

THE NATURE OF THE
EDUCATION SERVICE
IN MUSEUMS, ARTS AND
HERITAGE VENUES

SYMPOSIUM

Proceedings of the Symposium
held on 5 November 1999 at
The National Gallery of Ireland.

The National Gallery of Ireland

Published in 2000 by
The National Gallery of Ireland
Merrion Square West
Dublin 2

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National
Gallery of
IRELAND

Text editor: Marie Bourke
Designer: Bill Bolger
Printed in Ireland by: McBrinn Print
Cover: detail of *Taking Measurements: the artist copying
a cast in the Hall of the National Gallery of Ireland 1887.*
Richard T. Moynan (1856-1906)
ISBN 0903 162 997

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SYMPOSIUM

Foreword

Síle de Valera, TD

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands

I thank Carmel Naughton, Chairman of the Board of Governors and Guardians of the National Gallery of Ireland, who invited me to launch the 1999 Symposium on 'The Nature of The Education Service in Museums, Arts and Heritage Venues'. It is a pleasure to introduce the papers which form the basis of the Symposium Proceedings.

Many people have contributed to these Proceedings. I commend their work, and particularly Marie Bourke, the Gallery's Keeper and Head of Education, who, together with the staff of the Education Department of the Gallery, organised the symposium.

It is important that cultural organisations like the National Gallery, the National Museum, the Chester Beatty Library and the Irish Museum of Modern Art hold conferences, not just devoted to scholarly research on the collections but also to examine aspects of museum work and to continue to develop the expertise needed to transform objects and works of art into resources that people can use for learning and enjoyment. These Proceedings should go a long way towards providing the stimulation and encouragement necessary to help develop the social roles of our institutions.

In commending the Gallery on its initiative, I would also like to offer a special word of encouragement to the Education and Outreach sub-committee of the Council of National Cultural Institutions. This sub-committee has initiated a major research project on Education in the national cultural institutions. I look forward to being presented with, and to examining the findings in due course. In the bringing of this work to fruition I have no doubt but that the deliberations of these Symposium Proceedings will be immensely useful.

SYMPOSIUM

Preface

Raymond Keaveney

Director, National Gallery of Ireland

The provision of an Education Service in a modern museum/gallery is a task that requires constant attention and support. Part of the challenge is to assess continually the role of the service so as to determine if it is adapting to the needs of the community it seeks to serve. Such assessment covers a broad spectrum of criteria, from social to education to technological, and more. In order to achieve an adequate grasp of this process, educationalists must keep abreast of developments in their area of operation.

In November 1999, the symposium on 'The Nature of the Education Service in Museums, Arts and Heritage Venues' provided museum and gallery professionals in Ireland with a unique opportunity to acquaint themselves with the latest thinking on a wide range of topics at the heart of their profession. It provided them with a forum in which to debate such issues as the changing role of education and the ability of museums to make a difference to our future; the use of new technology, particularly the Internet, and the need to evaluate its use; the necessity for promoting an 'effective experience' in visitors, and the role of empathy in this process. The symposium highlighted the benefits of developing a clear policy in the sphere of education and the importance of consultation with one's target audience in achieving this. There was also an informative selection of presentations on recent initiatives within a number of institutions, both in Ireland and overseas.

On behalf of the National Gallery of Ireland, and in particular its Education Department, I would like to commend all those who contributed to the symposium and who agreed to have their papers published in this compilation. It constitutes a most useful addition to the literature on museum education.

Introduction

Marie Bourke

Keeper and Head of Education, National Gallery of Ireland

I would first of all like to express my appreciation to all the speakers and delegates who took part in the National Gallery Museum Education Symposium, including Raymond Keaveney, the Director, and Síle de Valera TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, who launched this event. My thanks to the Heritage Council and the British Council for their valuable support, and a special word of gratitude to the staff of the Gallery's Education Department who organised the symposium.

The subject of the symposium, 'The Nature of the Education Service', provided a natural sequence to the 1998 symposium, which focused on 'The Role of Education in Museums'. The former enabled us to examine closely some of the elements that go to make up an Education Service and to debate a variety of issues in connection with that service. Among the topics covered were budgeting, new technology, volunteers, working with older people, touring exhibitions and outreach work, all of which provided fascinating talks that produced fruitful discussions. The papers given at the symposium form the basis of these Proceedings.

The nature of an Education Service should be of concern to every museum, whether national, regional or local. This is a particularly appropriate subject just now, at a time when visitors are looking for a much-improved level of facilities and service in our institutions. There is also the factor of the changing profile of our visitors, many of whom have experienced high standards of museum practice in other countries. When a well-balanced Education Service is put into place, our museums, arts and heritage venues should experience increased levels of support by the public and much greater understanding and enjoyment of their collections.

By the time the National Gallery of Ireland first opened to the public in 1864, education had already featured prominently in an address published by the Board of Governors in 1854. Over a century and a half later the National Gallery is reinforcing the importance of education in its mission: **'to display, conserve, manage, interpret and develop the National Collection; to enhance enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts and to enrich the cultural, artistic and intellectual life of present and future generations'**. The Education Service is, therefore, one of the main areas through which the Gallery seeks to provide greater public access to and interpretation of the Collection. While the Education Department advocates *'active participation in the services provided, including community access and outreach initiatives, encourage expansion of the skills of appreciation, understanding, interpretation and analysis'*, it acknowledges that the nature of education is changing, with learning now seen as the learner actively participating with the environment. This learning takes place in museums, which seek to interpret their collections but also to focus on their social role. These museums have become central, therefore, to any educational effort where the focus is shifting from the written word to the learners' active participation through engagement and interaction with the works of art on display.

It is interesting to follow the emergence of the importance of visitor facilities and services in

the museum world over past centuries. René Huyge, the French scholar, made the astute observation that museums and encyclopaedias appeared at about the same time. Both were an expression of the eighteenth-century spirit of enlightenment, which produced an enthusiasm for equality of opportunity of learning. The theory behind these movements was a simple one: that collections, which had hitherto been reserved for the pleasure and instruction of a few people, should be made accessible to everybody.¹

During the nineteenth century, education was considered the prime function of museums. The ideal museum was understood to be ‘*the advanced school of self-instruction, the place where teachers should naturally go for assistance*’. Although many museums were unable to achieve this ideal, this was a firmly held view. By the 1920s this conviction, held so strongly by nineteenth-century thinkers, was under attack. A new generation of curators was less interested in the public use of museums, and more interested in the accumulation and study of collections.² Although the educational function of museums was traditionally considered venerable, the last four decades have witnessed a shift in both the definitions of education and its relative importance within museums and within the museum profession. The modern world has changed the social and cultural structure in which this function is taking place. J.C. Dana, the early-twentieth-century commentator, proposed that if a museum was not ‘*useful to the community*’ then it did not deserve to be called a museum.³ Indeed, the very nature of education, both what we mean by the term and what we expect of educational institutions, has changed.⁴ The present generation of museum professionals have become increasingly aware of the educational role of museums and have begun to re-evaluate the relationship between museums and their visitors. Museum visits in the past tended to be brief, infrequent events, requiring less time and effort than most other educational activities.

Late-twentieth-century changes and developments worldwide have demonstrated that museums have to provide more attention to areas such as development, fundraising and revenue generation, more vibrant exhibitions, research, scholarship, and more wide-ranging and extensive services to the public. This is in addition to their role of preserving the nation’s heritage. While the acquisition, conservation, display and interpretation of collections will continue to be the *raison d’être* of every museum, these institutions will also be judged by the quality of the services they provide for the public. As museums move towards a more businesslike operation, museum management is attempting to find a way of preserving arts, culture and knowledge as an end in themselves and not as a number on an accountant’s computer.⁵

1 Hudson, K. *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought*. Macmillan, London, 1975

2 Greenhill-Hooper, E. *Museum and Gallery Education*. Leicester University Press, 1997.

3 Dana, J.C. *A Plan for a New Museum – The Kind of Museum it will Profit a City to Maintain*. Elm Tree Press, Woodstock, 1920

4 Hein, G. *Learning in the Museum*. Routledge, New York, 1998

5 Alexander, V.D. ‘A Delicate Balance: Museums and the Market-place’, *Museum International*, No 2, UNESCO Paris, 1999

The challenge for new museum managers will be to suggest meanings or 'lifestyles' that the public may subscribe to by visiting museums.⁶ This is all ultimately leading in the twenty-first century towards a new emphasis on the social role of the museum. In order to create an environment in which the social role can develop, many functions of the museum will have to work more closely together, as a team. Museums of the future may even choose to look towards devising programmes and events in collaboration with other cultural heritage institutions so that the concept of visiting museums becomes associated with a pleasant, enriching and beneficial way of passing time. The Education Service will play a key part in determining how institutions will be judged by the quality of service they provide for the public. The next generation of museum educators will have the opportunity to address this task.

⁶ Prentice, R., Davies, A. & Beeho, A. 'Seeking Generic Motivations for Visiting and Not Visiting Museums and like Cultural Attractions', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1997

The Changing Role of Museums

Mike Houliban

Director, Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland

In November and December 1991 and again in May and June 1992, Serbian warships and land-based artillery carefully and systematically targeted a range of cultural property along the Croatian coastline. Historic buildings, sites, libraries, museums and the Old City of Dubrovnik – a medieval walled city registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List – were levelled. The deliberate destruction of cultural property in the former Yugoslavia during the first seven months of the war in 1991 is considered to have been greater than in any natural cataclysm, such as the 1979 Montenegrin earthquake, and greater even than during the four years of the Yugoslav campaign of the Second World War. Such destruction of important monuments and collections has become, sadly, increasingly characteristic of both internal and international conflicts in the second half of the twentieth century. This horrendous fact also contains significant messages for us about the power of the places in which we work, the changing perceptions of others towards them, and about the world that is driving the evolution of our workplace.

Although museums, and those who work in them, sometimes perceive themselves to be unaffected by the outside world, the past twenty to thirty years has witnessed an evolutionary shift in the role of the museum; a shift that is still taking place; and, I will argue this morning, a shift that is being driven by increasingly complex forces, which are largely external to and beyond the control of the museum. By identifying these external drivers and signifiers of change in the world of geopolitics, society, economics, management and marketing, we can, perhaps, begin to map the journey we have already embarked upon, as well as the directions we might be taking over the next twenty years. According to the Director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the nineties has been a decade of such far-reaching change that 'the director of forty years ago would not recognise the museum of today'. For the museum director, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the challenge will be about leading the museum's transition from one level of complexity to another.

Within this context I will try to show how museums are reacting, often successfully, to these challenges. Sometimes the way forward is far from clear. However, it is obvious that education is essential to the long-term viability of the museum. Why? Because it is centred on people, goes to the core purpose of museums and is rooted in the community. To give myself maximum flexibility, I have taken Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's all-pervading concept of education as being at the centre of the museum web, affecting everything we do, and being everything that we do.

So, what are the realities of the world in which we live, and how do these currents of change connect to our museum world and to the part played by education? I thought it might be intriguing to start at the macro level to see if we can identify the global forces of change and then track our way into the nature of change in museums and where the strands might be going. Where do we start; who is bold enough to predict our geopolitical, social and economic future? Well, inevitably there are academics, management gurus and commentators lining up to help us out. (Please note that I am keeping religion and spirituality out of this, at least for the time being.)

The first global reality is the *Triumph of the market economy*. As a starting point, I have taken Francis Fukuyama's 'The End of History?', an article printed in an American magazine, *The National Interest*, way back in summer 1989. Here he postulated the triumph of liberal democracy and a market-oriented economic order as the only viable options for modern society – in effect, the culmination of the politico-economic process that Hegel had considered when he had talked about the end of history after Napoleon's victory at Jena in 1806. With the collapse of communism, Fukuyama and other commentators, the so-called optimist-rationalists, have described the post-modern state as one in which there is no serious competitor to free-market democracy as a way for people to organise their politics and their economics. No sane country, it is argued, would ever try another experiment with state-monopoly command economics. In one form or another, everybody will be using market capitalism.

So how does this affect museums? Well, for a start there can be few museums since the late 1980s that have not felt the pressure generated by the intrusion of market forces over other, more serene considerations. Government, central and local, has no longer been willing to pick up the age-old financial nightmare, the 'funding gap'. Instead, we have been told to stop bleating and to be more 'entrepreneurial'. Government policies in the UK, North America and Australia have pushed towards the privatisation of public enterprises and the creation of an enterprise economy built on revenue generation and corporate sponsorship. Viability has become the name of the game, and not-for-profit institutions have blurred their position as they adopt the business functions, activities and even the roles characteristically reserved for profit-making organisations. These factors are shaping change towards entrepreneurial museums, where skills of marketing, sales, audience-research and education, with its ability to touch new and embedded audiences or markets, are essential to ensure future viability.

Competitiveness has also entered the frame as museums are increasingly perceived by funders as part of the intelligent leisure/entertainment industry and, therefore, competing for cash and audiences with other arts bodies, the theatre and sport.

Dr Sherene Suchy, in her thesis *Change, Challenge and the Museum Director's Role*, asked some seventy-five museum directors from across the world where they anticipated major changes impacting on their institutions and staff. Overall, financial issues were the number one challenge. The major predicted shifts included increased emphasis on business alliances and planning; the need for business acumen; the attraction of new and larger audiences; the generation of revenue so that public programmes could pay for themselves. This was paralleled by a view that curators would experience diminished authority and there would be less emphasis on scholarship.

The second global factor has been the *Victory of democracy*, inevitably allied closely to the *Triumph of the market economy*. As the geopolitician Brian Beedham has pointed out, the iconic collapse of the Berlin Wall and the start of the 1990s brought a realisation that democracy had won the second of the century's two great conflicts of ideas. First fascism and then communism had been defeated. Democracy, the belief that every man and woman should have a

share in making the law and that the views of the minority should be taken into account, had pushed ideological authoritarianism into a corner (although such ideologies can still be found preserved in some museums).

Now, museums are quite liked by people, even if some museums don't particularly like people. However, an evolutionary process has been taking place since the 1980s, accelerating into this decade, that engages people with the museum. It started, spurred on by the market-economy drivers – with customer focus. Museums were and still are encouraged to reach out, sporadically, to customers; holding focus groups and offering 'customer care' training for staff are now common currency. The next twenty years may see the process of 'Customerizing' described by Tom Peters in *Liberation Management* extending to museums. This involves building the entire logic of the institution around the flow of the customer through the 'A to Z' process of experiencing the organisation. You know the sort of thing that Disney does with customer episodes that start in the car-park or even at the airport, long before you get to the main event.

