

**ALMA S. WITTLIN  
& STEPHEN E. WEIL**

**MEMORIAL  
LECTURES  
ICOM 2010  
SHANGHAI, CHINA**



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF MUSEUMS  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MUSEES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MUSEOS



## Content

4 Avant-propos

7 Preface

8 Welcomes

10 Introduction

12 Second Alma Wittlin Memorial Lecture

LYNDA KELLY *The Twenty-first Century Museum:  
The Museum Without Walls*

20 Fifth Stephen Weil Memorial Lecture

DAVID FLEMING *Museums Campaigning for  
Social Justice*

26 The Authors

27 Coda

28 Impressum

**Alma S. Wittlin**  
**and Stephen E. Weil**  
**Memorial Lectures**

held during the  
Twenty-second General Conference  
of the  
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF MUSEUMS

Shanghai, China  
2010

**The Alma S. Wittlin and  
Stephen E. Weil Memorial Lectures.**

**ICOM 2010, Shanghai**

**“Museums –  
Orchestrating  
Diversities for  
Harmonious  
Change”**

This special museum event, the Memorial Lectures in the evening of Monday, 8 November 2010, was organized on behalf of the Austrian National Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM-Austria) with the co-operation of the General Secretariat of ICOM, of ICOM-China and of the ICOM International Committees for Education & Cultural Action (CECA), Exhibition Exchange (ICEE), Training of Personnel (ICTOP) and Management (INTERCOM). It was made possible by financial support of the Austrian Consulate General in Shanghai.

The four International Committees regarded the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of ICOM, held in Shanghai, China as a perfect opportunity to continue the interdisciplinary discourse begun in Vienna in 2007. The audience was honoured by a welcome address of Alissandra Cummins, outgoing President of ICOM, by official greetings of the host country read by Mr. Zhang Bai, Chairperson of ICOM-China, and opening remarks delivered by representatives of the ICOM-Committees, Wilfried Seipel, President ICOM-Austria, and Emma Nardi, President CECA, followed by an introduction given by Angelika Ruge, outgoing President ICTOP.

The Memorial Lectures, two papers delivered by internationally renowned museum professionals, explored specific aspects of museum work of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and pointed out how much can be gained by interdisciplinary analysis and by taking into account critical, also historical museological positions for dealing with present day issues.

Taking a lead from the theme of ICOM's 22<sup>nd</sup> General Conference, "Museums for Social Harmony", the Memorial Lectures treated fundamental epistemological questions relating to the diverse social functions of museums, their tasks and relevancy for future developments, formulation of goals developed from that, and, vice versa, management issues and practical problems.

The second Alma S. Wittlin Memorial Lecture, *The Twenty-first Century Museum: The Museum Without Walls* was given by Lynda Kelly, Head of

Audience Research at the Australian Museum, Sydney. The fifth Stephen E. Weil Memorial Lecture, *Museums Campaigning for Social Justice* was held by David Fleming, OBE, Chair of INTERCOM and Director National Museums Liverpool, UK.

In closing the evening, Nancy E. Zinn, outgoing President ICEE, remarked that the Memorial Lectures honoured two eminent museum personalities, who, in their writings and with their influential work, had witnessed an exemplary notion of the museum in service of society. She underlined that the Memorial Lectures provide an excellent opportunity for continued co-operation of several international committees, with the aim of sustaining indispensable professional exchange, possible within the triennial ICOM-meetings.

Attendance figures for the Shanghai Memorial Lectures – approximately 70 delegates, among them several of highest ICOM-level – as well as the inspired atmosphere of collaboration, renewed by the experience of the Memorial Lectures 2010, give reason and energy for this format to be considered in the program for future ICOM Triennials.

It is hoped that by making the Memorial Lectures 2010 globally accessible on the Internet, the thoughts and work of our esteemed speakers will invigorate discussions, and enable many members of the international museum community to relate them meaningfully to challenges arising in their everyday museum work.

## **The Persons Honoured with the Memorial Lectures**

### **Alma S. Wittlin** (1899–1990)

Alma S. Wittlin studied art history, history, literature, sociology and philosophy, and gained a doctoral degree in art history (1925) at the University of Vienna. Dr Wittlin worked in Austria and Germany as an art historian and had a first career as a sociologically interested writer of historical biographies. After her forced emigration to Great Britain (1937) she en-

gaged in researching museum work related to communication. Connected to contacts made in a 1949 ICOM-Conference, she emigrated to the United States of America (1952). There she founded a mobile museum service and worked as an educationalist in universities and museums, among others with the Smithsonian Institution.

Dr Wittlin's work found its most lasting pronouncement in two broadly received publications, *The Museum. Its history and its tasks* (Routledge & Kegan, 1949) and *Museums. In search of a usable future* (MIT Press, 1970). These present all aspects of a museum's functions to be constantly re-examined in the light of the "need for a change from an emphasis on hardware to an emphasis on software" (1970, 216). Dr Wittlin enjoyed great respect among museologists of her own time and has more recently been 'rediscovered' internationally for her stimulating work, seen as fostering topical museum discourse.

[www.univie.ac.at/geschichtegesichttet/a\\_wittlin-frischauer.html](http://www.univie.ac.at/geschichtegesichttet/a_wittlin-frischauer.html)

## Stephen E. Weil (1928–2005)

Stephen E. Weil was the Emeritus Senior Scholar in the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Museum Studies. He served as Deputy Director of the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden from 1974 until his retirement in 1995 and was administrator of the Whitney Museum of American Art from 1967 to 1974. Among his many professional activities, he served on the Advisory Board of the Research Center for Arts and Culture at Columbia University and on the Planning Committee for the annual ALI-ABA course of study on Legal Problems of Museum Administration. He was a great teacher, a wonderful writer, and a revered mentor to many people in the museum profession, especially, though not exclusively, in the USA. He was also one of the guiding lights in the creation of INTERCOM, the ICOM Committee on Management.

Dr Weil's books with Smithsonian Institution Press include, *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquiries into Museums and Their Prospects* (1995), *Rethinking the Museum* (1990), *Beauty and the Beasts: On Museums, Art, the Law, and the Market* (1983), or *Making Museums Matter* (2002). Stephen E. Weil had graduated from Brown University in 1949 and received an LL.B. from the Columbia University School of Law in 1956. [www.aamus.org/pubs/mn/MN\\_NDo5\\_RememberingSWeil.cfm](http://www.aamus.org/pubs/mn/MN_NDo5_RememberingSWeil.cfm)

## Hadwig Kraeutler

Organizer of the ICOM Memorial Lectures 2010  
Editor of the ICOM Memorial Lectures 2010 Reader

Vienna/Austria, October 2011

## Preface

---

As President of the Austrian National Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), I had the honour to open the evening of the 2010 Memorial Lectures in the framework of the Twenty-second General Conference of ICOM with the theme “Museums for Social Harmony”. It was a great pleasure for me to extend greetings, and to welcome Madam Alissandra Cummins, President of ICOM, the distinguished speakers, and the delegates assembled from all corners of the ICOM-world in Shanghai.

