



Museum Strategy and Marketing

Designing missions

Building audiences

Generating revenue and resources

Neil Kotler & Philip Kotler

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"*Museum Strategy and Marketing* isn't the new jargon. It's a new set of probing questions about museum purpose, structure, and operations by authors in touch with both museum realities and business school approaches. Museum boards and directors will be interested in *Museum Strategy and Marketing* because Neil and Philip Kotler raise questions that they should be asking."

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Building Audiences

Generating Revenue and Resources

Neil Kotler and Philip Kotler

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To our mother, Betty Kotler, and to Nancy, Wendy, Jena, Jessica,
Melissa, and Amy, our national living treasures, we dedicate this book.

PREFACE

The Museum can reach only those whom it can attract. This fact alone is enough to compel it to be convenient to all, wide in its scope, varied in its activities, hospitable, . . . eager to follow any lead the humblest inquirer may give.

—John Cotton Dana, founding director, The Newark Museum (1917)

Inside the entrance of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, youngsters are milling around or are seated at tables, working with art materials, fabrics, and collectibles. Elsewhere in the museum, high school students are serving as docents, taking visitors on a tour of a photography exhibit. The upper-story galleries are filled with Willem de Kooning paintings—large canvases of lyrical lines and pastel hues forming a continuous ribbon of color weaving through luminous galleries. A musical performance is just winding down in the auditorium; a storytelling workshop, using museum collections, is taking place down the hall; and in a nearby studio teenagers are rehearsing a play. It is Free First Saturday at the museum, a monthly event in which the Walker hosts a day of family-oriented activities devoted to creative expression.

This illustrates a trend: museums are broadening their image, audience, programming, and support. Like bandwidths in the digital and broadcasting worlds, museums can be thought of as ranged along a continuum, from “narrowband” museums at one end to “broadband” museums at the other. The former are museums that take a narrow view of their missions, programs, and audiences. The latter are museums that have a broad sense of mission, an expansive image to communicate, a variety of programs, and a large, diverse audience to serve. Just as bandwidths in the digital world vary according to the extent of information they can channel in a given time frame, so too “bandwidths” in museums differ in terms of the range of programs, experiences, and services they offer their audiences.

Museums, to be sure, are as different from one another as a Picasso painting is different from the beaverskin top hat Abraham Lincoln wore the night of his assassination—a precious object the Smithsonian Institution displayed in its 150th anniversary exhibition that toured several U.S. cities beginning in 1996. Indeed, the appeal of a museum lies in its individuality and distinctiveness. Yet regardless of their particular qualities, museums increasingly recognize that they have to compete for audiences, support, and resources; offer quality programs; communicate their distinctiveness; build long-term relationships with their communities; and find the means to sustain themselves financially, as once-reliable public-sector funding dwindles.

The most successful museums offer a range of experiences that appeal to different audience segments and reflect the varying needs of individual visitors. Research has shown that museum visitors seek experiences that cross the boundaries of learning, doing, and relishing. They are quite capable in the space of a single day of absorbing thrills and excitement, relaxing, and finding delight in aesthetic pleasures as well as cerebral discoveries. To the extent possible, successful museums provide multiple experiences: aesthetic and emotional delight, celebration and learning, recreation and sociability.

The trend toward broader offerings, wider audiences, and market-oriented programs carries some costs as well as benefits, although we believe that the benefits outweigh the costs in the long run. The broadband museum has encountered criticism and resistance in parts of the museum community. The criticism is rooted in differing conceptions of the museum mission and identity.

Four varieties of museums illustrate these differences in mission and identity: the traditional object-oriented museum, the modified traditional museum, the community-oriented museum, and the storytelling, experience-oriented museum. The differences reflect on important issues that will be examined throughout this book: whether fine and rare museum objects can stand by themselves or require extended interpretive texts, contexts, and meanings; whether museums should limit their audiences to provide a contemplative, focused setting or make their offerings available to the largest number of people, even at the expense of crowds and congestion; whether ancillary programs such as community events, continuing education, and concerts weaken or interfere with core activities and, if not, what is the right balance with core activities; and whether museums should become market-oriented entities, catering to audience and community preferences, or should preserve their identity as primarily scholarly, educational, or esoteric organizations. (These issues are discussed further in Chapter Two.)

Museums are also finding that they can use the tools of strategic planning and marketing to reach their goals without compromising their missions and their integrity. Indeed, high-quality planning and marketing are instruments rather than ends; they are adapted to the purposes and the objectives that mu-

seum managers define. In a competitive world, museums are being measured by the experiences, benefits, and outcomes they generate as much as by the collections and other resources they possess. Strategic planning and marketing are instruments for shaping, communicating, and distributing quality experiences and programs and reaching the broadest possible audience.

PURPOSE

This book offers the museum community a philosophical and methodological framework for examining a museum's resources, mission, opportunities, and challenges. Solid self-assessment and research become the basis for setting goals and implementing strategies.

Museum Strategy and Marketing is the first comprehensive and systematic book devoted to the uses of strategic planning and marketing in museums. It covers all phases of planning and marketing and offers a set of detailed auditing and review tools. It is the first book to examine the full range of marketing skills relevant to museums: existing product marketing, new product marketing, channel and distribution marketing, service marketing, sales and promotion marketing, price marketing, donor marketing, and image and brand marketing.

This book gives focus to the concept of the "museum experience" as a key outcome of museum visits—specifically, a range of experiences including learning and celebration, recreation and sociability, aesthetic pleasure, and enchantment. The book examines the evolving concept and role of the museum: from the collection and conservation of material culture to information and education to providing experience and meaning.

Museum Strategy and Marketing highlights three critical features of museum management: distribution, added value, and museum alliances and partnerships. Museums are increasingly making objects and exhibitions, educational offerings, and services available beyond the halls of the main museum building. Digital and electronic media and geographically dispersed satellites and facilities provide additional distribution channels. Like other organizations, museums are finding ways to add value to their offerings. They are supplementing collections and exhibitions with interactive and multimedia technologies, are expanding their gift shops and restaurants, and upgrading services they provide to visitors. Museums, in addition, are building partnerships with other museums and with outside cultural and educational organizations as a means to raise visibility, assemble greater resources, and elevate programming quality. Museums have also organized joint marketing programs and joint purchasing co-ops to reduce costs.

