

# MiD

Why Museums?

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## Why museums?

### Editorial

Michael Gyldendal, Chairman of MiD

Why Museums is the title of the Association of Danish Museums' conference on learning and communication, and one could, of course, reply "why not?" But it should not be obvious why we have museums, it should be a matter of constant debate, and museums professionals should always challenge our *raison d'être*. In this issue of MiD Magasin we have collected some of the papers from the conference. Anne Krebs from Musée du Louvre debates attempts to democratise access to museums.

Museums are often perceived as national public service institutions which should serve all citizens. But it is a well-known fact that the primary users of museums often come from the same third of the population that uses opera, ballet and theatre. A big part of our potential audience simply do not attend our institutions. This is a trait that churches and museums have in common: they are public institutions where supply exceeds demand. Empty churches are at the moment being sold and used for other purposes, and if museums are not being used sufficiently, they may also simply be closed and sold as supermarkets?

Museums have for a long time now tried to attract new visitors, especially groups that do not normally visit us. Many museums are making exciting projects to entice young people aged 15–25 years to come to museums. They focus on making the visit relevant and appropriate for youngsters. Museums need to try to take our guests seriously by inviting them to participate. But it is not a simple task. During a conference about youngsters and culture a young man said: "when I was a child my parents invited

me to participate in our cooking. But I was always the one peeling potatoes, when I would much rather be the one who were stirring the pot and adding the spices." The Golden Days festival in September 2015 has the title Important Shit. The reason we have museums is also about what "important shit" we put into them. Maybe "Grauballemanden", the bog body that can be seen at the new Moesgård Museum, is not relevant to young people. So the question is: how do we make him relevant? Should we remove him from the exhibition and replace him with something that young people find more interesting? Or should we concentrate on those who already use the museums and make their experience better?

In this issue of MiD Magazine you can read how museums has used crowdsourcing as a means to involve audiences, and how museums engage visitors by letting them be creative and productive at the museums. The educational department is often very important: as Carol Rogers from National Museums Liverpool states: "we believe that museums are fundamentally educational in purpose; places for ideas and dialogue, that use collections to inspire, excite and challenge people," and at Tromsø University Museum youngsters were challenged to reflect on cultural heritage and the role of museums in society. But visiting a museum with your school or educational institution is not a free choice. You are "forced" by your teacher to go. We still have a big challenge to make young people come to the museums by their own free will. And maybe we cannot succeed. Maybe we cannot attract all groups to come to our institutions, but we need to discuss it, because museums are supposed to be open to everybody and everybody should feel invited.

► Postcode project  
Photo © Joann Kushner

## National Museums Liverpool: Open School, Open Museum

Carol Rogers, Executive Director Education and Visitors,  
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National Museums Liverpool is one of the world's great museum organizations.

We hold in trust and safeguard some of the world's greatest museum collections, which are universal in their range. We are core-funded by central UK government, and we are the only national museum service in England based wholly outside London, so we have a unique fourfold role – we are the main museum service for Liverpool and Merseyside; the largest cultural organisation in the North West of England; and we operate at both national and international levels.

Having played a pivotal role in the cultural, educational, and economic life of Liverpool and the North West for more than 150 years, our success can be measured in terms of how well we combine this local and regional role with our national and international responsibilities.

### **Mission-led**

Our mission is to be the world's leading example of an inclusive museum service.

We believe in the concept of social justice; we are funded by the public and in return we strive to provide an excellent service to the whole of the public. We believe in the power of museums to change people's lives. We work hard to be a free museum service, and focus our venues, exhibitions and education resources to reach out, represent and connect with the diverse needs of our local communities.



We believe that museums are fundamentally educational in purpose; places for ideas and dialogue, that use collections to inspire, excite and challenge people.

#### Value-driven

The Liverpool City Region is home to 1.5 million people, which includes around 327,000 children in 191,000 families. The region has experienced significant deprivation and income inequality for many years. A high percentage of people are living on low incomes, with limited job prospects for adults claiming social benefit. There is a lack of basic skills in reading, writing, and communication generally and a mistrust of officialdom and of institutions. The incidence of abuse of alcohol, drugs and other stimulants is high, as is debt, which creates need, illness and stress.

Our mission and values are influenced by this, but we are careful not to make the mistake of categorising all people living in challenging circumstances as though they were a homogenous group or class. A deprived upbringing does not inevitably result in family life that is devoid of love, warmth, support and hope, and we do not label our stakeholders in this way. Nonetheless, these are the recurring issues that National Museums Liverpool needs to understand if we are to make any impact in disadvantaged communities.

#### Effective Partnership

We operate a mission-led and value-driven approach to education engagement, which is not a response to the availability of project funding that we see so often, but a rich and far-reaching strategy that aims to deliver great content, inclusive participation, and imaginative programming. Our venues are bursting with stimulating concepts, ideas, and images and it is imperative to us that the needs of Liverpool families and children are central to our educational purpose and social mission.

We also understand that museums exist in a world where society no longer wants to be a passive consumer. People of all ages can now make movies on their mobile phones, take photos all day long, promote their ideas on-line, and blog about their local and global cultural experiences. We live in an age of immense productivity that demands constant and immediate access to cultural heritage. Our audience is motivated to be the designer, the curator, the producer, and the promoter.

This presents both opportunities and challenges for the museum sector to learn how to connect, to listen and to understand how people wish to engage with their culture and personal, often sensitive histories. Museums need to

strive to meet the needs of education providers and participants, to take them on new journeys as participants, audiences, teachers, leaders, and creators of culture. Engagement should begin at an early age, with the sole aim of enabling young people to achieve their full potential.

We design our education programmes to support every learning age and ability, encouraging participation from early childhood until later adult life. Our education content is informed by the UK's national curriculum for children aged 4–18 years and aligns with the UK's social agendas for adults and older people. We design our education resources collaboratively with other agencies (education, health, cultural and voluntary, and with networks that support young people) to ensure they are relevant and accessible.

#### Positive Challenge

To develop a sustainable relationship with young people as regular users and advocates of our museums, for the rest of their lives, is our ultimate goal. This work is not easy and there is evidence that our museums and Liverpool's wider cultural heritage cannot reach everyone. The hard fact is that some communities – those on the margins of mainstream society – are exceedingly difficult to engage with. The Mayor of Liverpool's Education Commission (From Better to Best, 2013) identifies that education across Liverpool has improved over the last decade, and that the achievements of young people have improved. The author of the report (Baroness Estelle Morris) notes that the city has changed during its long, hard journey to lift aspirations, to improve support for schools, and to raise standards of attainment. The report identifies that Liverpool is in competition with other towns and cities to develop new national industries that require different skills, and that the need for a well-qualified workforce is even greater against the backdrop of reduced government budgets and resources.

#### Positive Action

We believe that we are well placed to support Liverpool's ambition to provide every child with the best possible education, as we bring to the table a substantial and unique education offer that has the capacity to positively engage young people with their local heritage and Liverpool's significant global history. To achieve this we have secured representation at senior planning forums within our local authority children's services departments and at school networks locally and nationally. We regularly talk to education strategy leaders to raise awareness of our work and to establish dialogue and consultation that ensures



▲ ISM campaign zone - Transatlantic Slavery

we maintain a clear understanding of the challenges and shifting landscapes faced by communities in general and by young people in particular.

#### A Suitcase of Stories

A case study in reaching out to a marginalised social group is A Suitcase of Stories; an education outreach programme targeting children aged 3–5 years, living in recognised disadvantaged areas of the city. The project was developed to connect families with our major art gallery (Walker Art Gallery) to raise awareness of our free services for very young children and to encourage their families to visit the Gallery.

A Suitcase of Stories links the Gallery's fine art collection with a nursery school setting. The 'suitcase' contains a wide range of creative play activities reflecting the Gallery's art collection, designed to support teachers and parents with the development of their children's early childhood speaking and listening skills. The programme has proved to be very popular with nursery schools, and outcomes include: a positive change in the children's communication, language and literacy skills (intonation, sentence

structure, story structure and use of new vocabulary); sustained conversations between children; and a growing confidence to participate in group activities with other adults.

"I think this project has been fantastic for the kids; just seeing them there enjoying themselves and telling stories. Since you came into the nursery she makes her own stories up at bedtimes. We even have a go at making new stories up too. She absolutely loves it." Parent at Chatham Nursery

#### Postcode

A project we designed to connect with young people of secondary school age is Postcode, which we delivered in partnership with a documentary filmmaker and photographer. Our aim was to encourage conversations with young people to capture the reasons for them being out on the streets and damaging their own community.

The young people expressed their opinions through photography and film to create eight portraits resembling the 'Old Masters'. The works were exhibited at the Museum of



▲ ISM gallery- Transatlantic Slavery



▲ Suitcase of stories 2

► Postcode project 2  
Photo © Joann Kushner

Liverpool and included text labels designed by the young people to challenge the negative public perception of their neighbourhoods.

“The idea behind Postcode is to take away the prejudices based simply on your clothes and where you live....the ‘old masters’ style is to remind older generations that they were once young too!” Young participant.

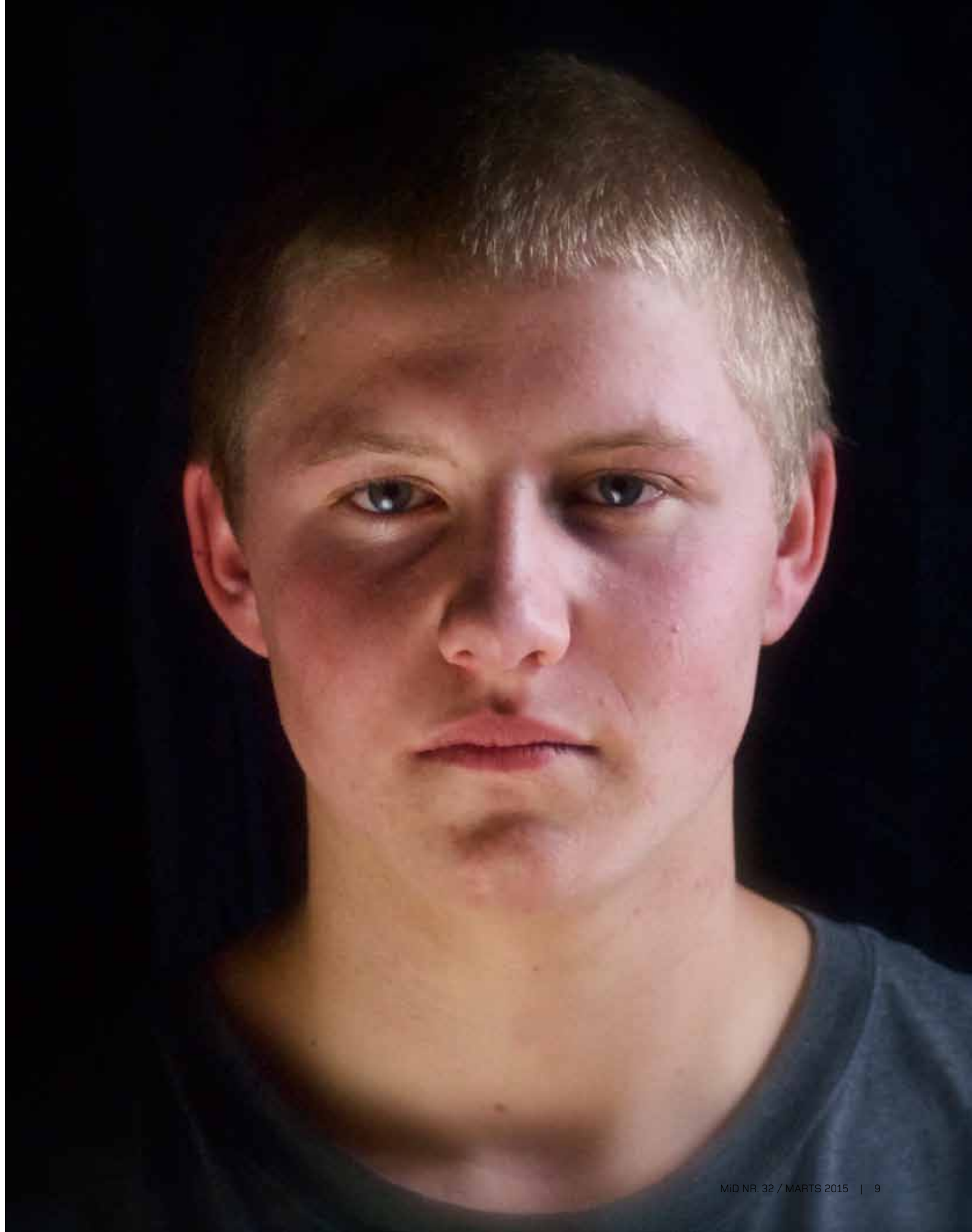
800,000 visitors saw the exhibition and the experience was extremely positive for those involved; the young people gained new media knowledge and skills; a positive attitude towards and appreciation of contemporary painting; and an increased tolerance and ability to judge and discuss the views of others.

#### Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery

Every year, tens of thousands of school children from across the UK visit our International Slavery Museum to participate in the Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery school session, which is designed to develop young people’s understanding of the contemporary issues surrounding equality and diversity.

The session facilitates young people’s knowledge of the origins of racism and discrimination and the serious consequences of racist attitudes. Young people are inspired to explore historical campaigning as a template for their own human rights campaigns, and the Museum provides them with the tools to get their voices heard in society.

After a visit to the Museum a group of students designed a campaign to highlight child slavery in the cotton fields





▲ Suitcase of stories

of Uzbekistan. They accessed the Museum's collection and research resources to understand the facts about child slavery, and designed their own slogan 'Cut Cotton Crimes, Can you feel the Sadness in your Clothes'. Their aim was to challenge society to think about where the cotton in their clothes had come from, and they also designed and produced their own T-Shirts, badges and wristbands, complete with campaign logo.

"Thank you for a wonderful visit to the International Slavery Museum. We had a great time; the students loved being able to touch objects like those normally kept behind glass, and it has really helped the students develop a better understanding of the issues surrounding transatlantic slavery. We are looking forward to coming again next year!" Ellie Vermeulen, Windermere School.

#### Positive Impact

We do not underestimate the challenge of engaging deprived children and young people in museum activity. The

challenge will defeat all but those with iron determination and commitment, as it will defeat those who devote insufficient effort, time, and patience. But we are motivated and confident that our approach has a strong social value and relevance to the most disadvantaged and disengaged children and young people across our region. Our aim is to provide them with a cultural heritage to which they feel connected and of which they feel proud, and to foster a belief in and ambition for a future that they may have felt was beyond their reach.

We measure our impact through new school partnerships, diverse education activity, and high levels of participation – during and beyond the school day. Our success is shared and articulated by our local schools, external education providers, and regional and national government departments. The measure of which we are most proud is the increase in the number of schools and young people visiting our venues: from 30,000 visits in 2004 to 170,000 visits in 2014.

## Museum Ethics and Museum Change

Dr. Janet Marstine, School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, [jm423@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:jm423@leicester.ac.uk)

How might a learning officer choose between a long-term bespoke programme that has the potential to improve the lives of a dozen marginalised community members and a blockbuster that will substantially raise visitor numbers but not encourage visitors to challenge their assumptions? How should a conservator weigh up an offer of corporate sponsorship for the cleaning of an important work with the stipulation that, in return, the museum give permission for the corporation to use that work in an ad campaign? How does a curator consider the sensitivities of diverse audiences when collecting, exhibiting, and interpreting work that might be offensive to some?

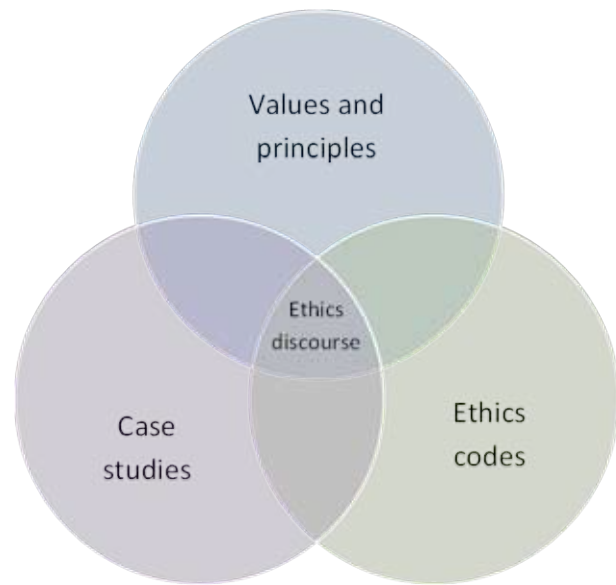
In our rapidly changing world museums face increasing demands to engage with complex ethics issues that go beyond a simple 'right and wrong'. Museum ethics is among the most pivotal concerns of museum professionals in the twenty-first century and is central to all areas of museum work – no museum practitioner is immune. However, the predominant late-twentieth-century approach to ethics as professional practice, which relies on ethics codes revised perhaps once a decade and authored by like-minded individuals, behind closed doors, has proven to

be a constraining factor rather than an enabling process. For museums to reach their transformative potential as agents of change, they must embed in their very fabric a changing concept of museum ethics.

#### The role of codes

Museum professional bodies and the institutions they represent have long relied on ethics codes to define their policy and practice. Introduced by the American Association of Museums in 1925, the UK Museums Association (or MA) in the 1970s and the International Council of Museums (or ICOM) in 1986 (Besterman 2006, 433-435), such codes remain the touchstone of museum ethics today. This dependence, in turn, reflects the prioritisation of skill development and standard setting that characterised the museum and museum studies sectors for much of the last century. The focus on professional ethics has played a significant role in distinguishing public service from personal gain and political interests. Ironically, it has also insulated museums from social concerns in the world around them.

The understanding of ethics as a code has led to a 'legalistic' approach that too often produces reactive and incremental change. Focusing on decrees and prohibitions, ethics codes tend to be static, prescriptive and authoritarian. They secure their influence by claiming the con-



◀ The three spheres of contemporary ethics discourse

sensus of experts. Too often they become a justification for museums to avoid more complex ethics discussions, particularly around social responsibility.

A premise that underpins the development of the new museum ethics is that professional ethics codes alone do not suffice; as a default instrument of ethical practice, they do not adequately equip museums to deal sensitively and fairly with the shifting ethical terrain. Traditional ethics codes represent a particular set of values, and each code encapsulates the moment or context in which it is written so that it effectively becomes ‘fixed’ in time. Ethics codes speak in universal terms with little acknowledgment of diverse and ever-shifting cultural and international contexts. Further, national, international, discipline-based and institution-based ethics codes and conventions too often contradict one another, leaving practitioners in a muddle about how to proceed. And interpretations of any one code can also be distinctly different.

#### A tripartite approach to ethics

Twenty-first-century approaches recognise codes as one part of a larger body of ethics guidance. As applied ethi-

cist James Dempsey explains, ethics discourse emerges from a triad of three distinct, overlapping spheres: codes; values and principles; and case studies (Marstine, Dodd and Jones forthcoming 2015). Through their complementary, interlinked nature, together, the three methods have the potential to empower individuals and groups to engage in ethics discourse leading to informed and responsive ethical decision-making.

#### Values and principles

How does the domain of values and principles contribute to museum ethics discourse? We might think of values and principles as a set of ideals to which to aspire. In the UK public sector, the ideals most commonly cited are the seven principles of public life, or Nolan Principles, set out in 1995 by the Lord Nolan Committee as: selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership; the Museums Association endorses these principles.

Identifying and considering values and principles can benefit a twenty-first-century ethics strategy by establishing a positive and inclusive framework for decision-making and guidance for action. However, values and principles

are abstract and can be both difficult to translate into practice and contested in terms of their implications. Moreover, values and principles do not in themselves help practitioners to unpack their complex and sometimes contradictory meanings in diverse cultural and international settings.

#### Case studies

What is the value of case studies, of analysing a specific ethics issue in context? Case studies have the capacity to spark discourse on how to resolve a particular dilemma. They are practical and relevant, providing an accessible means for diverse participants – including museum publics – to engage by making connections through their personal experiences with ordinary ethics. And case studies can generate diverse interdisciplinary perspectives and understandings. Chris Megone explains that the use of case studies from a range of disciplines can help museums to negotiate difficult issues by encouraging them to move away from the polarised positions of stakeholder groups towards finding points of similarity which can advance equitable solutions (Marstine, Dodd and Jones forthcoming 2015). How can medical ethics inform museums’ treatment of human remains and vice-versa? How might the ethics of journalism converge with museums’ perspectives on censorship? What kind of dialogue can be fostered between political ethicists and curators developing exhibitions about war? How might environmental studies provide a model to assess the sustainability of museums?

Disagreement is fundamental to unpacking case studies, and constructive conflict is a means of overcoming polarised positions. A process of identifying how and why clashing positions develop can facilitate a shared understanding of common ground. Protagonists on either side of an argument might desire the same outcome, but disagree on how to reach it. Alternately, they might articulate the same view, but frame it within different political or belief systems.

Case studies can foster ethics discourse by moving beyond oversimplified positions of right and wrong to build upon issues of mutual concern. It is important to acknowledge, however, that case studies as a sphere of ethics discourse can lack clear guidance, frameworks, or structure. How case studies may apply to circumstances beyond their specific context may not always be apparent. Marrying case studies to codes and principles helps to illuminate their relevance.

#### Museum ethics and museum change

We are currently on the threshold of change in which the social role and value of museums will become increasingly significant (Museums Association 2013). The new museum ethics is a catalyst that can help museums to cross this threshold. Understanding the confluences among values, case studies, and codes has the potential to help museum practitioners recognise the benefits of self-reflective practice through the lens of the new museum ethics. Clearly, embedding the new museum ethics is challenging work. But regulation per se is not an adequate response to the ethics quandaries of the twenty-first century. In fact, the reliance on codes alone too often becomes a justification for museums to avoid difficult ethics conversations, particularly around moral agency and around issues of power and the sharing of authority and resources.

Engaging in the new museum ethics is a twenty-first-century skill that museum and museum studies leaders must build among students, professionals and communities. The new ethics is a powerful approach to effect organizational change and work toward social responsibility. It has the capacity to strengthen public trust by equipping museum practitioners to deal sensitively and fairly with the shifting ethical terrain, now and in the future, and to involve diverse stakeholders in museum ethics discourse. To develop a level of comfort with ethical decision-making based on a range of social concerns is to accept the complexity and dynamism of ethics discourse that both reflects and shapes the real issues that museums encounter.

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◀ Olafur Eliasson  
Riverbed, 2014 (installation)  
Photo Anders Sune Berg  
Credit: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk

# To move and be moved

## Performative approaches to art and curation

Mette Thobo-Carlsen, postdoc, University of Southern Denmark, mtc@sdu.dk

Today, museums are developing new curatorial and pedagogical strategies based on more dialogic and participatory forms of knowledge production and dissemination in order to strengthen their social engagement with society and their educational functions towards its visitors. This article argues that performative approaches to art, culture, and curation can help us rethink the static model of exhibition as representation and help us qualify alternative modes of looking, interacting, and learning from art. The article describes some of the theoretical reflections behind an ongoing postdoctoral research project that aims at developing an evaluation method for the museums to analyse and evaluate the performative role of the museum visitor and the cultural value of museum participation.<sup>1</sup>

### New Museology

According to cultural anthropologist Sharon Macdonald, the rise of the so-called “New Museology” (Vergo, 1989) that picked up pace in the 1980s and 1990s, “indicates a shift to seeing the museum and the meaning of its content (...) as situated and contextual rather than inherent”

(2006: 2-3). The paradigmatic shift announced in the New Museology entailed a new emphasis on how the museum and its exhibition may be perceived and interpreted in various ways by the visitors.

As museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill also notes, the turn to the visitors as a diverse, plural, and active community or public was a theoretical move away from working with a “transmission model of communication and an expert-to-novice model of teaching” and a turn towards “a more open and forward-looking interpretive paradigm that employs a cultural view of communication involving the negotiation of meaning.” (2006: 367, 262). Hooper-Greenhill describes the new visitor-oriented approach to museum communication and education as based on constructivist knowledge and learning theory (368).

### The performative turn in Curatorial Studies

Today, as I wish to argue, new research methods based on a performative understanding of art and culture are suggesting a more non-normative, critical, perhaps even political approach to the user agency of the visitor and to the curatorial modes of knowledge production and dissemination.