An interesting development of this concept, relevant to museums and described at this year's American Museums Association Conference, has been proposed by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore's 'Welcome to the Experience Economy' in the *Harvard Business Review*. The theory is that consumers unquestionably desire experiences, and more businesses are responding by explicitly designing and promoting them as an economic offering. The whole concept can be summarised in the four-stage development of the birthday cake. As a vestige of the agrarian economy, mothers, almost certainly, made birthday cakes from scratch, mixing extracted farm commodities that together cost pennies. As the goods-based industrial economy advanced, pre-mixed ingredients could be sourced from the local shop for a few pounds. With the service economy, busy parents ordered the cake from a bakery or grocery at about ten times the cost of the pre-mixed ingredients. In the time-starved 1990s, parents, at considerable expense, will get Chuck E. Cheese or some other business to stage the birthday party as a memorable event for the kids – and Chuck E. Cheese will chuck in the cake for free. Experiences are inherently personal and immersing; the best ones are entertaining, aesthetic, escapist and educational. Some museums have been doing this for years, particularly open-air sites and historic buildings, which are frequently driven by the educational needs of the visitor.

The second aspect of democratisation is the redefinition of the museum, by its users, as community property, a non-threatening, social space and a site for contemporary cultural development. Ownership of the museum, its presentations and its collections by the people is already one of the most important contemporary issues in museums. At the Museum of the American Indian, captions are written by Indians; the new *Te Papa* museum (literally *meeting house*) in Auckland, New Zealand is one of the most exciting examples of collaboration and expression between a museum and its peoples, in a bi-cultural setting; elsewhere, people are taking more active interest in issues of ownership of the collections as objects are repatriated to aboriginal groups or victims of the Holocaust. Even the growing involvement of volunteers is perhaps more a reflection of an external desire for participation than a satanic, internal plot on the part of management to reduce staffing costs. Francis Fukuyama referred in 1995 to 'social capital' as

a form of social trust, which precedes business activity and the creation of economic capital. Dr Sherene Suchy in *Change, Challenge and the Museum Director's Role* argues that the development of social capital between an institution and its user/owners, given the contentiousness and sensitivity of ownership claims, is one of the most significant challenges facing us.

Taking that challenge on to its next stage of complexity and combining the global realities of democracy and market forces, the museum will have to be a champion of social capital, but in an environment that favours economic capital. Expressions of this duality can be seen particularly in cities, which, as centres of established economic and social significance, enable the museum to play a role as a site for social capital and even economic capital. At the heart of the most successful urban regeneration projects, such as in Boston, Barcelona, Bilbao, Sydney, London Docklands and Trafford, cultural expressions in the form of event architecture, art galleries and museums are to be found. It is a short-sighted developer who ignores the pulling power of cultural attractions and believes that offices, flats and shops alone will regenerate inner urban areas.

In this context, Dr Suchy's directors predicted staff impact on curators through increased customer focus; for marketing and public relations, developments in tune with specific user groups; and for exhibitions reflecting popular demands. Directors will be paying more attention to public service departments. Having sometimes been undervalued in the past, these departments will have to be positioned on an equal basis with other areas of the museum. Education departments, whilst mediating the objects and stories in language accessible to the user, have too often been regarded as 'the lowest order in the food chain', according to the Director for the Yale Center for British Art.

The third global reality is that *The world is fragmented* – despite our technological linkages, or maybe because of them; the world is parochial and far from being a community or a village.

This view is corroborated by the fact that in 1914 there were 62 separate states in the world, 74 in 1946 and 193 today. The rise of ethnic, racial and religious tensions in many parts of the world, as well as the rise of 'internal' nationalism – including within many European countries – suggests a threat to world stability through a pattern of breakdown amongst larger multinational and multi-ethnic sovereign states. Across the world there are many thousands of geographical, ethnic and cultural 'peoples' who are demanding or could claim the status of nations in the traditional rather than the modern political sense. The devolution of limited powers to regional assemblies in the United Kingdom reflects this pattern.

In parallel, the second half of the twentieth century has witnessed an enormous expansion in the preservation and presentation of the physical symbols and evidence of cultural identity. Although museums have been around for four hundred years, it is estimated that about 95% of all the world's museums today have been established since the end of the Second World War. The number of preserved monuments, buildings and sites have also expanded from some thousands to as many millions.

Museums and those involved in the preservation of the patrimony have constantly emphasised the importance of museum collections and historic sites as symbols of cultural identity at community, regional and national levels. As such they provide clear targets for those acts of violence designed to obliterate the cultural vestiges of 'enemy' ethnic or religious groups. It is also a mark of the power of such objects and places in the minds of both the preserver and the destroyer. Remember the destruction of the Croatian coastal sites; a cultural and economic blow because it had the effect of crippling Croatia's post-war tourism industry.

Many international museums would identify cultural diversity as the most important ethical issue to shape the role of the museum in the new millennium. Social awareness, audience demands and legal requirements are placing new pressures on institutions by touching education, exhibitions, human resource management and collecting. One of the most popular cultural venues visited by people travelling abroad is the museum. How can the museum shape itself as a place where deeper issues and tensions within society, such as racism and sectarianism, can be confronted? This places special responsibility on us to tell our stories in ways that reflect a broader political and social reality and that contribute to mutual understanding and cultural respect. This is a relatively new and politically charged role for the museum. Some, as a result, might see the museum as a force for social change; I would argue that the museum is increasingly part of a wider apparatus within society, working towards social transformation. At the core of this work, and frequently driving it, is the role of education. Dealing with issues of cultural diversity is the single most important challenge facing museum educators. Museum collections are a gateway to understanding how other people live and view their world. How you interpret and communicate those collections can have an affective influence upon our society and the future.

Fragmentation, diversity and, therefore, increased competition are also on show in the world of goods and services. There are more products than a decade ago, and consumers are faced with 'market blur' – a cacophony of similar offers. Packaging in the form of branding, marketing and advertising has become the mechanism to achieving the competitive edge.

Museums now perceive themselves as being in competition for visitors and funds. Marketing, in one form or another, has become part of the routine role of any museum, large or small. Marketing is about education and impression management, not about selling. Too often marketing can become an end in itself, losing touch with the core purpose of the institution. Impression management is about communicating core values, not necessarily the product. If your museum claims to value education or innovation, then headline it. Because museums are so diverse in their content, the successful ones really work hard on their uniqueness and tap into the complementary values of society.

So what else is out there? The management gurus James Kouzes and Barry Posner, in the 1995 Preface to the reprint of their book *The Leadership Challenge*, identified six other global trends or challenges, which they describe as the New Realities. In their view these challenges will shape the way organisations will operate in the opening years of the new millennium. As a museum professional I can relate to their first reality, namely that The cynics are winning.

People are fed up and are pessimistic about the future. Individual and group alienation is high, loyalty is valued less, particularly to institutions. And, of course, cynics tend not to participate in trying to improve things. Does this sound familiar?

The expectations of individuals are influenced by factors external to the organisation, in particular the values of society and organised groups. Attitudes to work, authority and equality are constantly shaped and changed by society. The way in which organisations analyse and respond to their environment is strongly tied up with national culture. For the museum as employer it is important to understand this process because the values of society change and adjust over time, and therefore the policies and methodologies that were acceptable ten years ago may not be so today.

Most museums would see their role as an employer and recognise the need for specialist support in the motivation, reward, training and education of their staff. Research has shown that moves towards participative decision-making can lead to commitment and willingness to move with change. (If you are sitting there thinking, I've heard all that before, then you may just be one of those cynics.) Perhaps one of the most alienated of professionals within museums in recent years is the curator. Having dominated and lead museums from the turn of the century to the 1960s and 1970s, curators now find that their role has changed dramatically. They are no longer the arbiters of communication, a role increasingly assumed by educationists. They are no longer the gatekeepers of knowledge, not since they put it onto computers, where it is accessible to all. In some areas, such as ethnography, even their role as scholar kings is being challenged by native peoples more versed in the meaning and significance of the objects. Their world has shrunk to the development of the collections and their interpretation. However, there are new opportunities to provide intellectual leadership and to take on a more direct educational role based on the translation of information into knowledge.

Kouzes and Posner's second reality is that *Power has shifted*. Today there is more computing power in an upmarket BMW than there was on the first manned space flight. With access to information only a keystroke away, power is shifting from those with titles, to those with technology and the skills to use it. In terms of organisations, this power shift is responsible for the flattening of hierarchies and the movement of the centre of organisational gravity away from the powerful boss to empowered people. Even the language is changing; not so long ago, the mainframes that sat in sanitised glasshouses were called 'masters' and the terminals on our desks were 'slaves'. Today, the situation is reversed; the data receptor is a server and we are the clients. Power has gone to the people – the clients, argue Kouzes and Posner.

Certainly, many museums have and are facing the challenge of restructuring. Deconstructing the museum hierarchy to reflect the needs of the business and not the predilections of individual staff and ossified power structures is one of the most sensitive and difficult tasks facing museum leaders and staff. Creating a new matrix of working relationships based on skills and functions remains tricky. Most older, established museums retain what Johnson and Scholes would describe in their book *Exploring Corporate Strategy* as the 'cultural web', in which the beliefs and assumptions that constitute the organisational paradigm are hedged in and pro-

tected by different aspects of organisational culture. The latter have built up over time and include the routine ways that members of the organisation behave towards each other; the rituals of organisational life such as training and assessment; the stories that people tell about the place; the symbolic aspects of life, such as logos, offices and car-parking arrangements; control systems; the power structure, which is likely to be associated with the key constructs of the paradigm; and, finally, the organisational structure, which will in turn reflect the power structure. Challenging the paradigm requires an assault, sometimes indirect, on the cultural web. However, without such an approach the task of adapting the museum's role to meet external challenges becomes even more difficult.

Kouzes and Posner's third reality is that *We're all becoming increasingly connected*. Today, thanks to technology, you can circumnavigate the world from your desktop in eighty seconds or less. You can view, hear and order goods, sitting at home, from suppliers half way around the world. Information is instant and news is old instantly.

The concept and potential of the Digital Museum, articulated recently in *A Netful of Jewels*, raises exciting educational possibilities for distance learning and extending the reach of our programmes and knowledge to existing and new audiences. The potential for museums and archives to work together is only just being explored. We will hear more about this area this afternoon.

Fourthly, Kouzes and Posner identify *Knowledge as the new currency* – replacing land and capital as the new economic resource. How else, they suggest, can Microsoft's stock trade at a higher price than that of car-maker General Motors. For organisations, competitiveness will depend upon knowledge and the competence of the workforce.

Museums are data banks of knowledge. Allied to the new communication technology, the authority of our curators and the clarity of our educators could give museums a significant presence within the community, beyond the physical boundaries of the showcase. For example, there is a place and demand for scholarship in the community; here museums have a potentially important role to play by acting as a bridge between their broad-based audiences and academia.

Kouzes and Posner's sixth reality is that *There is a new social contract on the table*. Organisations have shed jobs, shrinking in size and restructuring around clear business needs. The contingent workforce is on the rise, while the permanent workforce is on the decline. Project teams of specialists come together to produce a product, provide a service and are disbanded. Young people today face the prospect of changing their jobs many times, maybe even their career. Loyalty and job security have been replaced with promises of more interesting work and greater employability in exchange for commitment to excellence. The age of the virtual organisation is upon us.

Directors in Dr Sherene Suchy's research generally predicted their museums as realigning on the basis of cross-functional teams, rather than the static silos of professional discipline. The

project-team approach, based on bringing together a variety of skills, has been adopted for large rebuilding schemes, exhibitions and a range of other activities, including collections' management. It has given the educator an opportunity to break out of the usual hidebound hierarchy and to articulate the role and value of education in a variety of workplace settings. Nevertheless, change and transition around domains of expertise can be sensitive and can frequently lead to what one American director has described as 'turf wars' between departments.

Finally, Kouzes and Posner have identified that *There is a renewed search for meaning*, with fragmentation, cynicism and shifting relationships has come a greater yearning for identity, purpose and meaning in our lives. Values and virtues are discussed more openly, and people worry about the legacy they are leaving, including their environment. In a virtual world, the real and authentic is more highly valued.

Museums have always provided context to the past, to creativity, to innovation and to the natural environment. In this respect, they have become places of pilgrimage, where the relics can provide an authentic link to the past or to the excellence of human achievement. Many museums can trace their original foundation back to motives associated with education, enjoyment and inner renewal or refreshment.

By providing context and meaning to the existing world, museums have the opportunity to be more overt about offering insights and participating in shaping the future of our society. Some natural history museums, for example, are dealing effectively, clearly and provocatively with future issues of bio-diversity and environmental conservation.

So, how can we summarise the changing role of museums? They have a role that is centred on restoring hope and creating meaning in people's lives. They are increasingly about rebuilding a sense of community and generating understanding among diverse peoples. More and more, they will be about turning information into knowledge and thereby creating value to the user. Most importantly, museums will have a role in making a difference to our future. And, isn't that what education is all about?

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The Nature of the Education Service

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‘... In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce?... The cuckoo clock...’

Interesting that he finished with an object! You probably remember the sentiment – articulated by Orson Welles to Joseph Cotten in *The Third Man*. Actually the bizarre thing about this particular line is that in a screenplay written by Graham Greene, it was the actor, Welles, who requested its inclusion. He had worked up the scene himself and thought it would suit the circumstances. The point I am making, I suppose, is that we need a little conflict and reference to an artefact to make sense of the world around us. Over the next thirty-five minutes – during which I have the pleasant task of preaching to the converted – I will try to describe some of the advantages that an education service and policy can give an organisation, and give ten pointers towards good practice.

After spending forty minutes or so one brilliantly starry night in Cumbria pointing out to my ten-year-old what the constellations were, how far away they were, how light travels, how what we were looking at happened before the time of Socrates, she said, ‘But Daddy, haven’t you noticed just how *pretty* they are?’

Despite years of training and experience, here I was being educationally wrong-footed by my own kith and kin. She went on to say, ‘You have failed to appreciate that the impact of the affective domain in the developing child’s experience is probably more than ten times greater than the cognitive... *As with museums, so with astronomy...*’

Well, she might as well have!