ICOM-Austria’s engagement in the Memorial Lectures first and foremost relates to Alma S. Wittlin, one of the two persons honoured with the event. Because of racist and political persecution she left Vienna and Austria in 1937. She first went to Great Britain, where the grounds were laid for her influential museum work, and later to the United States of America.

About seventy-five years ago, the host city for the 2010 ICOM General Conference had been a destiny of hope and safety for many compatriots of Alma S. Wittlin’s. At that time, in order to escape the terror of the Nazi regimes in parts of Europe, thousands made the dangerous and difficult journey to Shanghai.

The 2010 Memorial Lectures under the theme of “Museums: Orchestrating Diversities for Harmonious Change” offered an opportunity to hear the speeches given by Dr. Lynda Kelly and Dr. David Fleming OBE. I am very grateful to my colleagues that they shared their insights and experiences, and talked to us about fundamental technological and philosophical museum developments, and that they now have given consent to have their work published. This, I am sure, will strengthen us in our efforts as we work together within the ICOM-structures to promote the role of museums in Society.

If the museum is to thrive in its specificities as a social tool, we need to ensure that in spite of all the pragmatic conditions, there is space and scope for new and innovative work forms allowing for interdisciplinary networking, as well as for the

development of relevant theory. The fulfilment of these tasks of the ‘public’ institution with an educational function is dependent on the fruitful and viable interaction and convergence of the audience-oriented work forms on one side, and the collection related and management activities on the other.

Enhancing interdisciplinary exchange and co-operation therefore seems appropriate to embrace the challenges of developments in museum learning, in relating to the audiences with engaging exhibition work, and changes to be expected in professional training, and organizational, and management issues for future museum work.

In this sense, ICOM-Austria has been a proud supporter of the Memorial Lecture program since the General Conference in Vienna, in 2007. It will be our honour to continue this support for the future. Let me invite you to take part and take full advantage of the results – ideas, strategies, discussions – developed from the joint Memorial Lectures evening.

One year from the actual event, I would like to express my gratitude to the Austrian Consulate General in Shanghai for decisive support given.

Finally, I want to thank all involved – Hadwig Kraeutler, the good spirit and motor of this outstanding event and of the publication of the Memorial Lectures, those working in the ICOM-headquarters in Paris, ICOM-China, and the ICOM-International Committees for Education & Cultural Action (CECA), Exhibition Exchange (ICEE), Training of Personnel (ICTOP) and Management (INTERCOM) – whose collaborative efforts enable us to publish the 2010 Memorial Lectures on the Internet, and thus to make them available to the international museum community.

**Wilfried Seipel**

President of ICOM-Austria

Vienna, November 2011

**Dear Madam**  
**President of ICOM,**  
**dear presidents**  
**of ICOM interna-**  
**tional committees,**  
**dear speakers,**  
**and dear**  
**museum**  
**colleagues!**

It is an honour for me to welcome you all to this evening of the Alma S. Wittlin and Stephen E. Weil Memorial Lectures, organised jointly by ICOM-Austria, and four ICOM International Committees, for Education and Cultural Action, Exhibition Exchange, Training of Personnel, and Management.

This event provides a good opportunity to continue the interdisciplinary discourse begun in Vienna in 2007. Such arrangements should be encouraged within the framework of the ICOM General Conferences, as these provide the obvious opportunities with several committees in the same place at the same time. In my function as Chair of ICOM-China, I am happy that the ICOM 2010 Conference in Shanghai is offering this opportunity.

With these lectures two eminent museum personalities are honoured, Alma S. Wittlin and Stephen E. Weil. In their writing and with their influential work they have strongly advocated the notion of museums in service of society.

With this, it is my pleasure to extend, on behalf of the ICOM 2010 Shanghai Conference and of ICOM-China, a warm welcome to the two speakers of this evening, Dr. Lynda Kelly, Head of Audience Research at the Australian Museum in Sydney and Dr. David Fleming, Chair of INTERCOM and Director of National Museums Liverpool, United Kingdom, and to you all in this important ICOM event!

**Prof. Zhang Bai**  
Chairman, ICOM-China

Shanghai, November 8, 2010



# Ladies and Gentlemen, dear ICOM- Colleagues!

It is an honour for me to take part in the 2010 *Memorial Lectures* organised in Shanghai during the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). It is also a pleasure because this is my first engagement as newly appointed president of the Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA).

In the Board meeting that has taken place this afternoon, the CECA Board has strongly underlined the importance of developing activities involving more different international committees. The *Alma S. Wittlin Memorial Lecture* represents a very good example of this kind of collaboration.

This year the collaboration between ICOM-Austria, the International Committee for Exhibition Exchange (ICEE), the International Committee for Training of Personnel (ICTOP), the International Committee in Management (INTERCOM), and the International Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) has been particularly fruitful allowing ICOM members coming from all over the world to listen to two distinguished speakers: Lynda Kelly, Head of Audience research at the Australian Museum in Sidney and David Fleming, Director of the National Museums of Liverpool and president of INTERCOM.

The theme of the 22<sup>nd</sup> ICOM General Conference is *Museums and Social Harmony*. I think that this topic matches in a very good way both Alma S. Wittlin's life and work. She originated from Europe which she left in an historical period when social harmony was denied to many, in particular, to Jewish citizens. Her work was dedicated to the study of museums as tools for developing culture and enhancing everybody's participation in a harmonious way. I think that Alma S. Wittlin would have loved to be honoured in such a context and I thank all the colleagues who worked for the organisation of the lectures.

**Emma Nardi**  
ICOM-CECA President

Shanghai, November 8, 2010

## Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of ICTOP, ICOM's International Committee for Training of Personnel and of the other partners, I welcome you to this special evening with two Memorial Lectures.

ICTOP is supporting this common initiative of a joint evening session for the second time, presently within the framework of the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of ICOM in Shanghai. The Memorial Lectures originated in Vienna in 2007, launched by ICOM-Austria, however they are carried out as our communal effort, with the help of our colleague and member of ICOM-CECA, Dr. Hadwig Kraeutler. Due to the friendly support of ICOM-China and of the organizers in Shanghai, this evening gives us the welcome opportunity to bring together, once again, people from the different international committees within ICOM, and to develop stimulating ideas and share new and interdisciplinary approaches, which seem prone to influence and shape our thinking about future museum work.