Museum alliances and partnerships are appropriate responses to another type of challenge: the competitive inroads of information, entertainment, and media conglomerates that have far greater resources, more elaborate distribution channels,

and more extensive product lines. In today's world, museums compete for audiences with the electronic media (and stay-at-home habits); with the recreational alternatives offered by movies, theme parks, and sports competitions; and with "edutainment" organizations such as Disney and themed "destination" shopping malls and restaurants. Can museums, through partnerships, raise their visibility, assemble resources, and upgrade offerings to compete with conglomerates bent on capturing and dominating consumers' time, minds, and spending? One promising response is aggregating several museums in cultural districts that are compelling destinations for tourists and local residents and significant generators of local economic development.

This book is filled with illustrations of sound museum practices and models of museum problem solving.

AUDIENCE

Museum Strategy and Marketing is written for museum professionals who deal daily with challenges, choices, and decisions. Museum staff in all areas and specializations can benefit from the concepts, tools, and techniques presented. So, too, can members of museum boards; professionals in the arts, cultural, and educational sectors; and supporters of museums among foundation, corporate, and public-sector organizations. This book is also a text for museum studies and training programs as well as professional development programs in arts and cultural resources management and administration. The strategic planning and marketing concepts also have relevance to professionals in the travel and hospitality industries, insofar as tourism is a growing source of museum audiences.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONTENTS

Museum Strategy and Marketing is distinctive for its range of examples and illustrations of museum practices, programs, problem solving, and organizational behavior. Museum examples appear in every chapter and illustrate every major concept and theme. Eight museums, in addition, are highlighted in features headed "Model Museum Practices," extended discussions that appear toward the end of most chapters. The model museums illustrate topics and themes covered in the chapter. Yet the museums identified in this book constitute only a small sample of exemplary museums and museum practices. The museum world is filled with a great many admirable organizations and approaches; given the individuality and the scope of museums, generalizations are necessarily difficult. Thus the examples in this book should be regarded as illustrative only; it is our hope that their behaviors and practices will inspire adaptation to other settings and situations.

Part One (Chapters One and Two) of this book explores the challenges and the opportunities that museums are facing as the twenty-first century approaches. Chapter One looks at museums' variety, historical origins, and development, at how museums differ and what they have in common. Chapter Two examines three contemporary challenges: formulating a distinctive, engaging, and appropriate mission; building community support and larger, wider audiences; and acquiring needed revenues and resources.

Part Two (Chapters Three through Five) provides the framework of strategic planning and marketing that is developed throughout the book. No single marketing and planning formula is applicable to all museums, but every museum can benefit from one or another facet of planning and marketing. Chapter Three analyzes a museum's external and internal environments; the processes in formulating a mission, set of objectives, and strategy; and the possible effect of strategies on existing organizational design and systems. This chapter is essential to designing a strategic planning and marketing system.

Visitor studies confirm the importance of understanding museum audiences. Chapter Four looks at audiences, their characteristics and subgroups, and the ways individuals choose among recreational and leisure alternatives, including museum-going. Chapter Five applies marketing principles to audiences: segmentation, targeting, and positioning the museum and its offerings.

Part Three (Chapters Six through Twelve) presents the specific tactics, tools, and applications that transform marketing knowledge into implementable systems. Chapter Six describes the uses of marketing and museum research and information-gathering techniques. Chapter Seven focuses on strategic development of the museum's offerings (exhibitions, programs, services)—how to design and upgrade museum offerings to make them attractive to various types of visitors. Museums are also distributing their offerings more widely than ever; Chapter Eight considers various distribution channels (traveling exhibits, branch sites, electronic media, and other innovations) for making museum offerings more available.

Museums seeking to raise their visibility, project appealing images, and create effective promotion and communication programs will find Chapter Nine useful. It explores image building and brand identity, advertising, public relations, direct marketing, and sales promotion. Museums are also paying increased attention to pricing and revenue-raising strategies. In the past, most museums charged no admission or seriously underpriced their offerings. Chapter Ten examines pricing strategies and techniques, covering admissions, special exhibitions, sales in gift shops, memberships, and rental of museum facilities.

Chapter Eleven examines how museums can attract new resources and increase existing resources—for example, by converting infrequent visitors into regular ones, visitors into members and volunteers, and small gift-givers into larger gift-givers. The chapter covers membership, corporate contributions and

sponsorships, foundation grants, and public-sector support. It probes fundraising concepts, tactics, and practices. Chapter Twelve rounds out the discussion of strategies and tactics, providing a broad view of the museum as a marketing system and organization. It describes how museum managers can best use plans, budgets, and controls to achieve objectives and strategies. The Marketing Audit Guide, at the end of the chapter, takes museums through a full assessment of their environments, objectives, resources, and organizational designs.

In the concluding chapter, we consider the range of factors and conditions that can help museums secure their future in the twenty-first century. The chapter provides a summary of the findings and recommendations presented throughout the book. In the Appendix, Stephen Weil's essay "Twenty-One Ways to Buy Art" is a fitting finale. It brings readers full circle, back to the first task of a museum: to create and care for a collection. Weil, one of the museum community's most fecund thinkers, guides the reader in the realm of acquiring objects and building collections.

In the final analysis, museums provide a unique and distinctive offering: rich, sensory, multidimensional experiences with authentic and tangible objects in scholarly, informational, and interpretative contexts. We offer this book to all people to whom museums matter; our intent is to help them build and manage successful museums and to meet the challenges museums will face in the twenty-first century.

February 1998

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We also owe a debt of gratitude to the museum leaders who so graciously offered us opportunities to learn about their museums and explore a range of museum ideas, practices, and challenges.

—N. K. and P. K.

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Museum Strategy and Marketing



PART ONE



MUSEUMS FACE THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The Diverse World of Museums

An overcrowded museum is a healthy museum.

—S. Dillon Ripley

Museums are solemn spaces.