Since the 1960s, art has questioned the modernist ideal of art as mimetic representation and examined the performative nature of art and culture as something situated, embodied, and material and as something shared. In the 1990s, critiques announced a performative turn within art, literature and cultural studies. Cultural artifacts, practices and institutions like artworks, exhibitions and museums were no longer read as ‘texts’, as static symbolic structures with immanent meanings. In a performative perspective, cultural processes and practices are considered more like embodied semiotic activities or performances rooted in specific social spaces, bodies, contexts, and times and with a transformative power to enact, critique, comment on, or even alter institutionalised ways of experiencing and understanding.

This article touches upon two key cultural theorists. Irit Rogoff, for one, explores exhibitions as actual events of knowledge that are enacted, dramatised and performed on-site rather than just illustrated (Martinon, Rogoff 2013: ix). Mieke Bal is another cultural theorist who is most convincingly contributing to the development of new performative research methods regarding the curatorial field. Since the 1990s, she has developed a textual or discursive approach to different everyday cultural expressions, practices, and institutions such as art objects, exhibitions, and museums, combined with a cultural analysis of its performative elements and participatory nature, including an emphasis on the performative element of theoretical reflection and analysis itself.

Bal defines meaning-making as a both contextualised and contextualising activity: “meaning-making is an activity that always occurs within a preexisting social field, and actual power relations: the social frame does not ‘surround’ but is part of the work, working inside it.” Rather than a property that the artwork has: “meaning is an event; it is an action carried out by an I in relation to what the work takes as you.” (2001:5) Meaning-making is a communication performance that, according to Bal, not only constructs social meanings but by definition turns the subjects involved – in this case the curator and the visitor/viewer/reader – into active interpreters and performers of meaning-making practices (Bal, 2006: 529, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 2006: 362).

### The curatorial as an act of critical engagement

The curatorial act of putting art on display, the gesture of exposing, as Bal puts it (exposing etymologically refers to the action of making (the) public) is also a performative act of meaning-making. The curatorial act produces, by definition, a dialogic communication event between an “I”

and a “you” in order to voice certain opinions and judgments, to make them public. More often than not, according to Bal, curatorial discourse is, however, disguised as a monologue, as declaratory and informative (2006: 529).

However, curatorial discourse is never a value-free informative discourse, but is inherently performative in the way it enacts, and often reaffirms, discursive power positions and naturalises conventional modes of knowledge (like biographical or historical data), certain cultural narratives (often nationalist), traditional modes of looking, of interpretation and learning. To Bal and like-minded, all representations are socially, politically, ideologically, institutionally, and technologically mediated: “Exhibitions... must be understood as sites of cultural mediation; and mediation, furthermore, must be understood as a process that partly constructs that which it mediates.” (Macdonald & Basu, 2007: 11)

From a performative perspective, art on display does not only mediate already established cultural narratives, identities, experiences, and meanings, but may at best reconstruct – or reenact – that which it mediates in new or alternative ways. To Irit Rogoff, the curatorial may function as a mode of critical engagement or even activism in the world that cannot be anything but political.<sup>2</sup> A performative take on the curatorial may spark new, alternative ways of looking, of interpretation and learning that combine the dialogic, the participatory and the critical in one gesture. French sociologist Bruno Latour and Austrian artist and curator Peter Weibel (who by the way curated an exhibition called Making Things Public in 2005) suggest that we think of art and art exhibitions as “open fields of enactment and encounter”, as a site for various interactive and performative actions (2007: 107).

The performative turn in aesthetic, cultural and social theory in the 1990s and onwards has allowed us to reconceptualise the curatorial as not just a passive representation of the status quo, but as a performative act of critical engagement in the social world that may unsettle accepted knowledge or practices and produce something new. It has allowed us to reframe the communicative space of the exhibition as a performative space that brings together embodied action and critical thought which, ultimately, constructs a very different kind of museum experience or learning situation “outside structures of representation and objectification”, as Rogoff puts it (2006: 6).

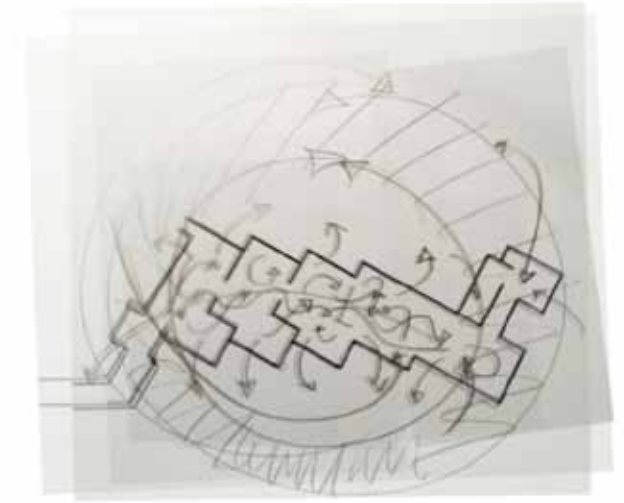
Riverbed is an experimental art exhibition created by Olafur Eliasson and shown at Louisiana, Museum of Modern Art at Humlebæk in Denmark in the fall/winter





◀ Riverbed, 2014 (installation)  
Foto: Anders Sune Berg  
Credit: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk

▶ Olafur Eliasson  
Riverbed, 2014 (installation)  
© 2013 Olafur Eliasson  
Credit: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk



of 2014/15. Riverbed is a site-specific exhibition that re-frames the museum of Louisiana as a performative landscape for situational activities and social experiences. The whole exhibition is, you might say, a participatory artwork. The exhibition is scattered across the entire length of the South Wing of Louisiana, underlining the architectural idea that the museum is to be experienced in an ongoing process, looking out on the physical landscape as you move through the mirrored corridors of the museum. It is also an exhibition that intervenes in the architectural structure of the museum by staging a new and even more challenging walk through an Icelandic riverbed. The difficult walk on the Icelandic stones is a reminder that experiencing art is something sensory, physical, situated, and material and something we often share with others.

#### The performative landscape of Riverbed

The installation of Riverbed, the Icelandic landscape, is a construction or staging of a new space within the white walls of Louisiana. It is less a space for passive contemplation and more a performative landscape for social encounters and physical enactments that makes us, the viewers, aware of ourselves and each other in a slightly different way than usual. We feel that we are together, participating – walking around, looking, smelling, touching, talking – in a staged event.

The exhibition is staged by the artist and the curating team, but without any explanatory texts on the walls, without any authorised footpaths or directions to follow. As participants, we are all on equal footing, so to speak. Riverbed repositions us as viewers in a constructed and staged environment and invites us to play an active role as navigators, way-finders and meaning-makers in order to find our own way through. We are, however, equipped with a sketch in a folder that remaps the museum space of Louisiana as a more open, dynamic and interactive experience site.

The exhibition is obviously not about transmitting or seeking knowledge. It is about constructing a new, more open, dynamic and interactive museum space that leaves plenty of room for individual engagement in the production, negotiation, and sharing of what this means and how this make you feel. Immersed in the art experience, our emotions, moods, sensations, associations, and physical movements become performative activities that may (or may not) move you or empower you to think, feel, sense, or act differently than we usually do in the museum, perhaps even in a new more active, creative, and innovative way. As I see it, the future museum and learning space that the exhibition wishes to sketch out is a less organised, less controlled public art space that allows us to move and be moved in many different ways. It gives us time to relate to each other and to the cultural environment surrounding us in a more affective and perhaps even critical way.

#### Exit

As an exhibition experiment Riverbed is: “about assembling people and things with the intention of producing differences that make a difference” (Macdonald and Basu 2007: 17). Our talks and walks in the exhibition space are in a way made public; the exhibition becomes in some sense about performing democracy in alternative ways. ‘We’, the public, are on display as a “dynamic network of moving and acting subjects” of various ages, professions and desires that just happen to share that moment.<sup>3</sup> The exhibition Riverbed at Louisiana is an attempt to reframe the art museum as a place for more dialogic and democratic conversations between institution and citizen. Riverbed shows that art and the curating of art have the potential to reposition the subject in the world, to move the subject, affectively and politically, to engage and live out the cultural structures of power and knowledge of the museum in more innovative ways.

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<sup>1</sup>This project is part of a larger research project called Towards a New Concept of Culture and New Types of Cultural Communication (CULT) funded by the VELUX FOUNDATION. It runs from January 2014 to January 2017. Head of the project is professor Anne Scott Sørensen, Institute for The Study of Culture, University of Southern Denmark [http://www.sdu.dk/en/om\\_sdu/institutter\\_centre/ikv/forskning/forskningsprojekter/kult](http://www.sdu.dk/en/om_sdu/institutter_centre/ikv/forskning/forskningsprojekter/kult)<sup>2</sup> To read more about the political and democratic potential in art and how it can be staged and actualised in exhibitions, you may consult my article “The participator as museum activist. A performative reading of the political potential of participation in the art exhibition The Model: Palle Nielsen” from December 2014 in the cultural review K & K Kultur og Klasse <http://qjs.statsbiblioteket.dk/index.php/kok/article/view/19840><sup>3</sup> Latour & Weibel defines democracy as a “dynamic network of moving and acting subjects”(2007: 105).



◀ Photo and illustration: Trapholdt

## Art + Museum experience = Wellbeing?

Karen Grøn, Museum Director, Trapholt, kg@trapholt.dk

At the Trapholt Museum of Modern Art and Design, curating with audiences has been a part of the museum's practice and projects since 2001. Surveys and interviews have been conducted throughout the period. In 2014 a large-scale research programme was initiated as part of the "Prism of Sustainability" research hub supported by the Danish Agency for Culture. Here, Trapholt uses the theoretical framework of Psychological Wellbeing in collaboration with its founder Professor Carol Ryff, Wisconsin University. The case considered in the study is the semi-permanent exhibition "YOUR Exhibition," opened in December 2014, where all audiences are invited to curate with the Trapholt collection.

### Why curate with audiences?

Initially, curating with audiences at Trapholt emerged out of a project from the spring of 2001 aimed at teenage mothers. As part of a museum visit, Trapholt invited them into the museum storage to select two pieces of art of their own choice; pieces which had their special interest. It was very stimulating to see that the young mothers, who were not frequent museums visitors, went from being apathetic museum viewers to becoming extremely engaged participants, eagerly finding and choosing the art that resonated most with them.

From the point of view of the art museum, we have a mission to open art up to the wider public, and it seemed that the act of curating opened up the eyes of the participants to the paintings and the qualities of the art works. The dialogue between the participant's private agenda and the agenda of the paintings emerged in a way Trapholt had not experienced in ordinary exhibitions. This made us think that the personal motivation involved in being invited to find, choose and compose art that could represent them and their interests included more than just the experience of being at the centre of the experience. It made the participants not only notice the paintings, but really look and engage with the art, thus reflecting a core mission at Trapholt. From this experience we got the idea that curating could be a powerful tool not only for this special group of young mothers, but for visitors in general – the question was how to establish a sustainable method that did not impose too many extra demands on staff, and how to measure the value and results.

In the autumn 2001 the project Curator for a day was established as an integral part of the exhibition Museum Mausoleum about the Trapholt collection. As part of "ordinary" tours in small galleries, visitors learned about curatorial methods and were invited to curate exhibitions with the museum's artworks and design objects (Grøn 2002, 2005, 2006, and 2007). It was a huge success, and visitor surveys showed that many of them had a great sense of experiencing art in a new and engaging way when

curating. The project was repeated in a developed version in the exhibition What is Art? in 2010. Over the course of the next three years Trapholt conducted three curatorial projects for groups with special needs. The project The Kaleidoscope of Culture for New Danes in 2011-12, "The Youth Bridge" for young people at risk of falling out of the school system in 2012-13, and "Museums and wellbeing" for people who had been ill with stress in 2013-14.

### The need for research

Over the years Trapholt has carried out visitor surveys and interviewed visitors to learn about their experiences when they curate. Every time we found overwhelmingly positive results. However, we still needed to place this information within a larger theoretical and evidence-based framework in order to move the findings from being only about the project as a success to create a deeper understanding of what motivates audiences and how museums and art can potentially influence people's lives. In 2013-15 Trapholt and the National Gallery of Denmark (Statens Museum for Kunst) raised funding from the Danish Cultural Agency to establish a research hub called "The Prism of Sustainability", consisting of the two museums and the possibility to invite two more partners. The aim of the research hub has been to facilitate evidence-based research for peer-reviewed publication by the four museums, and to create a research environment among the museums across traditional museum categories. Here, the

concept of sustainability refers to the need for evidence-based high-level research about interpretation in museums. "Prism" refers to the possibility for taking multiple approaches to each subject when museum researchers meet and share knowledge in a research hub. The Danish National Library and Medical Museion became the two partner museums.