I’d like to describe one or two scenarios where I feel museums can make an impact. First, without the *direct* involvement of the educationalist, but where the principles of learning have been applied (often because the person responsible is senior in the organisation).

To theorise a little...

When I was a kid, an uncle gave me a broken mantelpiece clock and told me I could have fun taking it to pieces to see how it worked. It was an Ingersoll alarm chimer and had dozens of springs, cogs, plates, screws, levers... In short, a complete playground of the imagination.

I never got it working again but I had a great time dismantling the technology while trying to teach my fingers to obey my eyes and to follow my mechanical intentions.

Having-a-go at something is one of the ways in which we learn about the world and about ourselves. The discoveries we make while in this mode are pivotal. We may all be able to recall our dismantling of Ingersolls, or the first time we changed a set of plugs, or maybe when we actually understood the meaning of the expression 'A drive', or why it is that we don't open the oven before the soufflé is ready...

We worked with our hands and we thought with our fingers – transatlantic educationalists should probably have termed it 'digital cognition' – but whatever it was, it probably represented for us the urge and fun of learning.

Piaget would describe how we moved from the sensori-motor phase, through the pre-operational, to concrete operations at primary-school age, and thence to formal operational thinking, where we learnt to apply logical cognition, abstract conceptualisation, theorising and hypotheses... and through all this development we were still bringing to bear that hand/eye co-ordination that we first developed in order to mangle teddy.

Learning is not replaced by learning, it is built upon it.

We can think of our experiences as geological strata, the most recent experiences forming the surface geology, while the earth's mantle is the experience of the womb. In the process of gaining experience we are often drilling down through the layers of our past in search of memories, which can inform what's happening in front of our eyes – and at the end of our fingers.

In having-a-go or playing with something, we may sometimes strike rich veins of memory and emotional wealth. If we do, the present is informed by overwhelming significances from the past. Frequently we had forgotten all about these things until the new experience, perhaps unwittingly, prospected for it.

A pensioner friend in Carlisle was brought to tears by the memory of having her hair wound into a mangle as a child. Her torturer (and brother) died in the second war and her description of the hair incident and of the arrival of the tragic telegram were almost the same sentence, though separated by some twenty years of sibling memories.

I had forgotten all about the Ingersoll clock until I saw one by chance in a junk shop. The memory of the fun, the uncle and the cogs turned into miniature spinning tops on the table – all this instantly came back and I decided to offer the same exercise to my children when the opportunity next presented itself.

Our world of things does this sort of thing quite frequently – and galleries that promote direct involvement are unearthing the good feeling that comes from the visitor becoming activated ... being *shaken* out of passive, unchallenged, non-threatened behaviour.

After all, being mentally *challenged* is to be *threatened*. We can say that we 'take a risk at learning';

what we mean is that to become an active gallery visitor is to admit to ignorance, to accept an explorer role, to reveal an absence of knowledge.

Socrates claimed that he was wise only in knowing that he knew very little. Few of us have his confidence.

Exhibits can be difficult to use if they assume a level of knowledge to start with or if they are threatening in some other way. Also, *children* are naturally cautious until you activate them. *Teenagers* want to be cool first, involved last. And *grown-ups* don't want to admit that the child's world can be fun for them too.

However, a key to educational success lies in social behaviour.

Reflecting on human aggression, Desmond Morris draws a useful distinction between hunting and warfare. They are both to do with survival; *hunting* involves violence against other species, *warfare*, against our own. He points out that these pastimes are quite distinct from murder. By displaying *aggression* we almost always avoid *violence*. And if we have to resort to violence, the next thing we do is to socialise ourselves into hunting mode.

Of course we very seldom actually become violent, but the hunting instinct is brought to bear quite often, and in a number of ways. It is focused, collaborative and seldom challenged from within the pack, whether co-ordinating an attack on Tesco's, deconstructing the latest defeat for Carlisle United, or helping a teenager with her homework. The goals in each case are *tribal* and seek the success of the species. The prey is identified, depersonalised, dealt with, shared and wolfed within the framework of the hunting pack. While in *hunting mode*, the relationships within the pack are far closer than when there is no prey in sight.

You probably think I've gone a bit haywire here and have muddled up my notes with a *Wildlife on One* script.

The point I'm trying to make is that even in the most dysfunctional or uneven visiting group, there is this capacity for *pursuit*. The pursuit is collaborative and uses individual skills within the group.

The child sets the hare running and starts the chase, the adult brings wisdom and experience to bear, and the pack enjoys the pickings.

So what's in it for the grown-up? Having fun; having institutionalised 'permission' to be a youngster again; being allowed to contribute to the environment rather than being expected just to be passive; having the youngsters distracted so the adults can do a bit of their own investigation; showing off their own skills, their slightly better knowledge, their swifter reading capacity. I have noticed adults reading labels while the youngster is having-a-go, and then offering this wisdom as though long-since acquired – to the child's obvious admiration.

What's in it for the child? There are fewer risks to take in learning for the youngster. Within their tribal role, ignorance and inexperience are the norm. Betraying lack of knowledge is a way of life. But they still need a stimulus to get over shyness or the anxiety which that betrayal in public brings with it. Collaborative 'play' with others and particularly with parents is a good way to achieve this.

Whether with packs, tribes, families or twosomes, interactive exhibits probably work best when they require collaborative attention *across the generations*.

Once a new experience is had and understood, the next stage can be a need to share the knowledge, to tell a parent or a sibling, to communicate the excitement of discovery. From this comes social learning, collective wisdom, ways of thinking, and the framework of learning itself.

Paulette McManus, observing social interaction at the BMNH, discovered that the levels of interaction and the consequent quality of learning directly related to the 'company you keep' in a gallery.

There is a reluctance barrier which, once crossed, is left far behind for the remainder of the visit. The visitor and his or her hunting tribe, from this point onwards, is switched on to 'active' mode and will invest much greater confidence and self-expression in what happens next. They are now far more likely to take that crucial risk at learning.

Interactive exhibits enhance the visitor experience. Even the flip-up lid and the push-button can do more to elicit favourable response than passive exhibits, by involving visitors and giving them added value. This doesn't mean that *contemplative* exhibits have no place. It merely means that careful use of both types is likely to be the most effective.

To take the example of the Iron Age quern:

- corn-grinding is hard work for slow progress
- rotary action is easier than reciprocating
- you've got to keep your fingers from being pinched
- sometimes you get the angle wrong and it doesn't grind properly.

In identifying what people learn, we can draw a distinction between '*cognitive*' gains – the facts you get to know – and '*affective*' gains – the degree to which you enjoyed the process and how you feel about it afterwards.

In the long term, all museum exhibits may be more successful in the affective domain than in the cognitive, and while visitors may in due course forget the detail of what was served up, they are unlikely to forget the enthusiasm that such exhibits can generate.

Amy was right about the stars.

All that I have been describing and the understanding we can glean from watching the public in a gallery should be the stock-in-trade of the Education Service.

It behoves the curator to understand these things, also. I recently went into a gallery where the curator clearly resented the way in which the public had been visiting the gallery. The interactive exhibit was broken and beside it was a notice: *'Owing to vandalism this exhibit will be out of order until further notice.'*

If ever there was a notice pregnant with rage at frustrated good intentions towards an ingrate public, this was it.

The school noticeboard language criminalised all of us ... we stood accused along with the Neanderthals and Visigoths before us ... and we would have to wait for a better world, before the stigma of collective violence can be expunged and the new order of Enlightenment restored.

Well, actually the handset wasn't up to the pounding that ten thousand eager visitors can give it.

In measuring energy, there is the megatonnage of H-bombs, the blast of hurricanes and the shock of plate-tectonics, but the destructive power of the visiting seven-year-old is in a class of its own!

It is essential to have individuals or teams responsible for maintaining exhibits, with a guarantee of limited 'down-times'. A philosophy of 'if it breaks, it's our fault' is the most appropriate to adopt. Controls, switches and the hands-on objects themselves ought to have military-grade design specifications.

So if gallery design can be informed by education specialists, what added value can these professionals confer directly? How can an Education Service appeal to direct users, such as schools?

Many teachers in the UK believe that a museum visit stands to benefit children more in terms of their attitude to a subject, than it will in the long-term acquisition of specific knowledge. They may not choose to share this with parents when asking for money, however.

So, while schools may remain earthbound in curricular dates, Good Kings and Bad Things; museums will enable schoolchildren to take imaginative leaps and flights of fancy that they will probably never forget.

Elaine Gurian refers to these as pivotal experiences, and with more than 50% of primary-school children visiting museums for the first time in school parties, who can doubt it?

Maybe some of these modern playgrounds of the imagination will lead to the switching on of mental light-bulbs and to the sort of enthusiasms that led Isaac Newton to take up apple-growing, William of Ockham to start shaving, and Stephen Hawking to buy his first watch... who knows?

What we ought to know by now is that museum education can provide profound experiences. In his book *The Inner Eye*, the anthropologist Nicholas Humphrey explores the nature of consciousness. He concludes that the explanation as to why we have it, while other creatures apparently do not, is *evolution*. In other words, we do better as a species by having consciousness than we would if we didn't. It seems also that all other species cannot indulge themselves consciously as we can.

Consciousness is chiefly the ability to look at ourselves and to see what we are thinking. It is also the ability to have a pretty good idea about what someone else is thinking. Socrates called this 'empathy'. If we have empathy, we can see what others are thinking. We can persuade them of our good intentions towards them in order to do business, to collaborate, to educate and, most essentially, to co-exist peacefully.

But we have to acquire empathy. We are not born with very much of it. So little, in fact, that it takes approximately thirty years to acquire empathetic insight, and even then it can be in short supply. Much of it is acquired from parents, from the family predicament and, if we are lucky, from going to school.

In less automated societies, people attempt to acquire it from elders and from shamans, priests or witch-doctors.

For us, says Humphries, the priests and elders we identify with come to us in the form of theatre or as television, radio, cinema, music, opera, soap opera, books, paintings and galleries. The wisdom doesn't have to be as mystical as before, but it should challenge the assumptions of learners and enable them to change their minds. After all, it's biologically impossible to think unless you're prepared to change your mind.

The modern museum must, therefore, challenge the visitor with questions, with the opportunity to compare different propositions, to discuss things or to offer a variety of different learning outcomes. Curators and education officers should not perceive themselves as the fount of all knowledge, but as a source of questioning – an open-ended series of mental stimuli, the complete antithesis of the stifling and prescriptive guided tour. They must appeal in the affective domain – and be fun!

Even the most contemplative of art galleries can work as a stimulus for enquiry if time has been taken to ask the questions. Let me give you an illustration of what I mean with Guillaume Lethiere's *Homer Reading his Iliad at the Gates of Athens*.

The interpreter will commence with the assumption that the learners are not necessarily art historians and may become easily bored by this sort of painting.

The questions can be simple enough:

- What time of day is it?
- What's the weather like?
- How do we know it's not Liverpool?
- So what sort of place is it?
- How many people are there in the picture?
- What are they up to?
- What else is in the picture?

Let's look a little closer. What are those people actually thinking and what could we say about the sort of people they are likely to be?

Of course you can go a bit adrift here, but you probably could spot the fact that the singer is blind ... and the slave's bored.

Although you might think, as one seven-year-old did, that the dog was being sick.

Now, leaving aside the issues of just how much archaeology and architecture has been crammed into the frame, and the passing reference to *Iliad and Odyssey* episodes –

- Athene at Phaeacia,
- Hector & Andromache,
- Circe's palace,
- Olympus,
- Odysseus and his dog Argos,
- Odysseus in the nude, awaiting Nausicaa,

the portrayal of character is available to us over a distance of half a continent and 200 years.

By a process of empathy, a youngster surmised that the foreground characterisation is portraying identity. These are not just the artist's friends dressed up in sheets, they are the Greek pantheon.

This is the ultimate tribute to Homer; he's so good, the gods themselves have come to listen (from Left to Right: a grouchy Poseidon, a lascivious Aphrodite, Apollo come for a music lesson, the bellicose Ares, the patrician Zeus, the lame Hephaistos, the androgynous Hera and, kneeling down (and focus of the epics), Athene in persil whites) – the ultimate irony being that Homer can't see his audience to recognise the tribute!

To record the words of the blind poet for posterity, the artist has stationed the muse of epic poetry, Calliope, at Pisistratos' elbow.

This neo-classical story from Nottingham Castle is accessible to seven-year-olds, *but only with*

the help of an interpreter, and in the four minutes you may have spent with the image, it has probably ceased to be boring, if it ever was, has become familiar and may one day become an old friend.

In planning for learning, we can enable a series of empathetic discoveries to take place. Dr Dennis Shemilt identified the following four levels of sophistication:

A primary schoolchild studying the Romans might conclude:

- first, that the Romans were different from us
- second, that they thought differently from us
- third, that people in Roman times thought differently from each other
- fourth, that any judgements we may make about the Romans and the Celts, may tell us more about ourselves today than about anything else.

Not all little learners ever get as far as that crucial fourth stage. They certainly won't if they are bored; and this is where the interpreter is vital. Museums have probably made more advances in this field than in any other over the past thirty years. Whether by interactive exhibits, by audio-visual programmes, by dramatic reconstruction, by carefully crafted publications or simply by contextual presentation, the museum can promote that empathetic insight. There should be the balancing of opinion, the likelihood of interaction, the discovery of the historical predicament and its values.

Of course a learner who questions everything and comes to treat everything with complete cynicism, might wind up like Socrates with his hemlock cocktail, but there is a good chance that he or she might come to treat the evidence of his own or her own eyes with reserve and discernment.

The following three images tell stories.

In the first, a dour Frenchman marches down a street possibly bound for the launderette, oblivious of the carnival atmosphere.

In the second, the face of the gendarme tells of frivolity, possibly a circus troupe following down the street, enough to turn the head of the young girl, the widow and the young man. Our 'empathy' antennae are twitching now and we are reading the scene quizzically; what we know of people, even from another country, is helping us to interrogate a particular scene from the past.

But in the third, Robert Capa's snapshot essay on the fruits of collaboration with the enemy brings us up short: the girl's bald head, the cradled half-German infant and the military escort mean that we have to reinterpret the expression of the dour Frenchman. Abject bitterness seems possible, perhaps, as he carries away what remains of his daughter's possessions in public disgrace. It's almost Sophoclean, and we are shocked; but not so much by the scene, which is

disturbing in itself, but because we could misinterpret the scene so easily.