For the 2010 Memorial Lectures, the International Committees have invited two distinguished guest speakers: Dr. Linda Kelly, Head of Audience Research at the Australian Museum, Sydney, Australia and Dr. David Fleming, President of INTERCOM, ICOM's International Committee for Museum Management and Director of the National Museums Liverpool, United Kingdom.

Linda Kelly is well known for her indefatigable engagement propagating the use of the "Social Media" for the sake of the museum visitors and for their overall involvement in museum work. She has published widely on museum evaluation and operates the "Audience Research in Museums"-blog and the "web 2U"-blog. Additionally, through Museum3, a not-for-profit social network site for museum professionals, she is in permanent contact with an active, global membership of over 3.000. With her research Dr. Kelly is relating to two new approaches to museum activity: One, the involvement of the (members of the) public in the museum, no longer merely as consumer(s)/visitor(s), but as partner(s) and user(s) – encouraged to participate, ask questions, and make demands, and the other, the

development of the idea of a participatory museum. These perspectives, if put into practice, will change the meaning and usefulness of the museum for the public. Dr. Kelly's paper, *The Twenty-first Century Museum: The Museum Without Walls* opens up entirely new dimensions for an integrated museum community.

Let us imagine some of the changes which will happen with the activities as promoted by Dr. Kelly's research. The museum will become a space for discussion and debates, and a place where the audiences feel entitled and involved. Could we before have imagined that an exhibition can be developed in egalitarian cooperation, shared by museum and user? Or could we even have considered that we would use the new media as tools for communication about a new exhibition or other events in the museum?

In 2006 to 2008, when the European ICTOP working group with participants from France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland discussed a "European Frame of Reference for the Museum Professions" and described 20 museum professions, no one thought of a social media expert position. Now, we must concern ourselves with such requirements and think of yet another specialist on the staff. To employ social media entails a responsibility to know about and fully use the communicative potential of internet technology. Among other new opportunities, it will open novel approaches for involving both visitors and potential visitors, possibly even in the planning processes of the museum. ICTOP will have to think more deeply about these developments and their impact on museum training programs.

The second Memorial Lecture is given by Dr. David Fleming, a colleague with a broad range of knowledge and experience in theoretical and practical museum issues, on a national as well as international scale, and a most distinguished member of ICOM. In 2007, Dr. Fleming gave the following definition for the then new International Slavery Museum in Liverpool: "This is not a museum that could be described as a 'neutral space' – it is a place of commitment, controversy,

honesty, and campaigning." In September 2010, Dr. Fleming distinguished himself as a co-founder of the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM). This was a move and a sign for the global world of today, that in our multicultural society, the question of social justice is still not solved. In his paper, "Museums as Campaigners for Social Justice", Dr. Fleming underscores that exhibitions and museums have a responsibility to explain the relevance of the fight for social justice today, and a decisive and positive role to play there.

In this sense, with the Memorial Lectures taking up both the social tasks of museums, their underlying missions and new technological possibilities, structures, and methodologies that follow, Dr. Kelly's and Dr. Fleming's papers can help us understand our developing roles in society, and how these changes and processes will enable museums to become more open and dialogic, and thus more attractive, engaging, and meaningful for the public.

Considering such fundamental notions, this evening of joint Memorial Lectures in the framework of the 22<sup>nd</sup> ICOM General Conference will be in line with, and continue the traditions, ideas, and aims of those honoured tonight, of distinguished museologist, Alma S. Wittlin, as well as of highly appreciated museum thinker and leader, Stephen E. Weil, in whose memories these lectures are held.

I wish you a stimulating evening.

**Angelika Ruge**

President ICTOP 2004-2010

**Lynne Teather**

President ICTOP 2010-2013

Shanghai, November 8, 2010

## Second Alma S. Wittlin Memorial Lecture

Lynda Kelly

# The Twenty-first Century Museum: The Museum Without Walls

This paper explores the impact of Web 2.0 across the museum sector, focussing on research about museum visitors' use of Web 2.0, and what Web 2.0 means for museum learning and organisational change. The paper invokes the spirit of Alma Wittlin (1970) who talked about museums as flexible spaces and George Browne Goode's (1891; 1991) notion of a museum as a house full of ideas. It concludes that in order to stay connected with audiences, twenty-first century museums must be flexible, vibrant and changing spaces, houses full of ideas, and museums without walls.

### THE NATURE OF MUSEUMS

George Brown Goode, ichthyologist and former Smithsonian museum administrator in the late 1800s identified that the nature of museum work is not only around knowledge creation, but knowledge generation and, ultimately, learning, as Goode stated: 'The museum likewise must, in order to perform its proper functions, contribute to the advancement of learning through the increase as well as through the diffusion of knowledge.' (1991, 337).

In this global, wired, connected and technology-driven Web 2.0 world, what will the twenty-first century museum look like? What are museum audiences doing online and how might this be translated into the ways they interact with our physical spaces? With this era of Web 2.0, social media and citizen-led information retrieval and joint problem solving, how can museums take a leading role in maintaining their authoritative voice while moving towards a more equal relationship with their users wherever they may be and however they chose to access them, especially given museums' propensity to conservatism and resistance to change?

Alma S. Wittlin identified that museums are characterised by their flexibility as '... they allow a wide gamut of differences in the use people make of them' (1970, 2). What expectations do audiences have of museums, given new ways of learning and engagement fostered by the underlying principles of how social media works and the evolution of the human

brain? What “wide gamut of differences” will future audiences make of the twenty-first century museum?

And, what does this mean for how museums are managed and structured in the future, given that, as Elaine Heumann Gurian said “The use of the internet will inevitably change museums. How museums respond to multiple sources of information found on the Web and who on staff will be responsible for orchestrating this change is not yet clear. The change when it comes, will not be merely technological but at its core philosophical” (2010, 95).

### WHAT IS WEB 2.0 AND SOCIAL MEDIA?

‘The term ‘Web 2.0’ (2004–present) is commonly associated with web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centred design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web’ (see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_2.0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0)). Web 1.0 was seen as having a primary focus on information provision – a one-to-many model where there was little in the way of feedback, sharing and conversation (Russo et al, 2008). Seely Brown and Adler feel that the most profound impact of the internet, and Web 2.0 is ‘... its ability to support and expand the various aspects of social learning’ (2008, 18) and therefore, the ability to solve problems together (Kelly and Russo, 2010, Noveck, 2009).

It is now recognised that the web is an inherently social space (Bearman and Trant, 2008), and it is well-recognised that museum physical sites are facilitators of social learning, so the fit between museums’ physical and online social spaces is a natural one.