The core elements of the research hub have been: 1) financial resources to invite relevant theoretical expertise from abroad to each hosting museum; 2) funding that allows research assistants to conduct the research; and 3) six compulsory two-day seminars. The research conducted in all four projects has focused on the relationship between exhibition and visitor. The different approaches range from anthropology, design theory to psychology. Each of the researchers invited was asked to join the research hub for a two-day seminar. The researcher entered into an ongoing dialogue with the host museum and acted as lecturer and "critical friend" to the three other projects. The seminars created a scientific environment of new ideas, exchanges, and concrete development of each of the four cases. Each seminar was concluded by a public lecture open to museum professionals; these lectures were coordinated by the ODM. In December an extra seminar was added: here, the participants in "the Prism of Sustainability" group joined a similar British research group at the Tate for a seminar about interpretation and exhibition experience research in museums.

Enriching encounter with a foreign scientific discipline  
 In December 2013 Trapholt contacted Carol Ryff to ask her to be the researcher for the Trapholt project. It appeared that Carol Ryff had just done a survey of about 400 articles written on her theory of psychological wellbeing, and she was pondering the question of why no one had ever worked on the relation between art and wellbeing. She kindly agreed to be part of the Prism of Sustainability project and our partner at Trapholt.

In June Carol Ryff came to Trapholt. On the first day she worked with the Trapholt team. On the second day she ran the workshop with the research hub. The work between Carol Ryff and Trapholt included in-depth discussions about the theory, how it could be used, and what was to be examined. Should we examine the methods of the art museum or the effects of art itself? We ended up further developing Carol Ryff's theory from "Psychological Wellbeing" to "Art Museum -Wellbeing". In the next phase of the collaboration the concept of "Art-Wellbeing" will be added on.

Trapholt received generous funding from the Nordea Foundation to develop a curatorial tool for a presentation of the permanent collection as part of the exhibition YOUR Exhibition (DIN udstilling), which opened in December 2014. In this exhibition Trapholt sums up all the knowledge and reflections from previous projects where we have curated with audiences from 2001 onwards. Before opening the exhibition the museum conducted a study of the "Art-museum wellbeing" of the audience, so that we have some data that predate the opening YOUR Exhibition. The study is repeated in February 2015 with audiences who have visited YOUR Exhibition. The results will be compared to see how being invited to curate influences the visitors' "Art-museum wellbeing".

The exhibition makes it possible to conduct a longitude study of the visitors' experiences, since they share their exhibitions over the Internet. This makes it possible to trace the visitors and ask them whether they would like to participate in a longitude study about how we experience art. Trapholt will continue the study of both "Art-museum wellbeing" and "Art wellbeing" with references to the concept of Psychological Wellbeing over the next four to five years. The first studies are due for publication during spring 2015.

#### Facts

About the Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing  
 The Ryff inventory comprises 84 questions that consist of a series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological wellbeing: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement. The following are example statements from each of the areas of wellbeing measured by the Ryff inventory:

Autonomy: I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.

Environmental Mastery: In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.

Personal Growth: I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.

Positive Relations with Others: People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.

Purpose in Life: Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.

Self-Acceptance: I like most aspects of my personality. Responses are totalled for each of the six categories. For each category, a high score indicates that the respondent has a mastery of that area in his or her life. Conversely, a low score shows that the respondent struggles to feel comfortable with that particular concept.

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▲ It is essential in the work at Trapholt to open the artpieces up in as many ways as possible.  
 Photo Jonas Alstrøm

## The Role of the Humanities in Improving the Human Condition

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Museums serve as repositories of history and culture, but perhaps above all, they are places where endless varieties of human expression can be savoured. How and why do we need such experiences? What, if anything, do museums accomplish for those passing through their collections? Answers to these questions are inherently tied to deeper issues of why our wellbeing as a species requires nourishment from the arts, in all their varied forms.

#### Science and humanities

I approach such queries as a psychologist who has devoted much of her scientific career to studying human

wellbeing – trying to define what it is and understand why some people possess various kinds of wellbeing and others do not. For the past decade, I have studied how experiences of wellbeing matter for personal health and longevity. In the process, I have come to realise that although I have spent my professional life in the sciences, I have always held deep affinities for the humanities – music, art, literature, dance, poetry, film, and of course, nature. The scientific world has engaged my mind, but the humanities have reached into my heart. There is a perplexing distance, remoteness, and separation between these realms, however, that goes beyond my own personal experience, and indeed, seems to characterise contemporary life.

Others have reflected on this divide as well. In 1959, C.P. Snow delivered the Rede Lecture at Cambridge University. Entitled "The Two Cultures," his central thesis, which



◀ A part of the research at Trapholt has been concerned how to promote an exhibition which one has to try in the first place in order to understand the idea at all. Here are some examples of the posters to the exhibition.

Photo Jonas Alstrøm

emerged from his career activities as a scientist and as a novelist, was that there exists a profound mutual suspicion and incomprehension between scientists and humanists. The lecture attracted widespread attention and continued to engage scholars in the decades that followed. In 2003, the celebrated palaeontologist, Stephen Jay Gould, published a book seeking to mend the gap between the sciences and the humanities. Gould's approach was primarily historical and began with an in-depth look at why, since the dawn of the scientific revolution, reflected in the 17th century writings of Francis Bacon, there has been conflict between those who seek knowledge via the scientific method, with its focus on empirical observations of the external world and a search for deterministic laws, and those who seek understanding via intuition, free will, and diverse varieties of expression generated by an unconstrained mind and spirit. Gould argued that each realm has its own rightful and legitimate turf. More importantly, he emphasised that each is inherently limited. Science cannot tell us what values to live by, nor can the humanities explain how our actions impact the planet we inhabit. Efforts to improve the human condition clearly demand both perspectives.

#### Meaningful integration

A recent volume (Slingerland & Collard, 2012), entitled "Creating Consilience: Integrating the Sciences and the Humanities" continues the discussion. The introductory chapter revisits persistent philosophical tensions that have worked against meaningful engagement between humanists and scientists. These include troubling philosophical debates about mind-body dualism, along with humanistic distaste of core scientific practices (reductionism, experimentalism, quantification).

To move beyond these obstacles, the editors called for greater respect of emergent levels of truth and, importantly, for dispensing with disciplinary chauvinism. Perhaps another alternative to bring the humanities and the sciences together is to simply put ponderous philosophical debates on the back burner, in recognition that they will

likely never be fully resolved. Instead, it may be more fruitful to channel efforts into identifying pragmatic, tractable, and meaningful initiatives that will nurture their integration. This is the path for which I wish to advocate by offering two substantive examples. The first comes from the research world that I inhabit, and the second ensues from the museum world, with which I have only recently become engaged.

#### MIDUS

For the past 15 years, I have been leading a major national study of health in the United States, known as MIDUS (Midlife in the U.S.) ([www.midus.wisc.edu](http://www.midus.wisc.edu)). Its overarching purpose is to understand the wide array of factors (biological, psychological, social) that influence health as individuals age from early adulthood through later life. To carry out the work, we have collected comprehensive information on over 12,000 adults, many of whom have been studied for 20 years.

Our scientific findings, which include over 600 publications appearing in top journals in diverse fields, have documented how psychological factors (e.g., personality traits, such as conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism; wellbeing, such as purposeful engagement, personal growth, self-acceptance; emotions, such as happiness, depression, anxiety, anger) and social factors (e.g., quality of ties to spouse, family, friends; giving and receiving of social support) matter for people's health, measured in terms of chronic conditions, functional capacities, and biological risk factors (e.g., stress hormones, inflammatory markers, cardiovascular risks). In addition, our studies have demonstrated that psychosocial strengths are especially important for health under conditions of adversity, such as lacking educational or economic advantage, providing care to an aging spouse or parent, or a disabled child, or negotiating marital transitions such as divorce or widowhood.



◀ ▶ It is the ambition of Trapholt to create a museum for dialogue as well as deeper reflection – depending on the personal needs of each visitor.  
Photo Jonas Alstrøm



### Benefits of the arts

Despite these contributions, which are advancing the integrative science of human health, the MIDUS investigation is inherently limited when it comes to knowledge of people's encounters with the humanities. We know little about whether members of our sample partake of (as consumers, or creators) literature, music, art, dance, poetry, or film. We are equally in the dark regarding the extent to which their lives are enriched by encounters with nature and beauty in the world around them. These omissions illustrate a fundamental problem in contemporary health research: it is preoccupied with the negative.

The central outcomes of interest are illness, disease, or dysfunction, and mechanisms of interest to account for such endpoints are genetic vulnerabilities, encounters with stress, and poor health practices (smoking, drinking, overeating, sedentary lifestyles). What studies of health neglect are influences that likely contribute in important ways to nourishing the human mind and spirit.

There is no compelling reason, other than lack of scientific vision, why such information has been excluded from contemporary health studies. In fact, there is growing awareness that the arts need to be brought into the health arena. A 2013 report provided by the Royal Society for Public Health in the UK was entitled *Arts, Health, and Wellbeing beyond the Millennium: How far have we come and where do we want to go?* It summarised evidence on benefits of the arts for health and public health policy. The report further highlighted the potential role the arts can play in professional education (medical training) as well as

in therapy, healthcare, and community settings. Numerous case studies were provided, along with enriching personal reflections about how the arts can interact with health.

### The museum experience

The divide between the arts and the sciences can also be approached from the other direction – namely, beginning with endeavours in the humanities and considering how they might be enriched by science. This possibility brings me back to the topic of museums and how they contribute to the lives of those who pass through them. My thinking herein was stimulated by participating in a conference at the Trapholt Museum of Modern Art and Design in March of 2014. Karen Grøn, Director of Trapholt, invited me to assist in formulating research plans to investigate how the museum experience might influence psychological wellbeing. The occasion was enticing for me, as it signalled a return to my longstanding interest in how the arts matter in our lives.

I used the visit to Trapholt to reflect on how encounters with art might affect people. For some, the museum experience might provide a place of refuge from suffering in their lives; for others, the exposure to art might offer inspiration, or provocation, or simply entertainment. Specific to my research on psychological wellbeing, I probed whether encounters with art might help us to better know ourselves (self-acceptance), or to find meaning and direction in our lives (purpose in life), or to make better use of our talents (personal growth), or to live according to our own values and principles (autonomy), or to deepen our

social ties (positive relations with others). It is wonderful to see that the Trapholt research group has made excellent progress carrying these ideas forward. I would also note that the preceding report from the Royal Society for Public Health included a section on Culture and Heritage, which considered case examples based in museums and galleries that were linking the arts to health.

### Synergistic collaborations

In summary, now is an auspicious time to forge deeper connections between the humanities and the sciences. On the one hand, there appears to be a receptiveness on both sides that is built around concrete targeted objectives. These have the potential to replace longstanding suspicions and enmity between the two realms with promising, synergistic collaborations.

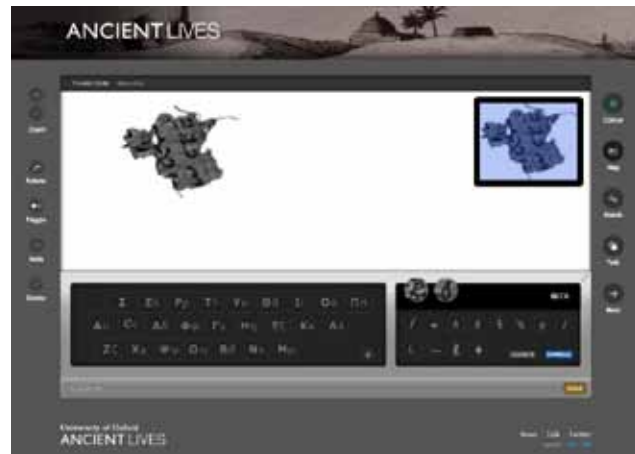
On the other hand, there is an imperative afoot, underscoring the contemporary need for such integration. A recent survey by the National Endowment for the Arts in the U.S. (Cohen, 2013) showed that only one out of every three Americans visited an art exhibit or attended a performing arts event in 2012. That figure represented a significant drop since the last survey in 2008. Others are now questioning whether we have entered a "posthumanist" era (Wieseltier, 2015) that has left behind the basic values and practices of humanism, with its ideals of personal cultivation by means of study and aesthetic experience.

