems wise for each country to introduce a law ensuring immunity from seizure.’<sup>16</sup>

During the Dutch Presidency (which took place in the second half of 2004), the Netherlands proposed the issue of mobility of collections to be taken up in the working plan for culture for 2005–2006. Consequently, the Council of Ministers adopted resolution 13839/04 on the working plan for culture 2005–2006, which focused on five priority areas, amongst which was the mobility of collections and works of art. Within this context, the Council Presidency set up a working group of museum experts.<sup>17</sup> The mandate of the group was to prepare practical recommendations for improving the mobility of museum collections, with a special emphasis placed on questions related to insurance and indemnity, standards and guidelines and the role of the registrar.<sup>18</sup> The working group produced *Lending to Europe, Recommendations on collection mobility for European Museums* in the spring of 2005. Besides for

*An important reason for providing cultural objects with immunity from seizure is to provide security or assurance to the lenders of cultural objects that such objects will not be subject to judicial seizure while in the borrower's jurisdiction.*

the initial mandate, more subjects related to collection mobility had been discussed in this working group, e.g. the issue of immunity from seizure. The problems centred on the issue of immunity from seizure had been considered by the group to be the main obstacles or conducive to the mobility of museum collections on a wider scale. The complexity of the subject made it, in the view of the group, necessary to carry out a detailed comparative study of the various systems of immunity from seizure that were applied at that time. The group stressed the importance of establishing a good policy on immunity from seizure.

During the Austrian Presidency, in the first half of 2006, a team representing six successive presidencies (2004–2007)<sup>19</sup> met in Vienna to draw up an *Action Plan*<sup>20</sup> concerning loans for exhibitions between museums in the European Union. Six working groups were established to encourage the implementation of the *Action Plan*.<sup>21</sup> One of the working groups regarded the issue of immunity from seizure. The aim was, amongst others, to prepare a compendium of relevant international treaty obligations and the related international and European background, as well as to prepare recommendations on the possibility of introducing immunity from seizure legislation. However, the working group did not finalise its work at the time that the European Committee decided to set up an OMC Expert Group ‘Mobility of Collections’.<sup>22</sup> In the framework of the Expert Group, five subgroups were established; one of these subgroups was the ‘Immunity from Seizure’ subgroup.

One of the main conclusions that the ‘Immunity from Seizure’ subgroup drew in the course of its work in 2010 is that there is no best or preferred way to address immunity from seizure. It can be concluded that different states follow different approaches, which may work best for them individually. This all depends on their respective legal tradition and system, but also on the amount of international art loans that they are conducting, temporary exhibitions that they are hosting, or the demands of the lending states or museums. When considering immunity from seizure guarantees (including legislations), states should assess which approach would fit them best.

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMMUNITY FROM SEIZURE AND IMMUNITY FROM JURISDICTION**

Immunity from seizure is essentially different from immunity from jurisdiction. The latter term refers to exemption from the judicial competence of the court or tribunal having power to adjudicate in disputes. On the other hand, immunity from measures of constraint or immunity from seizure relates more specifically to the immunity of states in respect of their property from pre-judgment attachment and arrest, as well as from the execution of a judg-

ment rendered.<sup>23</sup> The fact that a national court may have jurisdiction with regard to certain acts of a foreign state does not automatically mean that measures of constraint can be taken.<sup>24</sup> However, the reverse is also true: the fact that cultural objects are immune from seizure does not automatically imply that it would be impossible to initiate legal proceedings in which the objects in question play a leading role.

The *Malewicz* case<sup>25</sup> is a good illustration of the difference between immunity from jurisdiction and immunity from seizure.<sup>26</sup> In this case, immunity from seizure of cultural objects was not at stake. However, the case shows how closely linked immunity from seizure and immunity from jurisdiction are, not least because it became clear that the aim of the United States authorities was not only to provide immunity from seizure, but immunity from suit as well.

On 9 January 2004, a group of 35 heirs of the world-renowned Russian artist Kazimir Malevich<sup>27</sup> filed suit in the US District Court for the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C. against the City of Amsterdam.<sup>28</sup> The heirs sought the recovery of 14 Malevich artworks<sup>29</sup> loaned by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam for a special exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York<sup>30</sup> and the Menil Collection in Houston.<sup>31</sup> The suit was filed two days before the exhibition in Houston closed.<sup>32</sup> On 11 April 2003, prior to the loan of the Malevich artworks to the US institutions, the US Department of State had issued a Public Notice<sup>33</sup> in which the US Department of State<sup>34</sup> declared that the objects to be included in the Malevich exhibitions at the Guggenheim Museum and the Menil Collection were of ‘cultural significance’ and that the exhibitions were ‘in the national interest’.<sup>35</sup> The heirs sued the City of Amsterdam for compensation, rather than trying to seize the objects. Such an action is in fact permissible, as the US Immunity from Seizure Act<sup>36</sup> precluded an attempt to seize the works, but did not prevent the foreign lender from being sued.<sup>37</sup> The very basis of the claim was that the heirs were of the opinion that the City of Amsterdam wrongfully acquired the Malevich artworks that are in the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam when the City purchased them from the German architect Hugo Häring, a friend of Malevich, in 1958.

On 22 December 2004, the State Department and the Department of Justice filed a ‘Statement of Interest’<sup>38</sup> to inform the US District Court of their concerns as to the potential effects of the heirs’ lawsuit upon the interests that the US Immunity from Seizure Act is designed to foster. The US authorities pointed out that under the Immunity from Seizure Act, the artworks concerned were considered to be immune from seizure and other forms of judicial process while in the US and that, until the proceedings in question, the Act had served as an effective and efficient means for protecting these kinds of artworks from litigation. The authorities recalled in their Statement of



Interest that the US Congress' stated purpose in enacting immunity legislation was 'to encourage the exhibition in the United States of objects of cultural significance which, in the absence of assurances such as are contained in the legislation, would not be available'. The authorities expressed the fear that the 'unprecedented' approach of the heirs would introduce a great level of uncertainty as to whether sovereign lenders will be confronted with greater litigation risks, simply through loaning an exhibit subject to immunity to the United States. They also feared that this could result in friction in US relations with other countries. They considered it 'undisputed' that the heirs could not seek to seize the artworks while they were in the country and under a grant of immunity. In their view, it was also undisputed that if the heirs had filed their lawsuit prior to the importation of these works, or following their departure, the court would have had no jurisdiction over their claims. The heirs were using the window of opportunity afforded by the US exhibition, therefore, as the jurisdictional hook for their claims. On 17 March 2005, the US authorities filed a Supplemental Statement of Interest to emphasise that a finding of no jurisdiction in this case would merely prevent the claimants from transforming into a sword what was intended to be a shield.

On 30 March 2005, the District Court emphasised that it was undisputed that the heirs could not seek to seize the artworks while they were in the US under a grant of immunity under the US Immunity from Seizure Act. As the heirs did not contend that they could have filed this suit prior to the importation of the works or following their departure, the court observed that the heirs were using the window of opportunity afforded by the Malevich exhibitions as the jurisdictional hook for their claims. Because the heirs were not seeking the judicial seizure of the artworks, the court considered the reliance on the Immunity from Seizure Act by the City of Amsterdam misplaced, as immunity from seizure is not the same as immunity from suit.

It goes too far to go into detail as to why the US Court was of the opinion that it had competence in hearing the case against the City of Amsterdam. It is important to know, however, that in June 2007 the district court set aside the argument of the City of Amsterdam that this lawsuit could deter further cultural exchanges. In view of the court, the loan of the artwork from the city to US museums was not a matter touching upon 'foreign relations'. It was a private transaction, admittedly with an altruistic public purpose, which had no far-reaching national or international implications, according to the court.

After intense deliberations between the heirs and the City of Amsterdam, an amicable settlement was reached on 23 April 2008. The settlement concerned not only the fourteen works that were the subject of the US suit, but also covered the entire group of Malevich works in the City's collection. Pursuant to the settlement, the artist's descendants received five important

paintings from the city's collection,<sup>39</sup> the remaining works in the collection will remain with the city, and the heirs' US suit was permanently withdrawn.

What happened in the *Malewicz* case might not necessarily occur in each state or under each jurisdiction. In private international law, the principle of 'lex rei sitae' (literally the law where the property is situated) generally prevails. In other words, it primarily depends on the legal system of the state to which the cultural objects are loaned.

## CONCLUSION

With legal disputes over the ownership of cultural objects on the rise, particularly as a result of claims made by heirs to cultural objects expropriated by communist regimes in Eastern Europe, as well as Holocaust claims, the issue of immunity from seizure for travelling cultural objects has become a real concern for states and museums. An important reason for providing cultural objects with immunity from seizure is to provide security or assurance to the lenders of cultural objects that such objects will not be subject to judicial seizure while in the borrower's jurisdiction. The second reason is to try to prevent cultural objects on loan from being used as hostages in trading and/or ownership disputes. However, immunity from seizure is essentially different from immunity from jurisdiction. Depending on the legislation of the borrowing state, the fact that cultural objects are immune from seizure does not automatically imply that it would be impossible to initiate legal proceedings in which the objects play a leading role.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Tanja Saarela, Finnish Minister of Culture, during the European Conference *Encouraging the mobility of collections*, Helsinki, 20 and 21 July 2006.
- 2 By way of a personal loan to President Kennedy.
- 3 The United States was the first country to introduce immunity from seizure legislation in 1965. The catalyst was an imminent exchange between a Soviet museum and the University of Richmond, in which the latter sought to import several artworks that had been appropriated by the Soviet government from art collectors. The Soviet Union made a grant of immunity from seizure as protection from former Soviet citizens claiming title to the cultural objects a condition of the loan.

- 4 Based on the description of immunity from seizure in the *Action Plan for the EU Promotion of Museum Collection Mobility and Loan Standards*, Helsinki 2006. Available: [http://www.ne-mo.org/index.php?id=104&STIL=0&C\\_PID=&C\\_UID=7](http://www.ne-mo.org/index.php?id=104&STIL=0&C_PID=&C_UID=7).
- 5 *Romanov vs. Florida International Museum*, No. 95-001285-CI-008 (Cir.Ct. Pinellas City, FL 1995). See also Stephen J. Knerly, Jr., *International Loans, State Immunity and Anti-Seizure Laws*, Ali-Abacours of Study – Legal Issues in Museum Administration, 1–3 April 2009, Boston, Massachusetts, 11.
- 6 An Eastern-styled, sable-trimmed and jewel-studded headdress worn by Peter I at the age of 10 in 1682.
- 7 *ICOM Code of Professional Ethics*, adopted by the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of ICOM in Buenos Aires, (Argentina) on 4 November 1986, amended by the 20<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Barcelona (Spain) on 6 July 2001, renamed *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*, revised by the 21<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in Seoul (Republic of Korea) on 8 October 2004. <http://icom.museum/ethics.html#intro>.
- 8 Among the works were paintings by Pierre-August Renoir, Claude Monet, Édouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin.
- 9 This decision was based on Article 184, paragraph 3 of the Swiss Constitution, which allows for ‘necessary measures to protect national interests’.
- 10 Signed in San Francisco, the United States, on 26 June 1945.
- 11 Article 55:  
 ‘With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote:  
 a. [...];  
 b. solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational co-operation; and  
 c. [...]’
- 12 Norman Palmer ‘Comments on the DCMS consultation paper on anti-seizure legislation for cultural objects on loan’ (on file with me). Palmer uses the phrase ‘... not be subject to judicial seizure or other hindrance from courts...’; however, as immunity from seizure should be distinguished from immunity from jurisdiction, it is in my view not possible to say that immunity from seizure can prevent any form of hindrance from the court. As a matter of fact, if the court has jurisdiction to assess a case, that may be considered by the lender as a form of hindrance as well.
- 13 Relief: remedy sought by a claimant in a legal action. *Dictionary of Law*, Third Edition, Middlesex 2000.
- 14 ‘Consultation Paper on anti-seizure legislation’, United Kingdom Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 8 March 2006, paragraph 1.16. However, as shown below, this kind of prevention is not always possible, as claims are still sometimes made.
- 15 O’Connell, A. (January 2006) ‘Immunity from seizure: an overview’, *Art Antiquity and Law*, Vol. XI, issue 1, 2. See also <http://www.artlossreview.com/legal/legalarchive.php?id+3>.
- 16 Study No. 2003–4879: An inventory of the national systems of public guarantees in 31 European countries (June 2004), Reunion des Musees Nationaux, Etablissement Public a Caractere Industriel et Commercial (EPIC) Paris (France) in collaboration with Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin (Germany).
- 17 Under the chairmanship of Ronald de Leeuw, at that moment Director General of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
- 18 *Lending to Europe, Recommendations on collection mobility for European Museums*, A report produced by an independent group of experts, set up by Council resolution 13839/04; April 2005. Available [http://www.museumcollectionsonthefly.org/references/Lending\\_to\\_Europe.pdf](http://www.museumcollectionsonthefly.org/references/Lending_to_Europe.pdf).
- 19 The Netherlands, United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland and Germany.
- 20 *Action Plan for the EU Promotion of Museum Collections’ Mobility and Loan Standards*, Helsinki 2006. Available [http://www.ne-mo.org/index.php?id=104&STIL=0&C\\_PID=&C\\_UID=7](http://www.ne-mo.org/index.php?id=104&STIL=0&C_PID=&C_UID=7). The draft of the *Action Plan* was discussed in the conference titled *Encouraging the Mobility of Collections*, in Helsinki on 21 July 2006, and endorsed by the EU Cultural Affairs Committee on 17 October 2006. The aim of the *Action Plan* was to facilitate the access to Europe’s cultural heritage, make it available for all citizens and find new ways to improve co-operation, trust and good practice for lending between museums.
- 21 These working groups are: immunity from seizure; state indemnity schemes; non-insurance, self-insurance and valuation of cultural objects; loan fees and long-term loans; building up trust and networking; loan administration and loan standards. There was a 7<sup>th</sup> theme, being ‘digitalisation’. That area is promoted by the National Representatives Group for the EU co-ordination of the digitalisation of cultural and scientific content.
- 22 *The EU Council Work Plan for Culture 2008–2010* firmly included the follow-up schedule of the *Action Plan* agreed under the Finnish Presidency. In addition, one of the central objectives of the

Culture Programme 2007–2013 of the European Commission is to encourage the circulation of works of art.

- 23 ‘Seventh report on jurisdictional immunities of States and their property’, by Sompong Sucharitkul, ILC Special Rapporteur, in Document A/CN.4/388, Yearbook of the International Law Commission 1985, Volume II, Part One, documents of the thirty-seventh session, para. 16.
- 24 In its Explanatory Memorandum to the amendment of the Bailiffs’ Act, dated 5 April 1993 (Parliamentary Papers 23081, no. 3) the Dutch government stated: ‘Both in treaties and in customary international law, immunity from execution is more readily accepted than immunity from jurisdiction. Although the matter is not absolutely clear, and opinions differ, it can be said that, in accordance with both customary and codified international law, it should be assumed that the property of a foreign State enjoys immunity from execution.’
- 25 *Malewicz v. City of Amsterdam*, 362 F. Supp. 2d 298 (D.D.C. 2005); *Malewicz v. City of Amsterdam*, 2006 U.S. App. LEXIS 615 (D.C. Cir., Jan. 10, 2006); *Malewicz v. City of Amsterdam* 517 F. Supp. 2d 322 (D.D.C. June 27, 2007).
- 26 See also my article ‘Declarations of Immunity from Seizure of Foreign Artworks and the Legal Position of Sovereign Art Lenders before US Courts: the *Malewicz* Case’, in: *The Netherlands in court; essays in honour of Johan G. Lammers*, 2006, 223–245.
- 27 When speaking of the artist, I use the spelling ‘Malevich’; when speaking of the legal proceedings, I use the spelling ‘Malewicz’.
- 28 Under the 1976 US Foreign Sovereign Immunity Act, the City of Amsterdam is a political subdivision of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
- 29 13 paintings and one drawing. I use the term ‘artworks’ here, as this is the term used in the suit.
- 30 This exhibition ran from 22 May 2003 to 7 September 2003.
- 31 This exhibition ran from 2 October 2003 to 11 January 2004.
- 32 The 14 artworks were part of a larger collection of some 84 paintings, gouaches, drawings and theoretical cards (technical drawings) that were purchased by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (a museum owned by the City of Amsterdam) in 1958.
- 33 Public Notice no. 4335. The notice carried the title ‘Culturally Significant Objects Imported for Exhibition Determination: “Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism”’. This Notice was published in the Federal Register on 11 April 2003, Volume 68, Number 70, 17852–17853. The Malewicz heirs had filed an objection to the issue of the declaration, but the Department of State decided to stick to its determination.
- 34 Patricia S. Harrison, Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.
- 35 ‘I hereby determine that the objects to be included in the exhibition “Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism” imported from abroad for temporary exhibition within the United States, are of cultural significance. These objects are imported pursuant to loan agreements with foreign lenders. I also determine that the exhibition or display of the exhibit objects at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York, from on or about May 22, 2003, to on or about September 7, 2003, the Menil Collection, Houston, Texas, from on or about October 2, 2003, to on or about January 11, 2004, and at possible additional venues yet to be determined, is in the national interest.’
- 36 22 U.S.C. § 2459. Public Law 89–259. (S.2273), 79 Stat. 985, approved 19 October 1965.
- 37 See also Yin-Shuan Lue, Polly Clark and Marion R. Fremont-Smith, *Countering a Legal Threat to Cultural Exchanges of Works of Art: The Malewicz Case and Proposed Remedies*, The Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, December 2007, Working Paper No. 42.
- 38 This is possible based on US legislation and has the aim to inform the court of the US administration’s view on certain legal issues as presented by a particular case.
- 39 The five paintings concerned are: *Desk and Room* (1913), *Suprematist Composition (Blue Rectangle over Purple Beam)* (1916), *Suprematism (Football player)* (1915), *Suprematism, Eighteenth Construction* (1915) and *Mystic Suprematism (Black Cross on Red Oval)* (1920–1922). *Suprematist Composition* was auctioned at Sotheby’s New York in November 2008, and sold for USD 60 million.

## **LONG-TERM LOANS: A PROPOSAL WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT**

The term 'long-term loan' refers to the lending of objects by one museum to another in the same country or abroad for a period of time beyond the usual one to six months, which is standard practice for short-term loans. This article will look at long-term loans as one arm of collections management. All the possible advantages or disadvantages, obstacles and benefits, will be examined based on selected examples. Finally, I shall attempt to show that, if more and more museums were to adopt this practice, it could provide solutions to many issues related to the display, promotion and accessibility of museum collections in accordance with the third principle of the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* (ICOM 2006: 6).<sup>1</sup> In my opinion, this practice opens up new horizons for the knowledge society not just for the benefit of the academic community, but for anyone interested in art and culture. Moreover, as Aristotle said, 'all men by nature desire knowledge'.

### **LONG-TERM LOANS AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL**

The practice of making long-term loans is widespread and can be traced back more than half a century to 1958 when the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam initiated a series of reciprocal loans with the National Gallery in London (Jyrkkiö 2009: 25). As far as I know, this is the first example of lending on a long-term basis. Nevertheless, there was still a lengthy process of discussions ahead over the complex issue of collections management before these matters were sufficiently clarified to be emphatically stated at every opportunity in international meetings and committees. Thus, collections mobility emerged as a priority for European countries, with the first seed perhaps being planted at the conference that took place in 2003 at Delphi.<sup>2</sup> Other conferences and seminars followed: in Naples,<sup>3</sup> The Hague,<sup>4</sup> Manchester,<sup>5</sup> Helsinki,<sup>6</sup> and Munich<sup>7</sup> as did the publications *Lending to Europe, Recommendations on Collection Mobility for European Museums* (Lending 2005) and *Action Plan for the EU Promotion of Museums Collections' Mobility and Loan Standards* (Action Plan 2006).

Consequently, the process of working out the issues involved in collections mobility is nearly complete in spring 2010. This process can be split into two phases. The first, during the Austrian presidency of the European Union, involved the creation of six working groups that were responsible for resolving particular issues regarding collections mobility. In the second phase, the mobility of collections was made a priority in the European Commission's Action Plan for Culture (2008–2010). Long-term loans have been the subject of a study by a sub-group of the OMC Mobility of Collections. This sub-group applied itself assiduously to the job in hand until it came up with the final text of the *Long-Term Loans Best Practices Report* in 2009 (Jyrkkiö 2009).

### ADVANTAGES

A legal framework is a useful way of ensuring more widespread acceptance and the implementation of long-term loans. In Greece, for example, the new law for the 'Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general', which was passed in 2002, allows for the long-term loan of antiquities for up to five years with the possibility of renewal. Similar legislation, allowing for loans of between three and five years, is also in force in some other member states.