‘Social media is a term for the tools and platforms people use to publish, converse and share content online. The tools include blogs, wikis, podcasts, and sites to share photos and bookmarks’ (<http://social-media.wikispaces.com/ShortAZ>). An important component of social media is the idea of social networking (In this paper the term “social media” is used to encompass the concepts of Web 2.0 and social networking), which refers to ‘... online places where users can create a profile for themselves, and then socialise

with others using a range of social media tools including blogs, video, images, tagging, lists of friends, forums and messaging.’ (ibid.).

Examples of social networking activities and sites include (adapted from Australian Communications and Media Authority Quick Guide *Personal and peer safety: Safe social networking*; [www.acma.gov.au/WEB/HOMEPAGE/pc=HOME](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/HOMEPAGE/pc=HOME)):

- Creating profiles or descriptions of yourself on Facebook, LinkedIn, and eBay
- Blogging on Blogger and Wordpress
- Video sharing on YouTube
- Photo sharing on Flickr and Google Images
- Saving your favourite websites (i.e. bookmarking) on Delicious and Digg
- Microblogging on Twitter
- “Living” in virtual worlds such as Second Life and Habbo Hotel through creating a virtual identity
- Instant messaging (IM) or chat features on most social network sites including MSN, Facebook and Ning
- Foursquare – a geolocation application that allows you to “check in” to places, earning points and rewards and competing against your friends

### WHY DO MUSEUMS NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT WEB 2.0 AND SOCIAL MEDIA?

The evidence is in – people are using social media in increasing numbers, and those who visit museums participate in the social media space in greater numbers than non-visitors. It is not only a museum industry imperative however. In her book *Wiki Government*, Beth Simone Noveck (2009) outlined the Obama Open Government initiative. She notes that the Memorandum states: ‘By soliciting expertise (in which expertise is defined broadly to include both scientific knowledge and popular experience) from self-selected peers working together in groups via the Internet, it is possible to augment the know-how of full-time professionals. ... Collaboration catalyses new problem-solving strategies in which, public and private sector organisations and individuals solve social problems collec-

tively.' (2009, XII–XIII). So, now rather than any time in history the web enables us to be able to solve these problems, problems that museums have something to say, for example climate change, biodiversity, social justice. In future (as now), social networking will increasingly be the ways citizens will come together to solves these problems.

### What does research tell us about the use of social media?

The Museum conducted some early studies during 2007 to look at the potential impacts of Web 2.0 on museum audiences: an online survey of Australians' internet behaviour; five focus groups with adults aged 18–30; and a workshop with high school students aged 12–18 years. The aim was to understand users' motivations and behaviour in more detail in the online, as well as physical, context (Kelly and Russo, 2008).

An online survey of 2,006 participants across eastern Australia was undertaken in November 2007 asking about the kinds of online activities they had undertaken in the previous month, as well as where they accessed the internet, how comfortable they felt with technology and demographic information. The kinds of activities Australians were engaged in mostly related to watching videos; reading customer reviews; participating in discussions; and reading blogs. These findings were further unpacked to see whether those who interact with museums online were different to general internet users. In this survey 41% (n=829) reported that they had visited a museum/gallery in the previous six months. The data from this group was separated to compare against the rest of the sample to see if there were any differences in their online behaviour showing that museum/gallery visitors participated at higher levels across all activities. Apart from using social networking sites, statistical tests revealed that these differences were highly significant across all categories.

### 2007 study

Activity	Total sample (n=2,006)	Museum/gallery visitors (n=829)
Watch a video	43%	46%
Use social networking site	34%	36%
Participate in discussion board/forum	32%	39%
Read customer rating/review	37%	48%
Read blogs	27%	34%
Tag web pages	19%	27%
Listen to podcasts	16%	23%
Use a wiki	15%	20%
Post ratings/reviews	15%	21%
Comment on blogs	13%	18%
Upload video/audio they created	12%	15%
Publish own web page	10%	13%
Publish/maintain blog	8%	9%
Use RSS feeds	8%	11%

Since these results have been published, further research into the use of social media by Museum visitors was undertaken via three surveys. The first was conducted with 174 visitors to the Museum's College Street site during January 2010, the second a more in-depth study of 169 visitors to the Museum during April/May 2010 and the final study of 1,000 Sydneysiders undertaken via an online survey.

The evidence showed that visitors to the Australian Museum were using social networks in great numbers – Facebook was the number one site they accessed usually every day and often several times a day. The larger sample of Sydneysiders also showed that Facebook was the number one social media site accessed, more so than YouTube. Respondents across all samples felt positive about their general use of technology, 63% are comfortable/extremely comfortable with technology, 31% are OK with it all and 6% find it all a bit much. 55% described themselves as early adopters of technology, 38% dabble a bit but prefer to wait and see and 7% are later adopters.

In summary, visitors to museums are more engaged in the online world than those who hadn't visited the Museum. This resonates directly with our 2007 study of museum visitors generally and their online habits, again demonstrating that those who visit museums are using these tools in greater numbers than non-visitors.

### **INFORMAL LEARNING IN MUSEUMS AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

As Goode noted museums are not just for creating knowledge but for disseminating that knowledge. In a literature scan of why people visit museums the main reasons people gave for visiting museums was to learn – both physical and online (Kelly, 2007, Kelly and Russo, 2010). However, what does learning look like in the Web 2.0 world?

There is increasing attention being paid in the literature to learning in the digital age. The Horizons Project, established in 2002 by the New Media Consortium, looks at emerging technologies and what these mean for teaching, learning and education, and also for museums. The 2010 report (Johnson et al, 2010) highlighted the following key trends with my commentary about what these mean for museums:

'People expect to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want to.' (2010, 4). This means visitors will learn not only in our physical spaces even though they may be in our physical spaces. They will access content from wherever they are (and it will probably not even be our content).

'It does not matter where our work is stored; what matters is that our information is accessible no matter where we are or what device we choose to use.' (2010, 4). What are museums doing to enable their collection and scientific data to be available on any platform? How are they relating the physical objects on display with information across a range of online platforms, including mobile?

'The work of students is increasingly seen as collaborative by nature.' (2010, 4). The boundaries between visitors and institutions are breaking down –

how are we encouraging social learning and collaboration in both our physical and online spaces?

'The role of the academy – and the way we prepare students for their future lives – is changing. It is incumbent on the academy to adapt teaching and learning practices to meet the needs of today's learners; to emphasise critical enquiry and mental flexibility ... to connect learners to broad social issues through civic engagement; and to encourage them to apply their learning to solve large-scale complex problems.' (2010, 4) I suggest you replace the word "academy" with "museum"! Museums have always been about engaging audiences with big issues. Visitors have expressed an interest in being challenged and having their say on controversial topics (Cameron and Kelly, 2010). What better way than to harness the power of citizens to work together solving big issues facing humanity – ones that museums have something to say about (climate change, biodiversity and social justice spring to mind)?