As with life, it's not until you get the whole picture that you can interpret it for what it is. The key to our investigation is how we read faces and body language –and what experience tells us – in short, how we empathise with what we see.

Many of the more interpretative exhibits in recent years have been informed by research into visitor habits and capabilities. So, for example, efforts have been made to keep display texts simple but clear, to use different methods of gallery interpretation, to pace exhibitions better, to provide free choice of direction, to offer seats and loo-stops, to publish better explanatory leaflets. There is even growing acceptance of the fact that exhibits that challenge and prompt conversations amongst visitors are likely to be making a greater cognitive and affective impact. By far the least exclusive forum for museum interpretation is still the school visit. Herein is the full spectrum of society, albeit in one age-band. But where education officers used chiefly to teach children, the growing trend now is in the briefing of teachers. Instead of teaching thirty children, it is possible to instruct twenty teachers, and thus 600 children. The skills of teaching in a museum and with collections are specific and often alien to many schoolteachers, but they are nonetheless transferable and extremely welcome.

Those museums that lack an education specialist, on the other hand, will struggle to keep abreast with the rate of change in schools and in education technology.

If we compare schools and museums, there is a very obvious difference in the ways they can support the learning child.

While schools may be formal, restrictive, offering the base line of education in providing the statutory framework of the curriculum; museums can match curriculum aims while going far wider in their scope. They can challenge teachers with new ways of thinking about subject matters. Extending beyond formal education, they can provide the stairway to life-long learning and can even appeal to the disenfranchised and the socially excluded.

The museum manager needs to remember that learning happens to individuals more than to groups. *What you learn* is that extension from your present threshold to your new destination. Museums that can seek out and understand those thresholds will be more effective communicators.

Curators must manage the meaning of what they have and what they are presenting. In doing this, they have to adapt the context or the explanations to account for the learner.

A suitable chemistry might be found in SOMA (*Same object; multiple activities*). If the museum can think of a variety of different approaches to the same object or exhibition, it is more likely to have a successful impact.

In the past twenty years I have been involved in the development of education services in five very different museums: three local authorities, one charitable trust and now the National Railway Museum.

In each case, where the service has proved most effective, the following have been attended to:

- The creation and development of a written education policy.
- The adequate core-funding of the service.
- The inclusion of education staff in senior management.
- The devolution of funds and responsibilities to the education staff.
- The training of teachers as a core function of the museum.
- The establishment of an education base.
- The adoption of a service philosophy, where constant development is the rule and where feedback – good and bad – is welcomed as a learning opportunity.
- Networks are set up within and without the organisation, which enable the organisation to flourish and become part of the wider community.
- The organisation itself embraces learning and accepts this as the human condition.
- All staff are empowered and entrusted to play a role in what is the core function of any museum.

For the UK, the Anderson Report, *A Common Wealth*, now has sixty-two recommendations for improvements, many of which may strike useful chords here in the Republic of Ireland.

Museums must take education and interpretation seriously as a core function and as a policy issue. They must be aware of the visitors' needs, must promote enquiry rather than merely dispensing fact, must be 'curriculum aware', must appeal to the imagination of all visitors, must take advantage of the recent developments in interpretation know-how, and must be aware of the philosophical duty to promote empathy. Memorial, the new museum in Caen to promote world peace through an objective study of the horror of the Battle for Normandy, goes a long way towards achieving much of this.

By contrast, when I recently visited a museum that is part of one of Britain's two high-brow and historical universities and that could more or less have bracketed parts of the science national curriculum single-handed, I enquired at the reception desk to see if they had any teaching and learning materials; 'Good Lord, no', came the reply, 'we're part of the university.' In conclusion, I would urge you to remember that we are all learning junkies, dedicated to solving problems, often collectively. As a species, whether hunting or playing, we think on our feet and with our fingers so as to cut corners and to achieve an easier life.

The museum that can take account of this and offer an Education Service worthy of the name, will not only welcome more and more visitors but will provide that vital element of fun which is the oxygen of learning.

Achieving a Quality Education Service on a Tight Budget

Sue Wilkinson

Education Audience Development Officer, Museums and Galleries Commission

I am here today more, I think, because of my last job than my current one. Before July, when I moved to the MGC, I was Director of the South Eastern Museums Education Unit, a unit that was funded primarily by the Headley Trust and by charging the museums in which we worked. The Unit was set up to provide education support, resources and advice to museums throughout the southeast, with a particular focus on small museums without professional education staff or, in some cases, without any professional staff at all. I was the first and only director of the Unit, which is closing down next April following the regionalisation of SEMS. For four of the years I worked at the Unit, I was the only member of staff. This meant that, as well as running the Unit and organising the visits and projects, I also had to buy the stamps, make the coffee and even clean the office. I therefore have lots of experience, not just of advising museums on achieving a quality service on a tight budget, but of doing it as well.

I want to look first at what makes for a quality service, then at how one goes about achieving it, and finally at some examples of good practice.

Quality is one of the current buzzwords. It runs all the way through best value, it underpins registration, it is part of the drive to decide where funding goes and who has access to it; but how does one define the quality of an education service? It is a task I am going to be grappling with at the MGC as we look at drafting standards for education and access, which we can consult on in advance of registration phase 3. We are not alone in this; the West Midlands Area Museum Council is currently looking at devising a set of range statements for museum education as part of the First Principles process. These will then be used to measure the education services provided by museums in the region and to grade them in the same way as they were graded for their care and management of collections. This is the rub, of course. The minute we start talking about quality, we are almost inevitably talking about evaluation, assessment and standards.

Clearly, it is impossible to define or to measure quality simply in terms of the sorts of services a museum provides. One cannot distinguish in any meaningful way between providing handling services or guided tours or workshops or story telling or activity sheets. In fact, the types of service a museum provides are almost irrelevant; what counts is the learning that takes place and how these services promote or hinder it. Equally, the uptake of these services is at best a crude guide. I have been on many guided tours where I have learnt nothing more than an acute distaste for the guide who was taking me around. The most recent took place this summer in France, where my knowledge and enjoyment of French chateaux were seriously impaired by the sort of guide who bombards you with a whole host of facts and figures about the height and depth of the crenellations and how many stones there are in each wall-tower. But no matter how bored I was, I was nevertheless there. If we simply use visitor figures and take them up as a way of measuring quality, then we are in serious danger of falsifying the impact and undermining the importance of what we do. What I would like to know is what expectations visitors arrived with at the chateaux, what their different needs were, what they

got out of that tour, what impact it has had on them, how many will ever go back, if they would recommend it to others and if it makes others go.

The essence, it seems to me, in establishing a quality service in a museum or gallery is not about the levels and types of provision but about the process one goes through in determining what those will be and the framework within which such decisions are taken. This is where there can be common ground between the largest national service and the smallest volunteer-run museum. All can develop a policy and action-plan to guide them in their work and all can follow a process of community consultation, monitoring, evaluation and involvement in determining the education service they are going to provide. If we define quality as planning and process, then all museums, both large and small, can develop a quality service.

What I want to do now, therefore, is to look at how I would define the process of setting up a quality service, and then come back to some of the ways in which one might measure, having achieved it.

The starting point is to have an education policy. Many of the small museums I worked in with SEMS fought shy of writing education policies. In part because they saw it as a lot of work (which it is), in part because they wanted to start doing things right away, and in part because they were afraid that producing a policy was going to commit them to more than they could cope with in terms of educational activity. Most of them had, however, some experience of developing programmes and resources which had not then had the impact they expected, and this was a powerful lever to getting them to sit down and think about planning rather than doing. I became very familiar with curators telling me about some wonderful schools' programme or INSET session or family activity they had devised, only to find that very few people had turned up to it. The instinct for all of us when our best-laid plans seem to go wrong is to cast around for someone to blame. Of course, the reason why nobody had turned up was because the programme or workshop, however well planned it had been, significantly failed to meet the needs of the people it had been aimed at. This was usually because no consultation had taken place about what those needs might be or how they should be addressed and no piloting or evaluation had been done before the programmes had been put in place.

This consultation is an integral part, not just of the policy writing process but of the planning of any educational event or programme or resource. It is what makes developing education policies and plans take so long, but it is the key, I feel, towards providing quality services.

I was not invited to talk today on writing education policies, and anyway there are a number of excellent publications now available that deal with this topic. However, I would like to pull out some of what I consider to be the elements of successful policy writing because, in many cases, they are the same as the elements that go into making up a quality education. Good policies are, I believe, ones that all the staff buy into, and they only do so when they have been actively involved in the process. All the articles I have written on the subject and all the training sessions that I have run, start from the premise that everyone has to have some input into

developing the mission statement and discussing the direction the service is going in. There are numerous suggestions in *Education Basics*, a training manual written for the AMCs by SEMEU and available from them, for the sorts of group activities that can be used to promote this process. Good policies are also ones that take decisions and establish priorities, and it is impossible to do this without having carried out extensive research into the needs, including the learning needs, of both existing and potential audiences. It is impossible to decide where to target your efforts in terms of education and access until you know who might want to use the collections, what it is that they might need and want to help them to use the collections effectively, and whether you can meet those needs. Only then can you decide where best to target your efforts and what sorts of services, programmes and resources you should be developing. The line we always took in our training sessions with small museums was that whilst all museums would like to provide all services for all possible visitors, this was not realistically possible given time and resource constraints. Policies, if they are to be of any use, are about deciding exactly what can and should be done. A policy that says we are going to work with one local school over the next year to develop activities and resources to support their teaching of local history and run three events for families, is just as valuable and possibly more so than a twenty-page document that outlines a whole spectrum of plans for audiences ranging from under fives to over seventies.

In 1996 the Museums and Galleries Commission convened a group to discuss producing some guidelines for good practice in museum and gallery education. I was one of the group who met to discuss this issue and to draw up the guidelines. Until the guidelines, or something like them, form part of registration, museums do not have to adopt them, but they have provided museums with some clear idea of what they should be doing in the field of museum education and public services. As well as urging museums to see education as a core function and to employ specialist educators, they also urge museums to work in a planned and pro-active way. The most recent statistics from the MGC's database show that since the guidelines were launched there has been a change in the percentage of museums with education staff and with education policies. The level is currently running at 808 out of 1808 registered museums. It is very unlikely that the guidelines alone are responsible for this change. The establishment of education posts at the Museums and Galleries Commission and some Area Museum Councils, the work of The Group for Education in Museums, the Museums Association and engage, the National Report on Museum Education, the requirement of many funding bodies that applicants should have policies, the work of the Campaign for Learning in Museums and Galleries, etc. etc. will all have played their part in bringing about change, but that is of course how change happens. It is the combined pressure of a number of things rather than any one on its own. Nevertheless, the fact that the MGC, which does act in some ways as a regulatory body for museums, has published these guidelines, has made many museums aware of the need to start developing education policies, and DOMUS makes it clear that both small and large museums can develop them.

As well as taking decisions about who to work with and what to do, a good policy should also commit the museum to a way of working. This is what I want to talk about in a little more

detail because it is this which I think defines a quality service in a museum rather than the number of programmes or resources it provides.

As Director of SEMEU, I worked in many small and volunteer-run museums with few or no professional staff, let alone a professional educator. They were operating on a shoe-string budget with lots of enthusiasm, huge amounts of good intentions and with a wide range of professional skills from other walks of life. Nevertheless, they often found it very difficult to attract educational groups and were therefore very keen to try out anything that could help to solve this problem.

Once they had their policy in place and knew who they wanted to work with, we would begin, or suggest that they begin a process of extensive consultation with the group or audience the museum was trying to attract. This would build on all the research they had done for their policy. In 1996 we began work with sixteen small museums in Hertford who wanted to find out why so few local schools were visiting their collections and to establish the sorts of services and resources they should be providing. None of these museums had the resources to commission a market research company to carry out visitor research for them, nor had they the skills to develop a programme of their own. SEMEU, therefore, worked with them on a project which, as well as finding out what schools wanted from their local museum, also helped curators in those museums to develop new skills. Together we developed a questionnaire, which SEMEU piloted, and then each museum identified three local schools that had used their services and three that could have visited but never did. The curators then were trained in interviewing skills and used the questionnaire to carry out interviews with teachers in these schools. SEMEU analysed the results of the questionnaire and produced a report. What the survey established was that local schools were making lots of visits to museums, but that they were all tending to visit London rather than their local museum. It also identified direct teaching, access to handling collections and the provision of resource packs with information and activity sheets as the key things that would make them visit their local museum. Once this research had been carried out we then began work with four museums in the county (Hertford, Ware, the Bunyan Museum and Luton Museum Service) to help them develop the sorts of services and resources teachers were saying they wanted. The aim, in the long term, was to be able to assess whether implementing the suggestions made by teachers does in fact change the way in which they visit and use museums. Four very different projects were developed. In Hertford Museum we worked with teachers and with the staff to develop a handling collection based on the theme of housework. We wrote information sheets and activity sheets for teachers to use with this collection, and teachers piloted these at an evening session and then brought in their pupils to let them test them out. In response to the views of some teachers that they wanted access to someone who could offer direct teaching for their groups, we trained a freelance educator to offer taught sessions based around these resources. Hertford Museum launched the new service last year. Before these resources were available, the museum was getting about four or five visits a year from local schools. They had more bookings than that in the four weeks after the launch and the numbers have continued to rise. The projects in Bunyan Museum, Ware Museum and Luton Museum were very different. At Ware we

developed handling boxes and accompanying materials for the volunteers who run the museum to take out into schools (the museum is too small for a whole class to visit); at the Bunyan Museum we developed resources to help teachers to work on site, and at Luton Museum we trained a team of freelance interpreters in presentation skills. What was common to all these projects was that they were developed with the teachers they were aimed at and they involved them in all stages of the planning and development.

A very different type of service but with a similar approach is the Community Education Programme which has been developed at the Grange Museum in Brent. The Grange Museum of Community History is situated on a roundabout in Neasden. It has predominantly social history collections and a very small budget. Over the years it has developed an extremely high reputation for quality education work, all of which has been done by working with different community groups to help them to use the collections to plan and mount exhibitions that reflect their own history and heritage. The museum began this programme when it realised that its visitor profile in no way reflected the breakdown of the borough's population in terms of ethnicity (50% from 'ethnic' backgrounds and 9% Irish). In the 1980s it changed its name and focus from local to community history to reflect the diverse communities in Brent. A decision was taken to be pro-active in going out to people in the community to talk to them about how they might want to see the collections used and to see if they could be drawn into working on a range of permanent and temporary exhibitions. The first of these exhibitions, entitled *Brent People*, used local people's photos, memories and artefacts to create a new permanent display, and this approach has been continued throughout succeeding exhibitions. The museum now has a community advocacy group that is made up of people from the community who have worked on exhibition teams and which serves as an advisory panel and sounding board for the museum. The result has been a highly successful series of community-led exhibitions. The success of the programmes has demonstrated itself in terms of positive evaluation by and from visitors, a change in the breakdown of the people who visit and use the museum, a pro-active outreach programme, increased publicity, increased support from the council and closer links with the community.