Museums, I would underscore, have pivotal roles to play in such personal cultivation because they can elevate our

understanding of ourselves and broaden our vision of our capabilities. As such, they offer critical nutrients for good lives, which collectively pave the way toward good societies. What contemporary science can do is to help document how this process works – that is, how the humanities can serve to improve the human condition.

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▲ Image 1. The keyboards for 'Ancient Lives' include sample letters and symbols. The 'Beta' examples are visible on the keyboard in the right of this image.



▲ Image 2. <http://wd3.herokuapp.com/pages/AWD000106s>: OWD data digger, a private resource for the project team. Access available upon request to the National Archives, Kew or the Imperial War Museum.

# Crowdsourcing Text Transcription

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Handwritten manuscript materials contain a vast amount of information that is still largely not machine-readable. Partly because of the limitations of handwriting recognition technology, and partly due to the expense of cataloguing materials at item level, most museums, heritage and library institutions do not have the resources to create in-depth catalogues of their manuscript holdings. Such a task would require cataloguers to read and extract information from every page of material contained in their collection. The scope of this challenge means that a great deal of valuable information currently remains locked within manuscript pages, where it is essentially hidden from academics and interested lay people alike. Crowdsourcing offers one route to unlocking this data. It

is not a panacea, but if used carefully, crowdsourcing can solve some of the challenges inherent in cataloguing non-machine readable data.

Zooniverse is a world-leading academic crowdsourcing organization that designs tools to tackle the most pressing challenges of large datasets in the sciences and the humanities.<sup>1</sup> Since 2007 it has launched and sustained several projects in the humanities that harness volunteer effort to gather structured metadata as well as manuscript transcriptions. These text-based projects range from character-by-character transcription using a keyboard, as in Ancient Lives ([ancientlives.org/](http://ancientlives.org/)), to full-text manuscript transcription using free-text boxes, as in the case of a new project currently under development with Tate Britain (London), provisionally titled Transcribe Tate. See image 1.

Transcribe Tate will focus on twentieth-century British artists' archives. Several Zooniverse text-based projects fall between the extremes of character-by-character transcription and full-text transcription. They include Old Weather ([oldweather.org/](http://oldweather.org/)) launched in 2010, and Operation War Diary ([operationwardiary.org](http://operationwardiary.org)) launched in 2014, which ask volunteers to tag and extract metadata from manuscript material using a combination of marking tools, drop-down menus and free-text entry boxes. Although many of these tasks are complex and demanding, volunteers on Ancient Lives have contributed over 1.5 million papyri transcriptions; Old Weather volunteers have transcribed 2.63 million weather records from 450,000 navy logbook pages in four years; and Operation War Diary contributors have transcribed over 101,000 war diary manuscript pages in one year.

Perhaps surprisingly, many of the design principals underpinning humanities projects at Zooniverse have their origins in lessons learned from designing projects in the fields of astronomy, ecology and climatology. Zooniverse began with a single project called Galaxy Zoo ([galaxyzoo.org/](http://galaxyzoo.org/)), which launched in July 2007. Galaxy Zoo invited members of the public to process some one million images of galaxies from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey into two types, spiral and elliptical, a task that would have taken one person at least three years of round-the-clock effort to complete. The ~60,000 thousand strong crowd of volunteers who participated in the first ten days of the project not only submitted eight million classifications in that time; in less than a year ~100,000 volunteers had classified each image an average of 38 times, as opposed to once, thus rendering excellent quality data for each image.<sup>2</sup> Crowds have the power to process data quickly, and to a high standard.

The success of Galaxy Zoo led to the foundation of the Zooniverse and the launch of nearly 50 new projects in astrophysics, biology, climate science, and the humanities in the last eight years. Zooniverse now has over 1.275 million registered users, and works in partnership with over four hundred academic researchers, librarians, archivists, and museum specialists around the world.

Over the past eight years, the developers and researchers involved in Zooniverse have accrued extensive experience of creating user interfaces that facilitate lay participation in the sciences and humanities, that produce good data, and that provide pleasant user experiences. Four basic principles drive Zooniverse research and project design. First, and foremost, all projects must contribute to real research. Second, volunteers should not be asked to per-

form tasks that could be performed better by a computer or machine. Third, tasks should, ideally, be presented in a way that is accessible to a wide range of people: from young to old; to partially sighted; and, increasingly, in a range of languages. Finally, each classification or transcription task is performed by more than one person (as many as 80 in some science projects, and between three and seven for transcription projects).

Multiple volunteers' responses are aggregated and a consensus derived from their responses. For example, if 80 people see an image in Snapshot Serengeti, and 70 agree that it contains an image of one zebra standing and one zebra resting, the other 10 respondents' classifications will be deemed less correct or incorrect. The individuals' responses and their aggregated responses are checked by experts who use the data in editions, academic papers, library catalogues, scientific catalogues, data papers and so on.<sup>3</sup>

The image 2 shows the tags for a page in the 1st Division 1/9 Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary (Operation War Diary). Each tag contains drop-down text or free text, and the numbers in parentheses indicate how many users placed the same tag. The consensus interface (an example of which can be seen on the image below) also has a text output option, which allows researchers and our project partners at The National Archives (Kew) and the Imperial War Museum (London) to see the tag information in text as well as image form. See image 2.

## Transcribe Tate: Full-text transcription design and challenges

In 2015, Zooniverse, in partnership with Tate Britain, will launch its first full text transcription project. This project has not only been designed in accordance with Zooniverse's 'best practice' standards, but with an awareness of the stumbling blocks that other full-text transcription projects, such as the pioneering Transcribe Bentham, have faced over the years.<sup>4</sup>

Several design features in existing transcription interfaces combine to create daunting tasks and high rates of error. Most platforms expect volunteers to transcribe an entire page, which might then be edited by an expert.<sup>5</sup> While this might create good transcriptions, it is not an efficient use of time or resources.<sup>6</sup> It is also demanding of volunteers' time, and there is some evidence that users leave a project when the tasks are too big.

In order to mitigate user fatigue and time constraints, Zooniverse has created an interface that breaks tasks down into more manageable micro tasks. When users participate in Transcribe Tate they will be able to select a particular artist's sketchbook, letter, or diary. Once they find one they can read and are interested in, volunteers can do the following things:

Draw boxes or ellipses around any images, including photographs, drawings, and sketches.

Drop points at the start and end of individual lines of text (not grammatical sentences) and then transcribe the text between the two points.

Participants will be able to mark text that is deleted, inserted or illegible



▲  
A working version of the Transcribe Tate interface.

If volunteers choose to transcribe they may do as little as one line per page or as much as the whole page. There is no need to complete a page, and people can flick through manuscripts if they just want to read them (this is also possible on the new Tate website: [tate.org.uk/art/](http://tate.org.uk/art/)).

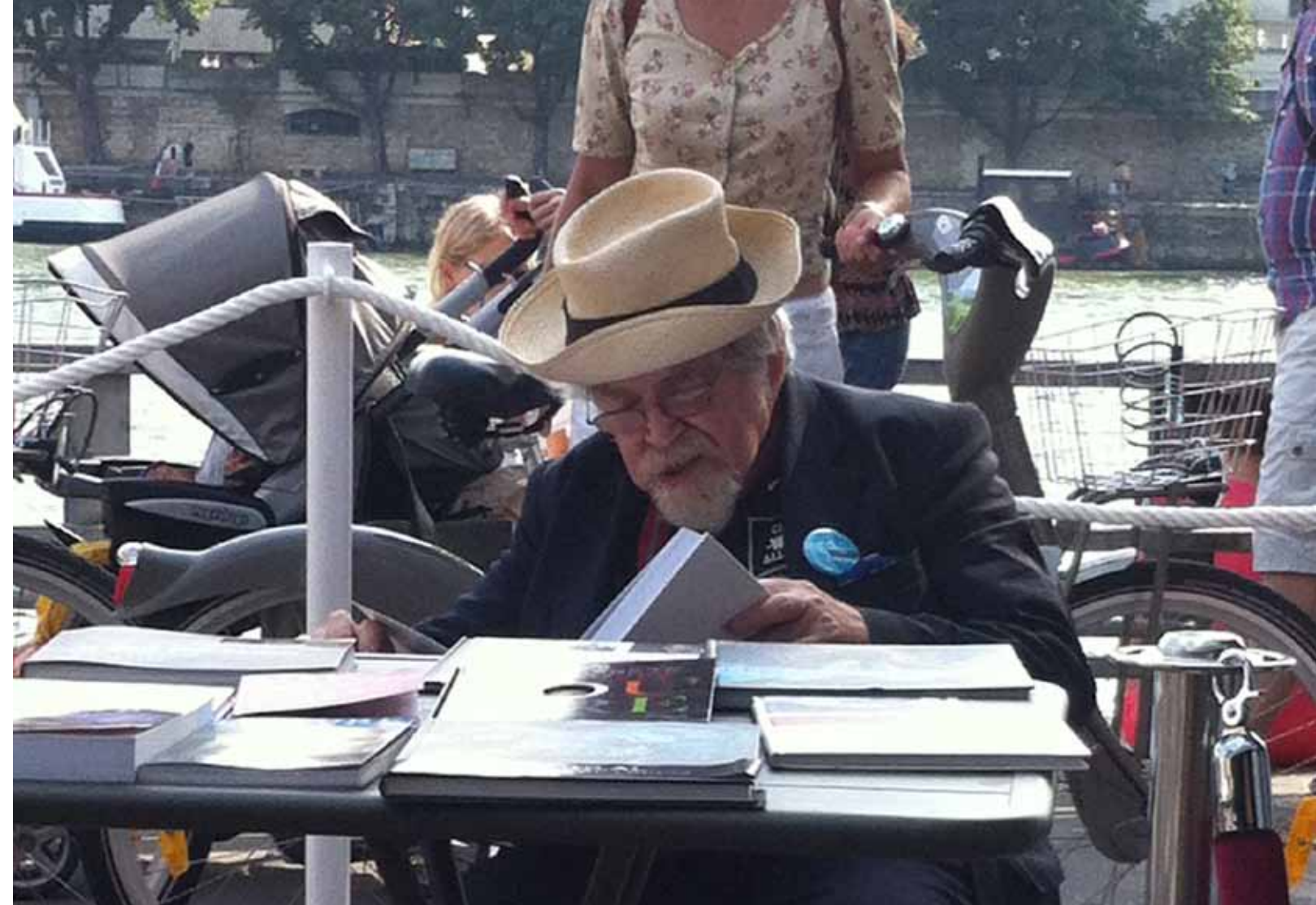
Three volunteers will transcribe each line and their responses will be compared using a bespoke algorithm. Once three participants have transcribed a line it will no longer be available for transcription. It will remain legible, but greyed out. This will hopefully expedite the transcription process, by only asking users to transcribe unfinished lines. Volunteers will also have the ability to click a button saying that an entire page has been transcribed. Once four people have done so, the entire page will be 'retired' and no longer available for transcription, though the manuscript will still be readable online.