'Digital media literacy continues its rise in importance as a key skill in every discipline and profession.' (2010, 5). How are we setting ourselves up to keep abreast of these skills? How are we changing the types of skill sets we recruit to our institutions, or change the ways that we work to work within a digital world? As they go on to say '... digital literacy must necessarily be less about tools and more about ways of thinking and seeing, and of crafting narrative.' (ibid.).

The Horizon Report details the technologies to watch in next 12 months. The first is mobile computing and increasing access to Smartphones: 'The mobile market today has nearly 4 billion subscribers, more than two-thirds of whom live in developing countries.' (2010, 9). The second is what they term "Open content", as more universities offer their course content online for free there is a '... shift in the way academics in many parts of the world are conceptualising education to a view that it is more about the process of learning than the information conveyed in their courses. Information is everywhere; the challenge is to make effective use of it.' (2010, 13) and museums can learn from this too.

The technologies to watch in next 2-3 years according to Horizon include electronic books, which will become easier to access, will lessen the environmental footprint and allow the individual to repurpose content in new forms. The other is Simple Augmented Reality (AR), with this technology being now easier to access even on a mobile device: 'Applications that convey information about a place open the door to discovery-based learning.' (2010, 22).

### **What are teachers saying about the internet and learning and museums?**

In November 2009 the Australian Museum held *Web to Classroom* workshops with primary and secondary teachers (<http://australianmuseum.net.au/blogpost/Audience-Research-Blog/Web-to-classroom-workshops>). The aim was to find out how teachers are using the internet in their classrooms and how we can work more closely with them via our own website. I asked them to identify the big trends/issues around the web that will impact on them for the future and they said:

- the Year 9 laptop program in Australia will impact on both teachers and students as there will be more two-way interaction and students working both with each other and with other schools across the world
- widespread prevalence of Smartphones for students (and teachers) so mobile web will become important
- wireless schools – no longer are students/teachers tied to a classroom or even their own school environment
- students value their social networks and peers' opinions and information rather than "experts"
- teachers are no longer "repositories of information" but are facilitators of students' learning – the relationship is more two-way and equal
- there is a move towards digital books primarily to reduce bag weight but also to save costs
- students expect instant feedback as they are used to this in their lives

- students want to learn and prefer sites that are interactive
- still some resistance among teachers who fear change, but all recognise that the change is coming!
- we are now dealing with "digital learners" – kids in future will never not have had their hands on something that doesn't plug in
- need to address the needs for kids to be physical and outdoors – don't neglect this
- kids (and us I believe) are now totally multi-tasked – where in the past this would be seen as a negative we now need to see this as a normal part of learning
- social and collaborative learning is now the way we all learn
- childrens' brains are changing to accommodate the ways they now learn and engage
- they don't need to retain/remember information as they can just go back and access it again
- we have moved from a *one-to-many* form of teaching to a *many-to-many* approach and a more equal arrangement (and a more empowered one too I suspect)
- the beauty of sharing online is that students can see each others' work and learn from that

### **What did students say about the internet and learning and museums?**

Given that learning through social media and digital resources is increasingly becoming a core function in the learning repertoire of today's students (Green and Hannon, 2006) it was decided to run an *e-Kids' College* with participants from the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools to investigate how they were using the Web and in particular, social media. An important component of the research was to seek feedback and advice about how the Museum's research and collection could be better utilised through digital media to match audience needs and interests. Twenty-four students from nine schools across New South Wales attended a one-day workshop in November, 2007.



Students were consulted on a range of issues encompassing their use of digital technologies in leisure and for learning. They undertook a behind-the-scenes tour of the Museum, spoke with a number of scientific staff, and experienced the public areas of the Museum in order to provide feedback about the Museum's potential online offer (Kelly and Groundwater Smith, 2009, Kelly and Fitzgerald, 2011). There are two areas I want to highlight here.

When asked to complete the sentence "Not being able to access the web is like not being able to ..." respondents likened it to not being able to breath, live, eat, talk, socialise and *Get access to water*, as well as *Travel around the world, explore my inner self or broaden my horizon*. This shows, how important, and an essential part of life the web is for young people.

A number of others also made a distinction between visiting the Museum itself and visiting the Museum's Website. For example, one student who had participated in previous research projects with the Museum had this to say:

*Last time I came here we focused mainly on new technology and we were constantly saying we needed more screens, games and interactive displays, but since then I have been thinking: I can do that at home, I can watch movies, play games etc at home. If I come to the Museum I want to be able to get information, read it and be able to learn from it. It is good to have these things (screens etc) but I guess, like all things, in moderation. The Website needs to suit all audiences. I got the feeling that you were trying to find out what we want but we are not the only people that use the Museum. A section on the site, with bright colours, games etc could be good, but it is unlikely that the reason we are at a Museum site in the first place is to play the games. We can do that anywhere. If we are there we are probably looking for information of some kind. So it needs to be easy to read and access without being too dry.*

## MUSEUM LEARNING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Scott Paris (1997) stated that to facilitate meaningful learning museums need to create environments that encourage exploration and enable meaning to be constructed through choice, challenge, control and collaboration, leading to self-discovery, pride in achievements, learning and change.

Like Paris, my own doctoral research (Kelly, 2007) although based in the physical space, also has resonance for online learning experiences. Some of the things I found were that visitors:

- will make their own meanings and construct their own narratives based on their experiences and interests
- expect that learning will build on what they already know
- want (and expect) choice and control over their museum experience and their learning through providing multiple pathways and a variety of interpretive experiences suitable for both individuals and groups
- want to engage in critical thinking and questioning, with programs that raise questions, point to some answers and addresses both facts and ideas
- access multiple points of view to enable them to reach their own conclusions and make their own meanings.

The emergence of Web 2.0 now means that individuals have more control over how, where and when they learn and consult a wide range of information sources in their own time and space (Kelly and Russo 2010). Old models of teaching and telling are no longer sufficient. As Cornu (2004) has observed in relation to schools, knowledge is now networked and requires an understanding of a collective intelligence over and above individual enterprise. The internet, and more specifically Web 2.0 has opened up a whole new way of engaging audiences, specifically educational audiences, who are taking up these tools in droves.

## ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE IN MUSEUMS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

As Heumann Gurian (2010) noted the Internet is fundamentally challenging and changing the ways museums do business, what their role will be and what our jobs will look like in a networked world? The world of the internet makes it possible for a museum to be a place of ideas where visitors and museum staff work together to create and disseminate knowledge and engage with ideas. Heumann Gurian also stated that: ‘My fundamental assumption is that museums will soon need to shift from being a singular authority to a participants and encourager of intellectual and social engagement among its visitors. In doing so museums will have to look at the administrative assignments and responsibilities of staff in order to become this more responsive institution’ (2010, p.108).

