INTERVIEWS WITH MUSEUM EXPERTS:
环顾博物馆专家访谈（一）
未来博物馆计划：未来博物馆是什么样子的？

1: 未来博物馆会是敏捷，独特和容易理解的地方

Social impact is the “new hotness” in which museums find their place as agents of social change. From revitalizing the neighbourhoods in which they are built, to serving as forums for dialogue around the provocative issues of our time, museums are not just bystanders or “witnesses to history”, they are becoming a voice and a force in shaping the social future. Museums are looking to create emotional experiences that inspire visitors to take action. Narrative storytelling inspired methodologies like the Inzovu curve are moving visitors from empathy to compassion, to action. Emotion-driven museum experiences will not merely present the facts, but will provide opportunities and stimulate visitors to engage proactively in the world around them. “Emotion-driven museum experiences will not merely present the facts but will provide opportunities and stimulate visitors to engage proactively in the world around them”

User eXperience design and methodology are inspiring exhibit designers to consider exhibitions as nimble platforms for information exchange and social engagement. Using the Agile approach of “minimum viable product” to create rapid prototyping on the exhibit floor, these design tests are becoming the foundation for the final design itself. Museums are asking for changeability: flexible and update-able exhibits, that can respond to the fast pace of social media savvy visitors. This will not be just a means to save on future exhibit costs, but rather a strategy to stay current and engage visitors in the creation of exhibitions as part of the social mission of the museum.

Physical, physical + digital, is bridging the digital with the physical world. The internet of things will lead to the internet of spaces as digital technology becomes increasingly integrated into our built environments. Integration is the key term here, meaning that museums will not lose their valuable role in providing the essential analog experience of direct access to real collections. Rather, as the appeal of the analog world in a digital age continues to grow, museums will embrace their analog roots, providing unique physical and non-digital social experiences that are augmented and informed by digital applications and methodology.

2: 未来博物馆=社会影响+用户体验+物理数字空间

Personally something emerges out of the question - What will museums be like in the future? It about what defines “us” aka this country and/or humankind? What are we saving/sharing/promoting? Who gets to decide? Things that are disappearing? Things that are emerging? What happens when you run out of space? These aren’t rocket science questions, of course, but they are questions my friend (a tour guide in Washington D.C.) gets every day - why
doesn’t John Adams get a memorial? And what would I need to do to “earn” one? And what do we when "the war to end all wars" doesn’t? The beauty is the answer changes year to year. So there is something about museums ability to be conversational, flexible and fluid.

So it left me thinking that museums are essentially about how we got where we are today, which is very political. Why isn’t the Museum of London running an exhibition about the global financial crisis? Do they have Lehman Brothers stuff in their collection, or pics of the corporate jet from RBS? Interesting to see the Snowden laptop at V&A, what other contentious contemporary objects should we be putting on display? A museum’s asset is to tell the story of the past - including the very recent past - to inform the present and help spur discussion on contemporary issues.

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So, a new museum I just visited has an exhibition about the history of ship building in their area but if want to know why there is no shipbuilding in the area now, the answer is not why. Why should political questions only be discussed in the “media space”? A museum, a physical space, can provide an environment in which evidence and counter evidence can be presented, and facilitate an active and vital discussion – one more valuable than is being discussed in the media.

There is an underlying implication from this question. Do we need to change? It is interesting to see how zoos are fast adapting to the changing world in which we live. Many zoological societies have repositioned themselves as champions of endangered species and breeding programmes. They’re now seen as defenders of animal welfare, a complete about-face to the general image of a generation ago. Maybe the question should be reframed; What do museums need to do in the future to remain relevant and a trusted resource?

Museums have spent the better part of a generation in an identity crisis, querying their social role and value, and perhaps their underlying purpose. Were they research facilities, amusement parks, educational institutions, storage vaults? Technological change, though not inherently a game changer, raised additional questions about shared authority, democratization, and access.

But amidst change and uncertainty, there was constancy too, and not all of it about budget challenges or keeping abreast of everything digital. Museums continue to have one special and unique trait: the public trusts them, and more so than any other institution, public, private, or commercial. It is the perfect brand value proposition.

How might it be maintained in an increasingly crowded marketplace of ideas, where “curating” has been stripped of professional context to sell home décor and breakfast foods, vacation travel and fashion trends? How perhaps might museums even expand it, moving beyond the status quo (however enviable) to positions of societal leadership?

"Leveraging – and sharing – authenticity, museums can transcend institutionalism or parochialism to demystify a shared humanity in a singular world”

It is not far-fetched. Already valued, reliable and demonstrably useful in societies made cacophonous by mind-bending quantities of data, museums consistently provide the least biased, most critically neutral interpretations of the past. It is an extraordinary competitive advantage.

Working transparently, museums must now move beyond mere representations of evidence to demonstrate explicitly how knowledge is developed, shared, or revisited. Making evident the gaps or omissions in our knowledge, identifying marginal or absent voices, helps audiences to explore with confidence and promotes engagement through nuance, perspective, and diversity. Authoritativeness has not enhanced cultural institutions, but authenticity has. Leveraging – and sharing – authenticity, museums must speak from multiple points of view, encouraging stakeholder and audience participation, even while bolstering scholarship. In assisting audiences to better understand how the past informs the present, how patterns and similarities can be observed in the seeming diversity and idiosyncrasies of history, museums can transcend institutionalism or parochialism to demystify a shared humanity in a singular world.