We can sum up the advantages of adopting the practice of long-term loans and rank them in order of importance with reference to actual examples as follows:

1. The first and perhaps most important advantage is the contribution that long-term loans make to enriching museums' permanent collections. Loans can further develop, supplement, clarify and reinforce the museological thinking behind a permanent exhibition or even some themed exhibit and can help increase familiarity with a particular period of art.

This tactic, of enriching collections for the purposes mentioned above, seems to be the most widespread. Let us take the example of the reciprocal loans between three Flemish museums, the Groeninge Museum in Bruges, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp and the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, which have made some hitherto rarely exhibited works more accessible (Jyrkkiö 2009: 18) or, alternatively, the loans from the Ateneum Art Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki to the Art Museum of South Karelia, which helped create a more comprehensive presentation in a themed exhibit on the subject of war (Jyrkkiö 2009: 19). Two examples from the Greek experience may also be useful. The first concerns the creation of a monothematic museum on the Olympic Games in Antiquity in the context of the Athens Olympics of

2004. In order to develop the subject as fully as possible, it was decided to borrow antiquities from 22 public archaeological museums throughout Greece, which, displayed alongside works from the collections of the Museum of Olympia, were a significant help in explaining the Olympic experience in antiquity. Since the works belonged to public collections, there was no need for contracts to be signed, but the loans were initially approved for five years by a ministerial decision. The second example concerns two long-term loans made to the new Acropolis Museum. They involved two fragments from the Parthenon marbles, one from the Vatican Museum and the other from the Antonio Salinas Archaeological Museum in Palermo, Sicily.

2. Long-term loans can also be granted in return for the restitution of a work to its country of origin by another museum, which had hitherto possessed it legally. A typical example is the agreement between the Antikensammlung in Pergamon Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture for the return of architectural sculpture from the Philippeion at Olympia, which had been excavated by the German Archaeological Institute in the late nineteenth century (Jyrkkiö 2009: 22). The agreements between the Italian state and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu (Jyrkkiö 2009: 23) and with the Staatliche Museen in Berlin (Jyrkkiö 2009: 21) are also considered extremely important. These examples show the usefulness of long-term loans in developing relations of trust between states to the benefit of scholarly knowledge and collaboration.
3. Another aspect of the museum world that may have benefited from the practice of long-term loans – and that should definitely not be overlooked – is the conservation of antiquities and works of art. A museum, lacking a fully equipped conservation laboratory for specialist projects, can come to an agreement with another museum, which will carry out the job and undertake to meet the expenses involved and will subsequently exhibit the works in the context of a long-term loan. One such example is that of the Svishtov Museum of History in Bulgaria, which lent artefacts to the Poznan National Museum in Poland, which undertook their conservation (Jyrkkiö 2009: 21).
4. An equally important reason for encouraging long-term loans – and that combines scholarly aims with practical ones – is the overcrowding in museum storage space. For example, the Historical Museum in Amsterdam loaned the Staatliche Museen in Berlin a painting from its overflowing reserve collection. Apart from the fact that it was taking up a lot of room in storage, there was next to no possibility of it being displayed in the museum to which it belonged (Jyrkkiö 2009: 25).

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From the above examples, it is clear that:

- without the agreement between the three Flemish museums, the public would never have become acquainted with these loaned works that had not previously been displayed;
- without the loans from two Finnish museums to a third, or the loans from 22 Greek museums to a newly established one in Olympia, some specially themed exhibits would have been presented in an incomplete fashion;
- without the agreement between Germany and Greece, the partial reconstruction of an important monument would have been impossible;



- without the agreement between Italy and museums in the United States, important examples of cultural heritage would not have been definitively restored to the country in which they originated;
- without the agreement between Bulgaria and Poland important art works would not have been conserved;
- finally, thanks to the agreement between a Dutch and a German Museum, on the one hand, storage space was freed up and, on the other hand, a work was exhibited that, in all probability, would never otherwise have been put on display.

### **SOME MISGIVINGS**

It has become evident from the foregoing that there are many advantages in implementing the practice of long-term loans, even when they are for restricted periods of time. Nevertheless, many countries have expressed reservations about adopting this practice. However, just by using the *Long-Term Loans Best Practices Report* it is not difficult to show that no obstacle is insuperable. For example, the complicated texts of the loan agreements can be simplified.

The preliminary negotiations that are required to reach an agreement between the two interested parties usually require some time. However, this should not be construed as an obstacle, as the final version of the loan agreement must be approached with exceptional care. Anxiety about the security of the works, and in some cases the high cost of insuring them as well, should not be an inhibiting factor now that many European countries have legislated for a system of state indemnity, while others are currently debating adopting similar legislation.

Moreover, we should not forget that prolonging the term of loans, i.e. choosing longer-term loans over short-term ones, results in an actual reduction of the expenses required to complete the setting up of exhibitions. There are also some other obstacles concerning the implementation of the practice of long-term loans as mentioned in the *Long-Term Loans Best Practices Report*, such as confidentiality or the superiority of one museum over another, but, in my opinion, these are fears rather than obstacles.

In other words, any misgivings or anxieties that have been expressed are less significant than the benefits that result from the use of long-term loans. All issues could be overcome with good intentions and mutual understanding and confidence.

## CONCLUSION

Because they seem to sum up the benefits arising from the widespread use of long-term loans in the best possible way, I will end by quoting two crucial statements from the relevant literature: ‘Museums are a link between Europe’s heritage and the citizens of today and tomorrow’ (*Lending* 2005: 6) and ‘The long-term loans offer new possibilities for study, restoration, exchange of experience and training’ (*Action Plan* 2006: 7). Some countries, such as Spain and the United Kingdom have already launched initiatives to promote the practice (Jyrkkö 2009: 10–11 and 20).

To sum up, long-term loans, with all their important advantages, presuppose and promote the development of relations between museums and their personnel, the establishment of trust between peoples – with mutual respect for the differences between them – and the awareness of a common European heritage. These are the goals on which we should be focusing all of our efforts.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 ‘Museums have particular responsibilities to all for the care, accessibility and interpretation of primary evidence collected and held in their collections’.
- 2 *Enhancement and Promotion of Cultural Heritage* (Athens–Delphi, 17–19 March 2003).
- 3 *What Standards and Management Models for the European Museums?* (Naples, 9–10 October 2003).
- 4 *Museum Collections on the Move* (The Hague, 28–29 October 2004).
- 5 *Increasing the Mobility of Collections* (Manchester, 27–28 November 2005).
- 6 *Encouraging the Mobility of Collections* (Helsinki, 19–21 July 2006).
- 7 *Mobility of Collections in Europe: Crossing Borders* (Munich, 15–17 April 2007).

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## **LOAN FEES**

One of the barriers to collections mobility in Europe is the cost of loans, particularly of fine art. Many museums believe that the cost of lending and borrowing high-value cultural objects is beyond their means while others may borrow single objects but expect that taking an entire exhibition will be financially impossible.

Moving cultural objects requires skill and care because it is essential that our cultural heritage is preserved for posterity. Any move must be thoughtfully planned and executed to the highest standards in order to ensure the safety of the object. Because the works of art that are on the move can be unique, fragile, and valuable, transportation is undertaken by a small number of highly specialised fine-art transportation agents and is often rather expensive. Museums lending their precious objects generally demand the greatest care in moving and handling. All of this can be costly simply for the logistics of the loan – moving it from one museum to another – before all the other costs of creating an exhibition are taken into account.

However, loans are not always, or necessarily, expensive. It depends on many factors and even if costs are high, there are ways of reducing them. There will always be a cost for moving a cultural object but it may be more manageable than many museums think. It is normal to negotiate with lenders in order to try to come up with solutions to costly problems. What is important is to have good communication between the lender and borrower so that borrowers have the confidence to ask for objects and lenders show a willingness to make loans financially viable.

***Loan activities  
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It is important to convince any lender that you have good standards of security and environmental control in your gallery space and that you are experienced in administering, handling, and caring for cultural objects. This really has nothing to do with costs and is all about professionalism and competence.

Sustainability is important in any loan negotiation. Sharing costs or collaborating with other museums to share an exhibition is a good way of saving energy. Renting equipment and display furniture rather than buying new and discarding it all at the end of the display will go far in energy efficiency. Renting, rather than constructing crates and using part-loads rather than exclusive-use vehicles should also be considered. Being energy-aware is important for the museum sector and is also a good way of keeping costs down.

There are many financial considerations when planning a loan but there are many ways of reducing costs. Loan fees and loan costs are two different things and will be explained fully with suggestions for what is reasonable and what is not along with recommendations for reducing the cost of borrowing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LENDING TO EUROPE AND LOAN FEES GROUP**

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Collections Mobility project has been working to facilitate lending and borrowing across Europe. The Loan Fees Group produced the following recommendations:

### Key issues

1. minimise any loan charges
2. avoid unnecessary or unfair costs
3. promote twinning and exchanges
4. do not expect museums to raise funds through loan fees

### Immediate actions

1. every museum should have a loan strategy
2. reduce or abolish loan fees
3. encourage long-term relationships
4. promote non-insurance for long loans

## **LOAN FEES**

There are two types of loan fees – the real cost of preparing and shipping the object, which is normally passed on to the borrower, and a fee for administering the loan, which may or may not be charged. While the real costs have to be paid by someone, asking for a loan fee for what is essentially the normal work of a museum is not in anyone's best interests. Any public collection has a duty to lend, since the objects are in their custody for the benefit of all and are in fact paid for by the citizens of that respective country. Public collections should be aware of this duty and ensure that the loans department is adequately staffed and funded in order to administer loans free of charge to the borrower. Loan activities should be recognised as an essential and valuable part of the museum's purpose and should be adequately supported by the museum.

In some museums, loans administration is of relatively low importance and remains invisible compared to the high profile of exhibitions. Every museum should be proud of its lending record and of the active service that it performs to increase access to loaned works. To increase this profile, loan figures could be listed on the website or in annual reports. Tours of exhibitions generated by the museum could be advertised and celebrated. Visitor figures for works on loan to other institutions could be included in the lending museum's statistics.

Loans should not be seen, therefore, as a way to generate money. Lending is a part of the activities of a museum and to charge a fixed fee for administering a loan can be considered unreasonable. Most museums do not charge loan fees and willingly lend only for the actual cost of the loan. Others, however, see a loan as an opportunity to charge the borrower and regard loans as fundraisers, thereby increasing the cost of borrowing.

There is no objection to a small, reasonable administration fee if it can be justified. A small fee is quite common for international loans, except where there are reciprocal arrangements. A fixed and costly charge, however, is not a good way to encourage loans. Most of these fixed fees take no regard of the amount of work for the staff, the complexity of the loan, or any complications or special requirements about moving and preparing the object. The borrower is usually met with a take it or leave it attitude with no room for negotiation. The borrower has to agree, otherwise he will not receive the object that is crucial to his new display. This method of increasing income at the expense of other museums does not help the free exchange of cultural goods. It also makes no sense for museum A to charge museum B for a loan, only for museum B to then make a similar charge the following year. Apart from wasting money, it is not the best use of administration time.

There are, however, a few exceptions:

1. collections that lend but never borrow
2. museums with exceptional demands for certain key works
3. collections with few resources in-house that have to buy-in all the services for loan administration

For example, an exception would be made for an institution that exists only as a permanent collection with no exhibition space and no exhibition programme. This organisation is a net lender and never a borrower. It finds itself constantly reacting to other people's requests to borrow and spends much staff time in administering loans. There is no obvious benefit for the museum in lending (since, as we said, lending is an invisible activity) and the financial burden on the museum is caused by the activities of others. In this case, it is reasonable for the museum to charge a small fee in order to continue this work.

Museums that have many wanted objects but that do not borrow in return can be excused for charging loan fees. For example, drawings collections may find themselves sending out large groups of works on paper, or even entire exhibitions, all of which require considerable work in administering, conserving, and framing. They seldom borrow, however, as they have only a small display space.

If a collection is not established as a museum, for example a historic house, then there may also be a justification for a loan fee to administer the loans as, in this case, they are outside the primary function of the institution.

In all of these cases and others, any loan fee charged should be reasonable and affordable to borrowers in order to encourage loan requests.

Loan fees can seldom be justified and should be discouraged except in certain circumstances. Any such cost should be stated at the outset of any loan request. Lenders should be flexible, costs should be negotiable, and everything should be clearly stated in the contract.

***Every museum  
should be proud  
of its lending record.***

#### **LOAN COSTS**

The actual costs of the loan, however, are real and do have to be paid for. In general, it is the borrower who pays all the costs as they have the benefit of the loan. However, the lender has a professional duty to keep costs low and to do what they can to facilitate the loan. Any costs should be open to discussion and both parties should explore the alternatives and work together.

#### **Preparation, conservation, and framing**

If the object is not up to display standards, it will have to be treated before the loan can go ahead. The object must be sound and fit to travel in order to prevent any damage during transport or handling. It is necessary to conserve and consolidate any object that requires it, but this work must be directly in relation to the purpose of the loan. Not every object requires preparation and not for every loan. Borrowers should ask about the need for conservation and make sure that the object was not already scheduled for work as part of the owner's conservation programme. Work could include cleaning, con-

solidating loose or flaking paint surfaces, or securely attaching parts of an object. Sometimes major structural conservation work has to be done, in which case the borrower has the right to decline the loan if the cost is too high. Borrowers are usually required to pay the costs of the conservation and preparation for their loan but it should be made clear that the work is specifically for the purpose of the loan.

If the painting or object does not have a mount or a frame and if there are no plans to create one in the near future, framing and mounting costs can be passed to the borrower. Although works should be mounted to ensure their safety, not all works need to be framed because, on occasion, they may be placed in a display case. The borrower should decide on the method of display before agreeing to cover any framing and mounting costs.

All of these costs can be negotiated. The lender and borrower could agree on who is best placed to undertake conservation or framing and mounting. If the lender has in-house conservation and technical departments, the costs should be for materials only and not for staff time. If conservators are freelance or frame makers are outsourced, then the full cost should be agreed between the lender and borrower before any work commences.

### **Packing and crating**

The lender knows the object best and must be allowed to specify the method of packing in order to ensure its safety. The lender will prescribe the method of packing and may use soft-wrap, a transit frame, reusable box, or full-specification purpose-built crate. Whatever the method used, both parties should attempt to keep costs low and not use a purpose-built crate where a simpler option will be sufficient. If a crate is required, it may be that one already exists for the object, or it could be possible to adapt another crate. Renting crates should be considered. The costs of packing materials can be passed to the borrower. The borrower should retain all the packing materials for the return journey.

The lender should inform the borrower if the packing is done by an in-house team or by the agent. Staff costs for packing should not be passed on to the borrower. If an agent is used, the estimated costs should be agreed in advance.

### **Transportation**

The lender and borrower may have their own transport, in which case, it should be used if appropriate. If neither party has transport or if the object(s) require specialist transport or handling, such as oversized objects or a large number of works, outside agents will have to be employed. These must al-



ways be professional fine art transporters with experience in moving museum objects and with a high degree of security. Comparative bids for the best value should be sought by the borrower and discussed with the lender. The lender should not be too fixed to one carrier but should be flexible in the choice of an agent, provided that they meet all the required specifications for safety and security. The lender should agree to part-load or load sharing in order to reduce costs, provided of course that this meets the insurance or indemnity requirements. The borrower usually pays for the transportation costs but the lender should not make any unreasonable demands such as adding additional works to the vehicle that have no relation to the loan. Both parties should be flexible as to the day and time of collection in order to keep costs down. Scheduling a shipment a day earlier in order to have a part-load can greatly reduce a transportation bill.

### **Insurance & Indemnity**

The high cost of insurance has often been named as a major barrier to lending. The best way to reduce this cost is to use state indemnities. If the borrower has a state indemnity, it should be accepted by the lender. Some museums insist on commercial insurance even in cases where state indemnity exists. This is unfair to the borrower and also to the public whose taxes partly go to support the museum. If the lender does not agree to accept the state indemnity that is offered by the borrower, an explanation should be given.

Many government indemnities do not cover 100% of the value to where the shortfall may be topped up by commercial insurance. Insurance should be arranged and paid for by the borrower with policy and terms agreed in advance with the lender. A copy of any insurance /indemnity certificate should always be sent to the lender before the loan commences. The lender should not insist on using his insurance agent, unless the provision offered by the lender's agent is inadequate.

The lender should not ask for coverage for war, negligence, or the depreciation of value.

The lender should consider insuring for repair only and not for total loss.

The high values of fine art and decorative art objects often put commercial insurance out of reach. Museums have a duty to keep values realistic. Any valuation must be reasonable and justifiable. The borrower has the right to question any valuation in order to exclude artificially inflated values and excessive premiums. The lender should consider keeping values low and consider self-insurance with partner museums where there is a history of shared standards and long-term trust.

### Couriers

There are many different views on when to send a courier. For objects that are particularly fragile or that need specialist installation, the lender naturally wants to ensure that his loan arrives safely and is carefully handled. However, some museums have a policy of couriering every object, even when the object is robust and the borrowing institution is highly experienced. In order to encourage lending and borrowing throughout Europe, there should be a general presumption that a courier will only be used when there is a proven need. If the lending institution sends a courier, they should explain why this is necessary. The most suitable person for the specific job should be used, for example, a conservator for a fragile work, a technician for a complex installation, or a registrar for a difficult journey or to inspect an unknown premises. The lending institution must always make sure that the courier is properly trained and well-briefed about the job at hand.

Although many indemnity schemes insist on a courier, this is usually one courier to accompany each shipment rather than one per object.

Costs for the courier must be covered by the borrower and should be reasonable costs that cover travel, accommodation, and per diem only. Terms and conditions should be set out by the borrower stating the upper limits of time and cost, and the lender should not make unreasonable or expensive demands. In all cases, the lender should give adequate notice of the courier's details so that travel arrangements can be made well in advance and costs kept low.

No additional costs, e.g. use of taxis when public transport is adequate, should be paid. The lender should accept the borrower's provision and should not try to bargain or increase the sum. Only in exceptional circumstances should there be any increase, and this should be agreed in advance between the parties.

Couriers could be shared in order to reduce the overall numbers and cost. By questioning the need for a courier and for agreeing on upper limits, lenders and borrowers can work together to ensure that costs are reasonable.

### Photography and reproduction

Photography or permission to use an image of a loaned object is often expensive for the borrower. The lender should find out if an image already exists rather than automatically passing on this cost. There could be plans to photograph the object in the near future as a part of an on-going cataloguing programme. The borrower should also ascertain if a copy could be made rather than requesting new photography.

If the lending museum has an in-house photography department, then the charges should be for materials only. If external photographers are employed, their fee must also be covered, but only the basic cost price should be passed on to the borrower. In any case, all costs must be agreed on in advance between the borrower and lender.

There should be no charge for reproducing the image in the exhibition catalogue or in any scholarly publication or lecture associated with the loan. Reproduction fees are only acceptable for commercial and retail purposes associated with the exhibition. In the case of lenders who are not borrowers, or for exceptionally large orders that are beyond the normal capability of the lender, then it would be reasonable to charge. However, any costs should be agreed in advance.

### **Administration time**

The lender should not charge the borrower for the cost of his registrars, loan administrators, curators, or other staff employed in the organisation of the loan. All administrative staff should be employed as a part of the general operating cost of the museum. In exceptional circumstances, a particularly large loan or an entire exhibition may justify employing additional staff, but this must be agreed on beforehand with the borrower.

These costs are all more or less justifiable but should always be discussed and agreed on between the lender and borrower. There should never be any unreasonable demands from the lender and no surprises. All costs should be kept to a minimum provided that the care and safety of the object is paramount.

### **Suggestions for reducing costs**

1. sustainability – think about recycling materials
2. common standards and procedures save time
3. negotiate to arrive at a satisfactory outcome for both parties
4. question the costs if they seem unreasonable
5. share the costs between the lender and borrower or pool resources
6. keep valuations low and make them justifiable
7. always use state indemnity where it exists
8. shop for the best value for transportation and insurance
9. collaborate or set up partnerships to share exhibitions
10. reuse existing frames, crates, etc., where possible
11. rent equipment, crates, etc., instead of creating new ones
12. consider part-loads instead of exclusive-use vehicles

**Lenders should:**

1. accept state indemnities
2. be flexible with dates
3. agree to part loads or shared shipments
4. use couriers only when necessary
5. keep values low and justifiable
6. pass on conservation/preparation/framing charges at cost
6. use standard frames
7. trust the borrower

**Lenders should not:**

1. make the process complicated
2. discriminate between types of loans
3. expect higher standards and conditions than those in which the object is normally kept
4. ask for conservation or framing costs when unnecessary
5. always send a courier
6. ask for excessive costs and conditions for the courier
7. be inflexible or incommunicative

**Borrowers should:**

1. question any costs that they do not understand
2. negotiate the costs and work required
3. offer to do any proposed work, e.g., conservation, themselves, if possible
4. prove that they have good standards and professional competence
5. consider another object if the one chosen is too costly
6. take advantage of requests for improved gallery conditions in order to upgrade the gallery
7. work to the highest standard of care of the objects

**Borrowers should not:**

1. be unprepared
2. have an insufficient budget for the loan
3. have poor conditions of care, security, or maintenance
4. request objects that they cannot accommodate or display satisfactorily
5. request objects that require lengthy conservation
6. expect the lender to provide everything free of cost
7. insist on unsuitable objects

## CONCLUSION

Reducing the cost of loans is vital to increasing the mobility of collections.