Mike Edson, of the Smithsonian Institute in a recent interview published in O’Reilly Radar, said ‘In the last epoch, we were measured by the success of our internal experts. And in this coming epoch, we’re going to be measured by the success of our networks at large: our social networks, our professional networks. People are going to be connected. Ideas will be sharable and portable.’ (<http://radar.oreilly.com/2010/05/how-the-smithsonian-keeps-up-w.html>)

Many museums are getting better at their physical offerings (although some still have a way to go), the web environment is somewhat lagging, with a patchy uptake in social media tools and some (healthy and not-so-healthy!) scepticism about the role and value of these. Given that social media is a great way to fulfil these requirements – it supports learning objectives, is relatively low-cost, is being used, certainly by Australians, and has a close relationship with the physical site, then why hasn’t it been embraced by museums in greater numbers? MacArthur (2007) identified that institutional bias is the most pressing problem in the uptake of social media/Web 2.0 in museums. If this is the case, what can be done?

Some clues come from three sources: first a Harvard Business Review article interview with Mitchell Baker, chair and former CEO of Mozilla who created the open source web interface Firefox (Mendonca and Sutton, 2008). Second, a post at Mashable (<http://mashable.com/2010/05/11/social-media-tips-execs/>) about how social media benefits an organisation, and finally a post sourced from the Gurteen Knowledge Website (<http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/blogpost/Knowledge-Workers/>) about the skills that knowledge workers will need in the future.

In reflecting on these, it is suggested that for museums to embrace a Web 2.0 mindset and develop new approaches to museum practice organisations will need to:

- be prepared to let go
- take risks
- give staff and communities permission to go for it, then learns from that
- encourage connections and networks both internally and externally
- provide scaffolding and support that others can work from, while recognising that they don’t always need to innovate themselves, let others use material and do it instead
- acknowledge that a healthy community will self-monitor and self-correct
- take their place as the subject matter expert, while also drawing on the power of the collective community
- remember that some areas will still need “discipline” and organisational input, yet many more will need participation.

Web 2.0 is fundamentally challenging the nature of our institutions. Ellis and Kelly (2007) stated that ‘Web 2.0 puts users and not the organisation at the centre of the equation. This is threatening, but also exciting in that it has the potential to lead to richer content, a more personal experience’.

Many years ago now, Stephen Weil said that museums need to transform themselves from ‘... being about something to being for somebody’ (1999, 229, emphasis in original). Web 2.0 and particularly social media provide the perfect vehicle to take Weil’s ideas further, with the museum of the future enabling learners, users, visitors (whatever you want to call them) to become participants wherever they are and however they choose. Learning studies, audience research and certainly our social media experiments to date have demonstrated that our audiences want this kind of interaction and will participate. Given that this depends on how willing museums are to implement cross-organisational change and conduct meaningful two-way interaction and dialogue with their audiences through the tools of social media, will museums come on board and play in the digital space? It is worth noting that Weil also said over ten years ago that ‘Tomorrow’s museums cannot be operated with yesterday’s skills’. So what will tomorrow’s museum be?

My work to date has shown that the twenty-first century audience will be better connected, more informed, more engaged, older, more culturally diverse, more interested in ideas and architects of their own learning. They will be mobile, accessing information wherever they are and whenever they choose to. In this way, they will be active participants, rather than passive receivers of content and information. Given the opportunities provided in the virtual spaces via Web 2.0 and social media, the 21st century museum must be flexible, mobile, vibrant and changing spaces, accounting for a variety of uses, houses full of ideas, and, ultimately, museums without walls. Professor Stephen Heppell (<http://www.heppell.net/>), the noted digital educator, stated recently that, given the rapid changes in technology and education, the next ten years will be the most fun we’ll have in our jobs. So, how we eventually end up as museums without walls is going to be challenging – but we’ll be having a lot of fun too!

## References

- Bearman, D. and Trant, J. 2008. Technologies, like museums, are social. In *Museums and the Web 2008: Selected Papers from an International Conference*. Ed. D. Bearman and J. Trant, 3–9. Archives and Museum Informatics: Toronto.
- Cameron, F. and Kelly, L. 2010. *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: London.
- Cornu, B. 2004. Networking and collective intelligence for teachers and learners. In *Digital technology, communities and education*. Ed. A. Brown and N. Davis. Routledge: London.
- Ellis, M. and Kelly, B. (2007). Web 2.0: How to Stop Thinking and Start Doing: Addressing Organisational Barriers. In *Museums and the Web 2007: Proceedings*. Ed. J. Trant & D. Bearman. Toronto: Archives & Museum Informatics.
- Goode, George Brown 1891; 1991. *The Origins of Natural Science in America*. Ed Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Green, H. and Hannon, C. 2006. Their Space: Education for a Digital generation. DEMOS Foundation: London.
- Heumann Gurian, E. 2010. Curator: From Soloist to Impresario. In *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums*. Ed. F. Cameron and L. Kelly, 95–111. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: London.
- Johnson, L., Levine, A., Smith, R., and Stone, S. 2010. *The 2010 Horizon Report*. The New Media Consortium: Austin, Texas.
- Kelly, L. 2007. Visitors and learners: Adult museum visitors’ learning identities. Unpublished PhD, University of Technology, Sydney.
- Kelly, L. and Fitzgerald, P. 2011. Cooperation, collaboration, challenge: how to work with the changing nature of educational audiences in museums. In *Rethinking Educational Practice Through Reflexive Inquiry*. Ed. N. Mockler and J. Sachs. 77–88. Springer: London.
- Kelly, L. and Groundwater-Smith, S. 2009. Revisiting the Physical and On-line Museum: A Partnership with the Coalition of Knowledge Building Schools. *Journal of Museum Education*. 34(4), 55–68.
- Kelly, L. and Russo, A. 2008. From ladders of participation to networks of participation: Social media and museum audiences. In *Museums and the Web 2008: Selected papers from an international conference*. Ed. J. Trant and D. Bearman, 83–92. Archives and Museum Informatics: Toronto.
- Kelly L. and Russo, A. 2010. *From Communities of Practice to Value Networks: Engaging Museums in Web 2.0*. In *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums*. Ed. F. Cameron and L. Kelly, 281–298. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: London.
- MacArthur, M. 2007. Can museums allow online users to become participants? In *The digital museum: A think guide*. Ed. H. Din and P. Hecht, 57–65. American Association of Museums: Washington DC.
- Mendonca, L. and Sutton, R. 2008. Succeeding at open-source innovation: An interview with Mozilla’s Mitchell Baker. *The McKinsey Quarterly*, 1–7.
- Noveck, B. (2009). *Wiki Government. How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger and Citizens More Purposeful*. Brookings Institution Press: Washington DC.
- Paris, S. 1997. Situated Motivation and Informal Learning. *Journal of Museum Education*, 22, 22–27.
- Russo, A., J. Watkins, L. Kelly and S. Chan. 2008. Participatory communication with social media. *Curator* 51(1): 21–31.
- Seely Brown, J. and Adler, R. 2008. Minds on Fire: Open education, the long tail, and learning 2.0. *EDUCAUSE* January/February: 17–32.
- Weil, S. 1999. From being about something to being for somebody: The ongoing transformation of the American museum. *Daedalus*, 128(3), 229–258.
- Wittlin, A. 1970. *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future*. The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