So, a quality education service on a tight budget – how do you achieve it? I cannot, of course, provide the definitive answer, but these are some guidelines to bear in mind.

- If you do not have a professional educator on your staff and there is no possibility of getting one, identify someone or some people who will be responsible for education at your museum. They do not have to do all the work themselves, but they will be responsible for ensuring that it gets done.
- Find someone who will be responsible for trying to get funding for educational projects. You need someone who is prepared to go through directories of grants, badger local businesses, write to Government, see what funding is available from Europe, HLF, NOF, etc.
- Get these people to go and see what is being done in other museums and galleries. Crib all and any ideas that you can.

- If you rely on volunteers, try to recruit people with the right types of experience. Take every opportunity to let people know that they are needed and discuss with them what they could do.
- Look into training opportunities for your staff or volunteers.
- Find other museums that are developing their education services and establish partnerships.
- Set up systems for finding out what your visitors think of your current services and provisions. Start a Visitors' Book and use the comments; have a meeting with the people who staff the galleries and get their views; put evaluation forms at the information desk; start keeping records of the questions visitors ask.
- Collect as much information as you can about your local community and your potential visitors. Talk to community leaders, teachers, etc. about what they think of the museum and what they need and want from it.
- Use all this to feed into the policy-writing process. Keep your policy short and to the point. It should tell the new reader who you are going to be working with and why and what you hope to achieve over a planned period of time. It should commit you to a way of working that focuses on audience need and it should be reviewed regularly. All staff, trustees and councillors should feel a sense of ownership of the policy and should have bought into it.
- Once you have decided who you are going to be working with, establish links with community leaders or parents or teachers to start discussing, in more detail, how the collections can be used to meet their needs. Ask them if they will get involved in developing and piloting programmes, exhibitions and resources.
- View the development of an Education Service as a joint project that you do in conjunction with your users. See it as something open, flexible and creative.
- Review and evaluate regularly.
- Use your evaluation. Write reports on what you have done and let people know about it.

Finally, good luck. I firmly believe, given my experience of museums in the southeast, that quality has very little to do with lots of resources (they just enable you to do more). It has all to do with the approach people take to their Education Service. Those committed to user-focused service – which translates into taking a pro-active approach to visitor research, audience development, consultation, user involvement and evaluation – generally run high-quality services that would pass muster under any sort of assessment scheme. I certainly hope that when we finally get education and access into registration, it will focus on the process museums engage in with their visitors rather than on the range and type of services they provide.

Innovative uses of New Technologies in Museums

Dr Roland Jackson

Head of Education, The Science Museum

Introduction

Digital information and communication technologies are here to stay, even if it is quite impossible to forecast their development much into the future. Museums now have a major new mechanism for interacting with the public for purposes as diverse as exhibiting, marketing, collecting, selling and promoting learning. The emphasis in this paper is on interactions to promote learning, primarily through the web.

It is hardly possible to write a policy document currently in the sector that does not take account of the opportunities afforded by the new technologies. In the UK, the revised edition of *A Common Wealth: Museums in the Learning Age* (<http://www.culture.gov.uk/COMMONWEALTH.htm>) includes relevant new sections (pp21-26 and pp55-57). The publication by the National Museum Directors' Conference of *A Netful of Jewels: New Museums in the Learning Age* (<http://www.vam.ac.uk/index1.html>) provides a more detailed vision of the development of museums in the digital age.

Range of Applications

Digital technologies now cover a huge range of museum activity, simply, in relation to exhibitions and education.

CD-ROMs remain significant, providing offerings that might be described as 'catalogues' (e.g. many art gallery productions), 'interactives' (e.g. the 'Challenge of Materials' CD-ROM from the Science Museum) and 'collaboratives' (e.g. the 'My Brighton' project).

In-gallery systems continue to develop. They include visitor information systems, from the Microgallery at the National Gallery, London, to the state-of-the-art multi-language networked information system recently introduced at the Science Museum. Computers are used for simulations, games and quizzes, databases, electronic labels and to control interactive exhibits. One museum in the US is currently experimenting with wireless hand-held computers that act as text/video (and potentially audio) guides and allow interaction additionally with networked exhibits. In principle, the visitor could send gathered information straight to a web page at the end of the visit to browse later.

Remote access possibilities include video-conferencing. The Science Museum already offers schools a menu of opportunities each term, from mystery object sessions to encounters with actors and curators. Then there is the Internet, with the dimensions of e-mail and the web in particular, the latter offering an extraordinary range of possibilities.

Why People Visit Museum Websites

Not enough museums appear to be evaluating who is visiting their websites and why. The Science Museum carried out a substantive evaluation a couple of years ago, the results of

which are published on the website, *pour encourager les autres* (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/education/evalintro.html>), and further specific evaluations have followed. Most purposes for visiting online are broadly learning-related: planning a visit to the museum; finding specific information; researching a general topic; finding or using a structured learning resource; and exchanging information, ideas or views. Clearly there are people looking to buy things, hire space in the museum or even find a job, but learning is at the core. Museum website developers would do well to recognise this.

Developing Websites to Support Learning

Learning takes place in many different contexts, often categorised as informal (such as a family visit), formal (either by a teacher or student, who have very different needs) or self-directed (when an individual, specialist or not, will follow a particular learning interest). Being clear both about the context of learning and the nature of the learning is critical for effective development of websites (and indeed for the rest of the museum's offerings!).

The Science Museum evaluation indicated that about 30% of visitors to the website are planning an actual visit. They, therefore, need practical information, differentiated according to the type of learner (e.g. child, adult, family group) or teacher. Schools and colleges increasingly look to online booking facilities (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/education/scedbook.html>) and resources online that they can download, use and modify.

Many people are looking for specific information and knowledge. They may look through databases (including collections' information systems), access question-and-answer facilities, such as that run by the Singapore Science Centre (HYPERLINK <http://www.sci-ctr.edu.sg/ScienceNet/index.html>), or search virtual exhibitions on topics such as 'Flight' (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/on-line/flight/index.html>) or 'Dolly the Sheep' (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/dolly/index.html>). Collections' information systems have not been designed for public access and that does and will cause problems. In addition, they have not been designed to incorporate public perspectives and knowledge, which limits them as formative educational and community-building resources. I would like to see the next generation of documentation systems develop in a form I have termed 'open documentation', to provide means of incorporating public knowledge.

Alternatively, people may just be informally browsing and interested in a general topic area, such as the discovery of the electron (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/on-line/electron/index.html>) or one of the many topics that are the subject of the mini-web exhibitions, termed 'exhiblets', on the Science Museum's website (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/collections/exhiblets/index.html>). For these purposes, subject-based indexing and searching facilities ideally need to be provided.

The formal educational audience is a different market, and it is important to recognise whether one is targeting teachers or students with a particular application. A recent initiative from the Science Museum is the website 'Flights of Inspiration' (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/>

flights/index.html), which provides a resource for teaching about forces in the context of historic flights, although there is evidence that the site is widely used by people interested in flight itself (particularly in relation to the Wright brothers and the first transatlantic flight). Evaluation of these and other materials is key, in terms of who is using them, for what purpose and how. The Science Museum is currently exploring methodologies for doing this, including the use of extensive analysis of log files, online questionnaires and direct classroom observation.

The final broad educational purpose for using a website is to exchange information, ideas and views. The Internet is a communication medium, not simply an information-dissemination medium, and can support social activity and the development of relationships.

At the Science Museum, the STEM project (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/education/stem/>) encourages teachers and students to write about the educational use of the museum (and of the associated National Museum of Photography, Film and Television and National Railway Museum) and to publish the ideas on the web. The STEM website then contains links to these various perspectives. This initiative both encourages reflective educational activity in itself and also provides a collaborative set of shared resources created by the community of users of the museums. Some of the websites produced are quite stunning. The COMO project is similar in concept (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/education/como/>), and encourages the development of websites in the subject area of materials, linked thematically to the 'Challenge of Materials' gallery at the Science Museum. The 'EclipseLab' website (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/eclipse/eclipselab/index.html>) is more experimentally based; it encouraged the public to participate in making observations during the recent solar eclipse and then to share them through a public database.

Further examples include the running of discussion and debates, by e-mail (<http://www.nmsi.ac.uk/education/scedemail.html>) or on the web. They also include trying out interactive webcasting, in which a webcast (e.g. a Victorian mystery-object session) is run alongside real-time chat for audience participation.

Some implications for museum educators are that they should:

- Familiarise themselves with the medium
- Articulate educational user needs
- Take the initiative in developing content and activities
- Be involved in strategic website development
- Be integrated into teams producing online content and activities
- Think about the concept of 'open documentation'
- Help identify funding sources for content and activity development
- Network and collaborate electronically as well as via traditional means.

Why should Museums open Centres for Curiosity and Imagination

Alison Coles

Project Manager, Centres for Curiosity and Imagination, Kids' Clubs Network

Some might say that all museums are *Centres for curiosity and imagination*, places that inspire discovery and creativity, that engage visitors' intellect and emotions. But is this really true? Certainly in the case of children, research has shown that museums in general are not viewed as exciting or inspiring places. For example, research undertaken by the UK Museums and Galleries Commission in 1997, which asked children what they thought about museums and galleries, came up with the same old stereotype – museums are boring places with nothing to do. The children did, of course, talk about some very good experiences in particular museums, and certainly many museums offer workshops, events and so on which do capture the interest of children. But when we think about a family simply dropping in to a museum to visit the exhibitions, most of us might admit that in many museums this is likely to fall short of a great day out for the kids.

The concept of *Centres for curiosity and imagination* is something quite specific. Last year, the UK office of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation published a report that examined the phenomenon of 'children's museums'. These are hands-on, interactive centres for learning through play, which are hugely successful in the States, and now proliferating throughout the world. The Gulbenkian was concerned that children's museums did not appear to be spreading to the UK in a big way, and the report recommended that a project be set up to make this happen.

I was appointed early this year to manage that project, and my first task was to define what it is we wanted in order to help people to develop. What we did was to take the best aspects of existing children's museums, and those with the most resonance for the educational and social issues and priorities that face us in this part of the world, and developed them into a clear vision of Centres for curiosity and imagination.

So what is this concept of *Centres for curiosity and imagination*? It can be summed up in six main points:

- *Centres for curiosity and imagination* help children to understand themselves, other people and the world around them, complementing learning in school, the home and elsewhere. They embrace arts and humanities, science and technology.

Fundamentally, Centres will aim to encourage children's learning. The Centres will reflect a holistic approach to learning, striving to merge subject areas that are traditionally kept separate, such as art and science. However, each Centre will have its own particular focus, which could include helping children to appreciate their own community and its heritage, to explore their own feelings, to respect different cultures, to tap into their creativity or to understand scientific phenomena.

- *Centres for curiosity and imagination* foster curiosity, imagination and creativity, new ways of thinking and learning, positive social interaction, self-esteem and motivation.

These are crucial if a child is to fulfil his or her full potential. They are the bedrock of educational achievement and personal well-being. Centres will recognise that developing these qualities is as important as gaining knowledge, and aim to sow the seeds for a lifelong love of learning. Albert Einstein once said that ‘Imagination is more important than knowledge’, and I like the old African proverb which goes something like this: ‘Give someone a fish and you feed them for a day; teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime’.

- *Centres for curiosity and imagination* provide hands-on exhibitions and activities that inspire playful exploration of the world.

The Centres will be object-rich environments that inspire children to play in new ways, to make new connections, and to encounter new aspects of the world. Play is a hugely powerful tool for discovery and learning, for people of all ages. It is something that museums and galleries generally have not tapped into in their exhibitions and education programmes. Whilst visiting children’s museums in the USA I was inspired by the potential of play as a way of engaging children with objects – and in particular role-play. The best children’s museums I saw had created whole environments in which children could immerse themselves and interact with the objects. For example, the Brooklyn Children’s Museum (which is 100 years old this year) had an exhibition called ‘Global Shoes’ which introduced children to shoes from around the world in a series of role-play settings. From a shoe-design studio, to the factory floor, to a shoe shop, children were engrossed in following their own learning paths. At the Capital Children’s Museum in Washington DC, a group of galleries recreate Mexican environments, from a marketplace to a city-centre post office. And in Providence, the children’s museum helps children to find out about immigration to Rhode Island through a time tunnel with a series of settings. For instance, one setting is a cabin of a ship which brought a young girl across to the States.

The use of authentic objects is an important part of the concept of *Centres for curiosity and imagination*. These need not be museum objects – anyone can set up a *Centre for curiosity and imagination* – but since museums are the keepers of some of the most fascinating and inspiring objects, they are perfectly placed to develop such a Centre. It is, of course, a challenge to find ways of using precious museum objects in a playful environment, but not an insoluble one. In England, Walsall Art Gallery’s pioneering art exhibitions for under fives showed what could be achieved, as does the Roald Dahl Children’s Gallery in Aylesbury. It is not necessary to allow children actually to play with a precious object in order for them to enjoy it and be inspired by it. It can be enough to surround an object, which may need to be behind glass, with playful, imaginative, interactive exhibits that focus children’s attention on it.

- *Centres for curiosity and imagination* support the role of parents and carers in children’s learning and development.

Centres will recognise the power of family learning, helping parents and carers to engage with the exhibitions and activities alongside their children. In the States, I often saw parents as

involved as their children, playing and learning side by side. Many children's museums give guidance to parents about interacting with their children, or even run parenting classes. The Boston Children's Museum has a parenting resource room with free tea and coffee and information about a whole range of parenting issues. Children's museums are also often a stepping stone for parents into other types of learning, such as basic skills courses.

- *Centres for curiosity and imagination* develop from, and respond to, the characteristics and changing needs of the local community, involving children and other local people in decision-making.

