



Institutional Heritage

„The Museum Pilot“

Pilot on institutional heritage (museum pilot)

First of all ...

The work on the pilot is just starting – we cannot present results at this moment. We are in a preliminary phase and just began working on a refined concept.

Nevertheless ...

we can outline the intentions we have and can describe the environment in which the pilot will be conducted.

Museum pilot

The „environment“ of the museum pilot:

Central to the pilot are of course museums.

We will take a holistic approach on museums including the objects, the administrations, the activities and the visitors.

We do not understand museums as islands. They are an integral part of society. Societies develop and so do museums – in all their aspects.

Not just since the advent of digital information infrastructures there is a tendency in modern societies that citizens want to actively take part in decisions of all kinds, that more and more citizens want to take part in activities of all kinds. It is a process of self-empowerment. Citizens want to play a role.

Museum pilot

The „environment“ of the museum pilot:

These citizens are the visitors of museums these days. Museums have to adjust to a changing demand.

Since many years already there is a discourse among museums about a participatory approach. The body of relevant literature is growing. But the „participatory museums“ is more than an academic concept.

More and more museums are experimenting with participatory approaches in one way or another. The results are manifold.

Museum pilot

What the pilot will do:

The museum pilot will create an overview of participatory approaches already in practice and of experiences gathered.

Participation has – as every other approach – its limitations and determining factors.

It is these „determining factors“ which the pilot be analyzing.

One of the „determining factors“ is of course the situation of the respective museum itself. So our approach is to take two museums from the end of the line and compare.

Museum pilot

What the pilot will do:

We will choose for closer observation on the one hand a big museum in a big city with tourists as an important part of their audience and on the other hand a small museum in a small village with local people as visitors.

The possibilities for participation are obviously very different. While the participatory approach in general might be considered as a necessity for all kinds of museums, the ways of inclusions, the projects and conducts have to be adopted to the actual situation and intentions of the museum. Some have money, some don't. Some are multilingual some are not. ...

The result of the analysis of participatory approaches in the two museums will be reflected with experiences described in literature. In the end we will better understand what determines participation of citizens in institutional heritage and we will be able to give inspiration to institutions by showing what other institutions are doing already.

Museum pilot

As said before, the pilot, i.e. our analysis is still in the phase of outlining ...

Some of our guiding ideas as questions will help to illustrate the scope of the pilot.

But first:

Museum: What's in a name ...

What's in a name ...

There are many understandings of what museums are - in different countries the term is understood differently.

ICOM the International Council of Museums defines the term along with roles and tasks:

„ICOM Statutes

Article 3 - Definition of Terms

Section 1. Museum

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

(http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Statuts/statutes_eng.pdf)

A question of interpretation ...

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Some statements:

A museum that is open to the public is in the service of society

A museum that exhibits tangible heritage is in the service of society

A museum that conserves tangible heritage is in the service of society

A museum that researches tangible heritage is in the service of society

As can be seen (just another statement):

Museums are always in the service of society – they are it by definition!

Museums are in the service of society

The question to be asked is not “if they are” but

HOW ?

To understand better a closer look at what museums do is helpful:

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which **acquires, conserves, researches, communicates** and **exhibits** the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

Acquiring museum objects

Ideally a museum has a concept of what to collect and a certain budget to buy objects.

In reality most museums have no or only a very limited budget to buy objects. Very often private collectors, foundations or other institutions donate things. Museums are in direct contact with the public (donators) offering artefacts but in most cases it is the museum alone that decides what to take and what not to take.

What forms can participation take in the acquisition of museum objects?

Helfen Sie mit!

Dies ist eine Liste mit Objekten, die wir gezielt suchen - aber diese Aufzählung ist natürlich niemals vollständig. Wenn Sie ein Angebot haben, zögern Sie also nicht, direkt unsere Mitarbeiter in der Sammlung anzusprechen. Ohne eine vorherige Absprache ist eine Abgabe von Spenden, z.B. an der Kasse, nicht möglich. Bitte sehen Sie auch von unabgesprochenen Paketsendungen ab, da wir sonst aufgrund unserer Sammlungsrichtlinien gezwungen sind Ihre Spende zurückzuschicken.