## Fifth Stephen E. Weil Memorial Lecture

# David Fleming Museums Campaigning for Social Justice

The theme running through this paper is the museum's role in creating social justice. 'Social justice' is a notion based upon the premise that all people should be able to derive benefit from museums, that they have an entitlement to access to museums, and to see themselves represented in museums. Furthermore, museums have a responsibility to fight for social justice, not simply through ensuring access for all, but even in some instances through acting as forums for debate about basic human rights. To me, human rights, and the safeguarding of human rights, are at the core of "social harmony", and helping create social harmony is at the heart of the museum mission.

Over the past 30 or so years, museums worldwide have been changing fundamentally – how, and why?

They have become less obsessed with the internal mechanics of looking after collections, and have grown, slowly but surely, into a more extrovert role. They have become more socially responsible. This has come about through a combination of factors:

First, financial pressure and the need for relevance: politicians are increasingly looking for value for money. They want to see a return. All politicians want to see publicly-funded institutions used by the public in large numbers.

Second, changes in the nature of the museum workforce – the workforce has grown in numbers, has increased its diversity, and there are more women – these changes have led to a wave of enthusiasm for social history and community history, and to an increased respect for community life, community involvement, community access and democracy. Also the museum workforce is increasingly professional and less amateurish, museum staff are better trained, and better at managing. All this has resulted in a shift in the balance between objects and stories in museums.

The great American museum practitioner and theorist, Stephen Weil, after whom this memorial lecture is named, said that museums had shifted from being about something to being for somebody: so let's look more closely at what museums are for. The answer is, museums are for lots of things. Different museums in

different places, play different roles, depending upon all sorts of variables: collections, location, resourcing, the make up of visitors and so on. Some museums are of purely local importance. Some cater almost exclusively for tourists. Some are object-rich. Others rely heavily on film. Some deal with nature, others manufacturing, others people. In truth, no two museums are the same.

What I think is no longer open to challenge is that museums are for the public benefit. Those which are publicly funded are supposed to *achieve* something for society, rather than act simply as self-perpetuating institutions, the value of which is obscure and unmeasurable. In other words, museums carry a social responsibility. Let's consider the social responsibility of museums, and what it implies for the way we behave, and the way we present ourselves.

There have always been people working in museums who have been socially responsible, and there have always been museums which have acted in a socially responsible manner. More than 80 years ago John Cotton Dana said that the first task of every museum was "adding to the happiness, wisdom and comfort of members of the community". Dana argued that the museum is accountable to society – that the public's support of a museum is an "exchange transaction".

But it has only been in the last 30 years or so that the acknowledgement has grown that, in return for public subsidy, museums should strive to be available, accessible, welcoming and valuable to all, rather than to just a few; that missions should be strong, active and clear, not weak, passive and mysterious; that the educational role of museums is paramount.

The term 'social responsibility' encompasses a huge range of roles. It could be argued that the more traditional functions of museums – collecting, preservation, research, basic interpretation – are in themselves socially responsible activities, and indeed they are, to a limited degree. But to me, real social responsibility is when museums commit themselves to identifying and meeting the needs of the public, and when they place this at the head of their priorities, so that it

becomes an imperative, the mission of the museum.

This may sound simple, and it may sound as though this is what museums do routinely. However, it is neither simple nor routine. I have to say I have known many museum staff whose motivation has been to pursue their own, collections-based interests, rather than concern themselves overly with the wider needs of society. Social benefit flows from their work only incidentally.

So, I want us to think about the deliberate exercise of social responsibility, not just its incidental occurrence. I also want us to consider the spectrum of social responsibility, from the local level to which all museums can aspire, to the global, building on broad issues of human rights.

Museums which are socially responsible all have one thing in common: they have passion, a passion to create social value. They are not satisfied with collecting, preservation and research. This is not to say that they do not value these activities. A museum which does not value these things is illogical and absurd. But socially responsible museums regard these as techniques and means, rather than as ends in themselves.

The socially responsible museum has at its core a powerful commitment to education. It also has a powerful conscience. The museum – or rather its governing body and its staff (for a museum's identity is all about its people rather than its collections) – is committed to an agenda which rejects absolutely the notion that museums are restricted preserves. The museum wants to reach out, to locate and engage with all manner of constituencies.

In particular, it wants to engage with people who suffer from some form of disadvantage or discrimination, whether that be economic, social or personal, which renders them vulnerable. In other words, the socially responsible museum sees itself as valuable to all, not a few, and will go out of its way through positive action to fulfil this inclusive mission.

This is why free admission is such an important issue in the UK: museums which must – or which choose to – have an admission fee are handicapped in pursuing a socially responsible mission, because such

a fee is a barrier to people on low incomes and therefore is a barrier to full inclusion. These museums have to find ways of overcoming this barrier if they are to exercise real social responsibility

Positive action means that the museum is joining the fight against social exclusion, joining with other socially responsible agencies to effect a difference at the personal, community and social levels. In other words, social responsibility means being socially inclusive, which leads ultimately to social value and the attainment of social justice: that's our primary aim, I would argue. Without social value, without achieving social justice, museums aren't worth having. This is our moral obligation.

Examples of the kind of disadvantage I have mentioned – which lead to discrimination, unwitting or otherwise, and intolerance – are legion. Anyone who belongs to a minority, or who is on the outside of the prevailing power system, may suffer disadvantage. Disadvantage may be based on communication, resources, ability, preference, belief, physical characteristics, gender, occupation, age, origin: the list is virtually endless. Every individual, no matter who they are, suffers from vulnerability and disadvantage at some time in their lives; some individuals lead their entire lives suffering disadvantage. So we cannot afford to be complacent or dismissive of the need to be inclusive, though the challenge for museums is extremely complex. Let us consider what we are doing in Liverpool, Shanghai's Twin City:

With a population of almost half a million people, Liverpool is home to many distinct communities. For example, because of its seafaring history, the city is home to Europe's oldest Chinese community, and has significant numbers of people whose ancestors originate in both west and east Africa. There has been massive Irish influence on the city's character which, added to significant Welsh and Scottish influence, has led to the city becoming the least English of all English cities, and one which, cultural and psychologically, looks abroad rather than inward to the rest of England. Only one English city decided to have a pavilion at the

Shanghai EXPO this year, to present itself to China and the world – the city of Liverpool.