Each Centre will be unique, since it will serve a unique community. Local adults and children will be key participants in shaping the Centres, fostering a strong sense of community involvement, and Centres will evolve over time as community needs change. This community basis means that the Centres will be small to medium-scale – small enough to be responsive to local people and to allow a sense of ownership by the community. And the relationship with local people means that Centres can play an important role in community regeneration, helping to develop a strong sense of community identity and local pride.

- *Centres for curiosity and imagination* aim to provide maximum physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural and emotional access.

Centres adhere to the principle of equal access: everyone has particular needs, and Centres will strive to anticipate and meet these needs. In this way, each Centre will aim to serve the widest possible range of people, including disabled and non-disabled people, members of various ethnic groups and people of all income levels. Centres will be welcoming, socially inclusive places where people of all backgrounds feel included.

So what benefits can developing a *Centre for curiosity and imagination* bring to museums? I think there are two main benefits, and they both relate to the child-focus of *Centres for curiosity and imagination*. Firstly, by developing a Centre that is focused solely on the needs of children, you can go much further in serving their particular needs. What children like doing best – actively using their minds and bodies in a playful way – is not always popular with other museum visitors. However, I am still a strong believer in integrating provision for children throughout a museum or gallery, and certainly do not think that children should be confined to children's galleries. Indeed, I believe that *Centres for curiosity and imagination* can act as a stepping-stone to the rest of the museum, inspiring children to want to find out more and to explore the rest of the collection. Many of the children's museums in the States see their role in this way – as 'starter museums'.

Secondly, this focus on the child makes it easier to form partnerships with other organisations concerned with child welfare and to tap into national and local initiatives, including funding streams. This is something many US children's museums are very good at. I would like to give you just one example. The Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia runs a huge range of

programmes which are externally-funded. For example, it provides a programme for teenage parents and their children, it has installed an interactive room at the central in-take office for homeless families, and runs parent-child sessions for parents who have lost custody of their children and who are meeting them under supervision at Philadelphia's Family Court. The best children's museums are truly at the centre of their communities, and have the support of a wide range of funding agencies.

There is a huge amount of interest in the concept of *Centres for curiosity and imagination* in the UK. The project I am managing is helping people to set up Centres through giving advice, organising training and networking opportunities and publishing guidance. We are also promoting the concept of *Centres for curiosity and imagination* to decision-makers at a national level and to those with the money – and have met with much enthusiasm. Indeed, the Department for Education and Employment has contributed towards the project and sits on the steering group, along with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. I am currently working particularly closely with six 'trailblazer' projects that will demonstrate the concept, three of which are led by museums. One will be part of an Early Excellence Centre – a one-stop shop for services for young children and their parents; another is playing a key role in the regeneration of a run-down part of London; one involves a partnership with the local health authority and another with a youth service; one project is led by a group of children and young people, who have firm views about what they want and need. Many other individuals and organisations are starting to develop plans.

I would like to end with a quote that probably answers the question 'Why should museums open *Centres for curiosity and imagination*?' better than all my words – a quote from a nine-year-old visitor to a children's museum in Rotterdam: 'I like it here so much, I could stay here all day and sleep here as well. I want to go again. It was very, very, very, very nice'.

A Viewpoint: The Role of the Council of National Cultural Institutions

Judith Woodworth

Director, National Concert Hall

The CNCI was launched by Minister Síle de Valera in October 1998 and represents the commitment of the Directors of the National Cultural Institutions to advocating for cultural issues at a national level, co-operating in joint actions and supporting the development of the cultural institutions. Membership of the Council consists of the Directors of

National Archives	Heritage Council
National Museum of Ireland	Irish Museum of Modern Art
National Library of Ireland	National Concert Hall
National Gallery of Ireland	National Theatre Society Ltd
An Chomhairle Ealaíoin /The Arts Council	Chester Beatty Library

To describe the purpose of the Council in a single sentence, I would suggest that it is about making connections and forging new partnerships between the national cultural institutions, which will act as a catalyst for fresh opportunities and energies in Irish cultural life.

The Council has undertaken several joint initiatives in the past months, many of which are outlined in our information sheet. But perhaps most relevant to this forum is the work of the Education, Outreach and Community Education working group, and I am delighted to have been given this opportunity to describe the context and the work engaged in by the group on behalf of the Council.

The last twenty-five years have seen a major shift in the theories and practice of education in Irish society. A correspondence between education and schooling has been replaced by a vision of education that sees learning as a life-long process, the meaning and impact of which is being debated here today. Social and educational evolution is naturally reflected also in changes in the way that public institutions have sought to engage with the public. Education programmes have been initiated in the cultural institutions that aim to create opportunities for those learning to participate in a process of self-development through awareness of history, heritage and the arts. Since the mid 1970s, education programmes have developed in diverse cultural institutions and organisations, all of which have a responsibility to provide a public educational service.

While some of the development of such education programmes has been enshrined in legislation, much of it has occurred on an *ad hoc* basis, born out of individual institutions' policies and desire to embrace emerging new definitions of education in society. *Ad hoc* development has resulted in the establishment of Education, Outreach and Community Education Programmes in most of the ten national cultural institutions, which in turn has led to significant changes in the way those institutions relate to the public, and their perceptions of the connections between the institution and society in general.

The Education, Outreach and Community Education working group was established to explore these education realities for the cultural institutions and to inform future developments in this area. The group has concluded that there is a need for a strategy to provide a cohesive framework in which education policies can grow and thrive. There is a need also to analyse the relationship of education to other areas of work, physical and human resources, strategic partnerships, the national remit and the challenges of meeting future needs.

Translating this need into real action, the group has initiated a programme of work based on key principles of participation and consultation with the wider sector. The first stage, just begun, is an independently commissioned research project that explores best practice for education, starting with the education programmes of cultural institutions and looking outward into the wider sector.

The second stage will seek the active involvement of interested parties in the cultural and education sectors through workshops and reviews of the research process, with the goal of producing a policy document for education. It is hoped that this document will be used to impact on the views and programmes of, in particular, Government departments, policy-making agencies, practitioners in the field of cultural and heritage education, and educators and administrators.

I think it is important to state also that the education programmes in the cultural institutions are all at different levels of development – some have been established for up to ten years, others for only two – so it will be interesting to see what policy document will be produced at the end of the research process.

I would just like to put into context the way in which the National Concert Hall's own Education and Community Outreach Programme fits in to this process.

The National Concert Hall established the Programme in order to expand its brief as a national cultural institution for all sectors of the community and to provide accessible, practical, participatory and audience-developing events, thereby enhancing the experience of music for all those attending concerts.

The first Education and Community Outreach Manager was appointed in the latter part of 1997, with the Programme commencing in late 1997/early 1998. Through research and discussion with other arts institutions, audience members, educationalists, the Department of Education, RTÉ, the Arts Council and the National Concert Hall's own Board of Directors, a policy for the Education and Community Outreach Programme was outlined, to include the following points:

- To engage with all ages, all backgrounds
- To develop links with new arts organisations
- To establish a new relationship with the National Concert Hall's resident orchestra

- To provide practical support and collaborative opportunities with all levels of the education system
- To provide events and experiences to the highest possible standard, through the highest possible standard of personnel
- To continue with training programmes for musicians and teachers
- To align its activities to the concepts contained in the new curriculum for both primary and secondary levels
- To provide events that are participatory, non-specialist and available to all.

Examples of projects and events that have taken place in the Education and Community Outreach Programme are:

- Composition workshops in primary and post-primary schools, both in Dublin's inner-city areas and in ten locations around the country, aligned to the new music curriculum
- Masterclasses for third-level students, linking into artists from the NCH Celebrity Concerts
- Open rehearsals by international orchestras visiting the National Concert Hall
- Music appreciation classes
- Music workshops in Temple Street Children's Hospital
- Pre-concert talks
- Workshops and performances of set works on the Junior and Leaving Cert Music syllabus.

In conclusion, the Council of National Cultural Institutions working group will continue to develop its Education and Community Outreach Programme in order to fulfil the challenge of public demand for accessible, new and participatory events.

A Viewpoint: The New Arts Plan 1999–2000

Patricia Quinn

Director, The Arts Council

I am very glad of the opportunity to address this seminar on the subject of the arts in the museum context. The Arts Council is not normally a direct promoter of artistic events or activities – unlike many of the other organisations represented here today – but it has a long record of policy development and strategic funding of the arts in education.

My purpose today is to try to give a brief overview of the trends in our contribution to this aspect of cultural provision, which has long been seen by successive Arts Councils as of central importance to their work as the development agency for the arts in Ireland.

With a series of seminal reports, beginning with *Provision for the Arts* by Richards and Bowerman (1976), the Arts Council has acted as an advocate for greater policy and cohesion and better public provision for the arts in education. Subsequent studies and reports, including Ciaran Benson *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* (1979), Peter Brinson *The Dancer and the Dance* (1985), Donald Herron (1985) and Leatherdale and Todd *Shall we Dance*, have articulated specific agenda for action by the Arts Council and others and have contributed in no small way to the public debate and to Government policy development in the area of education and the arts.

The Arts Council moved to enhance its role from advocacy to direct action following the publication of *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* with Ciaran Benson's appointment (1978) as the first Education Officer of the Council. That appointment initiated twenty years of work to pilot or promote new kinds of engagement between artists, children and young people, or to encourage existing models. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Arts Council made significant contributions to arts curriculum development, and developed a range of institutional relationships in support of youth arts. Education and the arts formed part of the agenda of the emerging network first of regional and subsequently county Arts Officers, with support from the Arts Council and local authorities throughout the country. Increasingly, major cultural institutions and organisations of all kinds began to acknowledge the need to make educational outreach a central part of their work.

So it could be said that Benson's seminal report marked the beginning of a proliferation of activity serving what might broadly be described as the arts and education agenda. I am conscious that to say this may be to risk appearing complacent about the level or quality of provision for the arts in education. That is far from my purpose here. I suspect everyone in this room has found themselves appealing for more recognition, more resources for what is still a chronically undernourished aspect of our education system. Rather than rehearsing those concerns here, I am assuming that they are shared, and I am interested in discussing what may be done to bring about change.

In pointing to the Arts Council's track record, I am making a case for focused, strategic action: I believe that there is a value in persistent dedicated attention to these issues and, moreover,

that there is evidence of greater political recognition of the importance of this agenda. In the past, for the Arts Council, our role has involved a judicious mixture of promoting debate in the public domain, building institutional relationships, supporting good work and, occasionally, acting as a direct promoter of school shows. The latest in this series, an architectural show for second level, will be launched in early 2000.

The second Arts Plan, 1999-2000, gave us an opportunity to consult and reflect on the impact of our policies in the past, and the direction we should now take in promoting what, I repeat, is a central part of our agenda. One of the conscious strategies of the Plan is to 'increase opportunities for children and young people to engage with the arts'. The greatest augury for the next phase in promoting these purposes is the recognition given by Government to the Plan, specifically with the clear signal from the Departments of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and of Education and Science that they are conscious of the need for a joint approach to addressing some of the central development issues.

In the Arts Plan, these are identified as:

- The bench-marking of best practice and promotion of higher standards in arts education work
- The main-streaming of successful pilot projects
- The enhancement of teachers' capability to be arts educators.

We look forward to working with colleagues in the two Departments, and with leading practitioners, to give effect to this strategic objective in the coming years.

Workshop 1: Working with Volunteers

Jane Williams

The Ulster Museum

Some 375,000 volunteers work in museums in the United States.¹ In Northern Ireland there are about one hundred.² The difference is not simply one of scale; in Northern Ireland each year, some 131,000 people volunteer formally in other contexts.³ Are museums missing a valuable opportunity?

Who does volunteer in Northern Ireland, and why? What work is done by volunteers and how do they feel about it? How effectively are they managed? What do staff see as the pros and cons of using volunteers now and in the future? To determine the existing practice, and the potential for volunteering in museums, I undertook some research through the University of Ulster in 1997.

I focused on the twenty museums then registered with the Northern Ireland Museums Council and got responses to questionnaires – on the phone, in person, or in writing – from at least one member of staff in all twenty museums, and from thirty-two volunteers, about a third of those active in any one year.

Over half of Northern Ireland's volunteers are in the volunteer-run railway societies at Downpatrick and Foyle, a third in the Ulster Museum and the National Trust's Springhill property, and the rest are spread between six other museums. Ten museums do not use volunteers at all.

It was encouraging to find that volunteers come from all age-groups and backgrounds, though particular age-groups are often attracted to, or selected for, particular tasks, departments or museums. The railway societies, for example, are run chiefly by older men, and their numerical strength means that more men than women volunteer in the province. Among women, those in their twenties, usually looking for work experience, predominate. A related work background may encourage volunteers to apply but is by no means essential.

Also positive was the willingness of museum staff to accommodate different types of people as volunteers. Few saw qualifications as a priority, prizing more highly personal qualities such as being genuinely interested, a self-starter, hard-working, reliable, or a good communicator. Some felt it important to offer work experience to those aiming for the museum profession.

In recruiting, museums do not usually advertise openly, but depend on word of mouth and on volunteers taking the initiative to request work. Some are asked to volunteer by others.

About half the volunteers were invited for an initial interview or chat, usually to discuss their

1 American Association of Museums survey, 1989.

2 Jane Williams, *Volunteering in Museums in Northern Ireland: Practice and Potential*, University of Ulster, 1999.

3 *The Economic Value of Volunteering*, Northern Ireland Volunteer Development Agency, 1997.

interests, experience, motivation, and the time they could offer. Most were given choice in the work available to them, but a third did not feel their wishes were taken adequately into account.

In interviewing both volunteers and those who managed them, differences of perception did emerge. Staff went out of their way to accommodate volunteers, and assumed that volunteers were happier with arrangements than was the case. Yet volunteers did not feel it was their place to complain.

What motivates people to volunteer? The most significant factors in my study were, in order of importance: satisfaction at seeing results; having interesting work; being able to employ existing skills; enjoyment; intellectual satisfaction; meeting and working with people; learning from professional museum staff; doing something of use to others; working with the collections; gaining work experience or skills; enjoying the museum environment.

Nearly all felt their work was valued, though seldom by museums as institutions. Individual staff were often generous and imaginative in expressing appreciation: one botanical volunteer was delighted to be placed on a fern spore-exchange list!