Persönliches

- Gemalte Bilder aus dem Schulunterricht
- Dinge aus dem Ferienlager
- Eingaben (Bürgerbeschwerden an den Staat) als Original, Kopie oder Entwurf
- Selbstgemachte, gebastelte Gesellschaftsspiele
- Fotos (z.B. von alternativen Jugendkulturen), Dias (z.B. vom Arbeitsalltag)

Gedrucktes

- Gastronomie-Beschwerdebuch »Der Gast hat das Wort«
- Versandhaus- und Genex-Kataloge
- Zeitschriften 50er, 60er (z.B. Jugend&Technik, Digidags-Mosaik); Sputnik 10/1988
- Handgeschriebene Unterlagen der Generalsekretäre des Zentralkomitees der SED



Just one example:

The DDR-Museum in Berlin is asking citizens of the former GDR for objects that are in relation to this vanished republic.

Conserving museum objects

Ideally a museum has a depot where objects are stored under conditions that help to keep them intact for all times. A setting of controlled light and climate is created – avoiding too much use and contact for the objects.

In reality many museums use the storage space they can afford and they do the best to avoid too much light, insects, chemical and other hazards. Most museums cannot afford for all kinds of object the specifically ideal surrounding. Compromise is necessary.

What forms can participation take in the conserving of museum objects?

Leidenschaft verbindet Sammler weltweit

Seine Sammelleidenschaft lässt ihn bis heute nicht los. Er sagt, die Faszination daran habe etwas mit dem Jagdinstinkt zu tun und es sei eine große Freude, ein bestimmtes Modell ausfindig zu machen und dann zu ergattern. Spaß macht es ihm aber auch, die Züge zu restaurieren und wieder zum Laufen zu bringen. Irgendwann nahm er Kontakt mit amerikanischen Eisenbahnsammlern auf und tauschte sich mit ihnen in Internetforen aus. Immer wieder hörte er von diesen Kollegen, dass es in Nürnberg eine Bahn mit American Flyer-Zügen gibt, die schon seit ihrer Entstehung in den 50er Jahren mit denselben Motoren läuft und nicht mehr optimal funktioniert. Da es für ihn von England nicht so weit nach Nürnberg ist wie für seine Kollegen aus Amerika, nahm er Kontakt mit dem Spielzeugmuseum auf und bot an, nach Nürnberg zu kommen, die Motoren auszutauschen und seine Erfahrung zur Verfügung zu stellen, die er bereits mit den eigenen Zügen gesammelt hatte.



Neil Trump zusammen mit den beiden Betreuern Ulrich Friedhoff und Ingo Dittrich (von rechts nach links).
Foto: Uwe Niklas

Just one example: A collector from Britain coming to the Spielzeugmuseum in Nürnberg, staying there for three days helping in the restoration of American Flyer Trains (He brought spareparts along – the motor was not working well anymore).

Researching museum objects

Ideally a museum has a staff of people who exclusively research all kinds of contexts of the museum objects, from material composition to production or use of the objects. The museum has a database with all the information about the objects at one place.

In reality most museums do not have staff that devotes all their working time on researching the objects. The same people that have to research the objects have to create exhibitions and have to control the conservation and acquisition of objects. Museum databases are still often catalogue cards or excel files.

What forms can participation take in researching museum objects?

Collection online

coin

[Back to search results >](#) 413/793 < >

Object type	coin ?
Museum number	2005,1111.334
Denomination	filler, 10
Description	Copper nickel coin.(obverse) Inscription is in the centre, with a patterning around the edge of the coin. (reverse) Inscription is at the top of the coin with an image of an ornate crown below.
Authority	Issuer: Government of Hungary ?
Date	1912
Production place	Issued in: Hungary ; (Europe,Hungary); Minted in: Budapest ; (Europe,Hungary,Budapest (district),Budapest (city))
Materials	cupronickel ?
Dimensions	Weight: 3.08 grammes Diameter: 19 millimetres
Inscriptions	Inscription Type inscription Inscription Position obverse Inscription Language Hungarian Inscription Content 10 FILLÉR



[Large image >](#)

Obverse & Reverse
Reproduced by permission of the artist. © The Trustees of the British Museum

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Recommend



Just one example: The British Museum asking people to correct or add information related to the objects



Feedback

If you've noticed a mistake or have any further information about this object, please email: collectiondatabase@britishmuseum.org >

Communicating museum objects

Ideally a museum has a database with all its objects online available for everyone. The museum presents and updates all information about each single object and the contexts it belongs to.

In reality only very few museums have all their objects available at the internet and those who put objects online have difficulties in updating the information.

What forms can participation take in communicating museum objects?