—Otto Mayr

The Art Institute of Chicago's blockbuster exhibition of the works of Claude Monet drew 960,000 visitors during a nineteen-week period in 1995. The Monet show generated substantial increases in museum membership, gifts, corporate relationships, museum shop earnings, and rental fees; its impact on Chicago's economy in revenues and jobs was estimated to be nearly \$300 million. The 1996 Cézanne exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art drew 550,000 visitors during a thirteen-week period, generating ten thousand room-nights for the city's hotels and an estimated \$86.5 million in added income for the city. A city-commissioned report concluded the museum is a prime tourist attraction and the city awarded the museum a substantial grant to promote its programs. Museums in the closing decade of the twentieth century are drawing larger audiences and offering a greater variety of exhibitions, programs, and services than ever before. If the number of new museums and museum additions is any indicator, the museum world is reaching wider audiences and acquiring a visibility in some cases rivaling that enjoyed by popular culture and the mass media. Let us examine the distinctive qualities of today's museums.

THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

Museums offer experiences, ideas, and satisfactions not found in other places. These derive from authentic objects of nature, history, science, and the arts that museums collect and display; the sensory experiences with three-dimensional

objects that museums present and interpret; and the research, scholarship, and interpretation that support museum collections and exhibitions.

A visit to the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Grand Salon from the Hôtel le Tellier in Paris or to its Indian Buddhist temple or its Japanese teahouse offers a one-of-a-kind experience of being transported back in time and being immersed in a complete environment of great beauty and enchantment. The experience of remembrance and bonding with the history and glory of the United States was a palpable part of visits to *America's Smithsonian*, a traveling exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Smithsonian Institution's founding in 1846. The exhibition was filled with great objects of the American past, including the famous 1853 Rembrandt Peale portrait of George Washington, a sword worn by Washington in the Revolutionary War, gowns worn by the wives of U.S. presidents, objects of U.S. technological history such as the Apollo 14 space capsule, and the top hat that President Abraham Lincoln was believed to be wearing the night he was assassinated in 1865. Visitors stood in awe of these objects. One said: "I feel like somebody sprayed me with gold. That's how beautiful and fortunate I feel." Another said: "The longer I stay, the more intense it gets. To see the things that Abe Lincoln wrote, to be so close to something that is woven into the fabric of our history—it goes beyond words." Standing before the painting of Washington, yet another visitor said: "He looks so noble. Serene. It's holy" (Waxman, 1996, p. C6).

A visitor to the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History in the winter and early spring of 1996 could view *Landscape Kimonos*, a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition of Japanese kimonos handwoven and hand-painted by Itchiku Kubota. Kubota, a seventy-nine-year-old Japanese artist, re-created a sixteenth-century technique and tradition of fabric dyeing, transforming it into a unique art form of the twentieth century. Visitors encountered in a large oblong gallery a series of thirty-five silk kimonos, hanging side by side. Each depicted a fragmentary moment of seasonal change reflected in the landscape. Moving from the left side of the room to the right, the visitor viewed through color, line, form, and texture the passage of seasons from autumn to winter, a changing landscape of mountains, fields, lakes, and skies in the varying light and shadows cast by sunshine, rainfall, cloud cover, and snowfall. Visitors expressed a sense of being transfixed by an artistic vision of the natural world that allowed them to see nature in a wholly different light.

A visit to the vast and rich Paul Gauguin retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in the late 1980s produced a transformative experience for one of the authors. For several days following the show he would step outside the front door of his house in the early morning to fetch the newspaper and peer out on the world as if he were viewing it through Gauguin's eyes, imagining the luminous colors of Gauguin's Tahiti transposed to the midst of Arlington, Virginia.

Science and natural history museums offer biological specimens, ecological settings, scientific instruments, and objects of engineering and technology that can arouse curiosity, illuminate patterns, and lead to important discoveries. Maxine Singer, a biochemist and president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, can recount memorable experiences as a youngster visiting New York City's American Museum of Natural History. Freeman Dyson, a physicist and scholar at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, can relate visits as a youth to London's British Museum and the Museum of Natural History, experiences that shaped his love and pursuit of science. Museum collections and exhibitions are often a springboard to scientific vocations.

Great museum exhibitions offer visitors transcendent experiences that take them outside the routines of everyday life and transport them into new and wonderful worlds of beauty, thought, and remembrance. The psychologist Abraham Maslow termed these "peak experiences," experiences that are totally absorbing and at the same time transforming of perceptions and understanding. At their best, museums elevate the spirit, enlarge thought and feeling, stretch the imagination, and offer enchanting experience.

Museums are engaging in greater self-assessment as a means to improve their offerings and organizations—examining opportunities and obstacles in the larger environment and planning tools with which to adapt to changing circumstances. Some museums are reinventing themselves. The Detroit Historical Museum, for example, a venerable seventy-year-old city-run institution, facing substantial cuts in state funding and a 40 percent staff reduction in the first half of the 1990s, undertook a significant and transforming reorganization. According to museum director Maud Lyon (interviewed Mar. 12, 1996), the changes, along with a greater commitment from the board of directors, led to a major refocusing on community involvement, participation, and support. The museum organized a new permanent exhibition, *The Motor City*, which increased visitorship by 60 percent over three years. Every significant group in the city involved in automotive history participated in conceptualizing and designing the exhibit. For example, in discussions with the labor unions, museum staff realized that the exhibit should highlight the role of labor unions in advancing the position of industrial workers. Community mobilization led to growth in donations, volunteers, donated services, and other resources. A television station established a partnership with the museum to produce public service announcements highlighting Detroit's history. The city of Detroit is making plans to commemorate its 300th anniversary in the year 2001 and has asked the museum to play a major role in organizing this tricentennial celebration.

In this chapter we will examine what a museum is, what museums have in common, and how they are different. We will also view museums historically to trace their evolution and development.

WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

According to a 1989 survey, there are an estimated 8,200 freestanding, independent museums in the United States. If museum branches and the historic homes and sites are included, this number exceeds 15,000 museum sites (American Association of Museums, 1994, pp. 23, 27). Of U.S. museums, 55 percent are historical museums and historic sites; 15 percent, art museums; and 14 percent, nature and science-and-technology-oriented museums, including zoos and botanical gardens. The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a U.S. federal agency, estimates the total number of independent U.S. museums in 1992 at 8,934 (Danvers, 1992, p. 21). Great Britain has an estimated 2,000 museums. Numbers fluctuate, of course, as museums start up or shut down.