We are moving away from the rigid requirements for climate conditions in our galleries to a more flexible attitude. We are increasingly developing shared standards and knowledge (UKRG and NEMO). Our aim is to make loans easier, more accessible, and more sustainable. It is important to continually question the costs and the practice of loans and to make the process simpler and more cost-effective. A willingness to debate and to work together to facilitate loans will increase the sharing of our cultural collections.

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## **DIGITISING MUSEUM MATERIALS**

### **– TOWARDS VISIBILITY AND IMPACT**

The increased exchange of immaterial goods and the profound changes in the way content is created and used are the characteristics of a digital society. Advances in information and communications technologies influence the way we work, think, and create – both as individuals and as a group.

Digital resources are becoming increasingly significant throughout society. This trend is also reflected in the museum sector, which is responsible for creating, managing, making accessible, and preserving digital knowledge capital related to cultural material and visual culture.

Just a decade ago, in 1990s, the driving force behind the digitisation of museum collections was collections management. The rise of the Internet as the key information seeking, learning, and experience-building environment has thrust online services and digital content that is provided by museums, libraries, and archives into the spotlight of cultural heritage and information society policies, both at the European Union level and in the individual EU member states. Digitising is increasingly being justified by the benefits of content use and reuse that are provided to society.

The activities of the European Union clearly reflect this shift. In the *i2010 Digital Libraries Initiative* (The European Commission 2005), the electronic information resources of scientific and public libraries, archives, audio-visual archives, and museums are, for the first time in the European Union's activities, at the core of the information society.

Based on these policy definitions, both the European Commission and the Council of the European Union have in recent years prepared a number of more in-depth and complementary documents that, alongside the digitisation of physical materials and the management of digital materials, increasingly emphasise the development of use- and user-centred electronic services. Ensuring the availability and usability of born-digital and digitised materials in the decades and centuries to come is a goal towards which both the

Commission and the EU member states are working. The Commission and the member states together have committed themselves to establishing a European Digital Library, *Europeana*.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, the European Union trend is to strengthen the role of cultural content as the foundation upon which knowledge and innovation are built. *Europe 2020 Strategy* (European Commission 2010) identifies active support for digitising Europe's rich cultural heritage as one priority leading to smart growth. It is, therefore, highly likely that the increased European Union interest in the digitising of cultural materials indicates both concrete EU-level measures that will enhance digitising and increased pressure for the member states to include digital cultural heritage in their political agenda also in the future.

Alongside arguments for economic growth, we should also study the impact of digitising by investigating the negative implications that failing to digitise key national cultural materials would have on various sectors of society. Both EU and national level digital agendas need more extensive research results than are currently available on the impact of digitisation and the online accessibility of museum materials.<sup>2</sup>

### **MUSEUM MATERIALS' SLOW JOURNEY TO THE INTERNET**

Museums have a long way to go before they can provide online access to the vast collection potential that they have accumulated over the centuries. Museum materials are digitised less than the materials in libraries and archives. Of the digitised materials, far less museum materials are made available for free via online access than library and archive materials (CIPFA 2009).

Digitising museum objects is expensive. The physical characteristics of museum materials make them unsuited for mass digitising, and because of their uniqueness, creating descriptive metadata for museum objects is a painstakingly slow process. Developing copyright solutions that cover a wide range of museum materials is crucial so that more copyright-protected museum materials can be made accessible online.

Advanced Internet search engines link museum collections and make them available to users regardless of time and place. By using online services, museum professionals learn about various collections and their interrelationships. Increased knowledge of existing collections also enhances inter-museum loans of physical collections. Digital content can be used in a number of ways, for example in professional online services that support inter-museum exchanges, exhibitions, and educational online services.

The ways that people use to seek information and experiences on the Internet are constantly evolving, making it impossible to continue building online services based on an organisational hierarchy or collections, at least in a wider sense. In addition to national online services, European museums make content available for search through the digital European library *Euro-peana* (the European Digital Library Foundation 2010). This makes national content accessible in a wider European context. There is no doubt that *Euro-peana* – which receives content through numerous aggregators such as the national digital libraries of the EU member states as well as specific and cross-domain museums, archives, and library portals – will become one of the key access points to cultural heritage content on the Internet.

### **SELECTING MATERIALS FOR DIGITISING**

When selecting cultural material for digitisation, museums typically prioritise materials based on technical criteria (physical condition of the original material), content criteria (representativeness, uniqueness), and use criteria (demand).

Digitisation is used to preserve fragile analogue cultural materials and to reduce wear and tear through use. Museums, libraries, and archives often concentrate digitisation activities on focus areas based on a combination of content and use criteria, such as the representativeness, significance, uses, and demand of the materials. A typical example includes digitising homogeneous, culturally or scientifically significant collections with characteristics that make physical handling difficult.

Questions related to the use of digital content go all the way back to the origins of the materials. It is, therefore, important to interact with various user groups when selecting materials to be digitised.

### **CHALLENGES OF DIGITISATION**

The challenges of digitisation are manifold, covering large volumes of materials, increased complexity of materials, management of internal interrelationships between collection items, and future, unforeseen technological advances.<sup>3</sup> The technology used and metadata created in the process of digitising materials should meet all the use and long-term preservation demands in order to prevent the need for re-digitising the material later.



The type of the analogue material largely determines how faithful a replica the digitised version will be. Some object types, such as three-dimensional museum items, still need to be digitised as two-dimensional versions because 3D technology is fairly expensive and, therefore, not yet feasible for digitising large collections. However, advances in the digitising technology have created new ways to study materials, especially from a scientific point of view. One example of this is the image manipulation of scientific samples by dyeing and enlarging.

The museum sector is known for its numerous descriptive metadata standards (McKenna *et al.* 2009). However, the trend to separate user interface development from background systems makes it easier to develop search services that can make use of several metadata standards. The biggest problem with museum collection search engines is no longer the numerous descriptive metadata standards but rather the various deviations from the standards – still a regrettably common practice – that makes it more difficult to build the necessary search engine indexes and decreases the searchability of the collections.

Digital museum collections are mainly created so that they will also be accessible for future users. Preserving the stored information for a long time without compromising accuracy and integrity can only be achieved if sufficient administrative metadata is attached to digital objects. Administrative metadata in this context means technical metadata, metadata associated with long-term preservation, and access right data. Correcting deficiencies later is expensive, and sometimes even impossible, as the necessary data may no longer be available.

### **DIGITISING OPTIONS - IN-HOUSE, OUTSOURCED, OR WITH PARTNERS**

Selecting the optimal digitising process depends on a number of factors, including the characteristics, physical condition, volume, and use of the materials that are to be digitised as well the profile and resources of the museum, and logistics.

When museums carry out digitising in-house, they develop institutional digitisation knowledge. However, both digitising equipment and software become obsolete fast, and investments cannot always be fully utilised. Outsourcing digitisation requires that the museum has adequate procurement and supplier management processes as well as quality control measures. The advantages of outsourcing are that museums do not need to make large

investments and museum staff can focus their activities on the core business instead of the technical aspects of digitising. New concepts where libraries, archives, and museums work together to create digitising services look particularly promising. Such partnerships help to optimise and share knowledge, software, and equipment, which is a huge advantage.

Recent years have seen a slight increase in co-operation projects on the digitising of cultural materials across Europe. Reports submitted by member states to the European Commission in 2010 indicate that the business partner involved in the co-operation projects was usually an IT or a web service company. Libraries in Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, for example, have made agreements with *Google* for the digitisation of books and other materials.<sup>4</sup> Compared to public funding, however, co-operation project funding for the digitising of museum collections is still negligible.

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## **DIGITAL ONLINE CONTENT – BUT WITH WHOSE METADATA?**

The increasingly digital society poses challenges to museums because, on the one hand, museums must maintain the integrity of museum collections while, on the other hand, they need to enable and support the creation of new information products and services.

Users will actively use digital museum collections only if the associated services have been created with users in mind.<sup>5</sup> However, the demand to empower users is leading to a situation where museums must set guidelines for how they use and display social metadata.

Using social metadata to describe materials is a delicate matter for museums. Users value digital content and services provided by museums, libraries, and archives primarily because they find them trustworthy. At the same time, they want to participate in the creation of information. The origin of social metadata should be clearly identified in the online services providing access to museum materials to ensure reliability. A badly implemented mixture of social and museum metadata will only discourage users. If implemented properly, social metadata will enhance and enrich digital museum content and services without compromising the trust of users.

## **CHALLENGES OF LONG-TERM PRESERVATION OF DIGITAL MATERIALS**

Museums have a duty to preserve the core content of the information society, the permanently retained digital cultural heritage, in an accessible format for hundreds of years. Finding a solution for the long-term preservation of digital cultural material has become a hot national and international topic. During the first decade of the twenty-first century people have awakened to the fact that, without sustainable solutions for long-term digital preservation, our collective memory will gradually fade over the coming years and decades.

Digital museum collections will not be preserved without a long-term preservation system that can be used to manage all the risks associated with digital content. Long-term preservation systems ensure that digital content can be transferred from one media, software, and hardware generation to another without compromising integrity so that they will be accessible to future users. Even without a solid long-term preservation solution, museums can enhance the preservation of their collections in a number of ways. The most crucial ones are geographically distributed data replication and retention and sufficient metadata.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that we are still – with the exception of a few pioneer projects – looking for sustainable digital preservation solutions for museum collections works in our favour. If museums work together – or with libraries and archives – to develop joint solutions for long-term data preservation, they will achieve significant process benefits and cost savings as well as save natural resources. We will see, without a doubt, enthusiastic discussions on the ecological efficiency of digital preservation in the near future, which will be as fervent as the current discussions on the environmental impact of the storage conditions that are required by physical collections.

Although work on the practical solutions for long-term digital preservation is just beginning in many countries, digital preservation can be supported by creating a sufficient amount of accurate metadata during the digitising process, using up-to-date collection management systems, and storing backups in a geographically distributed manner.

Although permanently accessible digital content multiplies the positive impact of digitising, it also creates long-term costs. The entire museum sector would benefit greatly if the various cost models for long-term digital preservation were further developed as an internal co-operation project in order to meet the needs of museums, libraries, and archives.<sup>7</sup>

## **TOWARDS THE CENTRE**

In order to serve today's museum visitors, digital content and the associated advanced online services and mobile applications are necessary. Easy-to-use digital content determines, to a great extent, the role that culture, history, and science play in people's daily lives and the kind of information used in research, education, and business.

The best way to prepare for the challenges posed by digitising museum materials and the management, distribution, and preservation of digital content is to ensure that museum collection policies and digitising strategies are up to date and to share information and experiences between museums, libraries, and archives. Digitising must be supported by joint and/or shared services, procedures, guidelines, and solutions. By joining forces, these holders, distributors, and preservers of core society information can secure their place at the centre of the digital society.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 See The European Commission 2005, 2008, and 2009, the Council of the European Union 2006 and 2008 and the European Digital Library Foundation (2010).
- 2 Interesting studies have been carried out in recent years in the Netherlands (Poort *et al.* 2009) and Great Britain (British Library 2004).
- 3 Several practical guides and professional online services are available to support the digitising of cultural material, including JISC Digital Media 2008a–d and the Canadian Heritage Information Network CHIN 2010. The handbooks and models (2010a and b) of the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) cover the entire lifecycle of digital content, from creation to long-term preservation.
- 4 The reports by the EU member states on the digitisation, online accessibility, and digital preservation of cultural material provide an interesting cross-section of the current state of affairs in Europe (Member States Expert Group (MSEG) 2010).
- 5 Interesting studies on material use and usability include CIBER 2008, Snow *et al.* 2008, and Tenopir *et al.* 2009.
- 6 Useful tools and methods supporting long-term digital preservation include the self-assessment tool DRAMBORA (Digital Curation Centre DCC *et al.* 2010), the TRAC checklist (CRL *et al.* 2007), as well as the test bed software and planning and evaluation tools by Planets Consortium (2010). The OAIS reference model is widely used to describe the long-term preservation in archives and libraries (the Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems (CCSDS) 2002). Seamus Ross' article (2007) provides an interesting view of long-term preservation (2007).
- 7 For more information on the costs associated with the long-term preservation of digital information, see Ayris *et al.* 2008, McLeod *et al.* 2006, Blue Ribbon Task Force 2010, and the National Archief of the Netherlands 2005.

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PART FOUR

FOR THE  
PUBLIC'S  
BENEFIT

## EUROPEAN COLLECTION RESOURCES

### - MUSEUMS SERVING EUROPEAN IDENTITY

The local or national identities are a reading of the ultimate *differentia specifica* within the wider scope of, in this case, European heritage. Therefore, in order to retain diversity within equality and common, shared features, there is an implicit expectation that identities are to be recognised, studied, cared for, and communicated to the collective self(-ves) as well as to the others. The basis of this rich and creative working process, which is peculiar to all public memory institutions (but not limited to them) are collections.

The notion of 'building up identities' should be understood in this way; to invent the identities as projections of desired self would be opposite to their implied nature<sup>1</sup>. It is a task to which museums may be central by way of the attractiveness of their communicational nature and the fact that they mostly collect three-dimensional, palpable, and authentic objects, acquiring thereby specific relevance. However, as we move on, we increasingly perceive that present and future will face us with the challenge of all public memory institutions and actions working together in a multitude of ways. Besides for the usual objects as testimonies of conquest (of other cultures and of nature) or possession (all treasures turned into museums) or simply collected because of their superlative values (oldest, rarest, most precious), we will increasingly choose *trivialia* and *quotidiana* as the inevitable basis of new discourse. The notion of collection will expand, and so will the network.

No matter how they come about or what they consist of, it is important that collections retain credibility. Institutions will have their European exhibitions, European rooms, and spaces where they will show the European contribution wherein a certain culture has added to the common denominator of the European identity. This communicational capacity and demand will have to be supported by adequate collecting, networking, and communicational strategy.

Incited by theory and practice, the reality changes. Therefore, in regarding collecting from such a vast panoramic standpoint, its nature will change and make it more efficient. Database reality, although its roots are in our scientific or poetic capacities, has an incredible ability to assist not only our memory but also our imagination. Synthetic, animated virtual worlds constructed from/upon (now we see more than ever) rather unattractive fragments of former reality, not only represent an immense interpretative tool, but they also change our notion of the object of collecting.

### **WHOSE VOICE IS BEING HEARD? WHO TELLS THE STORY?**

As museums are nowadays communicational institutions for the most part (though, of course, based upon research and scientific arguments), their acquisition policy must be of the same. The sought after effects upon the community or society will increasingly determine this policy. Squeezed by rising democratic standards, the average Eastern-European politicians, for example, give priority to short-term effects and quick interventions<sup>2</sup>. Collecting never figures as important enough on their agenda: too slow, and too long-term. Therefore, it is only the profession itself that can make a difference. How? By research and documenting the changing spirit of time and its value systems, in turn making it capable of assisting democracy by offering ready insight into the themes of interest.

Profession(-alism) consists of values, rules and strategies, – acquires importance and a high position in society's decision making. Acquiring the trans-generational responsibility by insisting upon an obligatory transfer of professional experience, we can assure long-term policy and strategy. By this transcendence from personal to the collective, we need to come of age, – from occupation to a grand profession. This would decisively change whose voice is being heard. This transfer of the focus, and of the centre of gravity, is what will also change collecting. Expressions such as 'my museum', 'my collection', 'my archive', 'our sector', etc. will dissolve in new creative responsibility. All that we have, as 'ours', is a common mission within the public memory and the issuance of 'our' part in the societal project.

When this is about daily institutional heritage practice, communication officers (whether specialised or partially engaged in it) tell a story, – are supposed to convey the sets of messages of which most institutions disposes. Some do. However, the story is often not told at all, because what is offered is facts that could serve a story. When told, it makes the story possible, but most probably not the needed one, because museums are implicitly about governing a value system or being based upon it. That brings us to the questions that are outside of our competence, in that the 'norm' or prevailing

idealist project may colour most of our performances<sup>3</sup>. The lack of broad professional vision within the civil allegiance to collective and individual liberty and the lack of disposition to offer significance to the non-goers and minority groups, in turn contributes, albeit unintentionally, to a lack of tolerance, – a problem in the West and a menace in Eastern Europe.

The voice that we hear in most heritage institutions is that of the ruling (complex and often incoherent) establishment. At worst, or best, if you like, – when museums are of no concern to power holders, – they speak the language of science, – an anonymous voice coded by its complexity and aloof by its ‘historical distance’, but certainly not false. Therefore, what they convey to their social environment usually does not correspond to its needs, – with no reference to the major problems of the community. That makes museums, of which most are still financed by public funds, a part of the problem, and not a part of the solution.

#### **HOW DO COLLECTIONS RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC?**

Historically, many collections were formed in order to confer prestige upon, or to assure the immortality of, their owners. A fixation on materiality, exclusivity, and the superlative in turn made many a collection a rather vain-glorious project. In addition, the scientific ambition and use of collections was directed towards the production of knowledge. This was the omnipotent remedy for all the problems of humankind, and museums were supposed to create it, care for it, and distribute it. Born of the dramatic acceleration in socio-economic change during the Industrial Revolution, modern museums were supposed to save the evidence of what was disappearing for the sake of remembrance and knowledge – in the form of collections. (A cynic would also have it that a bad conscience might have played a part here). However, disappearing cultures cannot be preserved, and heritage cannot remain productive, simply by collecting objects. As soon as education became the primary goal of museums, traditional collections started to be questioned. How can one successfully educate, let alone communicate, on an orientation that invests in scientific perfection and the completeness of a collection rather than in its capacity of interpretation?

Today, the fascination with the palpable, original object has become harnessed in the twin goals of advanced interpretation and effective communication with the museum user. The traditional museum has the potential to become a medium of social communication, in which solutions to contemporary problems can be negotiated. Collecting and the museum have been radically reformed, via innovative collecting practices, including ‘communicational collecting’, the distribution of collections and virtual collections.

*Disappearing cultures  
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objects.*

Instead of knowledge that is supposedly neutral and subject to either indifference or manipulation, collections are starting to serve wisdom, as effective, ethical, and usable knowledge. Our aim should be to create heritage institutions that are a part of a social guidance system, in turn leading to sustainable development and the achievement of shared goals. In the face of the commodification of the planet, collections must reflect what should be the overall objective of the heritage arena: namely, the realisation of the common good. Thus, they will change the very nature of their institutions from vanity and mere knowledge to wisdom (which is moral, responsible knowledge), so that collecting will serve communication and sustainable development.

**HOW COLLECTIONS CAN BE USED AND COMMUNICATED**

The real network that forms the physical substance of an imaginary Museum of Europe, if there should be one, – could be an open structure, cumulative and anticipatory in the developing destiny of Europe. Europe needs to be communicated, and that can be done best if we forget the old structures and their divisions, or, even better, if we derive from them an inspiration for a new strategy. Collections can be used and enriched in their reflecting the common denominators of European identity.

Living in the age of heritage, museums only comprise one part of it, so that what we should take into account is the existence of many heritage institutions that form a single capacity to be used. A network may be a part of the practical implications, but what we are speaking about here is a change of attitude, and a different, advanced professional philosophy. All collections, whether a part of living traditions, museums, archives, knowledge banks or virtual museums, with collectors and individual owners of heritage, – all the places and circumstances of identity recourse, have to be ‘assembled’ and regarded as a common capacity, and as a common resource. Hybrids, as they will all become in various ways, will behave as real and virtual, – depending upon the changing function and respective need that they have to fulfil. They will form a constant pulsating pool, in turn sharing resources and acting according to the concerted action that they will mend.

Once we acquire total insight, we get a chance to play with it, – to use it creatively in order to form responses to the detected needs: of communities (on whatever level) or even of the ‘market’ or whatever our own specific notion of it may be. Our stakeholders will recognise the benefits of the powerful field of counter-active memory, – as the one that will be used as a corrective and adaptive mechanism that is added wisely to the forces of change. They will not oppose the change. They will rather help moderate it into a meaningful quality, ‘down’ to the very individual, who is all too often lost in solitude, ignorance, and despair.