**MUSEUM OF
NEW ZEALAND
TE PAPA
TONGAREWA**

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Toro mai

DISCOVER THE COLLECTIONS

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Ako

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Mo matou

SHOP

Wharehoko

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Tautokotia, kuhu mai

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Collections Online

[About Collections Online](#)
Tips for searching on Collections
Online

About Collections Online
Mō ngā Kohinga Ipurangi

Collections Online has information on almost 800,000 artworks, objects, and specimens from Te Papa's collections - from [dinosaur teeth](#) to [contemporary art](#), [buzzy bee](#) to [Xena](#).

Collection areas cover [Taonga Māori](#), [Pacific Cultures](#), [New Zealand History](#), [Photography](#), [Art](#), [Botany](#), and [Zoology](#). These topics are complemented by over 190,000 images, with over 60,000 available for high-resolution download.

There's also a wealth of information on related people, places, topics, species, and research from Te Papa.

Why don't all collection items have images?

Te Papa's collections are very large and incredibly varied. From [microscopic lice](#) to [22-metre-long artworks](#), the collections cover many sizes, shapes, and materials.

We're working as fast as we can digitising items from the collections - but apart from time, there are a few other reasons images might not be available yet. These include:

1. Copyright

We are unable to display images of items that are still in copyright, without the copyright owner's permission. It may be we can't track down the copyright holder (such as the original artist), or the copyright holder has declined Te Papa permission to display the image.

2. Cultural rights

As part of Te Papa's principle of Mana Taonga, we do not release images of taonga without consulting the whanau, hapu, or [iwi](#) that the taonga originates. Te Papa holds these taonga on behalf of the iwi.

Just one example: The Museum of New Zealand only communicates maori-related objects in the internet if the maori community agrees. The museum keeps the objects on behalf of the (respective) community.



Exhibiting museum objects

Ideally a museum has a permanent exhibition and additional temporary exhibitions. All objects in an exhibition are equipped with accompanying explanations in many languages, that are placed that even children can read them. Additional explanations in braille for the blind are available. The composition of the exhibition, its topic and the story it tells are interesting and intellegible for all visitors.

In reality most museums are not able to provide multilingual explanations to the exhibited objects, special descriptions readable for blind people or children are rarely placed aside the objects. Permanent and temporary exhibitions are decided and created by curators and they not always meet the interest of the citizens.

What forms can participation take in exhibiting museum objects?



Click! A Crowd-Curated Exhibition

June 27–August 10, 2008

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Click! is a photography exhibition that invites Brooklyn Museum's visitors, the online community, and the general public to participate in the exhibition process. Taking its inspiration from the critically acclaimed book *The Wisdom of Crowds*, in which *New Yorker* business and financial columnist James Surowiecki asserts that a diverse crowd is often wiser at making decisions than expert individuals, *Click!* explores whether Surowiecki's premise can be applied to the visual arts—is a diverse crowd just as "wise" at evaluating art as the trained experts?

Click! is an exhibition in three consecutive parts. It begins with an open call—artists are asked to electronically submit a work of photography that responds to the exhibition's theme, "Changing Faces of Brooklyn," along with an artist statement.

After the conclusion of the open call, an online forum opens for audience evaluation of all submissions; as in other juried exhibitions, all works will be anonymous. As part of the evaluation, each visitor answers a series of questions about his/her knowledge of art and perceived expertise.

Click! culminates in an exhibition at the Museum, where the artworks are installed according to their relative ranking from the juried process. Visitors will also be able to see how different groups within the crowd evaluated the same works of art. The results will be analyzed and discussed by experts in the fields of art, online communities, and crowd theory.

The exhibition is organized by Shelley Bernstein, Manager of Information Systems, Brooklyn Museum.

Just one example:

Brooklyn Museum asked „the crowd“ to decide what shall be part of an exhibition and what not. - already in 2008

We will collect such examples and many more and confront it with our analysis of two museums. Our guiding questions are:

What forms can participation take in the acquisition of museum objects,

What forms can participation take in the conserving of museum objects,

What forms can participation take in researching museum objects,

What forms can participation take in communicating museum objects,

What forms can participation take in exhibiting museum objects ...

... under what conditions?

In other word ...

What can be done ... and by whom?



Let the pilot fly !

What follows ...

To even more demonstrate the potential of the participatory approach two practical examples will be presented by colleagues from Berlin and Budapest.

Credits

Heather and Violet - <https://flic.kr/p/pw2hBT>

Pilot Annie - <https://flic.kr/p/g2HTNM>