The American Association of Museums (AAM) defines a museum as an institution that is “organized as a public or private nonprofit institution, existing on a permanent basis for essentially educational and aesthetic purposes,” that “cares for and owns or uses tangible objects, whether animate or inanimate, and exhibits these on a regular basis,” that “has at least one professional staff member or the full-time equivalent,” and “is open to the general public on a regular basis . . . at least 120 days per year” (1994, pp. 18–19).

Even given this very broad definition, it is sometimes difficult to know what is a museum and what is not. Indeed, some people visiting Venice, Italy, have concluded the entire city is a museum, not just the particular buildings that promote themselves as museums, such as the Museo Archeologico and the Museo Orientale. The same thought arises when visiting Hampton Court or Warwick Castle in England. Do they not contain great collections of fine and decorative arts and represent history as well as or better than some “history museums”?

Is Atlanta’s Cyclorama a museum? The Cyclorama tells the story of the Civil War Battle of Atlanta (July 22, 1864). Its centerpiece is the world’s largest painting, a canvas in the round weighing nine thousand pounds and measuring 358 feet by 42 feet—longer than a football field. Extending thirty feet out from the painting is a diorama-like foreground containing hundreds of three-dimensional figures and objects (wagons, munitions, and natural landscape). Audiences view the painting from a moving platform with theater-like seating. In another part of the building are cases filled with Civil War uniforms, guns, and memorabilia. The battle scene for the most part depicts a historical narrative. Yet the guide points out that one slain figure in the foreground is the likeness of Clark Gable, who starred in the movie *Gone With the Wind*, set during the Civil War. Gable visited the Cyclorama in the late 1930s and expressed his enjoyment but also his dismay that his own image was missing from the painting; the owners subsequently added the Gable figure. Further, the guide explains, the painting was

inspired by a Confederate general, John B. Hood, and was commissioned twenty years after the Battle of Atlanta. Parts of the painting glorify Hood's role in the battle. Do advocacy and the fictive elements diminish the standing of the Atlanta Cyclorama as a museum?

How Museums Differ

Museums vary in extent of collections, size of staff, endowments, revenues and expenses, physical plants, and hours of operations.

Collections. Ninety-three percent of U.S. museums, it is estimated, own collections; yet children's museums, science and technology centers, and history centers often possess negligible collections or no collections at all. The Museum for African Art in New York City organizes on-site and traveling exhibitions of objects borrowed from private collectors and other museums. The Contemporary, in Baltimore, is a museum without walls, an organization of museum professionals who bring together interpretative work and expertise, objects and collections borrowed from other places and create exhibitions for the public at different sites in the city.

Collections that embody a record of history, art, nature, or science contain objects that are of value in and of themselves. However, science and technology centers often contain tools, props, interactive machines, and materials with which to demonstrate science and technology. These objects are tools rather than rare, authentic pieces.

Museums are in the business of caring for, interpreting, and showing authentic objects. However, the Museo del Falso (Museum of Forgeries and Counterfeits), in Salerno, Italy, which opened in 1991, is dedicated to the collecting, study, and viewing of faked objects. Its earliest exhibitions were devoted to counterfeit foods, detergents, and precious metals.

Most museums are organized around a specialized collection or else multiple collections specific to a particular field. However, the South Carolina State Museum, located in Columbia and publicly funded through the state legislature, is five museums in one, featuring regional and contemporary art collections, regional historical collections, technology and engineering collections, natural history collections, and a science center that help it fulfill its core mission of educating young people. Many museums that are acquiring objects are likely to deaccession and sell off or exchange objects to make room for others. Yet the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, in Boston, has a distinguished collection of more than twenty-five hundred objects of Western art that cannot be sold or added to, according to the founding charter. In addition, the installations and interior design of the building cannot be altered in any significant way. The vast majority of U.S. museums are nonprofit organizations. However, some museums, such as the New Jersey Children's Museum, in Paramus, are organized as for-profit businesses.

Most museums ask their visitors not to touch objects. The Atlanta History Museum's 1997 exhibition, *Metropolitan Frontiers: Atlanta, 1835–2000*, had signs posted in several areas urging visitors to touch certain objects. The Shotgun House, situated at the exhibition's center, is a reconstructed nineteenth-century working-class dwelling. A sign at the porch entrance read: "Please feel free to touch all objects in the Shotgun House." Virtually all museums are secular and research-minded in their assumptions about objects, evidence, and authenticity. The Living Bible Museum, in Mansfield, Ohio, however, is an institution preserving and presenting a belief system (Christianity rooted in the Old Testament). It advertises itself as nonsectarian, but it is located within the Diamond Hill Cathedral in Mansfield.

Ownership. An estimated 59 percent of all U.S. museums are privately governed and 41 percent are government run (7.3 percent by the federal government and 27 percent by states and municipalities). In France, by comparison, approximately 80 percent of the museums are run by the national government. Museums in Great Britain vary from national museums, such as the British Museum, that are substantially maintained by the government to small local museums and museum services that are supported by a combination of local government grants and private contributions.

Size and resources. Small museums, defined by the Institute of Museum and Library Services as having "five or fewer full-time paid or unpaid staff, or an annual operating budget of under \$250,000," account for 75 percent of all U.S. museums. The average smaller museum is open 221 days in the year and serves 16,000 visitors annually. It has two full-time staff and an annual operating budget under \$90,000 (Danvers, 1992, pp. 9–10). For example, the Maryland Ornithological Museum and Clyburn Nature Center and Arboretum, located in Baltimore, together occupy a large nature preserve. In the mid-1990s the museums were managed by an all-volunteer staff; the director was a city official working at a distance from the museums and lacking museum training. A typical small, rural U.S. museum is the Morrow County Museum, in Heppner, Oregon. This thirty-two-year-old museum has a mission to chronicle the history of the local agricultural area, from the pioneering period in 1890 to the early settlement in 1920. Community members donated most of the collection's five thousand pieces. Only in recent years has the museum adopted acquisition, collection management, and conservation policies. The director works full time but is paid at three-quarters time; there are no other paid staff. The museum lacks storage facilities and conservation materials, and virtually all of the collection is shown in the galleries (Danvers, 1992, pp. 18–20).