Finally, a bespoke algorithm is under development at Zooniverse, which will enable Tate subject indexers and librarians to see where users' transcriptions agree and disagree, and make any changes before accepting these into the catalogue and website. Users will get periodic

updates when their transcriptions have been accepted. Transcribe Tate is very much an experiment. While previous studies of Zooniverse volunteers suggest that smaller tasks and more frequent experiences of accomplishment (finishing a task) are motivating, it remains to be seen whether the granular process will work in practice. If the new system does work, however, the next challenge will be to create even tools that enable institutions to ingest and curate the deluge of data that crowdsourcing generates. It is not enough to capture metadata and transcriptions: we need to facilitate museum and library specialists to be able to sort, standardise, and make that data accessible.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Zooniverse is headquartered at the University of Oxford, with branches at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, and the University of Minnesota (USA).<sup>2</sup> Fortson, Lucy, Karen Masters, Robert Nichol, Kirk Borne, Edd Edmundson, Chris Lintott, Jordan Raddick, Kevin Schawinski, John Wallin, Galaxy Zoo: Morphological Classification and Citizen Science (forthcoming 2015); arXiv:1104.5513 [astro-ph. IM; accessed 28 January 2015].<sup>3</sup> Zooniverse publication information is regularly updated here: [zooniverse.org/publications](http://zooniverse.org/publications).<sup>4</sup> Transcribe Bentham <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham/>. The design rationale and challenges of crowdsourcing have been well described by the Transcribe Bentham research team: Causer, Tim, Justin Tonra, and Valerie Wallace, 'Transcription Maximized; Expense Minimized? Crowdsourcing and Editing The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 27 (2012), 119–37 <<http://llc.oxfordjournals.org/content/27/2/119.full.pdf+html>> [accessed 13 December 2014]; and Causer, Tim, and Melissa Terras, "'Many Hands Make Light Work: Many Hands Together Make Merry Work": Transcribe Bentham and Crowdsourcing Manuscript Transcription', in *Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage*, ed. by Mia Ridge (Ashgate, 2014), pp. 57–88.5 See for example, the Letters of 1916 project <<http://dh.tcd.ie/letters1916>>, as well as Transcribe Bentham as well as the many projects supported by Ben Brumfield's popular FromThePage software: <[http://beta.fromthepage.com/?ol=hd\\_logo](http://beta.fromthepage.com/?ol=hd_logo)>. Brumfield keeps an excellent blog, 'Collaborative Manuscript Transcription', which contains invaluable insights into and information about this growing field. <<http://manuscripttranscription.blogspot.co.uk/>> 6 See Causer et al, 'Transcription Maximized; Expense Minimized?'.7 Eveleigh, Alexandra, Charlene Jennett, Ann Blandford, Philip Brohan, and Anna L. Cox., 'Designing for Dabblers and Deterring Drop-Outs in Citizen Science', in *Designing for Dabblers and Deterring Drop-Outs in Citizen Science* (presented at the CHI 2014, Toronto, Canada: CHI 2014, 2014), pp. 2985–94 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2556288.2557262>>.



▲  
Caption and Copyright The Louvre at the Beach Outdoor exhibition and activities at Paris Plages summer event. © Musée du Louvre / Gaëlle Lesaffre

## The Social Value of Museums

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#### Relevance and limits of theories of value

Cultural institutions are – still – struggling to demonstrate the systems of goods and values derived from cultural participation; this is due to disparities in research and

methods, difficulties in extrapolating the results of studies, as well as cultural players' non-acceptance of "assessment" tools or the lack of resources devoted to the study and evaluation of public policies. Three limitations are worth highlighting in order to understand the current challenges facing museums when it comes to measuring their "public value," particularly in the area of learning and education.



◀ The Louvre at the Beach  
Outdoor exhibition and activities at Paris Plages  
summer event.  
© Musée du Louvre / Gaëlle Lesaffre

Firstly, the legitimization system of non-profit organisations is based mainly on the production of a great many discourses on the missions and effects of policies implemented (such as social impact, cohesion and cultural diversity). Assessments of “cultural democratisation” have now given way to lines of action and research devoted to how museums contribute to social inclusion, individual well-being, or to the benefits of museums in terms of public health.

Secondly, in the cultural field, theories of value were primarily imported from the economic field to ensure the legitimization, for each national model, of the public or private expenditure supporting these organisations. The rationalisation born of the market-economy model and New Public Management (NPM), which has prevailed and still prevails today, holds sway in the legitimization of values associated with cultural property and the justification of their existence through public subsidies. Even though this analysis is essential for understanding the mechanisms of museum funding, redistribution, and “added value” of museums for

contemporary society, the fact remains that the “social” purpose of museums remains the poor relation and the blind spot of public cultural policies, like a relatively marginal variable – especially in times of economic crisis and lower state support – in terms of business models.

A third limitation is that the results of international studies attesting to the failure of attempts to democratise access to museums or to art in schools<sup>1</sup> undermine the “social” value of museums: conflicting research findings; the difficulty in isolating the specific effect of cultural practices in relation to other effects; the difficulty of measuring long-term effects on specific cohorts, which alone would be a means of analysing such effects according to individual career paths, etc.

Yet some academic branches, such as the sociology of values, have shown that this discipline can be used to describe and objectify the various registers of values associated with cultural participation. This approach is all the more relevant as it takes the viewpoint of users,

their practices and representations, rather than the strict viewpoint of cultural organisations: a museum’s “public value” is not one borne by Institution or Policy, but is the result of an encounter between institutional values and individual (or collective) values. The French sociologist Nathalie Heinich<sup>2</sup> highlights the existence of various “value registers” related to individual social and cultural practices: civic, ethical, juridical, functional, domestic, reputational, aesthetic, or even “purificatory.” In the case of museums, studies show that the dominant values users associate with cultural practices take the form of aesthetic (relating to beauty), aesthetic (value of sensory experience), hermeneutic (the interpretation of the practice in understanding and building individual identity), or even “purificatory” aspects in that a museum is perceived by its users as an area sheltered from the world, where one is able to reflect on oneself, position oneself within a human history, and compare one’s own identity to that of the past and that of other individuals. In other words, it is a way of escaping from the contingency of the world, from its increased pace and conflicts, and of questioning them. Indeed, rarely do museum-goers, opera lovers, or live performance aficionados promote “education” or learning as primary values when it comes to cultural participation.

Different value registers pertaining to cultural participation vary in intensity and scope, ranging from those values that fall within “community realms” (shared widely by several individuals or social groups) and values that fall within “singularity realms” (shared by few individuals, without necessarily helping to create a sense of belonging to a wider group). Moreover, these various registers fluctuate in time and space. It is therefore essential for museums to study these value systems, particularly the way in which individuals and social groups draw upon and today benefit from experiences and “stories” whose source may lie in museums and their collections<sup>3</sup>.

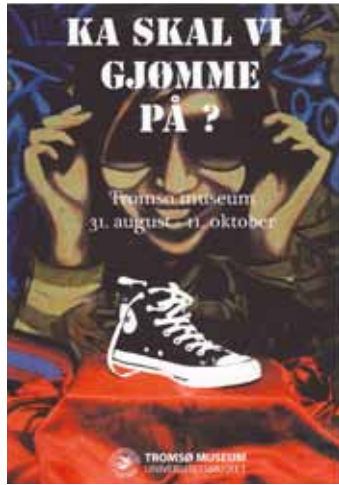
Understanding the museum’s “public value” in today’s world raises major challenges because contemporary societies are experiencing the fragmentation of conventional realms of belonging or recognition – in particular, “established” culture and its associated references (what used

to be called “Humanities”) are no longer transmitted or shared as a common core. This shift and weakening are linked to the fact that they are no longer taught in educational systems or disseminated as a form of intergenerational, family heritage; to people’s new expectations in terms of culture and education; to the emergence of new cultural experiences and objects; and to new value registers specific to the younger generations<sup>4</sup>.

The museum is one of the few places to offer areas that question the various realms of values connected to societies. Where will its focus for action lie tomorrow? Should the museum rally visitors around a culture “established” by state and region? Should it help develop and foster a cultural community spanning several social groups? Should it encourage encounters between differentiated cultural forms and expressions? In a society in which individuals are particularly critical of their representative bodies, the challenge and the issue at stake lie in museums’ ability to fulfil their social purpose, to build value spaces for people, and to promote the expression of a critical assessment of the world and its evolution.

Modern society has become much more divided in its opinions, representations and values. The recent elections, at national or European level, bear witness to the fact that it is becoming more difficult to obtain a political and civic consensus on societal issues concerning the coexistence of various social groups. At a time when divisions and tensions are growing more pronounced, between East and West, between developed and poor countries, between the upholders of a more open and tolerant society and those who advocate a return to the values of a past deemed unifying, current developments in the relationship between the museum and its audiences now fall within a context of tensions that are becoming stronger instead of weaker. This helps explain the difficulty – and indeed the challenge – facing museums to act as forums rather than temples, providing legitimate venues for building areas of shared values belonging to the public, rather than their traditional role of normative settings for the display of cultures and histories considered dominant, unequivocal and hegemonic.





▲ The exhibition poster was designed by Sigri deVries, age 17.



▲ Socks with a story – definitely cultural heritage!



▲ The Magic of showcases. What happens to your keys or phone when laid on museum velvet?



▲ Gakgak the cuddly toy and his story on display.

## What are we to keep?

– reflections on cultural heritage for teenagers

Per Helge Nylund, MSc, MA, Exhibition Manager, Tromsø University Museum, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, per.h.nylund@uit.no

Reaching out to young people is among the most important tasks of museums. We are often faced with challenges when trying to communicate ideas and facts to teenagers, keeping the attention of youngsters in the digital era. It can be hard to convey the intended message of an exhibition planned and built by scientists or scholars – even more so if the agenda is set by a governmental body and presented through a compulsory school programme.

This is the story of how a museum in Northern Norway created an educational programme in order to make young people reflect on cultural heritage and the role of museums in society – and ended up staging an exhibition backwards. This is how it we did – with a twist that might inspire others to try something similar.

### A cultural heritage challenge

The Norwegian Ministry of Culture declared that 2009 was to be the Year of Cultural Heritage. Museums were encouraged to make exhibitions that would educate school teenagers aged 14–18 about cultural heritage: what is it, what can we do to protect it, and why should it be conserved? If the museums could slip in something about immaterial culture too, and expand on the role of museums in society, that'd be nice, thank you very much. At Tromsø University Museum we quickly understood that this was no an achievement to make during a two-hour long visit by school groups.

Firstly, we asked what cultural heritage is to the average Norwegian. Well, it's the Viking ships – isn't it? And the stave churches from medieval times – none of which are preserved in North Norway? Good and true heritage, indeed, but not necessarily something with the power to ensnare the attention of every 15-year-old. Who could tell

us, then, what kind of cultural heritage the youngsters are interested in, and what they regard as important to keep for future generations?

We had to ask the young people themselves. And therefrom, we decided, we were aiming at material for an exhibition as well. Our big idea was this: the teenagers should get a grip of what cultural heritage is by making an exhibition out of their own belongings.

To get started, we set four goals for this project:

1. To establish the meaning of “cultural heritage” in the eyes and minds of teenage visitors, encompassing also immaterial culture.
2. To inspire young people by letting them meet researchers from a range of social sciences.
3. To collect teenage culture through objects and films, based on what the youngsters themselves felt relevant to keep
4. To demonstrate how museums work by making an exhibition based on this collection.

### A test class searches the museum's waste bin

First we invited a class of design and media students. We wanted to try our ideas on them, and invited them to help us attract other schools. First, we asked what cultural heritage was to them.

Not surprisingly, Viking time objects were mentioned, along with a sort of definition: “something that tell us about the old days, of how people lived before.”

Now we brought out a prepared waste bin and emptied it at a table. Then we let the pupils rummage through the contents. Amongst obvious waste like yesterday's newspaper, used bus tickets, and broken toys were some surprises: a 16th century coin, an old family photograph, a stone axe, and a piece of Viking jewellery. The pupils quickly saw that these latter objects had got into the bin by mistake; they were museum objects and not trash. These objects could indeed tell us something about peoples' lives in the past, in accordance with the definition we'd just made.

But those other objects, don't they also tell us something about how people lived in the past? Soon the pupils saw that used bus tickets and broken toys were also objects of culture – and a newspaper can indeed tell us about what people did in the past, even if it is a very recent past. We had to establish a revised definition of cultural heritage that it included “everything man-made”. After the pupils had reached this conclusion, one of them sighed: “But then EVERYTHING is cultural heritage objects!”

So what about the bits of our culture that don't leave physical traits? We discussed slang words, music, dancing and skiing. And what about foodstuffs or smells?



◀ Facebook: Through printouts and posters we included facebook as an object in the exhibition.



▲ Mobiltelefon: When the teenagers wanted their mobile phone to be collected, we borrowed a similar one from a shop to display.



▲ Mascara: Important for young people through all ages: Cosmetics are cultural heritage.

The class found that these were also a part of our cultural heritage, and suggested using video in order to preserve and communicate this immaterial culture.

#### Getting in shape for school

Our test class had made sense of cultural heritage, and now we asked them to help us inspire other young people to contribute. Using their skills in media and design, the pupils designed posters, an advertising video, and a newspaper article. The museum used some of this material in our marketing to attract school classes visiting us.

The poster we chose to promote the exhibition focused on the contrast between the classic museum showcase and everyday items from modern youth culture. The title of the exhibition read: "What are we to keep? The cultural heritage of the young".

Invitations were sent to schools in our area, inviting classes to participate and come to the museum during the first months of the autumn term, having chosen their own objects for an exhibition.