Of course, as our practices demonstrate, it is much easier to create an endless multitude of European projects and associations than to change the approach to heritage institutions as a common, flexible network belonging to the same (mega-profession) as well as the same professional philosophy. Whether we are speaking about new museology, heritology, or mnemosophy<sup>4</sup> will matter rather little the very moment that the majority agrees to pass a certain common training for basically the same job that we all do (in our own specific ways): collect, care for, and communicate public memory. Why would we need a theory for that? We need such because a mega-profession mentality is not going to pop up by itself. It will rather come about by constant training and creating a different professional philosophy. Except for the most notorious innovative examples, most curators, archivists, or librarians still see neither the challenging similarity in their expertise nor the need for re-definition and ascent to another level of professionalism. The latter would also comprise linking themselves to their counterparts in the database sector or among private collectors, or even private or legal subjects in possession of one or more objects of public interest.

## **REDEFINING THE RELATION BETWEEN COLLECTING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNICATION**

Collecting is often circumstantial. If we forget the splendid exceptions, most museum collections do not adequately reflect the title of the museum that contains those bears. They are the result of various historical conditions, of bequests, donations, grants, and acquisitions. However, even if corresponding more to their contents, museums should not interpret collections. They should rather interpret the identity that they are there for, in turn using collections to their best ability. New technologies are increasingly able to assist us in an unprecedented way. To make it an obvious, possible, and unifying task, we first need to regard all the institutions as integral parts of the same sector.

The aim is to enable an effective navigation through data and knowledge bases in order to retrieve the multidisciplinary content when it is necessary. Communication, strategically recognised as the ultimate vehicle of the societal imprint of these institutions, will only then be possible. Multidisciplinarity, even in trans-sectoral and transnational proportions, should lead to dynamic project orientation.

The science *eo ipso* will cease to be the prevailing source of strategic decisions in collecting: instead, they will derive from the scientific study of the needs of the final users of the heritage sector's products. Needless to say, those products will have to be convincingly honest and usable in order to assure their longevity and cost-effectiveness. It is understood that we never see cultural institutions as a profitable sector in a direct sense.

What can protect us best then from a vulgar or suicidal deviation from the development of firm, professional criteria and standards? That is by definition applied by a scientific approach. As museums change their priorities because of their being forced by the research of the market and situation analysis, their demand for scientific research may seemingly suffer. It may well be that quite a number of museums will not be able to maintain their ideal standards of scientific research. In some cases, it will be enough to make a better division of labour and in others to partly outsource the job, counting on natural partners, such as institutes and universities. Solutions like this, rather painful and undesired for the present specialists of academic disciplines who are working as curators, may seem a powerful tool for future, trained and self-conscious museologists. The latter will understand that collecting will be a matter of ever new deals, policies, and strategies. Commonly managed dislocated storages and care, pools and networks that will include other owners of heritage objects and information, such as legal bodies, corporations, communities, and even individuals, will form the future cumulative collection, sparing thereby the resources and adding to the versatility of the programme.

Collections will be subdued by way of a shift of significance from the original objects to an interpretive inventory. With new multimedia, 3D images and, in the near future with holographic images, into which the users will be able to enter in a literal sense and metaphorically, – we face challenges to originality and authenticity that must, and certainly will, change us. The museums of original objects and that precious, almost fetishist touch will never disappear, but will shift towards a more subtle poetic, artistic language. Public memory institutions, museums included, will change by addition, not by reducing their potential. Their collections will decrease in their particular importance, whereas their *right* to a certain theme or heritage will grow. This will lead to an array of extremely creative para-museal establishments. Copies and reconstructions on the spots that have ‘the right’ and still bear the potential of ‘*genius loci*’ will increasingly be a legitimate practice. Parallel to it, their obligation to the community or a group that they are responsible to, will count more seriously. ‘Value for money’ will be universally hated by heritage practitioners, but new professionals, as they will emerge, will take up the challenge so as to transform museums into the proverbial laps of ancestors, where nice and horrible stories will be told in a variety of impressive and convincing ways, – a communication and the appropriate expression that are formed at the creative confluence of curatorial, scientific expertise, and artistic creation.

We shall constantly question ourselves as to whose past we document and communicate in trying to be socially responsible. In political correctness and honesty, shall we have to be able to say as to whose interests are reflected in our collections and what we are doing with them? This will bring forth the redefining of collecting along multiple lines:

- Conceptual: Product or process? Object or concept? Far past or immediate past included? We shall incline ourselves to collecting that will be able to show the processes more, and that will reveal the concepts beyond the physicality of the objects and draw the past as close to us as possible.
- Proprietary: Who is the true, natural owner? Taxpayers? Yes, but the common good shall define collecting as serving democracy and properly reflecting it. Collections of the powerful and their values will become history.
- Informational: Heritage is information, in character and spread. This being the basic fact, we shall do away with the present limits: no matter in which form, where from or what, – information will count in order to form a ‘meme’, units of memory to be communicated.



- Professional: ‘De-professionalisation’ as a policy of the total museum, will simply mean that we shall adopt the language of life, will constantly re-define and re-conceptualise our institutions in order to adjust to the changing circumstances and ever new needs. This will include, to the extent possible, all of our working processes, collecting included.
- Organisational: Co-ordination, pools, re-distribution, new partnerships, – all that along the changing lines of interest, and as a constant giving and return. Fifty marble busts deposited in the eternal darkness of the basement museum storage will be better off than in any public space. We shall judge the balance of risk and ‘profit’ differently.
- Intentional: What is the final use of the material, institutions, working process, and actions? Common good. Ennobled present and safe future. The method can only be one, – that of a corrective and adaptive nature, assisting thus the quality of the inevitable change.

In this respect, the entire memory collected comprises component collections that may be placed and used by particular interests, but becomes a unified resource at the highest level of practice and by the most general theory that explains them as occupations of an imaginary, but rather certain, mega-profession. Collections have to be known and evaluated in order to make part of the common resource, which will not care for their proper divisions by theme, medium, ownership, provenance, administration, or whatever. Once in need, they would be called on for temporary exhibitions of three-dimensional objects or imaginary, permanent exhibitions with whatever subject that we might have the need for at the given time.

Different occupational traditions (archives, museums, libraries) may, therefore, merge and be complemented by the immense potential of information and communication technologies in which digitisation makes storage, retrieval, and manipulation a different, astonishing endeavour that not only influences traditional institutions, sometimes at the level of hybrid institutions, but also creates its own variety, – digitally born institutions and collections accordingly. It is not a question of whether we shall face this challenge but rather how shall we turn it into powerful tools of our renewed perspectives.

We are already creating digitally born public memory institutions (such as *Europeana* and *Open Library*), which are a type of composite heritage projects that could function according to the needs, expectations, and resources available. There is an astounding number of institutions, so complex in their nature and some nearly temporary in their processual, pulsating nature that they deny any sort of easy classification. What are they? Museums, documentation centres, heritage centres, archives, social action cen-

tres, libraries, etc.<sup>5</sup> It is hard to tell, and maybe not at all important, because they will change tomorrow following the current life circumstances and the need to closely respond to the changing needs of their community or target group.

### **WHOSE CULTURE SHOULD COLLECTIONS REPRESENT?**

All cultures will have their practiced traditions as emanations of living heritage, their collections in public memory institutions will be accumulated evidence for communicating their heritage, and other public and private subjects as well as the ‘mnemosphere’ will be the gigantic mega brain as a result, and as a reflection of their nature. Therefore, we may only question if this is carried out in a satisfactory way, or re-consider the situation upon some analysis. If the conclusion is that imperfections would have to be dealt with, then even present collections may make part in the problem. A trained professional from the heritage field would be able to detect whether some heritage is represented correctly or adequately. With identities, it is more difficult, but, then again, a trained person would know that heritage can be shared, but identity cannot. Far from wanting to complicate the matter, the claim should be clear: professionalism.

The occupations within the domain of public memory will have to (constantly) redefine their mission. Many will rightfully rely upon their historic image, some will have to return to the primary motives of their founders, and others will have to re-invent themselves altogether. The variety of cases is enormous, and so is their position and responsibility within. Therefore, there is no one recipe. In general, conceiving a mission statement for each museum and revising it every five to ten years will be a good method to understand oneself within the changing circumstances. Who are the stakeholders, what is the public, who are the users and non-users, what are the needs that are the reasonable professional agenda of the institution? Some societies have changed and so should their institutions. No change should be aggressive so that it may happen as an adjustment or through an addition (of a new institution, wing, collection, set of activities, etc.). A community having become multiethnic has to deal with that fact even in their public memory institutions.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 We are always exposed to such a process, however. The historical time for this anomaly was especially the process of forming nation states and issuing national identities, but any branding effort will always challenge our integrity in evaluating heritage.
- 2 ...which is, in fact, a democratic procedure, devoid of credible information and turned into a media show where nobody discusses the merit of things but rather the tittle-tattle about candidates, – often financed and orchestrated by power groups, whether domestic or foreign.
- 3 Any societal project is based upon a vision, but liberal capitalism does not seem to have any ideology, however unattainable, that would guide us. Therefore, outside of a broad concept of humanist ethics, we seem to have no other recourse.
- 4 Šola, T. (1997) *Essays on Museums and their Theory – Towards the Cybernetic Museum*, Helsinki: The Finnish Museums Association.
- 5 See <http://www.ns-dokumentationszentrum-muenchen.de/zentrum>; <http://www.museenkoeln.de/ns-dok/>.

**TELLING 'ANOTHER' STORY:  
WESTERN MUSEUMS AND THE CREATION OF  
NON-WESTERN IDENTITIES**

Contemporary museums are 'among the most successful leisure venues in the world' (Falk 2009: 21). At the same time, they are cultural forums, where people's [hi]stories (understood both as reconstructed pasts and events) can be discussed in informal and public ways, and where personal memories are materialised and shared, through collections (Pearce 1998). This is particularly true when museum exhibitions are concerned with local communities and their history; indeed, museums and their collections become a remarkable resource for local communities, which may strengthen their sense of place, shared history, and identity.

The present paper is based upon the idea of Western museums as informal cultural forums. Specifically, it is concerned with Western museums, non-Western collections and the formation of local identity. I will argue that the formation of cultural identity can happen when a group engages (with museum collections) through their collective memories and [hi]stories; through objects and by providing opportunities for recollection and remembering, museums can capture and exhibit the most transitory, precarious and even difficult aspects of human life (Chen 2007).

I will assert that contemporary Western museums can be considered as places where both memory and history contribute to the process of remembering and identity formation, through objects, in a public and accessible way. In addition, I will underline the importance of museum collections in relation to community cohesion and to the re-definition and 'preservation' of different cultural identities in the current British social and cultural context.

## **CONTEMPORARY WESTERN MUSEUMS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORY AND MEMORY**

In order to set the framework for the discussion, I would like first to define the concepts of 'history' and 'memory'. In the context of this paper, 'history' and 'memory' are considered as two complementary and yet different concepts; they are two matching aspects of the cultural process of remembering and the one can implicate the other, without excluding it. Therefore, although bearing in mind their substantial differences, I intend to acknowledge the way that these differences can contribute to a more complete recollection, vision and representation of past events and object interpretation.

By and large, history as a discipline is based on written evidence of a pragmatic and often chronological description, 'constructed by a historian [a sort of re-teller], located at some considerable distance – ... both personal and temporal - from the events or epoch being narrativized' (Gable and Handler 2000: 238). On the other hand, memory is mainly based on oral accounts and sources (which may include folklore) and presents a more personal and direct connection between the individual, events and objects; as Frisch points out, memory is 'living history, the remembered past that exists in the present' (Frisch 1990: xxiii). A further and conventional difference between history and memory is that history is considered to have a mainly academic connotation, in opposition to memory, which is the mere account of 'personally experienced events' and, therefore, does not have a primary, academic nature (Gable and Handler 2000: 238). However, by looking at events (and the objects that may symbolise them), both from an academic, historical perspective and from a 'memory perspective', we can gain not only a deeper insight into their historical and social context, but we can also stimulate a cultural awareness of them.<sup>1</sup> As for instance, in the case of the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, where, throughout the three galleries ('Africans before Slavery'; 'Enslavement and the Middle Passage'; 'Legacy'), slavery is presented through objects and peoples' memories, not only as being a part of British history but also as a historical and social set of events that have led to a shared contemporary cultural heritage, in terms of stories, music, carnivals, and local traditions.

The museum, through its collections, [hi]stories and attached memories, stimulates the awareness of historical facts (e.g. how and why slavery happened; how it was terminated and what its legacy is), but also aims to strengthen the identity of the British black community and encourage awareness and desire to pass onto future generations the memory of a past that should not be forgotten but rather remembered in order to be avoided. In this museum, history has taken the form of personal memories (e.g. the memory of an ex-slave; the memory of a Black British person currently living in Britain and whose ancestors were slaves), which 'can illuminate how

individuals, ethnic groups, political parties, and cultures shape and re-shape [through time] their identities – as known to themselves and to others' (Thelen 1994: 1118).

History and memory not only contribute to the general knowledge of the past, but in socially constructed environments (such as museums) they can also help people to engage with their own past, stories, identity and historical heritage in order to develop a better understanding of the present; indeed, as Eviatar Zerubavel explains 'like the present, the past is to some extent also part of a social reality that, while far from being absolutely objective, nonetheless transcends our own subjectivity and it is shared by others around us' (Zerubavel 1999: 81).

In museums, in order to bridge 'the strictly personal and the absolutely universal' histories and memories, the narratives (of events, of collections) should be made accessible and consumable by a wider public, who can then freely relate to and contribute to it in a more practical/effective way (Frisch 1990; Zerubavel 1999). However, how effectively are museums bridging personal and universal memories and histories, especially when they are dealing with non-Western groups and non-Western collections?

Between 1984 and 1992, the French historian Pierre Nora led a collaborative project, which examined the concepts of the French nation, nationalism, national identity, as well as the relationship between history and memory.<sup>2</sup> Since the outset of his work, Nora denounced a discontinuity between the past and memory: this discontinuity was determined by social conditions and was emphasised by 'an increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a past that is gone for good' (Nora 1989: 7).

However, over the past twenty-five years, Nora noticed that 'every country, every social, ethnic or family group has undergone a profound change in the relationship it traditionally enjoyed with the past' (Nora 2002: 1); the respect for the past has been interlaced with a sense of belonging; the collective consciousness has become a more conscious expression of the individual self-awareness. In the context of this change, 'history' and 'memory' may appear to be in fundamental opposition; this is because memory 'is life, borne by living societies', while history is a deliberately fabricated reconstruction of what is past, and what is no longer (Nora 1989; Nora and Kritzman 1996). In addition, Nora believes that, in contemporary society, every social group redefines 'its identity through the revitalisation of its own history' and not through its memory; as a consequence, there is very little memory left, which has been eradicated, substituted or even manipulated by history (Nora 1989: 15).

**Museums can provide  
the social framework  
for an effective and  
interactive sharing of  
historical consciousness  
and collective memories.**

Therefore, in order to keep some traces of 'original' memory, society collects it through organised images, speeches, and any visible signs, including in our case, museum exhibitions. However, these 'collections of memory' are too artificial and definitely not spontaneous, and there is a need to rely 'entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image' (Nora 1989: 13). Contemporary societies, indeed, have created an 'industry' of memory, which pretend to keep records of the past in the unpromising attempt of recalling and re-evoking the 'lost experience which once attached to them' (Benton and Cecil 2010: 21).<sup>3</sup> Consequently, since memory has to rely on materiality, its 'repetition'/recollection and 'transmission' also need to happen in material, three-dimensional places.

Within this context, it is legitimate to ask how non-Western collections in Western museums contribute to the understanding of the relationship between history and memory and, more specifically, to what extent non-Western collections in Western museums can trigger accurate memories of a shared past and cultural heritage.

Non-Western collections, in the West, are part of a difficult past; generally speaking, they are the result of Western colonisation, in non-Western countries. Such objects have been brought to the West, to Europe, as trophies or looted items and have become symbols of religious missions, political campaigns or imposed labour – as for instance many of the objects displayed in the galleries of the International Slavery Museum. For centuries, non-Western objects have been displayed as curiosities; they have been studied as typological specimens that could shed light on the progress of human thought; they have been appreciated as intriguing pieces of primitive art and the perception of non-Western people has been ‘saturated by fantastic notions of exotic and bestial... people’ (Scott 2007: 2; Nzegwu 2000).

If we consider, for instance, African collections in Western museums, African objects have been (and often still are) at the core of the debate ‘Art or Artefact?’, with the answer depending on the perspective (artistic or anthropological) adopted in the situated cultural Western hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> Often, in museums in Britain, African material culture is exhibited in displays that emphasise the artistic component of objects (as for instance in the Sainsbury Galleries at the British Museum, London or the African Worlds Gallery at the Horniman Museum, London) belonging to cultural groups frozen in time and space. This art-centred interpretation, furthermore, flattens the African groups’ cultural diversity and distinctiveness into general, Pan-African, broad categories – as for example ‘African Masks’ or ‘African pottery’ (Catalani 2009). Steven Conn considers this approach as not ideal, but it is ‘at least a truce in the political fights over non-Western objects in museums. In fact – Conn continues – in reclassifying objects from anthropology to art, the assumption is that we, as Westerners, will appreciate both the objects and the makers of those objects in the way that we value our own history and traditions’ (Conn 2009: 37). Indeed, once such objects have been moved from their original context and relocated in a new environment (as in a museum), they become part of the shared cultural heritage of the new, hosting society. However, going back to the focus of our discussion (how non-Western collections in Western museums contribute to the understanding of the relationship between history and memory), it is possible to state that it is the ‘voice’ given to collections that transforms individual memories into collective [hi]stories: ‘the notion of a collective memory [in fact] implies a past that is not only commonly shared but also jointly remembered.... By helping to ensure that an entire mnemonic community will come to remember its past together, as a group, society affects not only what and who we remember but also when we remember it’ (Zerubavel 1999: 97). The next section of this paper, therefore, will consider the voice that should be given to collections and the process of identity formation in the Western museums.



## CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND THE MUSEUM

In the context of identity construction, museums are particularly interesting because of their nature. Western museums, in fact, are artificial, educational, recreational institutions, in a continuously changing world (Pearce 1998). Throughout centuries, museums have 'evolved' and reshaped their nature and, especially in the twenty-first century, museums are linked 'more and more to civic identity and economic development' (Conn 2009: 56). The core ideas of 'educational' and 'curatorial' institutions are always two pivotal features of contemporary museums; however, what characterises contemporary museums is a strong emphasis on the concepts of access (e.g. physical, intellectual) and social inclusion, as well as an emphasis on the importance of the source communities, identity and their role in the interpretation process. Furthermore, the concepts of source communities and identity are very important, because they emphasise the interplay between the [hi]story and memory of cultural groups as well as the leading role of those groups in the interpretation process.

The term 'originating communities' or 'source communities' refers both to 'those groups in the past when [museum] artefacts [now on display] were collected as well as to their descendents today' (Peers and Brown 2003: 2). Generally, in the past the term 'source communities' was used to refer to indigenous peoples in the Americas and in the Pacific; however, due to the multicultural and multiethnic nature of contemporary Western societies, the term is now applied to every cultural group from whom museums have collected artefacts, including: local communities, diasporic groups, immigrant groups, refugees, and religious groups (Peers and Brown 2003). In the contemporary museum scene, these terms are also very important because, as Laura Peers and Alison Brown explain, 'the concept recognises that artefacts play an important role in the identities of the source community members, that source communities have legitimate moral and cultural stakes or forms of ownership in museum collections, and that they may have special claims, needs or rights of access to material heritage held by museums' (Peers and Brown 2003: 2). It is in this way that source communities are socially accredited for an authoritative knowledge of their objects. Additionally, the idea of museums shifts from an understanding of a monolithic, academic institution towards a more socially-oriented custodian of a shared cultural heritage.

Therefore, contemporary collaborations (between museums and source communities) are based, or in principle should be based, on an equal commitment and shared authority towards the material interpreted and represented and not only on a mere consultation on terminology or geographical provenance. For instance, let us consider African diasporic groups, currently living in the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> African diasporic groups constitute an aspect

of the historical and cultural memory of traditional African cultural heritage, outside Africa. Their knowledge is an essential social resource that can strengthen the cultural potential of collections and enable (inside and outside museums) the mediation and transmission of cultural heritage between individuals (Western and non-Westerners) and a shared experience (Appadurai 2007). As a consequence, many exhibitions – displaying traditional African objects – are now done in consultation with the local African community. This means that, increasingly, there is a shared commitment ‘to an evolving relationship between a museum and a source community, [a relationship which] involves the sharing of skills, knowledge and the power to produce something of value for both parties’ (Peers and Brown 2003: 2).