In contrast, the largest museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City, and the Smithsonian Institution, have several thousand employees and budgets in the hundreds of millions of dollars. A few U.S. museums have endowment funds reaching one billion dollars or more. The J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu and Los Angeles, California, is a subsidiary of the

Getty Trust, a U.S. charitable foundation that has in excess of \$4 billion in assets. At the other extreme, the Waterloo Area Farm Museum, in Stockbridge, Michigan, has an annual operating budget in the neighborhood of \$15,000 and an all-volunteer staff. In the late 1980s, the total value of U.S. museum endowments was \$14 billion; 93 percent was accounted for by large museums and 76 percent by art museums (American Association of Museums, 1994, pp. 87–88).

Hours of operation. Some museums are open to the public only a fraction of the year, and others, like the Smithsonian Institution, are open eight hours each day, every day of the year except Christmas. Sixty percent of U.S. museums are open every week of the year, and fewer than 1 percent are open only by special arrangement or appointment. One-third are open less than thirty hours a week, 44 percent between thirty-one and fifty hours per week, and one-quarter in excess of fifty hours per week.

In addition to all these operational differences, of course, museums vary by their subject matter: there are aquariums, planetariums, botanical gardens, and zoos; science and technology centers, art museums, and children's museums; nature centers and natural history and ethnographic museums; historical museums, and many small specialty museums with narrowly defined collections (see "Types of Museums" at the end of this chapter).

The range and diversity of museums in the United States have given rise to dozens of specialized museum associations, organized in different regions, states, and fields of collecting. Given the heterogeneity and variability of museums, the American Association of Museums in 1970 established a museum accreditation process, with procedures and standards that verify that a museum has "achieved and continues to meet generally understood standards of professional performance." By the mid-1990s, approximately 730 of the estimated 8,200 U.S. museums had achieved accreditation status.

What Museums Have in Common

What, then, can be said about most if not all museums? Virtually all museums are organized around collections of art, material culture, or specimens of nature. They share the goals of acquiring and conserving their collections and of interpreting and exhibiting this human and natural heritage to public audiences. They are expected to care for and preserve their collections as a public trust for future generations. The Grand Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, as shown in the photograph on p. 10, exemplifies the distinctive character of museums.

Museums are normally invested in missions that serve the public, and these missions are educational, aesthetic, scientific, or historical. The great majority of museums in the United States are organized as private, nonprofit organizations or as agencies of state and local governments. As nonprofit educational organizations, these museums receive certain privileges and exemptions under



Canadian Museum of Civilization/Musée Canadien des Civilisations, Hull, Quebec. The Grand Hall, shaped to symbolize Raven's Canoe, is a "villagescape" representing Native cultures from Canada's Pacific Coast.

Photo by Harry Foster.

U.S. laws and tax regulations, in return for which they are expected to function as publicly minded educational and public service-oriented organizations.

MUSEUMS EVOLVE

Museums originated among the ancient Greeks prior to the Christian era as scholarly, religious, spiritual, and creative centers, engaging a small number of participants and far removed from everyday life. Our word *museum* comes from the Greek *mouseion*, a temple of the muses—in Greek mythology, goddesses of inspiration and learning and patrons of the arts. One of the earliest museums was built in Alexandria, Egypt, in the third century B.C., by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the most accomplished of the Ptolemaic kings following Alexander the Great. Alexandria was then the preeminent city of learning in the Mediterranean world, and this Ptolemaic museum functioned as a scholar's library, a research center, and a contemplative retreat.

In ancient Rome during the second century B.C., museums became associated with the storage and display of collections acquired in colonial and military campaigns. The instinct for collecting evident throughout human history was elevated by the Romans into a major art form and a systematic enterprise. After imperial wars and conquests, Roman generals returned to Rome, as Fulvius did in 189 B.C., for example, with thousands of bronze and marble statues and gold and silver pieces, the plunder of military campaigns. The center of Rome itself became a museum, filled with objects from subdued nations (Ripley, 1978; Alexander, 1979).

During the medieval period in the West, the Roman Catholic Church became a preeminent intellectual center and patron of the arts. A significant art collection, overseen by Pope Sixtus IV, had been amassed in Rome by the end of fifteenth century. The period of the Renaissance in Italy, beginning in the late fourteenth century, marked the rise of humanism and secularism as leading ideas in society. Renaissance thought reflected strong interest in the study of nature and in inventiveness and artistry. By the sixteenth century, Italy was home to great private collections and museum-like buildings that housed botanical and zoological specimens, historical artifacts, skeletal remains, curios, shells, coins, bronzes, sculptures, and paintings. Collections depicting the range of world habitats and cultures were also highly sought after, becoming known in the eighteenth century as *cabinets of curiosities*. The term applied to the collections as well as to the spaces and furniture in which they were housed (Ripley, 1978). Far-ranging, encyclopedic collections developed out of these earlier collections, and today they are found in great international museums such as the Louvre, the British Museum, the Hermitage, and the Prado.

Collections in modern Europe and in England were assembled by kings and nobility, by the established churches, and later by wealthy merchants. Housed

in palaces and grand private residences, they were open to highly selective audiences. Science and natural history collections were available to scholars but off-limits to most people. The first university museum was Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum, opened in 1683. The museum's literature identifies it as "the oldest surviving purpose-built museum building in the world" and the earliest museum open to public visitors as well as scholars.

The public museum, open to people regardless of rank or class, arose first in London in the eighteenth century. Sir Ashton Lever, a country gentleman and graduate of Oxford, collected live birds and, later, shells, fossils, stuffed birds, costumes of native peoples, weapons, and every variety of exotic object. Having outgrown the space of his ancestral home, he opened a public museum in London in 1774. An admission fee was charged to cover costs and to regulate the number and manner of visitors. Lever's experience with visitors, however, was adverse, and he eventually put this notice in a London newspaper: "This is to inform the Publick that being tired out with the insolence of the common People . . . I am now come to the resolution of refusing admittance to the lower class except they come provided with a ticket from some Gentleman or Lady of my acquaintance" (Ripley, 1978, p. 32).