Building a foundation for collecting and heritage issues  
While waiting for schools to sign up, we started planning for the actual exhibition in the largest of our galleries (approx. 150m<sup>2</sup>). We put up all our available display cases, lining them with red velvet for that special "museum look". What were to go into these cases? We still did not have a clue.

In order to form a basis for the exhibition, and to help get reflections going, we made a few displays of our own:

1. What is cultural heritage? (Official definitions)
2. How do museums collect? (and why!)
3. Difficult and troublesome heritage (stories of racism, violence, or health conditions).
4. The magic of showcases (one open for visitors to insert their own objects).
5. The memory of your nose (boxes with smells).
6. Heritage you can't touch (including a hopscotch pattern on the floor).

We also put up our waste bin experiment for everyone to try, as well as a board where visitors were encouraged to give us their definitions or descriptions of cultural heritage and what it meant to them.

#### The young people march in

A typical visit from a school class took place in three phases: First, we discussed cultural heritage and carried out the waste bin experiment. Secondly, the class met one of our researchers who talked about his or her work. Lastly, the pupils registered their chosen objects and put them on display.

Classes brought in a wide variety of objects. Some were typical of their everyday lives: mobile phones, soft drinks, hairbrushes, sports equipment. Others chose objects with a personal story: a cuddly toy, a book, a pair of socks.

Yet others wanted to send a message to future generations: condoms, electric cars, or environmental awareness. Several pupils presented us with the challenging task of including Facebook as an object of cultural heritage.

The pupils recorded every object on a form, stating the reasons why this object should be preserved for the future. A public label was written for every object, which then went on display assisted by members of museum staff. We used lined baskets and white gloves, treating the objects with every possible care – much to the amusement of the teenagers.

Some classes wanted to display immaterial culture. They made videos at school or filmed in the museum. On a TV screen at the museum we were soon able to see videos about skateboard tricks, the SMS language, Manga fans, slang words, and a dance performance video about "the car as a social arena".

#### Growing an exhibition backwards to front – and closing it in style

With more and more classes visiting, the exhibition grew, with more objects added every week. The variety of objects grew too, even if we also got in more mobile phones and Facebook printouts. Copies of all the record forms and public labels were filed, and the museum's photographer documented every object. This way, the exhibition will last as a snapshot of youth culture in 2009.

After six weeks our showcases were full, and it was time to close the exhibition. As we could not celebrate the opening (because there was literally nothing to see), we held a grand closing of the exhibition instead. The classes came to receive our thanks and get their belongings back, and partook of a pizza buffet to celebrate.

#### Mission accomplished – with bonuses

With the exhibition closed, we tried to sum up our achievements. Apart from having had a great time talking to teenagers who advocated their personal belongings as future museum objects, we had made museum collecting and research visible. We had raised awareness of cultural heritage by letting visitors of all ages search through a waste bin or try hopping the hopscotch. And – probably best of all – our visitors saw how their own belongings carry the stories of our times, and started asking themselves "what are we to keep?"

Our project was one of three presented at the national conference concluding the Cultural Heritage Year, and in 2010 it was awarded "Best museum communication idea of the year" by the Norwegian Museums' Association. In the following years, we have continued to offer this project to schools in our area, as well as exporting the idea to other museums around Norway. It does not require much equipment, and can be done in any museum, library or school.

# Converging pathways to new knowledge

Göran Björnberg, Global Perspectives analyst, Swedish Exhibition Agency, [goran@bjornbergprod.se](mailto:goran@bjornbergprod.se)

The title of this year's conference arranged by the Danish museum organisation is Why Museums? In my contribution to the conference I will advocate the position that museums are an important informal learning place that needs to be incorporated into the formal learning-based environments of the 21st century.

Converging pathways to new knowledge is usually used as a metaphor for a context that is interdisciplinary, inter-generational and international, thus visualising a multi-dimensional picture.

I use it to visualise how museums and schools have a common interest in collaborating. Two institutions placed in the centre of society and with a long history, both carrying an educational perspective, one informal, the other formal, but with different objectives. Together, they complement each other, and with their pathways converging I believe they can embark on a journey towards new knowledge.

Last year I was responsible for a review for the Swedish government to analyse how museums and schools in Sweden can develop their collaboration. The review was based on a global perspectives analysis as well as a mapping of the current situation in Sweden. In the international analysis we looked at four countries (Denmark, England, France and Hong Kong), met with international experts and read a lot of material covering anything between research results to future analysis. In Sweden we also looked at statistics, met with museum and school professionals, did a survey among the Swedish museums, and read a number of reports.

Museums have a long tradition as educational institutions. The main focus has been on the collections, and experts related the history of artefacts. In times when travelling was a lot more limited than today, a visit to the museum could compensate for the local life most people lived.

Today the situation is different. The world we live in is global and full of experiences. The development of technology opens up new ways of communicating and learning. To the museum visitor this means that their expectations of their visit have changed from a passive reception of information to one that is experience-based. Built on a combination of the museum's ability to spark our interest and the possibility of participating in the experience offered. This is a big change.

General developments also mean that society is putting new demands on museums to develop their role as an institution that sensitively adapts to contemporary conditions. Society is beginning to ask for a return on invested capital.

This text is based on our review, featuring a mixture of results we found, thoughts and ideas from experts, and personal reflections. A review of this complexity is like an iceberg, which means that the report, an article or a lecture can only cover the tip of the iceberg. In this article I will present some of the results, reflected through three lenses.

**If you want to get laid – go to college! If you want to get an education – go to the library! (Frank Zappa)**

In a world where technology is evolving rapidly, the context for learning is changing. This means that WHAT we learn, HOW we learn, and WHERE we learn is under negotiation. In Western society learning has been intimately connected with schools.

In their book, A New Culture of Learning, John Seely Brown and Douglas Thomas advocate a new perspective. They believe that the learning of tomorrow isn't going to take place in a classroom. At least not in a classroom that looks like the classrooms we know. They believe that the educational system of the 20th century was based on the assumption that learning only takes place if there is teaching. Accordingly, education has been seen as a mechanical process where information is transferred from an authoritative teacher to a passive student.

Instead they believe that we need to change our mindset from a teaching-based approach to one that is a learning-based; here, a learning environment replaces the classroom as a model. They also believe that a learning-based approach focuses on learning through engagement within the world, connecting their thoughts to a socio-cultural perspective on learning as described by Vygotskij and Jerome Bruner.

Ann Bamford, one of the experts I met while performing this review, has in a research report for the EU Commission stated that according to the views of teachers and students, 90 per cent of learning takes place outside of the school. This is also convergent with the research of John H. Falk who, in his research on silent learning, has listed libraries, science centres, aquariums, and museums as places that are more important for a country's learning context than schools.

In a world where the importance of informal learning grows in scope as technology makes knowledge accessible, it is essential for the formal educational system to develop collaboration and connections to the environments where people learn. The Internet, libraries, science centres, and museums are excellent examples of informal learning places that are becoming more and more important in a new learning-based context, which accordingly needs to be incorporated into the formal learning environment.

**I think the teachers are the X-factor!**  
**(Anne Bamford)**

One of the objectives of the review was to benchmark success factors in collaborations between museums and the education sector. These are essential to reflect upon when museums are going to embark on a project together with one or several schools. In this text I would like to mention five of these. International examples show that collaboration between departments and authorities, in the form of policies and programmes, sends clear messages to both museums

and schools, giving co-operation legitimacy. This makes it easier for museum executives and headmasters to decide that development projects should be carried out.

Strategies for support and development give the collaborative work structure and direction. Earmarked funding for collaborative projects creates possibilities for both parties to participate on equal terms and supports sustainability.

The teachers are the X-factor for successful collaborations. The teachers' role is strategically important for quality and sustainability. There are a variety of methods for how to engage with teachers, but the best projects are those where teachers are involved from the outset.

Look upon collaboration as an ongoing professional process of development. Strategic collaboration between museum professionals and teachers, or teacher educations, creates lifelong ties between museums and schools that contribute to teachers using museums as a resource in their education. Strategies for reflection and evaluation must be incorporated from the start.

Working from a local perspective is a success factor. Partnerships between museums and schools based on proximity and accessibility creates close ties, makes it easier for both parties to have equal influence in the collaboration, and makes it easy for students to visit the museum.

**Museums are learning institutions simply because people going to them learn!**  
**(John H. Falk)**

When looking at collaborations between museums and schools it is important to pinpoint the value of culture-based learning in informal learning environments such as museums. This is important from two perspectives. Firstly, to have data that demonstrates how learning in museums complements and adds to formal learning. Secondly, to get arguments to present to politicians and policy makers when advocating increased collaboration between the two.

The quote from John H. Falk above is a truism, but also complicated, since people going to museums do not always learn what the museum, the curator, or the educator want them to learn. In her research, Ann Bamford has found that learning in museums can mean that the visitor knows less when leaving the museum than entering. This is due to modern pedagogical methods where truths are questioned and new perspectives and issues are brought to life.

So what is the value to students, schools, museums, and society from learning in museums?

Looking at a number of international research reports, these are some of the effects of culture-based learning.

On an individual basis, reports and evaluations show that children and young people taking part in extracurricular culture-based projects:

- Improve their knowledge of school subjects.
- Have higher self-construct scores.
- Improve methods and abilities to gain new knowledge.
- Are less absent from school.
- Improve general abilities and new skills.
- Improve their self-esteem, self-image, and confidence and are more extrovert, and that
- Such projects have the potential to support the students' cognitive development, social skills, and ability to cooperate.

For schools I would like to mention three benefits:

Firstly, that the cultural heritage and the multi-modal environment of the museum offer an alternative learning platform that supports reflection and dialogue, thus contributing to the school system's democratic mission.

Secondly, that schools get access to a multi-modal learning environment that offers a variety of learning opportunities and a larger spectrum of learning styles.

Thirdly, that it adds to the school's attractiveness among children and parents. An important point in times when parents can to a greater extent choose schools for their children.

#### What's in it for the museums?

In a survey undertaken for our review we asked 73 Swedish museums what they thought they got out of collaborating with schools. We received the following answers:

- A chance to reach a wider audience and new target groups.
- A chance for museums to learn – leading to new thinking and method development.
- A chance to provide an alternative environment for learning – an environment that supports other learning styles than school, and which is based on other working methods.

- A chance for the students to meet with experts.
- A chance to help school meet their targets
- A chance to act as a resource in the local society, adding to resilience and presenting an opportunity to reflect on contemporary issues.

The latter is interesting because it converges with what I think is one of the most important effects of culture-based learning in museums: that students develop their views on an open and democratic society.

Today, we see a development where globalisation, migration, integration, and technical development affect our society and lives. Both museums and schools must adjust to this. In Europe we also see a weak economy combined with increased tensions and polarisation within countries.

Culture-based learning, using reflection, research methods and supporting different learning styles, are suitable as a starting point for a discussion on complicated contemporary issues.

This is also where the value for society lies; its incentives for investing in collaborations between museums and schools. Apart from the students living healthier and better lives as adults, and having a better chance of getting an exam, being employed, and voting in public elections, learning, based on our common cultural heritage, strengthens the students' self-awareness and opens up possibilities for addressing issues about integration and diversity. This offers great potential: collaboration between museums and schools can contribute to a resilient society and to schools reaching their curriculum targets.

**American poet Muriel Rukeyser once said;  
The world isn't made of atoms. It is made of narratives!**

Herein lies a possibility and a challenge for museums: to use their narratives as a resource for schools and society. But it also is a potential to act as meeting spaces for a dialogue about the larger narrative of life and to contribute to a sustainable and resilient society. In this there is also a responsibility for the museums to develop and communicate this potential – but it is a possibility and a potential I believe that neither museums nor society can afford to turn their backs on.



▲ Sixth graders examining a landscape at the Tampere Art Museum as part of a cultural education programme organised by cultural education unit TAITE.

## Is service a swear word?

**Board of The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali, [www.pedaali.fi](http://www.pedaali.fi)**

At times, one can find discussions in Finnish debate on the public work done in museums, museum customer services, and the relationship between the museum and its exhibitions and collections. Is one of these more important or significant than the other? Does one prevent the realisation of the other? Do the different services aimed at visitors reduce the value of the museum content? Has public work in museums gone too far?