More frequently, members of the African Diaspora are involved in the process of object identification and, to a certain extent, in the one of interpretation; objects, indeed, need to be defined, not only in terms of their biographies, but also in terms of their original narratives, which can tell the story of a cultural and social relationship between past and contemporary users (Pearce 1998). In fact, although ‘biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure’ (e.g. in which circumstances the objects arrived in the museum; who was the collector), objects can become culturally and socially relevant only when the memories and [hi]stories attached to them are revealed (Kopytoff 2007: 67). Since 2004, the Manchester Museum (Manchester), for example, has started a project called *Collective Conversations*. Throughout this ongoing project, informal conversations between museum professionals and diverse groups or individuals of local communities (including migrant communities and African groups) were filmed. Participants were asked to talk about some objects from the museum’s collection and also discuss the meanings that they hold for them. Some examples of previous conversations have included: a discussion with the Yorùbá Chief Adelekan on the significance of a Babalawo, a Shango staff and a Gelede Mask, and a conversation with a member of the Manchester Museum Community Advisory Panel on how museum objects can be used to help to relate to different cultures and people.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, through museum collaboration, different source communities maintain their sense of community and assert their social, political, and economic identity and importance in the cultural context that they live. This is because, as Margarita Diaz-Andreu and Sam Lucy have stated, the idea of identity ‘is inextricably linked to the sense of belonging’ (Diaz-Andreu and Lucy 2005: 1). Through ‘identity’, people define themselves as belonging to a specific group and, at the same time, they redefine and reshape the way that they want to be perceived by other groups (Falk 2009). For example, previous research carried out with members of the Yorùbá Diaspora living in Britain and their relationship towards Yorùbá traditional religious objects displayed in museums has shown that the perception and understanding of being

Yorùbá today in a Western society has been affected by implicit, rooted, Christian and postcolonial stereotypes (Catalani 2009). In the new society, diasporic Yorùbá groups have tried to re-define themselves by underlining their 'divine' origins (by calling themselves 'the children of Oduduwa'), by strengthening their tribal pride and by often concealing their religious traditions from Westerners. This attitude has strongly affected the way members of the Yorùbá Diaspora relate to their traditional religious heritage in Western Museums. Actually, the people involved in the research tended to distance themselves, at least on the surface, from their traditional religious objects in order to reinforce their new Christian identity as well as their new social Western identity (Catalani 2009).

For source communities, the access to, and engagement with, their cultural heritage in museums is pivotal (Peers and Brown 2003). This is not only because they can define and consolidate their cultural and social identity within the 'adoptive' social context, but also because they can start to define themselves not only as members of the Diaspora or of an ethnic minority group but mostly as effective citizens of the new cultural community; for instance, not 'Africans in Europe' but Europeans with an African background. Reclaiming, even if only in intellectual terms, the ownership of their cultural material culture is a way to reconcile different cultural groups with a difficult and shared past (e.g. the Western colonial expansion) and legacy; it is a way of establishing fixed referential cultural points through museum collections that then become depositories of encoded generational memories (Parkin 1999; Scott 2007). Museums, therefore, can provide the social framework for an effective and interactive sharing of historical consciousness and collective memories.

However, in relation to the museum interpretative process, it is inevitable that museums and museum exhibitions draw on cultural assumptions as well as on the resources of people who make the exhibitions; the curator's voice, indeed, is still extremely predominant. Furthermore, in museum exhibitions, the choices of what to display or not are made to tell some stories and to ignore others. This interpretative 'selection' is carried out in order to appeal and give voice to a specific source community and unfortunately to neglect another (Karp and Lavine 1991). Additionally, these interpretative selections are very much influenced by the current museum agendas or curators' preferences. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask, notwithstanding the increasing collaborative approaches between museums and source communities, as to whose [hi]stories and memories are really told in the Western museums? I believe museum curators still largely act as the official spokesmen of those [hi]stories and memories, in an inclusive intercultural environment. However, these are the general [hi]stories and memories of the place where the museum is hosted; they are the [hi]stories and memories of the cultural differences and different cultural things displayed; they are narratives that 'contemplate the meanings of continuity and change' (Conn 2009: 19).

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Contemporary museums are full of ordinary and special ‘things’: from our own culture, from distant people, from different periods. However, it is through those ordinary and special things that we, as human beings, express ‘our constant need to re-create our world, constantly reworking, reinterpreting and remaking... our physical surroundings organized by internal narrative’ (Pearce 1997: 2). Furthermore, it is in these powerful, ordinary and special things that people’s histories and memory lay. Throughout this paper, I have been looking at Western museums as social contexts, where the interlacing of memory and history can contribute to inclusive cultural discussions. I have also considered how non-Western groups, by re-claiming an intellectual ownership towards their collections in Western museums through collaboration, can strengthen and shape the process of identity formation within the new, hosting society. Nevertheless, it seems that the official spokespersons of the narratives are still the museum curators. In his novel *The museum of innocence*, the Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuc explains that ‘the power of things inheres in the memories they gather up inside them, and also in the vicissitudes of our imagination, and our memory’ and indeed, museum collections are indeed very powerful things (Pamuc 2009: 324).<sup>7</sup> However, only a joint narrative of the hosting society and of the hosted group can provide a homogenous and complete perspective on a shared heritage and unravel the often forgotten [hi]stories and memories.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Provided that there are enough oral sources available on the topic.
- 2 The original work, *Les lieux de mémoire*, counts seven volumes. The volumes have been published, in French, between 1984 and 1992. However, the English translation (*The Realms of Memory*), counts only three volumes, published between 1984 and 1998.
- 3 ‘Museums, archives, cemeteries, collections, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders – these are boundary stones of another era, illusions of eternity’ and they are all part of the memory industry (Nora 1989: 12).
- 4 With the term ‘African objects’ I refer mainly to sub-Saharan African objects.
- 5 The terms ‘diasporic groups’ define dispersed ethnic groups, living outside their homeland (Tölöyön 2003).
- 6 Due to the positive responses of the local community, the project has developed into a permanent film studio, *The Contact Zone*, which was opened back in September 2007 with a ceremony led by a Yorùbá chief. The videos of the *Collective Conversations* are available online on the Manchester Museum website: <http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/community/collectiveconversations/>.
- 7 Orhan Pamuc received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006.

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**A DEAD ROM IN A PHOTOGRAPH**  
**- A CASE OF CULTURAL MOBILITY**  
**OF MUSEUM COLLECTIONS**

In museums, the difficulty of interpreting and managing cultural differences usually comes up in discussion regarding non-European cultures or recent immigrants. Many Europeans tend to forget that on our continent, well rooted in our societies, centuries-old ethnic and cultural minorities live, about whom the majority population is ignorant, even though these minorities are a part of everyday life. The most striking example of this is the Roma people, who have lived all over Europe since the Middle Ages and still remain virtually unknown.

In 2007, the Luxembourg City History Museum took the task of deconstructing the petrified myths and prejudices about the Roma and disseminating knowledge about their history and culture. The result was an extensive exhibition with a deliberately provocative title 'Watch out, Gypsies! The History of a Misunderstanding'. It was a success and created much discussion. As the Roma were also a subject of current debate in Finland, the Helsinki City Museum presented an adaptation of the exhibition in 2009. By preparing this exhibition in collaboration with the Finnish Roma, it provided an interesting lesson about the cultural challenges of showing Roma objects, and especially photographs, in a museum.

**PURITY – KEY VALUE OF THE ROMANI CULTURE**

The division into the pure and the impure is central in the Romani culture. Cleanliness practices have an effect on everything: living, housekeeping, eating, and dressing. Cleanliness and the modesty that is attached to it define the relationships between men and women, and especially older and younger people. The purity customs are particularly strict concerning Romani women of fertile age. These customs only apply to the Roma, so the majority population is not even expected to follow them.

As a Rom grows older, he or she becomes pure. The basis of Romani social customs is respecting all Roma who are older than oneself and protecting their purity. One must address old people respectfully, and one must not be indecently dressed in their presence. The elderly are the first to eat and are always given the best place to sit or sleep. A young Rom will never take a place above an older one, for example, upstairs.

Death is impure and corrupts everything that is in touch with it. For this reason, the personal belongings, for example clothes, of a deceased Rom are destroyed. No Rom wants to live in a home where someone has passed away. This does not mean, however, that the Roma would not inherit their parents' home. It is customary for old people to give their valuables, such as jewellery, as gifts to their children and grandchildren, who in turn cherish them as dear mementos.

The memory of passed away elders is treasured through photographs, to which the same purity rules apply as to living people. The photos of the deceased are kept in the kitchen, the purest and most valued room of the home. The photos of younger people are never hung above the photos of the elders. As the feet are considered impure, beds are placed so that the legs do not point to photos of the deceased. A photo album is never placed on a chair or on the floor, because these are also impure.

### **ROMANI PURITY PRACTICES IN A MUSEUM**

Knowing that the Romani purity customs are linked with old objects and photographs, it seems at first sight very difficult or even impossible to create a museum collection about Romani culture. However, since the 1970s, Finnish museums have collected numerous Romani items, mostly clothes, lace, and jewellery, which are usually acquired through purchase. There are also some photographs, mainly as the result of documentation projects that have been organised by the museums and partly as donations from the Roma. These collections have been treated and used as any museum objects.

When the Helsinki City Museum was preparing the exhibition about the Roma, great care was taken in collaborating with the Finnish Romani organisations and respecting the Romani customs. The Roma were consulted about several details of the exhibition, and they also checked the manuscript. Before the opening, a group of Roma was invited to see the exhibition in order to avoid cultural mistakes that might offend Romani visitors. This was the first time that we realised that the main problem was the fact that the exhibition venue, the Hakasalmi Villa from the 1840s, has two floors.

***Respect and trust***

***can bridge***

***a cultural borderline.***

We were planning to place an old photo of a Finnish Romani family on the lower floor of the villa. Seeing that, one member of the group said that she could not go upstairs because of the photo. As mentioned, younger Roma, especially fertile women, should never be above older Roma. Now, we learned that this rule also applies to photographs of deceased Roma – at least according to some Roma. Even though the other Romani women in the group were ready to go upstairs and encouraged her, she was uncompromising. We decided to alter our plans and found a new place for the photograph upstairs.

This episode made it clear that, in practice, there are many differences in the interpretation and adherence to purity customs between the different Romani groups in Europe and also within our country. For instance, the Roma in Northern Finland are much stricter than their southern kinsmen. As there are neither rulebooks nor authorities on proper Roma life, the families and even individuals interpret the traditions according to their own feelings, which of course creates conflicts within the Romani community.

Later on, this ambiguity became even more obvious as we faced a genuine cultural clash. We had received from the collections of the National Board of Antiquities some old photographs of Finnish Roma. These were used in the exhibition book and brochure, which were available at the entrance, on the lower floor of the villa. An elderly Romani woman from Northern Finland visited the exhibition and found to her surprise a photo of her passed away father in the brochure. She was shocked and furious and said that her heart broke as any young Romani woman could step over her father. She accused our Romani guide and demanded that every single copy of the brochure and the book must be immediately taken upstairs. She also called several notable Roma and raised a ruckus over the exhibition.

Our Romani guide – an elderly woman of southern origin – was astonished by this reaction. She could have never imagined that someone would be offended by a photo printed in a book or a brochure. Logically thinking, it is



impossible to control the location of every single copy, as they were printed in thousands, so any photo might easily end up in many impure places and situations. But, as our guide said, this had nothing with logic to do. Somewhat reluctantly, we removed the brochures and books upstairs – and hid some of them near the entrance desk because selling the book would have been impossible otherwise. As a precaution, we also removed all the remaining very old photographs of the Finnish Roma from the lower floor. The bad feelings were settled and the rest of the exhibition's duration went on without further conflicts.

### **RESPECT AND TRUST CAN BRIDGE A CULTURAL BORDERLINE**

Our case is an interesting example of the challenges of documenting and presenting a culture that is different from our own. The Romani notion of photographs is very difficult to adapt into present-day museum practices. Even if a museum is most willing to respect the Romani traditions, it might prove impossible to store and exhibit the photographs – even those printed in books or brochures – always on top floor. Today, as increasingly more historical photographs are digitised, published on the Internet, and watched on whichever computer screen all around the world, the idea of controlling the exact physical location of a photograph has become quite absurd.

Inevitably, a Romani photograph crosses a cultural borderline as it is taken into a museum collection. It loses its position as a dear and highly respected memento of a passed away ancestor, and becomes a collection item among hundreds of thousands of similar ones, as an example of an exotic culture, which is meant to be exposed to people who are unfamiliar with the set of values linked with it. Understandably, this hurts the Roma. They are not accustomed to museums, which are rather marginal, actually almost unknown, to them. For them, photographs are very intimate containers of memory, not impersonal historical documents with a more general meaning and importance, as museum curators tend to see them. In a way, this could be interpreted as a form of cultural exploitation of a minority.

Meanwhile, the Finnish Roma have become aware of the rapid change of their culture. During the past 50 years, the Roma have abandoned their former nomadic lifestyle in the countryside and settled in urban environments. This has caused a break in the transmission of tradition from the older generations to the younger. Subsequently, the Finnish language has replaced the Romani language, old Romani songs and tales have been substituted by commercial popular culture, and memories of the people's past are fading. At the same time, the education and organisation level of the Roma has improved in Finland, and they have begun to see their history and cul-

ture as a positive source of identity, something to be respected and preserved by themselves – and others. This has finally led to claims of founding a Finnish Romani museum and writing an academic history of the Finnish Roma.

The eventual founding of a Romani museum necessarily involves close cooperation with curators representing the majority population, as there are no Romani historians or professional museum workers in Finland thus far. Respect and trust are quintessential to this work. In order to pass their heritage into the hands of the curators, the Roma must feel secure with them and be convinced of their consciousness of the Romani customs and values. Nevertheless, even the most respectful approach will mean further acculturation of the Roma. Creating a Romani museum is welcomed by the Roma as a symbol of cultural equality and esteem, but that project will definitely also transfer the values of the majority to the Roma. Even in a Romani museum, their objects and photographs will be given new meanings and roles that are different from their customary ones. It is hoped that good compromises will be found between Romani traditions and modern museum practices. Maybe a positive, non-exploitative model for the cultural mobility of museum collections can be found this way.

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**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC<sup>1</sup>**  
**– THE USE AND ACCESSIBILITY**  
**OF THE OBJECT FOR THE**  
**BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC**

The basis for this article is the oft-repeated, to some extent polemical, definition according to which a collection can only be considered a museum when it has an audience; otherwise, the collection is a store. At first glance, this view appears to somewhat ignore the manner in which more items are added to such ‘stores’ and how they are managed, and focuses more on the presentation of the store contents to outsiders. The perspective concentrates on collection displays and exhibitions, interpretation of artworks and the availability of information. Over the course of time, however, the notions of museum audiences and of their roles have changed, and, as appears later in this article, the audience’s focus eventually infiltrates even museum store contents and the fundamental questions related to collections.

**USABILITY OF COLLECTIONS**

When discussing the use and usability of museum collections, audiences are often referred to in this article as ‘museum users’. The selection of this term requires some explanation. There are differing connotations to various appellations, such as visitor, guest, viewer, learner and customer, and these appellations are an indication of the relationship between a museum and its audiences. ‘Viewer’ positions the visitor as a passive receiver, and ‘audience’ also emphasises the reception of offerings by the visitors (etymologically, the word ‘audience’ refers to hearing). A ‘guest’ has come to a museum to enjoy him or herself, a ‘customer’ is a person to whom services are being offered, and a ‘consumer’ is expected to use the products and services provided by a museum and to pay for them. In discussions in English, it is quite common to refer to museum visitors as ‘learners’ but in many other countries the term is seldom used by persons other than museum educators. Consid-

ering museum visitors learners gives them a more active and independent role than when associated with the foregoing appellations. It emphasises their independence in constructing meanings and in associating their observations to their life experiences, particularly when learning objectives are set by the learners themselves. Learning in a museum is supported by the concrete presence of items and artworks as well as by the experiential nature of learning.

Connotations to the word 'user' introduce an even wider scale of action; they depict museum visitors as active participants who independently determine the agenda of their museum visits and who also affect what happens in the museum. The user constructs his or her museum experience from the available ingredients and also contributes to the programme.

It is, perhaps, appropriate to point out that what is meant by *using* here does not refer to the kind of instrumental use of museums that seeks external benefits such as an increase in tourism or economic growth. Participating in culture is about personal agendas and spiritual enrichment – learning in the broad sense – and exchanging ideas, producing or affecting something, even about disturbing or protesting.

As regards collections and their use, there may be various interests and notions in society and among museum staff on the purpose and target group of collections. Public museums are historically bound to the state (nowadays also to smaller administrative units) and may be assigned, for example, to serve as a representative of the culture or identity of their area or nation. Museums are also closely associated with academia that has its requirements as regards the scientific basis for the collecting and the presentation of collections, of which these requirements vary for different types of museums. Moreover, contemporary financial and marketing perspectives put pressure on museums to maximise income and the number of visitors.

Different viewpoints imply varied notions on the possibilities of an audience to use collections. These notions place constraints on what the audience can be regarded as being allowed to do in a museum. From a viewpoint strongly emphasising scholarly expertise, the only people entitled to use museum collections are those with the appropriate professional education, while museum visitors are merely regarded as an audience. A more community-oriented viewpoint, on the contrary, will stress the audience's right of ownership with respect to the cultural heritage.

Assigning visitors with diverse roles also requires various kinds of activities and services from a museum. Learning is related to the notion of a museum as a learning environment, which requires that the various learning styles and learning goals of various individuals be taken into account. It is also nec-

essary to knowingly create facilities and situations that support learning. This will not necessarily happen if visitors are regarded as mere viewers. Furthermore, the notion of visitors as users is a part of regarding museums as a public space. It emphasises the role of museums as publicly funded institutions that serve all members of society. This viewpoint raises questions about how well the activities of museums cover various groups in society, and how well their voices are being heard in museums. The various forms of being a user of museums will be further discussed in the last part of the present article.

The accessibility of museum collections for the audience depends not only on the foregoing ideological stances, but also on highly practical aspects. Even when there is a mutual understanding that it is permissible for the audience to use the museum collections and that this is desirable, there are various practical obstacles ahead. The essential question is how people who do not work in a museum can learn about the museum collections and get their hands – both figuratively and literally – on the objects that are hidden in stores. Museum professionals have their methods for managing collections-related information, but can these be made available to the audience? Moreover, should they be? Furthermore, what opportunities are there for people to respond and work on their ideas based on the information that they have gained? These questions are discussed in the next chapter along with the notion of accessibility.

## **DEVELOPING ACCESS – FOR THE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION, STUDY, AND ENJOYMENT<sup>2</sup>**

The primary contact for the audience with museum collections are the items displayed in museums. Since only a fraction of the items possessed by a museum can be accommodated in a display at a time, one may ask what kind of idea of the museum collections that the museum visitors will get. Visitors do not necessarily even pay attention to the origins of the item that they are looking at, whether it is from the museum's own collections or on loan from elsewhere, but simply focus on what is being displayed. It requires special interest in the subject matter from the viewer to start considering the collection as a whole. What contributes to the viewer becoming interested in and familiar with the topic is the easy accessibility of information.

### **Digitalisation**

Digitalisation, which indeed has had an enormous impact on museum work as a whole, also opens unparalleled opportunities for the audience to retrieve information. The possibility to browse the contents of collections on-

line provides a better and more up-to-date idea of the extent and the entirety of collections than any printed catalogue.

Digitalisation of collections has been and is one of the great challenges for museums in the twenty-first century. It requires significant financial investment in both equipment and staff. These expenses are an addition to the costs of conventional museum work. Governments have subsidised the digitalisation of cultural heritage in many countries through specific programmes and other means of support. Besides for the resources, there are challenges in developing and selecting the appropriate and sustainable technology: it is not enough to develop databases, operating systems, interfaces and image formats once and for all. They must be continuously updated in order for them to remain usable as technology evolves.

From the viewpoint of the audience, the most important aspects after resolving the issues of finance and technology are the usability of information and i.e. copyright questions that restrict this usability. Museums use sophisticated systems to manage their collections and to structure information. These systems must include details of the documentation, origin, location, condition and value of items and artworks, together with descriptions for internal use. This information will not all necessarily directly serve users who do not work in the museum, and some of it cannot even be made available to the public. As many systems for public use are nevertheless based on such collection management systems, filtering information through various protocols for use on the museum website, the challenge is to restructure professional classification and management methods to be suitable for public use.

Indexing, i.e. content description<sup>3</sup> is very important from the viewpoint of the audience. Museum professionals who are familiar with their collections can find a certain artwork using an artist name or inventory number, for example, but for outsiders a search using just the name of the artist, or an object is too narrow. User-friendly collection searches are essentially intuitive: without knowing a single name or genre, a user is able to find information on art by searching for various themes, subjects and keywords.

The Tate Gallery (UK) has been developing digital access to its collection through its wide-ranging *Insight* project. The outcome of this project: the Tate Collection website provides a way to approach the museum collection via certain themes and various sub-themes. The website also offers partly game-like packages of varying structure. The collections web service of the Finnish National Gallery offers its users a tool that not only searches works by artist, period or category, but is primarily also an engine for multidimensional searches by keyword and by keyword combinations.