There is little or no payment of out-of-pocket expenses, except by the National Trust, and some staff felt this was an irrelevance. Others would like to offer some volunteers expenses and, indeed, paid themselves for volunteers attending a Christmas lunch. About half the volunteers said that volunteering did not cost them anything, but one had a forty-five-minute walk to the museum and others spent between £2.50 a day and £30 a week on travel and food. Young people, especially, would feel more valued if not out-of-pocket.

An encouraging aspect of existing practice is that the work done by volunteers covers the whole range in the museum service. They assist curatorial and administrative staff and work with the public. In any one museum, what limits their role is the work already covered by professional staff, the skills volunteers can offer, which staff are prepared to take them on, and the work staff need done or deem appropriate.

The service given by individual volunteers ranges from a couple of afternoons to thirty years. Downpatrick Railway Society has a particularly impressive record with many long-term volunteers and an average weekly commitment of over ten hours.

There is little formality in the arrangements made with volunteers, as these have grown up in an *ad hoc* way. Most volunteers have one person to whom they report, and all found this relationship valuable, though over half would value more help and advice from paid staff. Most had the chance to take on more demanding work when they felt ready. Formal records and evaluations of volunteers' work are not usually kept. Formal training tends to be limited to individual tasks, and volunteers are often expected to learn on the job.

Staff see the advantages of using volunteers as help with a heavy workload, as an enhancement of museum services, and as outreach into the community. The main disadvantages are seen as the time needed to train volunteers, the necessity of close supervision, the pressure of finding suitable work on a continuing basis, and volunteers' reliability.

Museums that do not involve volunteers say it is because they do not have applications, a tradition of volunteering, office space and management time, and they have concerns about insurance and liability. None were completely against the idea and many had a positive view of volunteering.

More volunteers are being used now than in the past and staff envisage a small but steady increase. In the absence of museum policies that actively encourage volunteering, the attitudes of individual staff are the determining factor. On the same morning, I spoke to the curators of two small museums.

The first said, *We don't use volunteers because we're such a small museum. We don't have the staff to supervise them.*

The second said, *We use volunteers because we're such a small museum. We couldn't manage otherwise.*

The National Trust operates a volunteer scheme that offers the best example of good practice in Northern Ireland, though only its Springhill property is registered with the Museums Council. It has a full-time volunteer co-ordinator, and some 300 volunteers, up to 80% of whom are active. While recruitment is still largely through word of mouth, there are plans for more active recruitment. The Trust has a volunteer registration form and an information handbook, they pay mileage and may offer free entry to properties. The scheme has grown by ensuring that volunteers are successful and, thus, increasing demand.

Careful selection is also important in the much smaller volunteer scheme here at the National Gallery. Other key elements in its success are fostering solidarity among the volunteers and encouraging ownership of their work. Arranging back-up tasks and having a director who knows volunteers by name require organisation and commitment rather than money.

These schemes probably provide better models for us than some of the huge transatlantic ones, but we can learn from the American experience in managing volunteers. Staff are usually happier than volunteers with current practice. Greater structure would be welcomed by some volunteers, but staff fear increased bureaucracy. Yet since even quite senior staff in museums may not have people who work to them, managing volunteers can provide useful experience.

Professor Jeff Brudney from the University of Georgia, in a lecture entitled *Involving volunteers more effectively: insights from research and international experience*,⁴ summarised some key points. He recommended a volunteer policy, formulated by staff and volunteers, to help allay staff fears of job substitution and of the demands of managing volunteers. He emphasised the

importance of a volunteer Agreement to clarify expectations, and a volunteer Manual written by staff and volunteers.

He suggested engaging a director of volunteer services, *preferably paid and rewarded according to success*. The idea may be alien to us, but what is there to lose?

He advised, *'a good management structure that sets guidelines for recruitment, screening, and interviewing, orientation, training, scheduling, supervising and evaluation. It's not enough to be a nice person.'*

Volunteers do value their relationships with staff but institutions need to give more formal recognition to volunteers without necessarily opting for presentations of certificates and American-style razzmatazz.

The skills and volunteers that museum staff need should be better defined, and active targeted recruitment, with a registration form and interview, is more likely to produce the right volunteers. Being selective, asking for references, and suggesting a trial period are worthwhile safeguards. The system should be led by the needs of museums rather than the offers of volunteers.

Volunteers are part of the public that museums exist to serve and they would benefit from a more transparent application procedure. Some record and evaluation of their work would enable greater acknowledgement of their contribution, and would allow more informed decisions to be made about their involvement. A simple volunteer exit evaluation would be instructive. While the payment of out-of-pocket expenses may be difficult, a comparatively small amount of money could make a significant difference.

Networking between museums, sharing experience, volunteers and training, could be beneficial. It is partly because of a lack of communication and recognition that we have little sense of a tradition of volunteering, even though Belfast's first museum was set up by a voluntary group over 150 years ago and volunteers have worked there ever since.

Modern learning theory would suggest that museums need to do more to facilitate active, self-directed learning. One path to achieving this is by offering the opportunity of volunteering, and by using volunteers to facilitate public programmes.

Belfast's new science centre, to be opened in 2001, could give a lead. The Science Museum in Minnesota effectively uses volunteers as interpreters, engaging visitors with exhibits: helping them extract marine fossils from shale or dismantle and reassemble an electric motor.

The best schemes, large or small, are those that suit their institutions, where staff know exactly what they want to achieve, define the tasks to be completed and are prepared to be pro-active in finding and managing the volunteers they need.

Volunteers are already engaged successfully in all areas of museum work throughout Northern Ireland and, given the will, there is scope for extending their role. This should be done, not to create a pool of cheap labour, but to increase access to our museums and their collections.

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Workshop 2: MUSE99 and Secondary Students

Helen Beaumont

Education and Outreach Officer, National Museum of Ireland

MUSE99 was a visual art project organised in partnership between the National Museum of Ireland and the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, the ASTI.

The project ran for almost a year, from July 1998, when we had our initial meetings with Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary of ASTI, to April 1999, when the National Exhibition of second-level students' artwork was launched at the National Museum, Collins Barracks.

In October 1998, students were invited to participate through information leaflets, which were mailed out to every secondary, comprehensive and community school or college in the country through the ASTI's mailing list.

The students were invited to visit the National Museum of Ireland at one or all of its three sites, at Kildare Street, Collins Barracks or Natural History at Merrion Street, to draw from the collections and use them as a starting point in making an artwork based on the theme, 'Interpreting Irish Life, History and Culture'.

The aims of MUSE99 were:

1. To promote and celebrate the visual arts in second-level schools by providing public exhibition spaces for students' work.
2. To highlight the contribution of teachers of Art to the visual arts in schools.
3. To promote the role of the National Museum of Ireland as a major educational and cultural institution and to develop further links between the National Museum and second-level schools.
4. To encourage Art students and teachers to use the National Museum of Ireland regularly as an artistic and educational resource.

An open week was held at each of the three museums in early December, where education, curatorial and conservation staff were available to students to give help and information in researching for the project.

The project was not a competition; every student who submitted an artwork – and there were over 1,000 – exhibited their work in a number of regional exhibitions at public venues in Cork, Galway, Longford, Kilkenny, Sligo and Dublin during January and February '99. From each of these exhibitions, ninety-one artworks were selected for the National Exhibition at Collins Barracks.

The National Exhibition, to which all the exhibitors, their families and Art teachers were invited, opened in April. The exhibition ran until early September and attracted over 35,000 visitors.

While the exhibition was on, a range of art workshops for second-level and primary schools was available. Groups who booked the workshops were brought around the MUSE99

exhibition of artworks – created by people of their own age, inspired by the Museum’s collections. The groups were then encouraged in one of the workshops to make their own response to the collections.

In June and July, the Education and Outreach Department ran a MUSE99 summer-school, inviting a range of designers, craftspeople and artists to give workshops on such topics as jewellery design, textile printing, book design, video art, and graphic design. The themes of all the workshops were based on and reflected what is on display at Collins Barracks and in the National Museum of Ireland collections in general.

While the National Museum of Ireland had exhibited work by students previously, MUSE99 was the first time an exhibition of young people’s work based on the Museum’s collections was given the same treatment in display and exhibition terms as museum objects. It was also the first time that the Museum became involved in a partnership with another body, the ASTI.

This partnership offered the Museum the chance to communicate directly with teachers and students, through the ASTI’s mailing list and their newsletter, ASTIR, inviting them to visit the three National Museums to discover, research and draw from the collections, using the artefacts as the starting point and inspiration for their art.

Displays of children’s work in museums and galleries is nothing new – I’m sure that many of you have seen such exhibitions. The impact that such exhibitions have with the public can be very powerful. Seeing work by, for want of a better word, ‘ordinary’ people on display beside museum artefacts or the work of ‘professional’ artists is one way to establish dialogue between the Museum and the public and, hopefully, increase access. In the case of MUSE99, the artworks were a tangible response to the Museum’s permanent displays and, in the words of the Director of the Museum, Dr P.F. Wallace, the project ‘[gave] the National Collections a new relevance to second-level students as the designers, artists and craftspeople of the future’.

The project is now in the process of being evaluated. We hope to work in partnership with the ASTI or other teaching unions on a project like this in the future. However, with the advantage of hindsight, there are a number of factors that we would bear in mind in organising the MUSE Visual Art Project again, for example, the short amount of time from the start of the project to its conclusion. With only the academic year from September to May, the timing was very tight, putting all involved – students, teachers, the regional co-ordinators, the ASTI and the Museum – under a great deal of pressure.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Barbara Nugent, chairperson of the National Museum of Ireland’s Caretaker Board, who spoke at the launch of the National Exhibition about how MUSE99 was part of the continuing process of developing the museum as a place as much for people as it is for objects. Referring to one of the artists, twelve-year-old Emma Twohig, who wrote in her entry to MUSE99, ‘History is not all just in books’, Barbara Nugent added, ‘not only is History not all just in books, but the museum is not just about objects, it is about people and their use of the museum as a resource for education and entertainment’.

Workshop 3: Engaging with Local Older Communities

Helen O'Donoghue

Senior Curator, Head of Education/Community Programmes, Irish Museum of Modern Art

Introduction

The Irish Museum of Modern Art at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin, opened to the public in 1991. A national institution concerned with modern and contemporary art, its aim is to foster within society an awareness, understanding and participation in the visual arts through exhibitions and programmes that are both innovative and inclusive.

Since before the Museum opened to the public in May 1991, a close active relationship had been established with St Michael's Parish Active Retirement Association, a group of older residents in the nearby area of Inchicore. The painting group of the Retirement Association was involved in developing a significant exhibition as part of the Museum's inaugural programme, 'Inheritance and Transformation'. This exhibition acted as a catalyst in developing a partnership with the national agency, Age and Opportunity, and through this partnership national policy work and international programmes have grown.

The group's ongoing engagement with the Museum acknowledges the role older people have to play in contemporary visual culture. The group's contact and involvement with contemporary art and artists is keenly felt to be essential to the exploration of new forms of expression and personal creativity. It contributes to the ongoing process of dealing with change in society and, to quote one of the group, 'Modern Art to me is an unknown area, but while it is unknown, it is like everything else. I believe that life progresses and changes, all areas of life. No matter what you do in life, things change. Things change in the areas of art, in religion, in our experiences. Nothing is static, nothing is static in art either and I see myself as open, open to new experiences... You can only recognise artistic endeavours or projects if they relate to something you know yourself'.

The initial liaison with the painting group has developed into the Older People's Programme, which forms part of the Museum's Education and Community Programme. In 1998/99, this programme became the focus of a research project, as part of the European SOCRATES funded project exploring 'Museums, Keyworkers and Lifelong Learning'. Partners include the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Stockholm Education, Kultuurvermittlung in Vienna and the Museo Municipal de Vila Franca de Xira near Lisbon.

At the Irish Museum of Modern Art, this research project comprised two parallel but linked projects. In Spring 1999, the museum hosted an exhibition of artwork made at the Museum since 1991 by older people from the St Michael's group. This exhibition, called *...and start to wear purple*, both demonstrated and celebrated older people's creativity and their engagement with contemporary visual art through the Museum. It also provided a review of the programme for older people to date and an opportunity to evaluate the programme's content and outcomes.

In October 1998, the group embarked on an investigation of the Museum's Collection, a project that led to the group curating an exhibition from the Collection in the Autumn of 1999, entitled *Come to the Edge*. The aim of this project is to develop a structure to support the group in the curation process and to identify the key elements of the Museum's programme as resources for lifelong learning. The research was carried out by Dr Ted Fleming and Anne Gallagher from St Patrick's College, Maynooth, and the research document, *Even her Nudes were Lovely*, will form the basis for ongoing development in this field of work for the Museum.

Background: The Development of the Programme to date

The Older People's Programme has developed through a number of strands and is integrated into all aspects of the Museum's activities. Workshops include learning about making art, meeting artists and exploring with them why artists make art, developing a deeper understanding about personal impulses to make and to express through visual means. The creation of significant autobiographical works, such as *Ribbons of Life* (1994) and *A Sense of Place* (1996), has grown out of the multi-faceted programme directed by curator Ann Davoren. This programme involves contact with visiting international artists exhibiting at the Museum, artists on the Museum's studio programme and longer-term contact programmes with both Irish and international artists living and working in Dublin.

The Older People's Programme aims to be enabling rather than directive and is formed by the policies of the national agency Age and Opportunity, whose role is to encourage older people to use their skills, to exchange ideas and to confront issues that concern them.

Art Education at the Museum

The programme is structured to involve three elements of art education: making art; meeting artists and discussing the conceptual basis of their work; and looking at art in IMMA's temporary exhibitions and permanent Collection. They are developed as inquiry-based experience that seek to encourage the testing of ideas, concepts and materials.

Artists and artworks are part of society. Art is relevant to people because, by participating in art, people are participating in their own lives. The philosophy of the Museum is a belief that the arts are connected with meaning, but that meaning does not lie in artworks; it is constructed in the relationship between the person encountering the artwork and the artwork itself.

In brief, our philosophy of art education in an adult learning context is as follows, and the programmes are structured around several elements:

- Meaning and knowledge are socially constructed and the Museum seeks to empower people to construct their own readings of artworks and to make and remake their own meanings.
- The Museum emphasises multiple perspectives and multiple interpretations.