The tension in museums between serving scholars, connoisseurs, and savants on the one hand and encouraging public learning on the other grew in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, museums gradually evolved into broader, public-minded institutions. In the transition stage, museums often set aside special hours or times of the year for ordinary people to visit. The British Museum, for example, opened its doors to the public in 1759, at least to visitors with proper identification, between the hours of 11 A.M. and noon. The Louvre in 1793, following the French Revolution, opened its doors to the public three days each week.

Museum Development in the United States

The pattern of museum development in the United States differed from the pattern characteristic of museums in Europe. Although there are exceptions on both continents, many European museums were created as instruments of ruling classes and governments to celebrate and glorify the national culture and the state. The great majority of U.S. museums, by contrast, were created by individuals, families, and communities to celebrate and commemorate local and regional traditions and practices and to enlighten and entertain people in local communities. The earliest American museums emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century in places like Charleston, South Carolina; Salem, Massachusetts; and Philadelphia.

U.S. museum development was influenced by the ideas of leaders such as Charles Willson Peale in the late 1780s in Philadelphia; George Brown Goode at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., in the late nineteenth century; and

John Cotton Dana in Newark, New Jersey, in the early twentieth century. Others like Philip Youtz, director of the Brooklyn Museum; Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Henry Watson Kent, the Metropolitan's supervisor of instruction; and Theodore Low, the Metropolitan's head of education, also exerted major influence.

Charles Willson Peale, the celebrated early American painter and portraitist, opened an art and natural history museum in Philadelphia between 1782 and 1786. Its explicit purpose was to instruct and engage ordinary citizens who lacked formal education (Brigham, 1995). Peale's museum was open certain evenings of the week in order to reach working people. He advertised that the extended evening hours were "to accommodate those who may not have leisure during the day light to enjoy the rational amusement which the various subjects of the Museum afford." Burgiss Allison, a supporter of Peale's museum, explained this mingling of reason, education, and entertainment: "With regard to amusements . . . it must be evident to every person of the least reflection . . . that if we can contrive to amuse whilst we instruct, the progress will be more rapid and the impression much deeper" (Brigham, 1995, pp. 19-20; see also pp. 1-5).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art offered lectures for adults beginning in 1872, two years after its founding. Boston's Museum of Fine Arts inaugurated adult education classes in 1876. George Brown Goode, director of the Smithsonian's earliest national museum, advanced the view that museums should serve the broad public and have clear educational purposes. He wrote: "The museums of the future in this democratic land should be adapted to the needs of the mechanic, the factory operator, the day laborer, the salesman and the clerk, as much as to those of the professional man and the man of leisure. . . . No museum can grow and be respected that does not each year give additional proofs of its claims to be considered a center of learning" (Boyer, 1993, p. 18). Goode pioneered in making museums accessible by creating the first explicitly educational exhibitions, with labels and texts to enlighten the public.

John Cotton Dana, founder of The Newark Museum, continued in Goode's path and became the leading proponent in the early twentieth century of audience-, community-, and education-centered museums. He wrote: "We believe that it will pay any community to add to its educational apparatus a group of persons which shall form the staff of a local institution of visual instruction. . . . [And museums] will transform themselves slowly into living organisms, with an abundance of teachers, with ample workshops, classrooms and spaces for handling the outgoing and incoming of objects" (Dana, [1917] 1988, pp. 7-8). His "new museum" made special efforts to attract young people.

Some urban American museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had missions to help train workers in the arts and in design and engineering skills that were needed in the industrial era. In Ohio, the Toledo

Museum of Art and the Cleveland Museum of Art established training programs. The charter of the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1913 stated, among its objectives, to “maintain an industrial training school” (Newsom and Silver, 1978, p. 14; see also pp. 13–26). This also reflected the nation’s growing interest, converging with the new philosophy of progressive education, in self-improvement, self-teaching activities, and informal and supplementary adult education practices.

America’s industrial and mercantile leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—Andrew Carnegie in New York City and Marshall Field and Julius Rosenwald in Chicago, among others—founded museums and libraries in the spirit of noblesse oblige for the explicit purpose of reaching lower-income and working-class people and immigrants who lacked formal education and strong acculturating influences. In Chicago, Field, Rosenwald, and other municipal leaders conceived a series of museums that were situated in the city’s public parks. Both the museums and the parks were intended to be *people’s parks*, reaching the majority of citizens who were unschooled or out of school; combining recreation, education, and nature study and offering wholesome, all-encompassing leisure-time activities.

Many U.S. history museums and historic sites developed from the bottom up, as a result of community initiative that sought ways to memorialize a community’s history and celebrate its traditions and achievements. No list of influences shaping U.S. museums would be complete without mention of the showman P. T. Barnum (1810–1891), founder of the jumbo-scale circus. Barnum was in the museum business as well, opening museums in New York State and in the Midwest. He combined entertainment, adventure, and exotic experiences with an appeal to natural curiosity, if not enlightenment. Rubens Peale, son of Charles Willson Peale and manager of the Peale Museum in Baltimore between 1822 and 1837, was one of the first museum leaders to raise concerns about competitors. The family’s archives preserve a comment he wrote in 1822: “Since the opening of the circus, I have been completely deserted” (Peale family papers, Peale Museum, Baltimore, Maryland).

Changes in Museum Design and Presentation

The design of early museum galleries and exhibitions reflected the learning of the people who enjoyed access. As long as museums embraced mainly scholars, connoisseurs, savants, and the wealthy, their collections and exhibitions required little explanation or interpretation. A typical nineteenth-century natural history museum, for example, was filled with cabinets and cases containing artifacts and art, ethnographic objects, specimens, and other natural objects, mixed together in a seemingly haphazard arrangement. Nineteenth-century museums provided little or no historical or contextual information; they held esoteric collections for the initiated. The absence of descriptive, contextual, and interpretative materials posed no great hindrance to this narrow band of visitors.