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Online services enable users to obtain information on museum collections regardless of geographical boundaries. The museums, however, follow their own guidelines in publishing their collections online: there are differences with respect to the information that is made available as well as in browsing options, search criteria and the manner in which search results are presented.<sup>4</sup> The scope and standard of the collections that a museum publishes also depend on its resources. Copyright issues are another factor that limits the ability to present and distribute images. This means that published online collections are not directly compatible.

The dream of merging the digitalised European cultural heritage into a single service has persisted for years, however. Broad agreement on common principles and practices will only be achieved if decisions are taken at a sufficiently high level. The goal for *Europeana 1.0*, a co-operative project of universities, research institutions and content producers led by the European Union, is to create a Europe-wide digital portal linking together libraries, archives, scientific and cultural institutions. The portal already has hundreds of partners and content producers and there are millions, and there will soon be tens of millions, of records in the database.

The basic idea for *Europeana* is to provide users with a virtual library offering cultural heritage for browsing and viewing. In a sense, this idea dates back to one presented by John Cotton Dana (1856–1929), an early developer of the concept of a museum, according to which museums are like libraries: reserves available to anyone to use.<sup>5</sup> New technology makes this kind of dream

possible, as all art and information can be encoded into bits. The same system can process text, images and audio material, and can thus combine information from various sources in the same archive of archives.

Europeana is based on open source applications and the opportunities offered by the Semantic Web to combine information from various sources and databases. By using a semantic annotation system, new and better ways are sought for a better understanding of the multilingual information derived from heterogeneous sources and for organising, finding and sharing it. From the viewpoint of users, the key feature is *My Europeana*, which enables users to collect and organise the information that is relevant to them. This kind of variety of usage opportunities, such as customising services to meet personal needs, is vital for the usability of any digital application. Challenges still to be addressed include language and copyright issues.<sup>6</sup>

### Interpretation

The presenting of collections – whether physically in museum halls or virtually online – also involves the interpretation of collections. The person who makes the interpretations has the power to choose, and a great responsibility for how a collection appears to the audience. Usually this power is exercised by the museum staff (there is more on curation later in this article). What is shown and how it is shown depends on the aims and the target audience of the exhibition. Every display includes, in one way or another, an idea of the viewer. As in the digital world, the display of collections in a gallery can be considered from the viewpoint of user-friendliness. A consciously selected and presented exhibition will take into consideration the audience's preliminary knowledge of the items or works, its expectations, needs and learning styles.<sup>7</sup> There is no way to allow for these aspects without audience research and audience participation.

The usability of collections is also affected by all of the information associated with the works, whether online or in a museum. In addition, this interpretation and information is primarily produced by museum professionals, but people from the audience are increasingly invited to participate in the interpretation of collections.

The way objects have been used has a specifically important role when assigning meanings to items with cultural-historical significance. Thus, the experiences and stories of the users are a part of the meaning of items. Great attention has recently been paid to storing intangible heritage<sup>8</sup>. This pertains widely to various fields and institutions of cultural research and museums. The social and aesthetic conventions, rituals and traditions, skills and knowledge, and the symbolic and metaphorical meanings of objects create context for them and help us to understand their meanings. Users provide a



certain kind of hidden knowledge about the objects, and such historical information that museums and academically oriented researchers otherwise cannot uncover.

Narrativity has also been rather common in the interpretation of objects in other ways. Several museums have started projects in which user stories are associated with objects. The stories may concern the history and use of objects and, thus, provide museums with valuable information on their collection. The stories may also be autobiographical memories of viewers that are evoked by the objects. These narratives will thereby support the interpretation of the objects and the development of a personal relationship to the exhibits. Stories from other visitors can give the viewer new perspectives on what they have seen and a broader context, such as the appearance of a similar object or phenomenon in other cultural surroundings.

The Museum of London has been recording the memories and experiences of Londoners since the 1980s (*Life stories and oral history*). The oral-historical collection of the museum contains more than 5,000 hours of recorded interviews and stories. Evidently, the experiences of the residents of the city are an essential part of the museum's collection portraying life in the city and the changes in it. The London Transport Museum is another museum that keeps records of the memories that are associated with its collection. The museum collects these memories continually via its website, where everyone is free to share their memories and read the recollections of others (*Show your memories*).

Industrial design and object design also involve essential factors other than aesthetics and the scope of the display; the experiences of the users of objects and their stories concerning this use have a great significance as well. When it comes to art, we can likewise consider that an artwork does not 'live' as such but what is essential is the reception of the artwork, i.e. its use. Thus, the ways in which viewers understand art and assign meanings to it are an essential part of the content of displays, and this should be appreciated and given space. Emphasising interpretations stresses the notion that a work is not yet complete when it is put on display, but is only assigned a meaning when interpreted by a viewer. Constructing a meaning is, therefore, a process that requires active participation by the viewer.

Interactive technology offers an effective platform for collecting audience contributions. Certain software applications designed for museum use enable visitors to add their personal stories, information and comments to artworks and objects that have been put on display (e.g. Salgado 2009). Museums have used rather distinct methods to distribute this kind of information in displays, but publishing the collection online is one valid choice for the permanent storage and distribution of the information.

Another method of gathering more interpretation contributors is to invite a group of people to examine the collection and make interpretations from their individual viewpoint for other people. Several museums have groups for young people, which organise programmes for their respective age group. These groups meet frequently, work with museum staff and artists, and ponder ways of bringing museum collections to the attention of various audiences and of interpreting the collections to these audiences. *Visual Dialogues*, a programme based on the Tate Gallery's collections, provides the youth groups of regional museums with opportunities to create visual interventions for exhibitions and to design methods and tools that give visitors new perspectives on artworks and opportunities to contribute to the works in one way or another. Centre Pompidou in Paris does this by inviting art schools from various parts of Europe to apply the methods of their art form in order to interpret the museum's collection hangings. As a result of this, the museum arranges evening events at which young artists make proposals for creating connections between various art forms and areas of life.

On a more conceptual level, the participation of the audience in the interpretation process is not restricted to the interpretation of objects in the collection but also concerns interpreting objects *as* a collection. Audience participation in this interpretation process reveals the various ways in which objects and artworks become integral parts of a collection and how a collection is assembled. These various museum narratives can also be processed through curation.

### Curation

Since the audience clearly has a role in interpreting collections in terms of content and information, there is cause to ask whether the audience could also take part in the interpretation of the collection in the role of curator or assistant curator. Many museums have had projects in which outsiders are offered the opportunity to participate in the curation process or otherwise influence the exhibition of collections.

Various exhibitions similar to *People's Choice* have been arranged in museums, often as competitions or polls. Visitors, as part of a larger group, can thus have an impact on which artworks from the collection are put on display. The visitor choice is often made from a range of objects or works pre-selected by the museum staff.

This also applied to the *Love Me or Leave Me* collection display at the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki. The display encompassed the most-discussed works from the history of five years of the museum. The first stage of the display consisted of artworks that were known – based on audience feedback, data collected from museum wardens and audience com-

ments conveyed by discussion guides – to have evoked the strongest reactions of admiration or rage from the audience. Thus, instead of thematic, historical or other similar factors, the preferences of lay visitors and a straightforward ‘like/dislike’ approach were chosen as the basis for assembling the collection display. This approach devolved to the audience part of the defining power of museum professionals. The latter part of the display, *Audience selections*, was completely based on the favourites of the audience. This gave even more concrete form to the ‘curatorship’ of the audience. The most loved and hated examples were selected from a database of 120 artworks stored in *Selector*, an interactive computer. Visitors were allowed both to judge the artworks (‘love me’/‘leave me’) and submit their comments. The purpose was thereby also to urge visitors to explain their selections in writing.<sup>9</sup>

Compared to voting, a more ambitious method of providing lay visitors with access to collections is to invite an outside group to assemble an exhibition of a museum’s collection. Participants in this kind of process will be able to present their personal views and will also gain a complete impression of collections activity and the curation process. For the audience, it is always surprising to see the multitude of activities that go on behind the scenes and to participate in a process that requires them to consider the assemblage and content of collections and their conveyance in a new way. It may in turn be surprising for the museum to realise how much information and ideas the audience may have and how many valid arguments the audience may present.

The Irish Museum of Modern Art has long involved outsiders in the curation of collections. Some of the projects have involved children and youngsters. In the *Come to the Edge* project in 1998 a group of older people were involved (O’Donoghue 2003: 85–86). The group held meetings once a week, initially working for three months with two artists and familiarising themselves with the artworks of the collection through various practical workshops. They then worked with the senior curator responsible for the collections and with the museum educator, studying aspects of assemblage and the curation process. They selected a theme, conducted background research, selected the artworks for the display and participated in the installation of the artworks. They also were in charge of the information presented in the display and participated in writing the text for the catalogue.

In a project organised by Kiasma, the residents of the Kivikko city district curated a display with artworks from Kiasma for the public facilities in their area. In this year-long project, workgroups assembled from the schools, youth club, parish and residents’ association of the area familiarised themselves with the various activities and collections of the museum and, as above, selected the works, wrote introductions for them and ‘hosted’ the artworks and associated events in local facilities.

More informal curation is an ongoing Internet process whereby the online community creates various 'art hangings' from collection websites. The Tate Collection, for example, makes this possible in its Your Collection pages, where users can assemble their personal displays from the online collection and share them with other users.

Access to collection databases is a practical prerequisite for audience participation. Suspicions and resistance within the museum may impose ideological barriers to allowing outsider participation in the work of an institution of specialists. Persistent antagonism between vocational expertise and a more democratic approach still exists in the museum field, even though this has been repeatedly shown to be untenable (e.g. Zolberg 1994: 49–65).

Successful projects show that audiences may have much to offer to museums. It would be peculiar to suggest that museum staff members are the only people who are capable of relevant thinking. Collections deal with subjects that relate, in one way or another, to people's lives and experiences. Therefore, people will obviously have thoughts and opinions on them. Curation by audience may introduce completely new perspectives and also question a museum's interpretations of its collection. Moreover, the opportunity to influence and participate in curation shows that the special knowledge and skills needed in museum work are not so esoteric that they cannot be learned. Such activity thereby gains pedagogical and marketing dimensions.

Besides for curation, the audience may also play a part in adding new items to museum collections. Private donations are one form of this, but a museum can also have more strategic connections to its community. Usually the addition of new works and the maintenance of collections is not visible to the audience, and acquisitions are generally the section of museum activity that is most strictly confined to the museum staff. Nevertheless, a museum may also inform the audience of this work by disclosing the grounds for acquisitions and by publishing its collection policy. The principles for adding artworks can also be disclosed through a discussion of subjects related to donation and providing associated directions.<sup>10</sup>

It is specifically important for museums that collect items related to a certain area, group or community that there are experts in the relevant subject themes in the body that decides on acquisitions. The *Re-assessing What We Collect* programme that began at the Museum of London in 2004, aims 'to engage proactively with London's diverse communities and to develop the Museum's collections to reflect and record their heritage'. At the same time, it recontextualises the collection objects and their history.

Ecomuseums, which operate in practical ways as a part of their community, are a case in point.<sup>11</sup> The staff of these kinds of museums may be considered

to focus solely on serving and advising local people, while the members of the community are responsible for decision-making. On the other hand, by referring to this kind of thinking one could argue that all museums are owned by their communities and that ideas, processes and people are as much a part of the content of museum services as the items in a collection. This provides a further argument for the notion that the cultural heritage and the institutions that are responsible for the preserving it should be open to people at all levels.

### **DEVELOPING NEW AUDIENCES – IN THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT <sup>12</sup>**

The foregoing discussion examines various methods whereby museums open their collections for the education and enjoyment of the audience and enable the audience to take part in museum life and activities. Museums have recognised, however, that not all people will spontaneously respond to the opportunities offered by museums, but that museums must be active in contacting the public. Collections may also be used as a tool for expanding the audience base and making the audience more committed. Reaching new, non-traditional audiences requires perseverance, and working with a collection gives continuity to this work that otherwise is often based on temporary displays and single customised projects.

The basis for reaching these ‘new audiences’ and the related community or outreach projects lies in the realisation that museum audiences do not represent the demographic structure of the surrounding society. Even if the basic idea was for a museum to belong to everyone, people do not, in practice, embrace their entitlement to culture: visitor surveys repeatedly indicate that museum services are primarily used by comfortably well off, educated people. Groups distinguished by their absence include various minorities, disabled, ethnic and cultural groups, elderly people and the socio-economically deprived. Thus, museums are a reflection of the prevailing structures of society: the people who feel closest to museums are those in a strong societal position. The mere existence of museums that are open to all does not automatically bring people inside. People will only become museum service users by growing accustomed to using them.

Why do museums and cultural institutions evoke feelings of belonging and identification in some people and feelings of being an outsider in others? Pierre Bourdieu explains this phenomenon as a situation that derives from the various layers and fragmentation of society: people’s self-image and *habitus* and the structure of society are more or less mutually compatible. When they do not match, people feel that they are ‘in the wrong place’

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(Bourdieu 1993). This happens when people with no knowledge of museum codes and museum behaviour enter a museum. Bourdieu characterises the attitude whereby the culture of those in a strong societal position is taken as a norm and *desideratum* as symbolic violence: those with power are able to naturalise their own reality and the *status quo* to seem legitimate. According to Bourdieu, education, upbringing and thereby also museums regenerate and maintain the situation.

Carol Duncan presents museums as ritualistic spaces where visitors, by touring the premises, participate in the ritual reinforcement of the prevailing image represented by museums (Duncan 1995). According to Duncan, museums are representations of political and capitalistic power, and stand for a symbolic order that creates hierarchies, whereas touring a museum entails acceptance of this and the performance of a rite. Since museums are no longer required to manifest the power of the Church or Sovereign, they support the construction of community on a symbolic level. For this, rites and cults need to be created so that the *status quo* will prevail, and be maintained and renewed. Duncan agrees that the museum is, therefore, an arena of belonging and exclusion, and is based on a segregation between us (the nation, the intelligentsia, the mainstream, etc.) and them.

Consciousness of unequal participation has increased, and many museums have reacted to influence the situation. Museums have established panels and councils with representatives from groups that have little participation in museum activities. On the other hand, museums have also implemented outreach and regeneration projects in which collections and artists, for example, have been relocated to suburbs and among communities that would not come to a museum spontaneously. Especially in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, museums have worked hard to reach ethnic and cultural minorities. Cultural policy in these countries also requires museums to promote equal participation.

Discussions of museum users and the inclusion of audiences are related to the question of the social purpose of museums: is the purpose of museums to affect the surrounding society and world actively, i.e. is the societal purpose just one of the museum's core tasks, or are societal influences only a possible consequence of other actions? Museums have become increasingly audience-oriented, which has created tension between various views of the role of museums and between various interests. Some museum professionals are afraid that this may happen at the expense of collection management, restoration and research (Ballé & Poulot 2004: 247–249).

According to George E. Hein, a museum is equal to education, and he considers that there is no question of social action by museums (Hein 2005). To support this view, he uses the notion of progressive or constructive learning.

Drawing from Dewey's work, he argues that society needs members who have developed independent and critical thinking, and that there is no other path to change. It is precisely this thinking that the museum supports through its education mission. Particularly in discussions on the position of various minorities, the social purpose of museums is regarded as a priority that collections must support (Sandell 2002). In order to be relevant to their communities, museums may have to reinterpret their collections, for example by exploring narratives or representations of disabled people or ethnic minorities. The new interpretations may challenge not only the museum's own understanding of its collections but also the perception of these groups in society (Dodd *et al.* 2008).

Lois Silverman provides a new perspective on this question by examining museums in the framework of social work (Silverman 2010). Using various examples, she finds numerous elements of social work in the operation of museums, and argues that museums perform social action even when unaware of it. One of the key goals of social work is to influence the life situations and relationships of people with a view to realising some desired change. This has always been a part of what museums do: they enhance interaction between individuals and groups, and the development and expression of identities, they participate in societal movements and campaigns, they affect attitudes, disseminate information and so on. Silverman considers that there is a considerable untapped scope for museums to consciously use their collections for processing various human needs and relationships between people. These include supporting connections between generations or debate on the relationship between genders at various times and in differing cultures.

The Museum of London considers that the foregoing *Life Stories and Oral History* and *Re-assessing What We Collect* projects serve to make people more committed to museum activities and to content production. The empowering effect of participation and opportunities to reinforce connections between generations has also become evident in the course of these projects.

Communal activity sets challenges for museums: establishing connections and reinforcing community commitment requires time and staff who are specialised in this activity. This function is usually assigned to educational departments. The development of community programmes requires types of vocational expertise other than traditional museum work skills, and it also differs from the work done with conventional target groups such as schools. The activity is associated with a broader debate on communities – what they are, how they relate to museums – and cultural diversity and identities. This field is structured differently in various countries but, from the viewpoint of audience work, it is essential that the consideration of diversity is not externally determined to view individuals as representatives of 'otherness'.<sup>13</sup>



Problematization affects the audience work of all museums but particularly the presentation of 'other' cultures (see also Anna Catalani's article in this publication). The Victoria & Albert Museum (London), which presents historical textiles and clothes of Southern Asia in relation to the contemporary population and fashion of this region (Fashioning diaspora space), is an example of a museum that discusses its extra-European collections with its audience. Quai Branly of Paris, in the activities of which it is difficult to find any links between its collections and, for example, immigrants living in France to whose cultural heritage the museum's objects might be linked, is an example of the opposite approach. The differing strategies of museums naturally reflect the broader multicultural policies of the countries. Being remote to users may also be a part of a protectionist academic sentiment. Decisions on the use of collections for the benefit of communities are based on will and choices.

Besides for targeted projects, museums should also pay general attention to how they 'talk': who do they wish welcome, who do they turn away, which kind of forms of interaction do they offer and what do they, in a way, expect from their visitors? There are various unwritten, unspoken rules and presumptions about what should and should not be done in a museum, how one should act and what should not happen there. These presumptions become evident when a visitor who has no experience of a museum institution enters a museum. Such visitors have to ask about matters that the museum does not communicate: unspoken self-evident aspects are not evident to them, but have to be discussed. One of the most essential questions concerning the relationship between a museum and its audience is how it regards these experiences of being an outsider, and how it deals with them and opens the world of the 'insiders' to these new visitors.

Tony Bennett, however, warns museums against being captured by the illusion of unrealistic radicalism. (Bennett 2006: 66). This concept is drawn from Bourdieu, and refers to the 'scholastic illusion' of academic intellectuals according to which a change in thinking also evokes changes in behaviour. Worldview, customs and values are, however, embodied in people; social structures and inequality are so powerfully rooted within us that they cannot be wiped away by mere information and a change in consciousness. This means that a project that brings a new group to a museum will not necessarily achieve any change in individuals and even less in society. Change and (un)learning requires repetition and persistent training. This is also noted by Natalie Heinich in her analysis of visitors to Centre Pompidou (Heinich 1988: 199–212). Incorporating different operations or socially heterogeneous groups may not, as such, produce any changes in behaviour or unite people who would not otherwise be involved with each other socially.

## DEVELOPING PARTICIPATION

For European museums, the 1980s and 1990s especially were a time of opening up to the audience (Ballé & Poulot 2004: 230–249). These decades also saw a remarkable increase in the number of museums. This new orientation towards the audience has introduced new services for the audience, marketing and, at the same time, a division of professional groups. Museum education has developed into a professional activity and has enjoyed even stronger and wider acceptance as a core function of museums.

Whereas in the 1990s the attention was placed on the needs of various user groups and the accessibility of museums, in the new century the focus has broadened to participation and the inclusion of audiences. An audience is not only regarded as the target of educational activity, but also as a participant in and user of museum services. An emphasis on accessibility and participation does not conflict, but the former could rather be regarded as a prerequisite for the latter.

The difference between the approaches can be described with examples of youth participation in museum activities. It is one thing to produce programmes for youngsters, and another to offer them full use of the institution for producing their own programme, as in the above examples. In the former method, youngsters are considered to be an audience, while in the latter they are participants and users. In a participatory approach, visitors are considered sovereign citizens who have something original to say concerning the work of the museum and also have a personal relationship to the content of that work and appreciate the museum's significance in their personal lives and in society. Users of a museum have the complete confidence of the museum to make their own decisions on their personal relationship to the museum. The museum is regarded as a public facility in which museum professionals are not the only ones who are entitled to participate in museum work.

From the viewpoint of a museum user, a museum is not a place for learning new things or acquiring new experiences, but rather a place for bidirectional interaction. Museum users have something to offer the museum, in which they are not there just to take something away. If anything, a visitor is a museum user and participant, whereas the duty of museum professionals is to offer opportunities for self-directed activity and the use of museum resources.

The change in the notion of a museum is comparable to the web 2.0 thinking that has become a symbol of community-oriented content creation. Social media are based on open source principles: both the content and the tools required for content production are available and free to everyone. Content is created through the participation of people, and is in a process of continu-

al change. Open source thinking and community orientation as a new form of activity is not, however, only about online environments, but also about our overall relationship to information, cultural content and organisations.