Whether museums remain physical destinations or digital tools is of little importance. It is not the container that will define them. Public trust will. Continued vigorous inquiries, courageously shared; democratized access to knowledge and uncertainty; transparent professional practices and accountability: these are the cornerstones of the museums of the future.
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"Our understandings of the meaning of culture, collaboration, and participation will all become more expansive, broadening the ways in which institutions can connect with our diverse communities."

I'm one of those people who believe that museums have become increasingly important in our chaotic, stress- and distraction-filled world. Since museums offer experiences, memories, and the self-directed exploration of content, they will beckon as a necessary respite to our often isolated, digital and virtual lives. Besides, in a world where we can fake anything, from art, to the news, to genetically manufactured food, the need to experience the real thing will only become greater.

Ultimately, museums matter because they are filled with wondrous things that remind us of what it is to be human. Our shared experience is expressed in so many interesting, exciting, and impactful ways. As the philosopher Alan Watts said, "the meaning of life is life itself." Museums are full of life: past, present, and future.

6: 未来博物馆将待公众参与发展深入

Ellie Miles, Interpretation Officer, The British Museum and Sascha Priewe, Managing Director, Royal Ontario Museum

Over the last couple of decades the arrival of digital technologies brought constructive disruption to museums. Museums who have experimented with digital projects, including online learning, digitization, born-digital collections or digital methods in visitor studies (a few examples amongst many) will have discovered how creative and collaborative their staff can be. As control of museums' digital activities settles down in organizational structures, the best museums will have gained a greater understanding of the range of skills amongst their staff, and glimpsed how they can be combined with external expertise and participatory projects.

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These lessons will augment museums' longer-term experience. Museums have always been iterative institutions, adapting and amending their collections, research, methods and exhibits as time passes. Collections grow, research evolves and attitudes toward the 'public' have been progressing. This process will continue, and small-scale interventions and experimental research projects will help museums to develop their ideas. Museums will need to work hard to maintain knowledge gained through this work.

With qualification-inflation and the proliferation of people keen to enter the museum workforce (despite continued pressure on wages), staff, increasingly on temporary contracts, will develop portfolio careers, moving in and out of museum work more often. As project-funded workforces shift, the networks and links between museums will strengthen. Inside museums, staff will continue to get better at working with different teams, including participants from outside the museum. Curatorial expertise will be valued and other expertise will be acknowledged too, as the participatory museum approach grows. The curator will rarely be spoken of as the embodiment of the museum, as museums recognise that it is the combination of ideas, collections, skills and people that is important.

Curators and others will form teams composed of people with complementary and equally valued skill sets. These collaborations will bring new combinations of skills to bear on museum projects, helping museums to create engaging exhibitions and programs, linking insight and skills from web, visitor services, designers, curators and learning teams bringing into balance the visitors' demands with what the museum can supply. By thinking of the visit as an event, and one that fits into the context of visitors' lifestyle choices, museums will be able to enrich their offer, and will diversify and engage their audiences more deeply and enduringly.

7: 未来博物馆依托于可持续的文化网络

Nadine Loach, Exhibition and Display Coordinator, Dulwich Picture Gallery

In the future, museums will be built on collaborations. Collaborations between staff, museums, universities, libraries, government bodies, visitors, sponsors, donors and communities. All working towards making museums more sustainable at their core.

An organisation’s culture is its identity. Strong organisational health, culture and leadership will be recognised as contributing significantly to the development of more resilient museums. Museums will be more in tune with how they function effectively; their structure, collaborations, finances, and overall shared purpose.

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A synergy of organisational, personal and professional development is necessary for the effective delivery of museums’ strategies. This will be understood at every level of development from sole museums professionals to government-funded institutions and independent museums trusts. The delivery of these forms of development will be through a combined approach of talks, workshops, partner collaborations, networks, training, resources, conferences, and improved staff communication and social activities. Future museums will ensure the wellbeing of staff and encourage their professional development. This focus on wellbeing is the key to an enthusiastic, hardworking and committed team. The benefits of which will reflect in museums as a whole.

Visitors and communities will become more integrated in museums. They will take ownership of museums’ collections and displays, playing a key part in contributing to curatorial decisions and developing new and diverse ways of sharing knowledge.

In the future, museums will be cultural networks that everyone will be a part of.
UK, Europe and New Zealand, in an environment designed to be disruptive, yet supportive - where participants could experiment, feel able to take risks with ideas, break old habits, create new ways of thinking and behaving, and develop mechanisms for dealing with demanding situations. In other words, OCL encourages entrepreneurial ways of thinking and behaving.

This is the future for museums - to blend social and educational purpose with clever entrepreneurial practices and mixed-funding business models, underpinned by a deep understanding of, and connection to audiences who want to come back.

"The museum of the future will not be conservative. It will be ambitious about being an accessible, relevant, and flexible organisation. It will be confident about being unlike any other museum."

For many small museums the introduction of on-gallery technology has been challenging. Hardware is costly and almost all tech development, support, and maintenance have to be outsourced. This both has financial implications and prohibits staff from gaining new, digital skills. In the future, technology should not only benefit museum visitors, it should enhance the organisation as a whole. For example, by allowing for quick content-updates and the re-use of hardware, without the need of external support.

Technology can allow museums to be more sustainable and let the new evolve from the existing. Today, museums often only make an exhibition on a certain subject once. In the future, it should be common practice to revisit a theme, because society changed, the organisation changed, and with the help of technology something new can be developed that builds on the resources and research that were created before. In addition, museum staff should be encouraged to experiment and play. By being playful we can bring new relevance to existing content, shine a new light on our historic collections and use our existing, digital, tools in exciting new ways.

The museum of the future will not be conservative. It will be ambitious about being an accessible, relevant, and flexible organisation. It will be confident about being unlike any other museum.