This did not mean, however, that museums lacked a point of view. Nineteenth-century natural history museums in London, New York, and elsewhere embodied a concept of history—history seen as moving along a providential path. The collections were regarded as records of human and moral progress, evolution from the primitive to the civilized—a notion clearly reflecting the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Museums evolved in other respects as well. The earliest history museums collected objects that reflected aristocratic or elite ideas, symbols, and culture. History museums typically collected and exhibited busts and paintings of heroes and famous historical figures and artifacts and specimens depicting great battles and historical events. Their purpose was to inspire by example as well as to enlighten. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (named the National Museum of History and Technology until 1980) was one of the first history museums to collect and show objects depicting everyday life and to interpret history from the point of view of ordinary citizens. Its exhibits of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America featured the implements and objects of everyday life, ordinary dwellings, common religious practices, and letters and documents recounting the daily lives of citizens. In similar fashion, history museums in the United States in the late twentieth century have evolved along one further path: collecting artifacts, artworks, and records reflecting on different cultures and ethnic communities, particularly "minority" and newly emerging communities.

Museum presentations today feature a variety of new elements—electronic and interactive media (videos, CD-ROMS, computer interactives, the Internet); hands-on tools and demonstrations; and storytelling, theatrical, dance, and musical performances. These interactive and multimedia museum presentations reflect recently developed educational concepts emphasizing multiple intelligences, diverse learning styles, and a range of culturally defined learning modalities.

Historically, museums were seen as authoritative custodians and interpreters of culture and knowledge. The presumptive authority of museums resided in their rare and authentic collections and in the curator's and scholar's expertise in interpreting the collections. By the latter decades of the twentieth century museums have for the most part evolved along egalitarian, democratic, culturally diverse, and popular lines. Collections, always the core of museums, now coexist with narratives and educational programs as prime museum values. Exhibitions increasingly offer multiple perspectives. The evolution of central museum concepts—from collections to information and education and from learning to experiences—has reflected a gradual shift from control by experts (curators, educators, scholars) to control by audiences. Museums traditionally controlled their collections and interpretations thereof, whereas audiences control their own experiences. Hence marketing, with its focus on the museum experience from the point of view of visitors and consumers, reflects the latest stage in museum

evolution. As museums evolve further, new ways of balancing disparate and sometimes conflicting elements and aims must be found.

SUMMARY

Museums offer distinctive things not found in other places, notably the enjoyment of rare and authentic objects, the sensory experience of encountering items of beauty and interest, and knowledge deriving from the research and scholarship behind collections and exhibitions. Although the presence of tangible objects characterizes virtually all museums, in many other respects museums can be as different from one another as they are collectively from movie houses, theme parks, and sports arenas. Museums differ in size and in resources, in numbers of staff and hours of operation. Museums also differ in architecture, facilities, and collections, exhibitions, and services. Historically, museums have evolved from elite organizations accessible only by the nobility to broader-based public institutions. Museums have also redefined their *raison d'être* along more egalitarian, democratic, and consumer-oriented lines. Museums, for much of their history, were valued primarily for the care and preservation of their rare collections as keepsakes for future generations. Because collections were the dominant focus, museum offerings and the museum-going experience were controlled by museum keepers and experts. But by the early twentieth century, the focus of museums had shifted toward informational and educational resources, programs, and purposes. An even more evolved view is that a museum's main function is to provide appealing and memorable museum experiences. The move from information and learning toward an experience in a distinctive environment is also a move toward giving museum "consumers" a much greater voice in defining museum quality and service.



TYPES OF MUSEUMS: A SURVEY

Museums are organizations with different collections, missions, and objectives. Here we review the major types of museums, their historical developments, their characteristics, and the issues faced in each group.

Art Museums

Art museums have evolved into broad, public institutions more slowly than have science and history museums. Aesthetic norms, connoisseurship, taste, and restrictions on entry worked to limit participation, but art museums are

evolving toward openness and inclusivity, with education receiving increasing emphasis. So-called blockbuster exhibitions have generally proved to be means of attracting large audiences and raising the visibility of art, artworks, and artists.

Art museums, it can be argued, have two audiences to deal with. The first consists of the patrons, collectors, and donors who contribute the artworks and other resources that sustain the museums. The high prices of works of art reinforce patrons' and collectors' status so that a high level of involvement in art museums symbolizes or even confers high social status. The second audience consists of visitors, members, and the general public. Correspondingly, art museums evidence a division of labor between patrons' and visitors' needs and interests; for example, art museums typically have extensive programs catering to donors and patrons. Art museums are building collections that go beyond the traditional emphasis on the fine arts—paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints. Increasingly, they are collecting decorative arts and crafts, design materials, architecture, and photography.

Art museums have the challenge of acquiring artworks that are costly and precious. They compete in this with other museums and with corporations and wealthy private collectors. They also compete with one another for gifts and donations. Art museums also have active culling and deaccessioning policies and use the funds obtained from sale or transfer to reshape their collections. In some museums, purchasing a costly work of art is viewed as trading off conservation, education, and museum services. The alternative uses of an art museum's budget can become a highly charged issue.

Art museums face a particular challenge in attracting visitors. The public is less likely to identify with the arts than with other areas of knowledge such as science. Art history, studio arts, and art education are experiencing cutbacks. The absence of awareness among young people in the value of the fine arts can lead to inattention later in life. Museums therefore have an added role in education. An excellent example of museum education in the arts is the Visual Learning Center at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. It has computer-interactive screens with information about the paintings, drawings, and prints that hang on the surrounding walls. At one screen a visitor can learn about the element of line in works of art; at another screen, color; at a third, light; and at a fourth, composition. Thus the interactive learning is integrated with and reinforces the visual encounter with the works of art in the gallery.

Art museums can provoke controversy and confusion. Some forms of contemporary art are unfamiliar to broad segments of the public and are distasteful to some people. The creation of art is often associated with individuals who harbor "avant-garde" and sometimes antisocial ideas. The very impulse among artists to push the boundaries of the customary can be interpreted as signs of radicalism, decadence, or disreputability.