To illustrate the change, Charles Leadbeater makes a distinction between the world of 'To & For' versus the culture of 'With' (Leadbeater 2009). In the former '(k)nowledge and learning flows from experts to people who are dependent or in need. Organisations are hierarchies based on the power and the knowledge to make decisions. Authority is exercised top down. The aim is to define what people lack – what they need or want that they do not have – and then deliver it to them. The world of To and For starts from people as bundles of needs, rather than, say, as bundles of capabilities and potential.' According to Leadbeater, web 2.0 is creating, by contrast, a culture of 'With', which changes people's relationship to information and to one another.

This change affects the working culture of museums and other organisations. Museums have to shift from dominating content, as they currently do, to becoming service providers of shared content, from possessing and controlling knowledge and expertise to sharing it. They should see themselves as mediators and brokers, rather than authorities. The participatory approach turns people into users and producers instead of audiences and consumers.<sup>14</sup>

One possible way to perceive this change from the viewpoint of the audience is through the concept of *produser*, in which Axel Bruns combines two functions: user + producer (Bruns 2009). This phenomenon as a whole is called *produsage*, collective user-driven content creation. Using a certain service is here also regarded as production, as content is created in a continual process in which various users bring their own contributions to the whole. This kind of activity is especially common in intangible production (publishing, information production and management, games, idea production) but also increasingly in the sharing of material property. Both forms of activity appear to have links to the Collections Mobility 2.0 Project that functions under the auspices of the European Culture Programme (2007–2013).

There is more to new forms of activity than merely developing new technology; Bruns discusses a shift in paradigm. *Produsage* is not confined to mere participation in the production chain, but rather forms a completely new way of thinking, in which the roles of producer, distributor and consumer are combined. This change does not only pertain to the digital world, but is also more far-reaching with impacts on the media in general and also on the economy, education, societal practices and democracy.

In this new culture of operation, the concept of community also requires redefinition. It changes from a predefined and defined-by-outsiders group of

***In order to be relevant  
to their communities,  
museums may have to  
reinterpret  
their collections.***

people or target group into an either self-organised or defined-by-insiders community, or into a temporary operational community focused on a particular phenomenon or service. In both cases, the community is limited in time and has flexible boundaries, enabling people to join or leave the group based on their interests or their situation in life.

At the same time, it is necessary to examine the traditional notion of expertise. Various other forms of expertise must be included in discussions alongside museum expertise to further enhance the production of information and meanings. This cannot be achieved merely by increasing Internet use – in fact many museums use the Internet in the old (web 1.0) manner to disseminate information that has been selected, produced and controlled within the museum. The change will occur in ways of thinking.

Examples of truly participatory actions in cultural institutions are still scarce but they are on the rise. One wide-ranging case, where local people were part of designing programmes around the exhibition was Documenta 12 in Kassel 2007. The event, among other things, invited a local advisory board in the

preparation of the exhibition, and developed a project involving schoolchildren as gallery educators. In addition, professional educators were selected from various backgrounds and were expected to construct their practice on personal approach and active experimentation – in the spirit of what Carmen Mörsch calls transformative discourse of gallery education (Mörsch 2009: 9–31). This type of approach necessarily entails a self-reflective and self-critical understanding of gallery education and the cultural institution.

Another initiative pointing to a new direction could be *The Revisiting Collections* programme (Collections Trust), which attempts to dissolve the dichotomy between the people-focused and collections-focused approaches that have long been considered competing trends in museums. The programme involves education and methods that help to make communities outside museums more committed to collection work. It highlights the needs of users (including potential users) to guide the prioritising of documentation, and shows that the interests of museums and their audience do not conflict. Museums that have applied the programme have been surprised at how much information people outside the museum can add to their collections. They have also found that the programme has created new forms of co-operation between museum departments and among the staff. What is especially interesting in the programme is that it is not confined to offering museum visitors a role as commentators on existing collections, but also allows a diversity of users to participate in the very core of collection work.

The art of ‘With’, produsage or web 2.0 thinking undermines the old notions of control and owning. Even though few museums have embarked on the courses that lead to the most radical changes in their collection work, this direction can already be witnessed. There is work to be done, however, in the practice and development of the ethics of sharing.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 From Article 3 – Definition of Terms, Section 1. Museum. ICOM statutes 2007.
- 2 From Article 3 – Definition of Terms, Section 1. Museum. ICOM statutes 2007.
- 3 Indexing means describing the subject matter of an artwork by a set list of keywords. The indexed works can then be retrieved by a subject-based search on the website.

- 4 The Tate Gallery and the Finnish National Gallery, for example, have both developed a software application for classifying, describing and listing works of art for their own purposes. National cross-institutional databases do exist, however, in several countries.
- 5 John Cotton Dana was working in a library when he was appointed manager of the Newark Museum (New Jersey). He wanted to make museums open for public use in a similar manner to public libraries, and to also loan objects to schools. As a museum manager, he emphasised education and the social role of museums as their most important purposes.
- 6 In copyright issues, *Europeana* takes a strong position in defending the public domain, see *Europeana Public Domain Charter*.
- 7 A valid presentation of learning styles and of how they can be taken into account in a museum display is provided in Gibbs et al. (2007). For an analysis of which factors affect interpretation, see also Hooper-Greenhill (2000).
- 8 This subject matter attracted a high level of visibility at the ICOM 2004 Conference in Seoul (ICOM News 2004).
- 9 The exhibition was on display from 3 April 2004 to 27 February 2005. More than 50,000 votes were cast and more than 2,000 written comments submitted. The works that attracted the most comments were put on display. The selection (*Love me or leave me*) is still available for viewing on the Internet.
- 10 The Finnish National Gallery, for example, has published a handbook that discusses private wills, donations, and deposits (Hämäläinen 2003).
- 11 For more on ecomuseums and 'new collecting', see Léontine Meijer-van Mensch and Peter Mensch in this publication.
- 12 From Article 3 – *Definition of Terms, Section 1. Museum*. ICOM statutes 2007.
- 13 For a critical analysis of communities and museums, see Witcomb 2003: 79–101.
- 14 Or, as Nicolas Bourriaud (2002:39–40) says, the 'ecstatic consumer' changes into the 'subversive consumer', by which he refers to the way in which artists, DJs and consumers use and customise forms and products to make them their own.

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PART FIVE

PRACTICAL GUIDE  
TO  
COLLECTIONS  
MOBILITY

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTIONS MOBILITY PROCESS**

This chapter provides a practical guide to the Collections Mobility process. It pulls together current good practice in developing loans policy and procedures and sets it out in a clear format for both lenders and borrowers. These are not new procedures; they have been taken from a number of published and online sources, all of which are credited in the bibliography, and most of which are easily accessible on the Web. However, this is the first time that they have been brought together and integrated into a comprehensive guide to the Collections Mobility process.

By necessity, this guide is generic, not prescriptive. The nature of one inter-museum loan will differ enormously from another and this guide needs to cover both short and long loans at the regional, national, and international levels.

To be an efficient lender or borrower you will need:








- a clear policy
- a systematic process of managing loans activity and the accompanying paperwork
- a set of standard conditions, backed up with a flexible approach to applying those conditions.

These three elements comprise the Collections Mobility process.

This guide encourages users to review their current lending and borrowing policy and procedures and to approach the process with transparency and an open attitude to negotiation and to keeping costs to a minimum.

The contents page to the guide is set out as a flow diagram in order to illustrate the process for both lenders and borrowers. You can work through the whole guide, or use the contents page to access a particular section.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTIONS MOBILITY PROCESS FOR INCOMING AND OUTGOING LOANS**

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## WRITING A LOANS POLICY

### **Question:**

We have been asked to lend an item from our collection to a small museum with poor security. Opinion is divided – some staff feel the risks are too high, others believe we should be more open with our collection – how do we resolve this situation?

### **Advice:**

A clear policy on lending and borrowing will assist staff decision-making and help an institution plan its lending and borrowing activity. It will also make it easier for you to explain your position if you do decide to reject a loan request.

Lending and borrowing museum objects takes staff time and financial resources. A lending institution needs to weigh the risks of lending collections items, and the time taken to administer loans, against the obvious benefits of increased access to collections. In order to meet loan conditions, borrowing institutions often need to make improvements in security or environmental conditions. Therefore, before getting involved in loan activity, it is important to establish a clear loans policy to help staff make the appropriate decisions, and to ensure that decisions are taken in line with your institution's overall mission and strategic objectives. It is helpful to other museums if you make your loan agreements accessible online.<sup>1</sup>

Use this section to check your existing incoming and outgoing loans policies against current good practice, or for guidance on how to write a policy.<sup>2</sup>

Does your 'Loans-in' policy specify...?	✓	Further explanation and examples
... the reasons why objects may be borrowed and set outside the limitations of the policy?		<p>Your reasons for borrowing might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• short loans for exhibition</li> <li>• long loans for research or long-term display</li> <li>• loans to enhance the interpretation of existing collections.</li> </ul> <p>You may state that you will only borrow items in line with your current collecting policy.</p>
... the conditions that the organisation will follow in administering the loan?		<p>This might include a statement that your organisation will extend the same level of care and security to loans as it does to its own collections. You should also state that all loans will be subject to a written loan agreement setting out the obligations of each party.</p>
... the minimum and maximum loan terms and state that indefinite loans will not be accepted?		<p>For example: you may have a three-month minimum loan period and five year maximum (with the option for renewal).</p>
... the way in which loans are authorised and that the organisation will consider the likely costs, risks, and benefits associated with any incoming loan before making a final decision?		<p>For example: all in-coming loan proposals may need to be approved by the governing body, or by the museum director, taking advice from conservators, collections managers etc. as appropriate.</p>
... that the organisation will establish, by due diligence, the lender's title to objects?		<p>Your standard loan-in agreement conditions might require the lending institution to state this clearly and your Object Entry system should also include this information.</p>
... the steps for dealing with loaned objects for which the original lender cannot be contacted?		<p>The policy should state clearly that the museum will take reasonable steps to trace the owners of a lapsed loan, how long you will continue to research the whereabouts of the lenders, and the need to maintain full documentation of any subsequent decisions on disposing or accessioning objects for which the original owners cannot be traced.</p>
... its links to your policies on documentation, access, and collections care?		<p>It is important to consider the impact of borrowing on your other activities and to set up a loans policy that is integrated into your wider collections management priorities.</p>

Does your 'Loans-out' policy specify...?	✓	Further explanation and examples
... categories of objects that may not be loaned out?		Categories of objects that may not be loaned out may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• items too fragile to be subject to shipping or display</li> <li>• items of cultural sensitivity</li> <li>• items that are themselves on loan to your museum (unless subject to further written agreement from the original lender).</li> </ul>
... categories of borrower that are not normally eligible to receive loans?		Most museums will not lend collections items to private individuals or private companies. However, in some cases, museums may lend to private companies but only subject to strict security, and collections care conditions and with reference to the ICOM code of ethics for museums. Your position should be stated clearly in the policy.
... the reasons for agreeing to a loan?		Reasons for agreeing to lend objects might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long-term public display</li> <li>• public study</li> <li>• research</li> <li>• temporary exhibitions.</li> </ul>
... your standard outgoing loan conditions?		Standard outgoing loan conditions can be listed in the policy or contained in a separate standard loan agreement with a cross-reference from your policy. See the next section – Arranging loans for examples of standard loan conditions.
... the minimum period of notice required for arranging a loan?		For example, you may state that this is one year or six months. When you decide what the minimum notice period is, be realistic about the staff time and resources needed for loans administration.
... the minimum and maximum loan length of loans?		This might be three months minimum and five years maximum with the option to renew.
... the way in which loans-out will be authorised?		The decision to approve outgoing loans may need to be taken by the board of governors or the director of your museum, or by a curatorial committee. You may stipulate the need for the decision to be based on advice from conservators and curators.
... your commitment to keeping loan costs to a minimum to engender good relations.		Consider committing your museum to a policy of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no loan administration fees</li> <li>• only using couriers when absolutely necessary</li> <li>• minimising conservation treatments</li> <li>• agreeing to government indemnity schemes or non-insurance where possible.</li> </ul>
... the links to your policies on documentation, access, and collections care.		It is important to consider the impact of borrowing on your other activities and to set up a loans policy that is integrated into your wider collections management priorities.



## ARRANGING LOANS

### Question:

I want to organise an exhibition using items held in several other museums. Where do I start?

### Advice:



The key to organising complex or multiple loans is in careful planning. The best advice is to start the process early...

Efficient systems, clear documentation, and good forward planning will make the process of lending and borrowing collections material manageable. For borrowers, this can mean establishing networks, building relationships, making loan requests, negotiating, planning for improvements to security and environmental conditions, and investigating insurance coverage. For lenders, the process involves establishing procedures for dealing with requests, developing your standard loan conditions, negotiating loan agreements, and building relationships with borrowers.

Use this section as a guide to initiating and negotiating loan agreements as a lender, or as a borrower.

***Efficient systems,  
clear documentation,  
and good forward planning  
will make the process of  
lending and borrowing  
collection material manageable.***


## Arranging Loans-in

The process for the borrower	Further explanation...
<p>Loans administration system</p> 	<p><b>Set up a system of loans administration</b></p> <p>You will need a method for keeping systematic records of your loans activity from initial negotiations, through to the return of the objects.</p> <p>This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a loan numbering system</li> <li>• object ENTRY forms</li> <li>• loans management information recorded on your computerised collection management system</li> <li>• a loans-in register</li> <li>• a set of written procedures for staff to follow.</li> </ul> <p><b>You may also want to develop:</b></p> <p>Standard loan-in conditions that you would use as a starting point for negotiation with other museums, or for arranging loans with private individuals.</p>
<p>Research</p> 	<p><b>Research questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do you know what you want to borrow?</li> <li>• do you know what it is possible to borrow?</li> <li>• do you know where to go, who to ask?</li> <li>• are you clear about the purpose and duration of the intended loan?</li> </ul> <p><b>Research potential subject areas and objects</b></p> <p>There are many ways to build up knowledge and develop a 'wish list' of objects that you want to borrow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• subject specialist networks</li> <li>• conferences</li> <li>• collections online and published catalogues</li> <li>• collecting policies online, or sent on request</li> </ul> <p><b>Research potential lending institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• online loans policies</li> <li>• online staff lists</li> <li>• loan policy and general conditions – online or sent on request</li> </ul> <p><b>Make informal contact and discuss your plans with the relevant staff at the lending institution</b></p>







## Arranging Loans-in



The process for the borrower	Further explanation...
<p>Formal Loan request</p> 	<p><b>Make a formal loan request once you have:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identified the institution(s) that you wish to borrow from</li> <li>• decided on the item(s) you would like to borrow</li> <li>• researched the general loan conditions.</li> </ul> <p>How early you do this will depend on the institution that you are borrowing from, but the earlier you make the request the better and many museums will have a minimum request period of between six months and one year. You may have had detailed discussions with curators or registrars about your proposed loan, but all loans requests need to be sent as a formal written request to the appropriate person at the lending institution. The loans policy of the lending institution may state what information should be included in the loan request and should state to whom the letter should be addressed. In many cases, this will be the museum director.</p> <p><b>A formal loan request letter will include some, or all, of the following information:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the title of the planned exhibition or display (if relevant)</li> <li>• scope of the exhibition or display</li> <li>• dates of the requested loan</li> <li>• venue for display or storage</li> <li>• type of the loan – temporary, long-term, or touring exhibition</li> <li>• contact details and person responsible</li> <li>• object numbers of requested items</li> <li>• brief description of requested items</li> <li>• reasons for the inclusion of the objects in the exhibition/display</li> <li>• whether a publication will be produced</li> <li>• statement of insurance or indemnity arrangements.</li> </ul> <p>It is helpful to submit a statement about the facilities and levels of care available at the borrowing institution at this stage. Many museums now expect this information to be supplied in a standard format, such as the UK Registrars Group 'Standard Facilities Report' template<sup>3</sup>. If you do not supply a facilities report at this stage, you will be requested to submit one later by the lender.</p>

## Arranging Loans-in



The process for the borrower	Further explanation...
<p><b>Set up documentation to record the Loan</b></p> 	<p><b>Loans documentation should be set up according to your standard procedures and should include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a file for correspondence</li> <li>• an electronic record or file for each object or group of objects requested.</li> </ul> <p>Once your loan request has been agreed to 'in principle', you may need to ask for further details about the individual objects. These should be recorded in your documentation system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• object numbers and descriptions</li> <li>• valuation</li> <li>• condition</li> <li>• display recommendations</li> <li>• environmental requirements</li> <li>• handling requirements</li> <li>• dimensions</li> <li>• photographs for advance research and exhibition/storage planning</li> <li>• additional catalogue information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Negotiate Loan conditions</b></p> 	<p><b>The Lender will send you a set of Loan Conditions to form the basis of a formal loan agreement.</b></p> <p>You may need to discuss the loan conditions in some detail to ensure that both sides are happy with the agreement.</p> <p>At this stage, you may also be asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide evidence that you meet the conditions for the display and storage environment</li> <li>• provide evidence of adequate museum security</li> <li>• set up insurance or indemnity for the loan</li> <li>• complete a facilities report if you have not already done so.</li> </ul> <p>You will need to request detailed information on the likely costs to your institution. These are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conservation</li> <li>• photography</li> <li>• condition reporting</li> <li>• packaging and transit materials and crates</li> <li>• transport</li> <li>• courier costs</li> <li>• insurance.</li> </ul> <p>Negotiations may take time and should be based on mutual co-operation with reference to the loans policies of both institutions. However, it is normal for the lending institution's loans-out agreement to be used as the basis for the final agreement and it is important that only one agreement is signed. <sup>4</sup></p>
<p><b>Sign the Loan agreement</b></p>	<p>A final loan agreement document should be signed by both parties when everyone is satisfied with the arrangement. The agreement should refer to all the specified loan conditions and costs to ensure clarity.</p>



## Arranging Loans-out

The process for the lender	Further explanation
<p>Loans administration system</p> 	<p><b>Set up a system of loans administration</b></p> <p>You will need a method for keeping systematic records of your loans activity from the initial negotiations, through to the return of the objects.</p> <p>This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a loans-out numbering system</li> <li>• object EXIT forms</li> <li>• standard loan agreement forms</li> <li>• standard loan conditions to form the basis of negotiation with potential borrowers</li> <li>• loans management information recorded on your computerised collection management system</li> <li>• a loans-out register</li> <li>• a set of written procedures for staff to follow.</li> </ul> <p><b>Loans out approval procedures</b></p> <p>You may also want to set up a formal written procedure for approving loans with clear guidance for staff on timescales, costs, authority for approval, etc.</p> <p><b>Standard Loan conditions as part of your published loans policy</b></p> <p>It is recommended that you establish a set of standard loan conditions and that these be stated clearly in your loans-out policy.</p>
<p>Publish your collections information and loans policy</p> 	<p><b>Be open and helpful to potential borrowers by providing clear up-to-date information about your collections, staff, and loans policy</b></p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publish your collecting policy online or provide hard copies on request</li> <li>• publish your collections catalogue online or the highlights from your collection</li> <li>• publish your loans policy online, or provide hard copies on request</li> <li>• make staff information available online with reference to subject specialisms or areas of responsibility.</li> </ul>

## Arranging Loans-out

The process for the lender	Further explanation
<p><b>Process for Considering Loan Requests</b></p> 	<p><b>Follow your procedure for processing loan requests</b></p> <p>When you receive a loan request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledge it quickly and give the borrower an indication of how long they will need to wait for a decision</li> <li>• start your decision making with reference to your loan policy and any written loan approval procedures that you have in place.</li> </ul> <p>Your procedure for approval may take into account the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the availability of the object – is it on display or loan?</li> <li>• the condition of the object</li> <li>• risk assessment</li> <li>• ethical considerations</li> <li>• the intended purpose of the loan – does this fit with your policy</li> <li>• whether your institution has the right to lend the object.</li> </ul> <p>At this stage, you may need to ask for more information from the borrower about the intended loan and for detailed information about the venue. For example, you may ask for a completed facilities report and for further details about insurance provision.</p> <p>Many museums use the UK Registrars' Group, 'Standard Facilities Report' in order to receive information about a borrowing venue in a systematic way.<sup>5</sup></p>
<p><b>Set up documentation to record the Loan</b></p> 	<p><b>Set up full documentation for the loan request</b></p> <p>Depending on your loan procedures, this may mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allocating a loan number to the request</li> <li>• recording the loan request electronically or in your loans register</li> <li>• setting up a file for correspondence and paperwork</li> <li>• cross referencing the loan number to the record for each requested object on your cataloguing system.</li> </ul>



## Arranging Loans-out

The process for the lender	Further explanation
<p>Make the decision 'in principle'</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p><b>Follow your procedure for decision making</b></p> <p>Once you have all the information that you need from the borrower, follow your internal procedure for decision-making. In some instances, decisions to lend will have to be taken by the governing body of your museum with advice from the relevant staff.</p> <p>In order for the decision to be made by senior staff, or your governing body, you may need to provide information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timetable for all work associated with the loan</li> <li>• estimate of the costs and liabilities for these costs</li> <li>• specific handling, packing, and courier requirements</li> <li>• environmental and security requirements.</li> </ul> <p>! If your museum rejects the loan request, explain the reasons clearly, with reference to your policy and procedures.</p> <p>! If the loan is agreed 'in principle', contact the borrower and continue the process of negotiation and planning.</p>
<p>Negotiate Loan Conditions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p><b>The Loan conditions will need to be discussed and agreed upon by both parties</b></p> <p>At this stage, you may need to provide the borrower with full details of all the objects making up the loan and of the likely costs of the loan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name and contact address for the lending institution</li> <li>• valuation</li> <li>• condition</li> <li>• display requirements</li> <li>• environmental requirements</li> <li>• handling recommendations</li> <li>• dimensions</li> <li>• copies of photographs of the items for research or publication</li> <li>• additional descriptive information if available</li> <li>• estimated costs to borrower.</li> </ul> <p>Send the borrower your standard loan conditions and be prepared to explain, discuss, and negotiate until both parties are satisfied.</p>
<p>Sign the Loan agreement</p>	<p>A final loan agreement document should be signed by both parties when everyone is satisfied with the arrangement – the agreement should refer to all the specified loan conditions and costs to ensure clarity.</p>

## Standard loan conditions and loan agreements

There are currently several sets of standard loan conditions, and other loan-related models and templates, which are available online for museums to consult or adapt for their own use.