#### Public work in museums

Finland is said to be the land of a thousand lakes. There are also plenty of museums: over one thousand museums operate in Finland, and more than 300 of these are professionally managed and open all year round. In recent decades public work has become an increasingly central and inseparable part of museum operations, taking into account the diverse needs of the visitors and becoming a vital part in the survival of museums. Previously, the museum visit was more private in nature, guiding the visitor into a silent meditative exploration. Now various guided tours, workshops, audio guides, discussion guides, drama tours, and private functions are on offer. On



◀ Housekeeping employees viewing contemporary art at the Aboa Vetus & Ars Nova museum. Picture by Jari Nieminen.

a busy event day a peaceful museum experience might be impossible. On the other hand, someone who would want a guided tour might stop by the museum during a time when it is not available. New contents also attract new audiences that might not otherwise have visited a museum.

Public work is widely understood as working for the benefit of the public. Indeed, the premise of each museum is to exist in order to serve the public – offering knowledge, thrills, and experiences. Service is more than just concrete individual service events, such as ticket sales, guided tours, or workshops. Even if the museum does not always display its collections, caring for it and maintaining the recording of cultural heritage is a service aimed at future generations. Even an exhibition is a service provided by the museum to its audience. Hence the experience received by the visitor is born out of the framework of services that the museum has created.

#### A task for the whole museum

Traditionally, public workers are those who are in direct contact with the visitors, such as guides, workshop leaders, ticket sellers, and other customer service staff. However, if one thinks more widely about the services produced, in a sense everyone working at the museum is serving the public. Indeed, the museum campaigns produced in Finland during the last few years have highlighted the visitor's needs as a task shared by the whole museum. Therefore, instead of making distinctions between various public work employees, content creators, and managers, we can now focus on producing the best possible service to our visitors – together.

In today's economic climate museums must constantly find new ways to fund their operations. However, services or functions aimed at increasing economic profit cannot be held separate from the museum content. For example, having flashy advertisements amidst exhibitions would clearly decrease the value and credibility of the exhibition. Museum staff must obey their own ethical guidelines in relation to the services they provide, and no new function should weaken the values already set.

#### The dream museum

To the person doing public work, the content of exhibitions does matter. A museum that takes its audience into account offers the visitors an experience which is both informative and based on high-quality content. That is the reason why groups of children can occasionally be seen in the middle of the exhibition instead of having them work in a closed space away from other museum visitors. Similarly, many adults wish to get a tour or additional programme to enhance their experience, as without it the experience is left incomplete. Even in Finland the word mediator is becoming established in museum vocabulary, as public workers, meaning all of us museum employees, have the task of mediating museum content to visitors – almost by any means necessary.

Museums exist for the public, but they also need an audience. If the public forgets us, we are in a situation where museums are considered no longer necessary, and their whole existence is under threat. Finding the right ways of working is a balancing act. The museum must remain a place where each visitor can seek and find experiences in the form which is most suited to them. One browses the museum shop, another participates in a workshop, whilst a third visitor wants to engage in quiet contemplation alone in the exhibition. None of these experiences is more valuable than the others, and behind each of them is a service provided by the museum. The dream museum can accommodate all of them.

The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali  
The Finnish Association for Museum Education Pedaali aims to reinforce the identity of the museum education profession and to increase its overall appreciation in Finland. The goal of the association is to act as a forum for active and future museum educators, provide training, and work actively in the field to promote museum education. At the moment Pedaali has approx. 200 members including museum and art educators, other museum professionals, and people interested in museum education and audience development in general.

## NEWS – ICOM CECA



**Squaring the Circle? Research, Museum, Public**  
**Nicole Gesché, Lecturer, Royal Art Academy in Brussels; Assistant at the Université libre de Bruxelles; and former Chair of CECA (1995-1998)**

#### CECA and UMAC Joint Conference, Alexandria, Egypt, 9-14 October, 2014

For the first time, ICOM's International Committees for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) and for University Museums and Collections (UMAC) organised a joint conference at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt. Some 135 participants from all continents participated in the four-day programme, planned by Prof. Mona Haggag from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Alexandria, which addressed questions such as: How should messages for museum audiences be conceived? What is the common work of museum researchers, curators and educators? How do they each view their role as a mediator and how should visits be carried out to allow any visitor to enjoy any museum exhibit?

A wide variety of papers were presented during the conference, giving university researchers and museum educators an opportunity to revisit museum collections through multiple perspectives and interpretations. The conference opened with discussion of how to surprise, engage and involve visitors and attract their imagination. Egyptian researchers, curators and educators spoke about the current situation of museums in Egypt and international speakers analysed the use of museums to promote inspiration and creativity, reminding participants of the importance of mutual respect and awareness of cultural identity.

Examples from all over the world demonstrated how museums stimulate curiosity and imagination, pointing out how important such experiences can be in times of crisis. Thanks to Badrya Serry from the Bibliotheca Alexandrina; Nivine Khaled from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Alexandria; and Jean-Yves Empereur and Fanny Alliaud from the Centre d'Études Alexandrines, as well as many others. The conference impressed the Egyptian colleagues so much that it sparked discussions about creating a Master's in Museum Studies at the University of Alexandria.

#### Kortlægning af skoletjeneste-modeller

En central opgave i SkoletjenesteNetværket er at indsamle praksiseksempler og kortlægge det samarbejde, der finder sted i krydsfeltet mellem skole, kommune og kulturinstitution. Den første kortlægning er nu klar, og den undersøger og afdækker, på hvilke måder kommunerne understøtter kulturinstitutionernes undervisning. Styregruppen har valgt at fokusere på kommunerne, fordi de har en nøglerolle i at sikre samarbejdet mellem skoleleverden og de lokale kulturinstitutioner – både økonomisk og organisatorisk. Det er kommunerne, der bidrager med midler til både skoler og dele af kulturlivet, og det er kommunerne, der sætter målsætninger for det lokale arbejde. Derfor er det interessant at se på, hvordan de aktuelt bidrager til kulturinstitutionernes arbejde med undervisning.

17 forskellige eksempler rummer den aktuelle kortlægning, og de viser, at kommunernes veje til at understøtte kulturinstitutionernes undervisning er meget forskellige. Eksempelvis varierer det meget, hvilke typer af kulturinstitutioner og -tilbud, der inkluderes, og hvor centralt museerne står i kommunernes forståelse af hvilke kulturinstitutioner, der skal indgå i kommunale skoletjenestemodeller.

På tværs af forskelligheder samler rapporten en række træk i otte modeller for skoletjeneste. Modellerne indrammer nogle karakteristiske fællestræk, og de faktiske skoletjenester er typisk en kombination af flere modeller. De otte modeller er:

- Helhedsmodellen – hvor der arbejdes med både drift, udvikling og kommunikation.
- Netværksmodellen – hvor der opbygges netværk mellem eksisterende decentrale skoletjenester.
- Brugerdrevet driftstilskud – hvor støtten til drift af undervisning er knyttet til skolernes konkrete brug af tilbuddene.
- Tværkommunale modeller – hvor flere kommuner går sammen om drift af en skoletjeneste.

- Transportstøtte – hvor elevernes transport til de enkelte kulturinstitutioner organiseres og støttes.
- Kulturregnskabmodellen – hvor kommunerne samler et katalog med kulturtilbud til skolerne.
- Pulje- og projektmodellen – hvor den kommunale støtte udmøntes i fokuserede, tidsbegrænsede indsatser.
- Generelt driftstilskud – hvor støtten til undervisning gives som en integreret del af et generelt driftstilskud.

I rapporten diskuteres fordele og ulemper ved de forskellige modeller. Den kan læses på SkoletjenesteNetværkets hjemmeside: [www.skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk](http://www.skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk).

#### Kontakt, sparring og rådgivning

Koordinatorerne i SkoletjenesteNetværk tilbyder sparring på lokalt og regionalt plan, både strategisk, organisatorisk og praktisk. Du kan fx bruge koordinatorerne til at vende en konkret idé, få rådgivning til hvordan man kobler sig til folkeskolens Forenklede Fælles Mål og Den åbne skole eller hjælp til at samle en række aktører i dit område, som kunne have glæde af et tættere samarbejde.

#### Kontakt til din lokale koordinator:

Koordinator for Nordjylland, Lars A. Haakonsen, [lah@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk](mailto:lah@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk), 29296175  
 Koordinator for Midtjylland, Birthe Bitsch Mogensen, [bbm@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk](mailto:bbm@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk), 30557345  
 Koordinator for Sydvest- og Sønderjylland, Dorte Vind, [dv@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk](mailto:dv@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk), 27741277  
 Koordinator for Fyn og Sydøstjylland, Ulla Kjær Kaspersen, [ukk@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk](mailto:ukk@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk), 30557346  
 Koordinator for Sjælland, Kirsten Hegner, [kh@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk](mailto:kh@skoletjenestenetvaerk.dk), 21693214

# MiD INFO



#### Generalforsamling

MiD's årlige generalforsamling blev afholdt den 2. februar på Jernbanemuseet i Odense. Referat fra mødet kan læses på vores hjemmeside. Efterfølgende blev vi vist rundt på museet af Anna Back Larsen, der også fortalte om museets samarbejde med skoler og undervisning i udstillingen "Sikkerhed" og trafiksikkerhed og jernbaner.

#### Mentor i MiD

Museumsformidlere i Danmark vil gerne tilbyde en mentorordning til nye og gamle medlemmer. Tanken er at vores mentorkorps står til rådighed for spørgsmål som nye medarbejder i museumsverden har. Hvad er MiD, CECA og ODM? Hvordan kan jeg skabe internationale relationer? Hvem arbejder med samme områder som jeg? Så vil du gerne være med til at hjælpe nye kollegaer på vej og har du en erfaring du vil videregive, så meld dig som mentor i MiD. Kontakt Michael Gyldendal for mere information: [mg@tekniskmuseum.dk](mailto:mg@tekniskmuseum.dk)

#### Nordisk netværk

Kulturkontakt Nord har bevilliget 30.000 euro til et etårigt projekt The best of Nordic museum communication – fresh network approaches from Nordic associations of museum education. Projektet er rettet mod at opbygge et netværk mellem museumsformidlere i Norden og at udgive et særnummer af MiD Magasin til efteråret med artikelbidrag fra de nordiske lande. En smagsprøve er med i dette nummer af MiD Magasin, hvor Per Helge Nylund fra Norge og den finske museumsformidlerforening Pedaali har skrevet en et indlæg.

Formålet med projektet er at samle og dele gode erfaringer med museumsformidling i Norden og dermed bane vejen for nye samarbejdsprojekter på tværs af grænserne.

Vi vil i fællesskab styrke formidlingens status og rolle på museerne samt styrke formidlingspraksissen til glæde for alle museernes brugere. Publikationen vil også blive distribueret uden for de nordiske lande, for at sætte fokus på, hvad der er det særlige ved nordisk museumsformidling.

Den islandske museumsforening – FISOS – er nu også med i samarbejdet. Vi sidder nu fem nordiske lande omkring bordet og diskutere forskelle, ligheder i museumsformidlingens status og rolle i Norden – og vi ser nu frem til at formidle det videre til foreningsmedlemmerne i Sverige, Norge, Finland, Island og Danmark.



Læs mere om Kulturkontakt Nord her: [www.kulturkontaktnord.org/](http://www.kulturkontaktnord.org/)  
 Læs mere om de nordiske museumsformidlerforeninger her:  
 FISOS - Félag Íslenskra Safna og Safnmanna (The Association of Icelandic Museums and Museum workers) <http://safnmenn.is/english>  
 FUISM-Föreningen för pedagogisk utveckling i svenska museer: [www.fuism.se](http://www.fuism.se)  
 Norske Museumsforbund. SFF- Seksjon for formidling: [www.sff.museumsforbundet.no](http://www.sff.museumsforbundet.no)  
 Pedaali: [www.pedaali.fi](http://www.pedaali.fi)



ISM campaign zone- Transatlantic Slavery

## MiD

- is the association of museum educators and communicators in Denmark – and is also open to others with a particular interest in presenting art, culture, and nature to wider audiences.
- puts emphasis on professionalism in education and communication – the contents must be of the highest professional standards.
- wishes to promote interdisciplinarity.
- provides a professional network for everyone working in the field.
- promotes co-operation on education and communication activities in Denmark and abroad.

### MiD membership

Membership costs DKK 300,- a year and gives you access to professional networking opportunities. Join MiD by contacting: [kasserermid@gmail.com](mailto:kasserermid@gmail.com).

Join us on [Facebook.com/pages/Museumsformidlere-i-Danmark](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Museumsformidlere-i-Danmark)