Many art museums are entering the electronic information age with great vigor. They view the electronic information highway as a premium distribution channel for reaching large audiences and especially as a link to young people, who are acclimated to computer and video technology. Even small art museums can maintain Web sites on the Internet, thanks to the relatively low cost and the relative abundance in most communities of computer whizzes willing to donate their services. There are risks in the electronic environment, however. Viewing art on a computer screen should not be a substitute for seeing art in museums. Digital images vary in quality and can be manipulated. Museums that put art on the Internet lose control of those images, with repercussions for copyrights and standards. Nevertheless, art images on videotape, film, and CD-ROM are now as widely disseminated as art images in books, and both forms can be of great aesthetic and educational value.

History Museums, History Centers, and Historic Houses and Sites

A survey of public interest in history museums and sites reveals two contrary tendencies—a great potential for public interest and yet level or declining visitorship. “In developed countries,” Victor Middleton (1994) observes, “there has been an extraordinary period of growth of interest in heritage. In part this reflects public interest and demand, in part the interests of supplying organizations dedicated to the conservation ideals. . . . The growth is a manifestation of relatively mature, educated and wealthy societies, able and willing to forgo some part of potential present consumption of resources for the sake of posterity” (p. 6). Kevin Britz (1995) refers to *community memory* in his chronicle of the rise of small-town historical societies and museums. He notes the upsurge in communities’ interest in honoring, recording, and interpreting their past and transmitting local values to future generations. Public interest in history and history museums is reinforced by holidays and commemorative events such as the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial celebration, which sparked the rise of many new history sites and museums.

A major issue for history museums is presentation. Books on a particular historical topic can claim to be comprehensive, and they usually include extensive bibliographies. Lectures are formats for learning a great deal about a particular subject of limited scope, and they often allow the audience to comment or ask questions. Museum exhibitions, however, are necessarily more selective and compressed than books and often less responsive to audience inquiries than lectures with a question-and-answer period. The need to compress a large amount of information and interpretation into a historical exhibition that is limited in size and space can lead to charges that the exhibition is biased, excludes certain perspectives, or favors certain groups over others. History museums are increasingly searching for ways to present multiple perspectives, particularly when controversial topics are involved. They are also investing in surveying

group and community perspectives on important historical topics and providing supplementary resources that visitors can consult for expanded treatment.

As American society and culture become more variegated and splintered, museum curators and historians face pressure to incorporate an ever-greater range of ethnic, cultural, and class perspectives. Inclusiveness is sometimes limited by gaps in museum collections, especially with respect to newcomer or emergent ethnic communities, or a tendency to reflect the views of a particular generation or gender. Thus history museums are being called on to record and represent a common heritage in a given community as well as the singular threads of ethnical, cultural, and generational groups and their degree of integration with or separation from the mainstream. Similarly, history museums are being challenged to deal with relative views, truths, and perspectives and eschew absolute ideas and claims to authority that characterized traditional museums. Community perspectives are being combined with curatorial perspectives. History museums are expected to be celebratory in portions of their exhibitions but are also expected to provide critical perspectives on other (or even the same) topics. Historical interpretation is itself subject to continuous rethinking and reanalysis; such "revisionism" is frequently a source of controversy among tradition-minded groups. Historians point out that scholars in other fields like biology, medicine, and economics are expected routinely to revise and upgrade their knowledge, yet historians are expected to stick to conventional interpretations, no matter how outdated by subsequent findings they may be. History museums in particular can be challenged by stakeholder groups who see their role as guardians of tradition and convention.

Two new directions in history museums have had a major impact. History museums, especially history centers, are engaging in the study and interpretation of contemporary issues and their effect on families, communities, cities, and society as a whole. They are employing their historical resources to illuminate contemporary conditions—and in some cases they are creating exhibitions and public programs that point the way to solving problems. History museums and centers are also experimenting with new presentation methods. One aim is to connect visitors with historical experience by linking broad historical processes and events to historical forces within their own communities and families. Museums are using personal as well as narrative elements to make history more current and engaging. An example is the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City. Visitors view several restored rooms with the original furnishings, photographs, and letters and diaries.

Science Museums and Science and Technology Centers

Science museums and science and technology centers are experiencing high rates of increase in museum visitorship. There are several reasons for this. Communities, school districts, and corporations have supported science museums as

education centers and as training grounds for skill building among young people. Science museums can supplement the limited science resources available in schools. They offer, to a greater extent than other museums, hands-on, interactive tools and exhibits of particular appeal to young people. Science museums and centers are process oriented rather than object oriented; this gives them greater contact with visitors and more audience involvement than most other types of museums.

Science museums and centers are experimenting with techniques and approaches for communicating science to a broad-based public. They have led the way in building IMAX and Omnimax theaters. San Francisco's Exploratorium pioneered in the use of interactive exhibitions, hands-on tools, and demonstrations of scientific inquiry and methods. The Carnegie Science Center, in Pittsburgh, offers science programs targeted to different age groups. The Maryland Science Center and the Shedd Aquarium offer unusual experiences with science and nature, including overnights and science camps. Science and technology centers have excelled in designing environments that are dynamic looking, colorful, and visually and aurally inviting. Science centers are relatively free of the obligation to maintain large collections (although many have collections); their objects are typically instruments and tools for doing science. Because they demonstrate so many things in so many ways, science museums and centers use more volunteers and staff, which requires training and quality control. Science museum and center managers say that one of the thorniest problems is maintaining interactive and computer equipment in working order. Active use by young people and also inadequacies in design and engineering result in frequent breakdown of the hands-on and interactive equipment.

Natural History, Anthropological, and Ethnographic Museums

Natural history museums are perhaps the most museum-like of museums. They tend to have enormous collections requiring a great deal of attention, care, and conservation—meaning large staffs and high operating costs. Nearly 60 percent of objects and specimens in permanent museum collections are accounted for by natural history museums. In contrast, science and technology museums account for only 2 percent of total permanent collections; art museums, just under 2 percent; and historical museums, approximately 12 percent (American Association of Museums, 1994, pp. 55–57).

Because the largest natural history museums originated as research organizations, employing scientists and scholars, their missions have emphasized research as well as exhibitions and programs for the public. The result has often been tension in allocating resources; balancing scholarly, curatorial, and public service roles; and integrating professional loyalties with museum loyalties.

Exhibitions at natural history museums tend to be longer lasting than those at art and science museums. Because these museums are generally older, their facilities tend to be less modernized, giving some natural history museums a