Models developed as part of the Collections Mobility project include:

A Loans Toolkit containing three documents:

*Long-Term Loan Conditions*

*Loan Fees and Loan Costs – Guidelines*

*Long-Term Loans – Definition*

The Toolkit is available at:

[http://www.ne-mo.org/index.php?id=130&STIL=0&C\\_PID=&C\\_UID=2](http://www.ne-mo.org/index.php?id=130&STIL=0&C_PID=&C_UID=2)

The 'Standard Loan Agreement' was developed in 2005 by The Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) to provide a standard loan agreement for European Museums seeking to make short-term loans.

It is available at:

<http://www.ne-mo.org/index.php?id=110>

The bibliography contains details of other models, guidelines, and template documents that were developed to support loans activity.<sup>6</sup>

The next table shown gives an overview of the types of conditions included in a loan agreement. It is not a complete standard loan document and you should refer to the documents listed above for a full set of standard conditions.

<b>Examples of standard loan conditions...</b>	
<b>Pre-loan and transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the responsibility for the condition of the objects at the start of the loan rests with the lender. Costs of conservation treatment may be met by the borrower, or split between the lender and borrower</li> <li>• the borrower is responsible for the costs of transport – the transportation requirements will be specified by the lender</li> <li>• packing and condition reports are prepared by the lender, and the costs are to be met by the borrower</li> <li>• inspection on arrival by a professional approved by the lender, and the condition reports signed by both parties</li> <li>• the required standards for handling and care will be detailed in the agreement</li> </ul>



<b>Examples of standard loan conditions...</b>	
<p><b>Non-Insurance</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>Insurance</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>Indemnity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the borrower provides full insurance coverage during transport</li> <li>• insurance values are to be specified by the lender and approved by the borrower – values based on the estimation of fair market value</li> <li>• for non-insurance agreements, high levels of care by the borrower are required and no insurance is provided during the loan, but any repair or conservation needed that is due to damage will be the responsibility of the borrower</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the borrower is responsible for insurance for the duration of the loan for the value agreed by both parties as described above</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loan covered by the borrower's state indemnity</li> </ul>
<b>Reproduction and Copyright</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the lender provides the reproductions that are needed and grants the right to publish the images as part of the normal museum activities</li> <li>• the borrower does not have the right to transfer publishing rights to a third party</li> <li>• published images must credit the owner with the agreed credit line or – the lender grants the right to the borrower to photograph the objects and the rights to publish images for normal museum activities...</li> </ul>
<b>Loan Period and possession</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the loan period will be specified</li> <li>• no transfer to a third party will be allowed during the loan period without a separate agreement with the borrower</li> <li>• the lender has the right to terminate the agreement and repossess the loan if the safety of the loaned items is jeopardised...</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the borrower is responsible for all the costs in connection with the loan including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transport</li> <li>• when necessary, conservation and handling</li> <li>• crates, packing materials, packing, and preparation time</li> <li>• insurance or state indemnity</li> <li>• where necessary, travel and subsistence for the courier</li> </ul> </li> <li>• no loan fee is levied, although the borrower covers all the real costs of the loan</li> <li>• costs will be agreed in advance in writing</li> </ul>
<b>Governing Law and jurisdiction</b>	<p>Any disputes or disagreements that may result from the present agreement shall be settled by means of negotiations. Should they fail, they shall be settled in accordance with the rules of arbitration.... The place of the arbitration is... and the language of the proceeding is...</p>
<b>Other Conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-seizure protection to be guaranteed by the borrower, if possible under law</li> <li>• The lender will provide evidence of full title and provenance</li> <li>• The borrower has the right to terminate the contract if there is suspicion about the legal or ethical origin of the loaned objects</li> </ul>

## PRE-LOAN PREPARATION

### Question:

I have heard that some lending institutions use the loans process as a way of getting someone else to pay for essential remedial conservation. Can we suggest that the borrower and lender split the conservation costs?

### Answer:

Most museums have to prioritise the conservation of their collections in favour of items that they intend to display themselves and it has been standard practice to pass on the conservation costs of a loan to the borrower. However, one of the recommendations of the Lending to Europe report has been for the lender and borrower to split the costs of conservation so that museums may become more open to this approach.<sup>7</sup> It is worth exploring with the lender before the agreement is signed.

One of the reasons that it is necessary to make loan requests many months in advance of the date of the proposed loan, is that both parties involved may have to carry out work relating to the loan and this work needs to be planned for and, in some cases, money may need to be raised to pay for it.

Actions for Borrower	Actions for Lender
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arrange insurance/indemnity as required by the loan agreement and send documentary evidence to the lender</li> <li>• if required by the loan agreement, make changes/improvements to security and submit the details to the lender</li> <li>• if required by the loan agreement, make changes/improvements to the display cases, environmental conditions, etc. and submit details to the lender</li> <li>• prepare stores or a display area for the arrival of the objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• construct display equipment if required by the loan agreement</li> <li>• check incoming reports on insurance, security, and environmental conditions from the borrower for compliance with the loan agreement</li> <li>• carry out full object condition reports</li> <li>• carry out any required conservation as agreed with the borrower and record</li> <li>• prepare simple <i>Loan Transit Records</i> to accompany the objects and for recording the object's condition on arrival</li> <li>• photograph objects</li> </ul>





## DESPATCH AND TRANSIT – ACTIONS FOR LENDER

### Question:

We have been sent a standard loan agreement by a national museum that we wish to borrow material from. It states that we need pay the cost of their courier. Do they really need a courier?

### Advice:

The lender's conditions take precedence over the borrower's and borrowers are normally responsible for many of the extra expenses associated with the loan, including couriers. However, it is always worth negotiating the loan conditions and you may find that you can come to a compromise.

The complexity of despatch and transit arrangements will depend on the number of items being lent, their size, fragility, and the distance travelled. International loans involve the bureaucracy of customs and export law and the tight security of air travel. Many museums will prefer to send their objects under the care of a courier from their own staff and this person will have the responsibility for the safe arrival of the material at the borrowing institution. Whether accompanied by a courier or delivered by a shipping agent, the paperwork must include condition reports for checking on arrival, a receipt to be signed by the borrower, details of the insurance coverage, and all the necessary legal documents for the movement of the objects between countries.

#### Actions for the lender

- ensure that all the steps during the arrangement of despatch are recorded and documentation is kept up to date
- make shipping and packing arrangements, including constructing or purchasing shipping crates and cases, as stated in the written loan agreement
  - appoint, and brief, the courier or shipping company agent
  - ensure that the courier, or agent, has full documentation for the loan and delivery
  - obtain the relevant customs documents and export licences
  - ensure that the packaging complies with the conditions of carriage – e.g. items taken as hand baggage on aircraft must comply with size restrictions
  - discuss arrangement with the borrower – agree on the date and time for the delivery and give full information on travel arrangements, contact names, and accompanying documentation
  - despatch loan – complete EXIT documentation, update records, and inform the borrower that the objects have been despatched

## Guidelines for the use of couriers

Using couriers can add significantly to the borrower's cost. Lenders should consider carefully as to whether a courier is really necessary for the safe delivery of a loan. In some cases, however, the costs of the courier may be offset by savings in the insurance premium as a courier's role includes dealing with any problems that might arise during the delivery of a loan.

### **A courier may be required for the following reasons:**

complex travel arrangements

- a large loan
- complex or delicate handling needs
- fragile objects
- complicated installation
- high value loans
- the first loan to a new borrowing institution<sup>8</sup>

The UK Registrars Group has published *Courier Guidelines* that give a comprehensive overview of the role of a courier. This includes a description of the courier's role, the preparations needed before embarking on a loan delivery, and a guide to each part of the courier process.

The Courier Guidelines are available at: <http://www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/publications>.

***It is helpful  
to other museums  
if you make  
your loan agreements  
accessible online.***

## RECEIPT/DELIVERY – ACTIONS FOR THE BORROWER

### Question:

Who is in charge of the unpacking and examination of the objects on arrival at the borrowing institution?

### Answer:

This should be made clear in the loan agreement. When a courier is accompanying the loan, it would normally be the courier working in close liaison with a nominated person from the borrowing institution who is responsible for unpacking. The loan agreement may stipulate that the examination of the objects be carried out by the courier and a conservator provided by the borrower.

Transportation poses the greatest risk to objects during a loan transaction and it is crucial that the objects are handled carefully throughout transit and on arrival, and that full documentation is kept of all movement of the objects. It is particularly important to complete object entry documentation upon receipt of a loan to ensure that the object(s) are included in the borrower's documentation systems. Most importantly, a condition check will be carried out and the report will be approved by the lender's courier or agent, and by a representative of the borrowing institution.

### Actions for the Borrower

- complete ENTRY form documentation on the arrival of objects
- unpack object, or the courier unpacks the object
- condition report completed by a courier or by an appointed person (specified in the loan agreement) and agreed on by the borrower
  - this is normally a simpler version of a full condition report and may be known as a 'Loan Transit Record'. In most cases, it will contain a photograph of the item that may be annotated by the person carrying out the condition check
- take any remedial action required – obtaining the lender/owner's agreement in advance as required by the loan agreement
- assign a loan number to the item and attach removable labels to the items or packaging
- update all records – loan records, entry form, catalogue
- record the location of the objects in store
- sign the receipt and send it back to the owner/lender, retaining a copy for yourself

## MONITORING LOANS

### Question:

The lending museum insists on sending a curator to check on the condition of the loaned object every six months at our expense. Is this reasonable?

### Answer:

This may be a considerable expense for your museum and the lender should have been clear about this in the signed loan agreement. If it was not specified in the written agreement, then you could try to negotiate a compromise, but for some national museums, this may be a standard condition of a loan.

If you have items on loan from another museum, or from a private individual, your museum should offer the loaned items the same, or higher, levels of care as your own collections. You should expect to provide regular information to, or to allow regular inspection by, the borrowing institution and to be in contact immediately if anything happens at your museum to affect the condition of the loaned items.

Monitoring action for the Borrower	Monitoring action for the Lender
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitor the loaned items regularly according to the loan agreement to ensure that the environmental and security conditions are being met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask the borrower or carry out a condition check at least annually and to send a report</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• visit the borrower to carry out your own condition report</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow regular access to the loaned items by the lender on request or as laid out in the loan agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask the borrower to carry out a check on the environment and security conditions at least annually and send a report</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• visit the borrower to carry out a check on the environment and security conditions at least annually</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide condition reports as required or report any changes to the conditions in your museum, even if these do not directly affect the loaned material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the insurance and indemnity policies before their renewal dates and request changes if necessary</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the case of damage to an object, report this immediately to the lending institution with a full report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if the ownership of the loaned object changes, close the agreement and arrange for the return of the objects or facilitate a new agreement at the time of the transfer of title</li> </ul>



## EXTENDING OR RENEWING A LOAN

### Question:

We hope to borrow an object from another museum, and would like to borrow it for at least five years in order to use it in a 'permanent' display. However, their standard loan conditions state that their maximum loan period is for one year. Can we negotiate for a longer loan period?

### Answer:

You should definitely talk to the potential lender. It is unusual for a museum to limit lending for one year only. This condition probably means that they will lend it to you for longer but that they will review their loans every year. It is possible that they will agree to a longer loan but that they will want to renew it annually on a rolling basis a year at a time.

<b>Extending loans – actions for the Borrower</b>	<b>Extending loans – actions for the Lender</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A loan will be for a finite, specified period e.g. six months, one year, five years... but if you would like to extend the loan, then you should make a formal request in writing before the end of the current loan agreement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your decision to renew or extend a loan may depend on the borrower having met the conditions of the original loan, having monitored the loan adequately, and on the ongoing availability of the objects for loan.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The notice period for renewal requests may be set out in the lending institution's loan policy or standard loan conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may have to reject a request for the renewal of a loan if you have plans to display the objects yourself, or if the object has been requested for loan by another institution.</li> <li>• It would be helpful to borrowers if you include information about how much notice you would require for considering the renewal of a loan in your loans-out policy.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If an extension to a loan is approved, supply all the necessary insurance/indemnity paperwork, and a signed renewal loan agreement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you approve an extension to the loan, ensure that all the relevant insurance/ indemnity paperwork is supplied by the borrower and sign a new loan agreement.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update all the relevant records.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update all the relevant records.</li> </ul>

## RETURN OF LOANS AND CLOSURE

### Question:

Should we use our EXIT form procedure when we return a loaned item to its owner?

### Answer:

The Object EXIT procedure is normally reserved for recording the exit of an item belonging to the permanent collection of your own museum. On the return of a loan to the lender, it is normal to ask the lender to sign the original Object ENTRY form to acknowledge the safe return of the object, or for a separate receipt to be issued.

At the end of the loan period, whether it was six months or an extended long-loan of 10 years, both parties will need to plan carefully for shipping and transit in as much detail as the original delivery. As with the delivery, the paperwork must be meticulously completed and care must be taken with insurance and with condition checking on departure and arrival of the items.

Return of loans and closure – actions for the borrower	Return of loans and closure – actions for the lender
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>plan the return of the objects to the lender and confirm the arrangements with the lending institution for packing, transport, courier, and receipt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confirm the shipping and courier arrangements of the borrowing institution and make arrangements for the receipt of the object</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete a final condition report on the object with photographs if required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on arrival, unpack the items and carry out a recorded condition check</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>return the objects via a courier or shipping agent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>any problems will be reported to the borrower and remedial action taken, depending on the terms of the insurance coverage</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>obtain signed receipt documentation from the courier or shipping agent – retain this documentation</li> <li>receive receipt documentation from the lender on the arrival of objects. This will confirm that the objects have arrived in satisfactory condition</li> <li>or, receive a report of damage in transit that will need to be followed by action – insurance claim etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>invoice the borrower for the costs of the loan as itemised in the original loan agreement</li> <li>acknowledge the safe arrival of the loaned items by returning the signed receipt to the borrower</li> <li>send a final confirmation of the closure of the loan once all the conditions of the loan have been met, including the payment of costs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>send copies of exhibition catalogues and any additional research material that has not already been given to the lender</li> <li>keep all documentation in loan files</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>retain copies of exhibition information and any additional research material that was produced as part of the loan</li> <li>keep all records of the loan on file</li> </ul>



## KEEPING RECORDS

### Question:

I want to set up a system of written procedures to ensure that we have a clear record of loans into our museum. Can you recommend a model procedure?

### Answer:

The SPECTRUM, UK museum documentation standard loans-in procedure will give you an overview of the procedures and paperwork that you need to put into place in order to manage incoming loans effectively as part of your overall collections management activity.<sup>9</sup>

Whether your museum borrows one item for long-term display in a new gallery, or regularly sets-up blockbuster international exhibitions, it will be essential to have clear written procedures for your staff to follow and a system for permanent retention of key information and records.

### The benefit of standard procedures

Loans administration can be very time consuming. The details of each loan agreement that you enter into as a lender or borrower will vary depending on the circumstances. Therefore, the more you can do to simplify and streamline the paperwork and the aspects of the procedure that can be standardised, the more efficient and productive you will be.<sup>10</sup>

#### For example, you may want to develop:

- standard loan conditions
- pre-printed loan agreement forms
- standard forms for condition reports
- standard forms for loan transit records
- pre-printed object Entry and object Exit forms

## Keeping records

Many collection management systems will allow for detailed loans information to be recorded in the museums computerised catalogue, and your written procedures and staff training should specify the levels and types of information that you require to be recorded in your catalogue in order to keep track of loans.

<b>The benefits of keeping comprehensive records of loans during and after the loan...</b>	
<b>to the lending museum</b>	<b>to the borrowing museum</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• keeping good records before and during the loan will increase your efficiency and save time</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• keeping good records before and during the loan will increase your efficiency and save time</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• retaining loan records after the closure of a loan helps you to maintain a full 'history' of the objects involved</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• retaining loan records after the closure of the loan helps you to keep a record of your relationships with other museums</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• new information about the object generated during the loan period, either through research or public reaction to an exhibition should also be captured and retained as an addition to your own institution's knowledge and understanding of that object</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• background information and research about objects on loan to you may add to your understanding of your own collections and should be retained in a format that can be accessed for the benefit of your museum</li></ul>

***If you would like to  
extend the period of a loan,  
then it is always  
worth asking!***



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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Publishing loans polices online to enable more loans is one of the commitments made by the UK National Museums Directors Conference in the paper NMDC, (2003) *Standards for Loans between National and Non-National Museums*.
- 2 Many of these policy suggestions are taken from Collections Trust, *SPECTRUM, the UK Museum Documentation Standard*.
- 3 UKRG Standard Facilities Report can be downloaded for free from <http://www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/publications/>.
- 4 Recent work on Collections Mobility in Europe and within individual member states has focused on encouraging simpler and cheaper standard loan conditions. If you feel that the loan conditions being presented by the lender are unreasonable or prohibitively expensive for your institution, you may find it useful to refer to published model agreements as examples of good practice. For example: NEMO, Standard Loan Agreement, or Collections Mobility Long Term Loans and Loan Fees Work Group (2009) *Long Term Loan Conditions, and Lending to Europe, Appendix 4, General Principles on the administration of loans and exchange of cultural goods between institutions*'.
- 5 UKRG Standard Facilities Report can be downloaded free from <http://www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/publications/>.
- 6 These include the Collections Trust, *Collections Link Loans Pack*, The UK Registrars Group (UKRG), *Standard Facilities Report*, the UKRG, *Guidelines for Couriers*, the UK Museums Association, *Simple Loans Administration*, and the National Museum Directors Conference, *Standards for Loans between National and Non-National Museum*. Full details of these resources are listed in the bibliography.
- 7 The suggestion that lenders and borrowers should split the costs of pre-loan conservation is contained in *Lending to Europe, Appendix 4 'General Principles on the administration of loans and exchange of cultural goods between institutions'*. These guidelines were originally drawn up by the Bizot Group (a worldwide informal group of art museum directors) and were reviewed by participants at the 'Museums on the Move' Conference in Birmingham who adapted them and published them for general use with the agreement of the Bizot Group.
- 8 This list is adapted from NMDC, (2003) *Standards for Loans between National and Non-National Museums*.
- 9 *SPECTRUM, the UK Museum Documentation Standard* is available to download from <http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum>.
- 10 For more information on loan procedures and what sort of records to keep see *SPECTRUM, the UK Museum Documentation Standard* and Harrison, M and McKenna, G (2008) *Documentation, A Practical Guide*.

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*Publisher*

Finnish National Gallery, Kaivokatu 2, FI-00100 Helsinki  
www.fng.fi  
ISBN 978-951-53-3286-8 (paperback)  
ISBN 978-951-53-3287-5 (PDF)

Erfgoed Nederland  
ISBN 978-90-78956-15-0

Institut für Museumsforschung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz  
ISSN 0931-4641  
Sonderheft 4

*Editor-in-chief*

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*Layout*

Timo Jaakola

*Printing house*

Kariston Kirjapaino Oy 2010

Edition 4000, available also <http://www.lending-for-europe.eu/>

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Photo page 10 (British Museum, London), 72 (British Museum, London), 150 (Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona), 224 (Cathedral, Colmar, France), by Susanna Pettersson.  
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