- Participants' concerns, experiences, values, expectations and aspirations are included as part of the curriculum of the programme.
- The programmes facilitate access and engagement, as meeting points or conversations between the participants, the artworks and the artists, within the context of a museum. Participants are active participants in the cultural process.
- The diversity of the Exhibitions Programme, Acquisitions for the Permanent Collection and artists participating on the Artist Work Programme is a reflection of the diversity in contemporary life and contemporary art.
- Quality of experience is a very high priority; in terms of engagement, time, materials and facilitators. Time is an important factor on all programmes; as much time is invested in drawing people out as is spent in drawing people into an artwork.
- The Education and Community Programme uses the process of creating exhibitions to analyse and articulate its work. The exhibition as a form of 'publishing' and disseminating models of practice is chosen because it is a core function of a museum of art.

In 1999, the United Nations' International Year of Older Persons, the Irish Museum of Modern Art developed an extensive programme of work to mark the year, building on eight years of local, national and international programmes developed with older people. The SOCRATES project offers us the opportunity to examine and reflect upon this programme for older adults within the framework of international museum practice.

The aim of the SOCRATES research project is to explore the role and potential of the group of older people on the Older People's Programme as keyworkers.

The objectives of this project are:

- To develop a retrospective exhibition of work by these older people as a review of the programme and as a focus for evaluating programme content and outcomes.
- To develop a structure so that these older people will curate an exhibition from the Museum's Collection and to identify the key elements of the Museum's programme as resources for lifelong learning.
- To conduct a study of the programme to date, assess its impact on participants' lives, the learning that has occurred and its potential for developing the keyworker role.
- The project is currently being evaluated and its findings will be disseminated in the year 2000.

Workshop 4: Touring Exhibitions and Outreach Residencies

Jenny Siung

Outreach Officer, National Gallery of Ireland

The aim of the Outreach Programme is 'to create an awareness of and interest in the National Collection nationwide.'

How was the Outreach Programme achieved?

A number of pilot projects were initiated in 1995, at a time when the National Gallery of Ireland had closed for a major refurbishment programme. This inspired the Education Department to look outside the Gallery, bringing new audiences into contact with the Gallery's Collection of paintings, drawings and sculpture around the country.

Regional museums, Arts officers and arts centres, public libraries and various arts festivals were the main groups targeted for the Outreach Programme.

Twenty-five events were arranged in 1995, ranging from talks for adults to drawing workshops for children, for example, at the Basement Gallery, Dundalk and through the arts officer in Kerry County Council. Dublin and County Dublin libraries also responded positively to workshops and talks.

Evaluation forms were sent to each venue that held an Outreach Event. In turn, the information was used to assess the potential of the programme.

Facilitators for the Outreach Programme consisted of experienced Gallery guides and tutors with Art History backgrounds.

In 1996, sixty events were organised as a result of the positive response to the Outreach Programme.

By 1997, the National Gallery of Ireland had successfully obtained sponsorship from AIB Bank to fund the position of an Outreach Officer (three-year post) and a three-year pilot programme of educative events at three Dublin libraries: Tallaght, Ballymun and Ballyfermot (North Strand joined in 1998). Talks on Art History and drawing classes with a contemporary artist were offered in each library, as well as practical workshops for children.

There was a total of 190 events in 1997, comprising:

- 72 AIB Bank-sponsored events in Tallaght, Ballymun, Ballyfermot and North Strand libraries
- 14 *Exploring Art* teacher-training programmes held in Education Centres around Ireland
- 4 talks on the *Exploring Art Handbook* for Arts groups
- 100 general talks based on the National Gallery of Ireland's Collection.

1998 saw the continuation of links developing around Ireland, resulting in 320 events, among them:

- 87 AIB Bank-sponsored events in Tallaght, Ballymun, Ballyfermot and North Strand Libraries
- 95 workshops as part of residencies in conjunction with the *Children's Art Exhibition Touring Programme*
- 6 *Exploring Art* teacher-training programmes held at Education Centres nationwide, organised by the Gallery's Education Department and funded by the In-Career Development Unit of the Department of Education and Science
- 120 general talks based on the National Gallery of Ireland's Collection.

Children's Festivals

There has been a steady increase in the demand for further events around the country. In 1997 the Outreach Programme participated in the Baboró Festival for children in Galway. Since then, the demand for creative workshops has increased, bringing the Outreach Programme out of Galway city to locations such as Rosmuc in Connemara and South County Mayo. On two occasions, workshops were conducted in Irish. Mobility is the key to the continuation of the link with such festivals, and other contacts have emerged, such as the Aisling Festival in Longford and the Children's Festival in West Belfast.

Touring Art Exhibitions and Residencies

The *Children's Art Exhibition* based on the environmental theme, 'Clean Air Keeps Ireland Green', was the result of an art competition held by the National Gallery of Ireland in association with Bord Gáis, managed by the Gallery's Education Department.

The competition was launched in February 1997 with over 4500 entries from the thirty-two counties; 2978 were from primary students and 1559 from post-primary students. Of these, sixty-two pictures were chosen to form the exhibition *Clean Air Keeps Ireland Green*. Thirty of the winning pictures were also selected to form the *Children's Art Exhibition*.

The aim of the *Children's Art Exhibition* was to encourage young people to create a picture based on the subject of clean air keeping people, animals, plants, water, buildings and the environment alive. By doing so, these young artists from primary and post-primary schools throughout Ireland highlighted fears and concerns that showed a surprising awareness of environmental issues. They provided a thoughtful and individual response to the subject, resulting in nature and the built environment being depicted in a variety of different and interesting ways.

Exploring Art Project

As a result of the exhibition, *Clean Air Keeps Ireland Green*, other initiatives followed:

- *Children's Art Exhibition* – was put on display at the National Gallery of Ireland from September to November 1997, and embarked on a countrywide Touring Programme during 1998 and is ongoing.
- *Field Trips* – involved bringing over 400 children from schools in disadvantaged areas of Tallaght to view the Children's Exhibition and participate in practical workshops. The Field Trips were sponsored by the Gulbenkian Foundation. The following year the

children responded with their own exhibition which was hung in Tallaght Library . President Mary McAleese launched this exhibition of children's art at Tallaght Library in March 1998.

- *Exploring Art Teacher's Pack* – each pack comprised a handbook on art, a set of twelve National Gallery slides and a series of twenty themesheets for primary and post-primary students. A copy of *Exploring Art Teacher's Pack* was distributed by the Department of Education and Science in 1997 to every primary and post-primary school in the thirty-two counties.
- *Exploring Art Programme of Outreach Talks* – a series of talks on the theme 'Exploring Art' were given by Gallery lecturers at arts centres, museums and other venues around Ireland. In addition 11 teacher-training courses supported by the Department of Education and Science, In-Career Development Unit, took place during 1997 and 1998, at Education Centres countrywide.

The Outreach Programme in 1999

This year, the Outreach Programme continues to maintain its popularity. Already 325 events have taken place nationwide:

- 98 AIB Bank-sponsored events have been organised at Tallaght, Ballymun, Ballyfermot and North Strand Libraries
- 161 general talks and children's workshops based on the National Gallery of Ireland's Collection
- 29 workshops have taken place as part of outreach residencies in conjunction with the *Children's Art Touring Exhibition*
- 25 Drawing Classes for adults in libraries nationwide
- 12 *Exploring Art* teacher-training programmes at Education Centres nationwide, organised by the Gallery's Education Department and funded by the Department of Education and Science.

The Community Access and Outreach programme continues to grow, gaining more recognition through many awards for programmes and projects provided by the Education Department.

Education is centred on people and most outreach work is rooted in the community. It is, therefore, essential to maintain links with the various community groups. Many of the programmes developed and offered to local communities through AIB Bank-sponsored programmes and other events, evolved organically. These programmes need to be continued to sustain and develop local audiences. The Outreach Programme has broadened people's awareness of the National Gallery, the National Collection and the Gallery's Education Programme through a wide range of interesting and stimulating talks, workshops and drawing classes.

It is vitally important that the programme is developed, particularly in view of the fact that it has grown from 190 events in 1997 to 325 in 1999. This is clear evidence of success and recognition and enjoyment and appreciation of the Gallery's community Access and Outreach Programme

Discussion Summary

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I take it as read that museums are – amongst other things – educational institutions. Education and entertainment are essential steps in the process of enlisting public support, without which, most of the hopes and dreams of museum people of all kinds will go unfulfilled. The National Gallery's Education seminars provide a valuable forum for raising awareness, not just of the importance of museum education, but also of what it is that museum educators do. At the 1999 seminar we heard of the entertainment value of exhibitions and the socially difficult situations in which some educators operate. We learned about an effective community outreach project, about working with volunteers, and we saw case studies of targeted programmes of activity in different museums, inside and outside the walls. Chairs are supposed to be neutral, but in being invited to respond to the papers given on the day, I have an opportunity – unlooked for at the time but all the more welcome – to participate retrospectively. As you read the papers given by the platform speakers, I will instead reflect on some of the broad issues that seem to me to have arisen during that most interesting day, and convey something of the credo of a practitioner with a traditional – perhaps increasingly old-fashioned – pedigree in the museum field.

The tensions that exist between different categories of museum practitioners, and that have been evident for many years, made their appearance in the discussions at the seminar. Coming from a curatorial background, it seemed to me that what was being debated was the very nature of the museum itself in the modern world. There are now internationally accepted definitions of a museum and these, strangely, never really surfaced in the debates as a way of focusing attention on the core purposes of those institutions and the core values that should inform all our activities regardless of administrative or professional categories. There is a clear need for reflection, for consensus-building, for questioning – and we had all that in the discussions. Above all, we need some leadership from the professionals, who are concerned to collect, preserve, enjoy and make useful our inheritance from the past and the developing heritage of the future. If we do not provide that leadership in policy formation, in day-to-day management and administration, in dialogue with all our stakeholders, then badly informed and short-term decision-making will rule the futures of our institutions and collections.

The papers gave more than a hint, too, of modern marketing and management theory in the discussions of how people experience reality. Are we distanced from some Holy Grail of 'authentic' experience by the market – surely not! That argument is as old and pointless as the true nature of, say, 'folk' music or dance. Is there a pure and uncorrupted form, which is 'real'? (Woody Guthrie once memorably remarked that he had never heard a horse sing.) In a sense, this is also the debate about the priority of the authoritative interpretation over the purely personal and instinctive response to a work or an exhibition. Like the new historicists, I believe that there are rational interpretations based on the rules of evidence, which enhance understanding of museum collections. Provided we make our bias explicit, it is reasonable to privilege these approaches over, say, inchoate relativism.

It is, however, unreasonable to exclude alternative views as non-authoritative – they are often enriching in surprising ways, even if you believe them to be completely wrong-headed. Museum curators and educators walk a fine line nowadays between demands for openness and perceived correctness on the one hand, and fidelity to professional or scholarly standards of truthfulness about issues of history, heritage or cultural understanding. There is such a thing as knowledge and reliable information and it is very hard-earned. We are inclined to think nowadays that museum functions can be broken down into categories, and so curatorship cedes caring for collections to collection managers, communication to the educators – or marketers – and so on. Is this really a good idea? Mike Houlihan spoke passionately of the need to find ways to convert museum data into knowledge, and he is right. But there are some categories of knowledge that really can only come from constant familiarity with and study of collections – they are databases that must be interrogated over long periods of time before certain kinds of new insights are created. Arguably, that kind of knowledge can only be generated effectively in museums where knowledge creation is part of the job description. If museums have no commitment to it, then they will never see the light of day.

As the marketer tells us, everyone in a museum is concerned in marketing, so I would argue that erecting new impermeable internal boundaries between functional areas of museum work is counterproductive. We are all concerned in education; we are all concerned in making new knowledge possible, whether by safeguarding the database, making access to it possible through documentation, through taxonomic work, through encouraging the public as well as the specialist to take an interest. Perhaps we should substitute the figure of ‘informed source’ for ‘expert’ in our hierarchy of museum types, but whatever staffing categories we create we should avoid pigeonholing.

Museums operate in a segment of the service sector and are subject to a particular set of market forces all of their own. This, it seems to me, is especially true of museum education. In the United States, charitable foundations are now much more open to supporting education in museums than to the older demands of acquisition, conservation and exhibition. There are many reasons for this. One of them must surely be the dissatisfaction that is so widespread with public education in many cities and states. This has tempted museum education departments into trying to substitute for the perceived shortcomings of the schools (and not just in art education). Some have even begun to develop charter schools in museums themselves. It is difficult to argue against such worthy and committed action but it is almost certainly misconceived. Education departments in many great American museums have become vast, and there is without question a powerplay between internal museum constituencies influencing the argument about the role and purpose of education in museums. This is reflected too in an uncertainty about the role of the museum itself as it balances traditional values of curatorship, scholarship and conservation against competing political and societal demands.

In the United States particularly, it seems to me, it is also fuelled by the incessant demands of fundraising to keep the institution as a whole afloat; decisions, including areas for development, then tend to be resource-driven rather than need-driven. Museum education in America

is, nevertheless, marvellous in its imagination, professionalism and commitment and we have much to learn from it and to admire. The lesson may be that an educator-driven museum is no more 'right' than a conservator-driven or curator-driven one. Museums are not immune to change and must indeed change and develop in useful and considered ways to meet the demands of a changing environment, but museums are not equipped to be the engineers of societal change. The problem with managing change is in finding the starting point and clarifying the remit. At the risk of branding myself a reactionary, I would like to register some views about museum education which I believe the seminar discussions raised acutely.

Museums are not comprehensive public education services – although the educational work they do is priceless; neither are they an extension of social services – although arguably they can be of great benefit to society in many unexpected ways. Museum education is definitely not audience development, although it helps, nor marketing, but museum education does market. It is undertaken for its own sake to add value to the experience of the museum visit or the museum contact. It can win friends for the museum but it is by no means a failure if it is not spectacularly successful in doing so – look at the experience of schools. Museums are not primarily concerned in economic development or in urban renewal, although they have been major contributors to these in some places. Museums are not required to follow fashion; they do have to bear witness at least occasionally to the more long-term values enshrined in their very nature as places that conserve. Museums remain essentially collections-based, but new hybrid forms are arising all the time.

Finally, museums and museum staff cannot afford to be complacent about education, outreach, display or public services. Award schemes and the praise of peers for projects successfully accomplished in accordance with the rules of the museum game do not disguise the fact that in many countries museums are losing audience even as numbers of museums increase at a bewildering rate. What is even more worrying is that there are sectors of the potential audience that museums never reach nowadays and may never have reached. Our own self-approval will only ensure that our museums of tomorrow will be just like those of today, if we are not careful. The seminars should keep on informing us and challenging us.

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