As well as a deep diversity, Liverpool has, for four generations, suffered from chronic economic decline, so that today the population is only half what it was in the 1930s. Once one of the world's richest cities and probably the world's most successful port, the city went severe decline between the two world wars, so that by the 1980s there were real fears for the city's future, and central government had to step in to try to regenerate Liverpool.

The city has recently appeared to have turned the corner, and regeneration has finally begun, with new shops, new hotels, new restaurants, new jobs, to add to Liverpool's unmatched cultural offer. Nonetheless, unemployment is still twice as high as the national average, and Liverpool and neighbouring Knowsley are ranked as the two most deprived areas in England, with Liverpool topping the rankings both in overall deprivation and in the extent of deprivation.

The point is that the socio-economic condition of Liverpool and the surrounding area, along with the nature of our museum collections, are defining factors in how my museum service should organise itself. While, because of Liverpool's prosperity in previous decades, the museum collections are world class, this is of little importance locally unless we can ensure that the people of the city actually derive some value from them. So, in terms of museum usage, National Museums Liverpool has a powerful commitment to achieving total inclusion of local people. We see ourselves primarily as a socially responsible museum.

So, what kind of things does a socially responsible museum say in its Strategic Plan?

"Our values We believe that museums are fundamentally educational in purpose. We believe that museums are places for ideas and dialogue that use collections to inspire people. We are a democratic museum service and we believe in the concept of social justice: we are funded by the whole of the public and in return we strive to provide an excellent service to the whole of the public. We believe in the power of muse-

ums to help promote good and active citizenship, and to act as agents of social change.”

## Strategy statement

National Museums Liverpool (NML) operates in a city which is the most deprived in the UK. Despite recent signs of regeneration, Liverpool... has been given “red alert” status by the Centre for Cities, and various indicators suggest that Liverpool’s recovery is extremely fragile. Employment rates, local educational attainment and skills levels are still well below the national average.

This is a hugely challenging environment for NML. Locally, people are at risk of suffering from social tensions, lack of social cohesion, anti-social behaviour, loss of confidence and aspiration, pressure on families and relationships, high stress levels.

NML carries a very great responsibility in terms of delivering first class museums that, as part of a wider pattern of cultural provision, can help create “social capital” in the area, enhancing well being, confidence and social connectedness. We strongly believe that NML can help mitigate the social consequences of adverse economic conditions.

We are committed to facing up to this social responsibility, and our determination to provide free access to all of our exhibitions, events and activities, allied with the highest quality standards and enormous variety, is at the core of this commitment.

We will meet our responsibilities by assembling, researching, caring for and exhibiting our collections; training, developing and motivating our staff; refurbishing and developing our buildings; increasing the range and reach of our education programmes; improving the quality of our visitor experience; and showing an appetite for risk and innovation, without which no cultural organisation can prosper.

In doing all this we will: widen participation in our activities, thereby fulfilling our social objectives, especially by attracting diverse audiences ensure that we offer educational opportunities to people of all ages and backgrounds strive to create an organisational

culture that motivates our team and enables us to work effectively and in harmony actively seek to increase the diversity of our workforce be alert to social, economic and technological change to ensure we remain focussed and relevant work in partnership with other agencies – arts, business, public bodies behave in an ethical manner at all times, promoting sustainable practices.”

Now, we can recognise that museums have many roles, and they have many different impacts or outcomes. This means that museums are full of potential, but they need to move forward, away from traditional thinking, in order to fulfil this potential. In turn, this causes stress in some museums, because not all museum people are able or willing to break with traditional thinking. Nonetheless, it is essential that Museums play their full role in society, not least because this is the way to help protect and enhance public funding for museums.

I think we can usefully divide museum roles into three broad headings:

1. research and collecting
2. economic role
3. social role, which is:
  - educational
  - community-orientated
  - democratic
  - open to debate
  - diverse
  - socially responsible

Despite the deeply engrained tendency to focus inwardly, museums now take education and learning more seriously, and are acting in a far more socially responsible way than before. This is a process which has been underway on a worldwide scale for a generation. This has resulted in a variety of developments in museum attitudes, structures and behaviours and skills.

The socially responsible museum has: A socially responsible mission, of the kind we have in Liverpool.

Staffing structures which give education and learning a place at the most senior levels in a museum hier-

archy, and a significant proportion of the staffing budget is given over to education staff.

An organisational culture which promotes and celebrates learning. If visitors and other users are to learn from their contact with the museum, then the museum has to have engrained within it a real commitment to team working, and has to have a level of trust and respect between staff who have different skills that is often missing in museums. There are no elites. There are no groups of staff whose outputs are less valued than those of others.

There is a hierarchy, but the museum is not hierarchical. In this way, true integration of effort can take place on the basis of an understanding of roles and of purpose. So many museums have curators on a pedestal, because they are the ones with the greatest knowledge of the collections. The importance of this knowledge must never be underestimated. But if knowledge cannot be unlocked then it is of no genuine value, and it can only be unlocked by the curators learning to work, as equals, with people who have different knowledge, different skills.

All successful teams contain individuals with complementary skills. Nobody would ever pick a soccer team made up entirely of goalkeepers, or strikers; nobody would arrange a symphony orchestra to contain only violinists, or only percussionists: it is the blend of different skills which makes things work. And so it is with museums. Therefore, when it comes to creating exhibitions, or educational programmes, or publications, the socially responsible museum harnesses all its talents, and from their outset these projects involve, among others, education specialists.

In the socially responsible museum, staff are able to take risks. There is no blame culture, so that when things don't work there are no recriminations, just lessons to be learned. Staff are given credit when things go well. The museum experiments and tries to do things differently, to see whether there are better ways. Staff are encouraged to learn and broaden their own skills through training programmes and other development opportunities.

Change is regarded as a good thing, not a threat, and change is anticipated, not just reacted to. In a fast moving world, the socially responsible museum has to move fast.

The socially responsible museum is comfortable with the idea that people have different needs and different ways of learning. We cannot control what people learn, and there is no monocultural approach to learning which can come through quiet contemplation for some, or through dressing up and role-playing noisily for others. The audience may be relatively learned, or it may be utterly inexperienced; it may be highly receptive and relaxed, or difficult and awkward. The essence of the socially responsible museum, where learning is taken seriously, is the variety of medium and of message.

It is understood that most users will visit the museum and simply take as they find: they will view exhibitions which, hopefully, will provoke a reaction, will change their view of the world somehow. It might have museums collections on show – it might not – perhaps the theme of the exhibition does not lend itself to the display of objects. That's alright. It's the learning that's important; the end, not the means.

The socially responsible museum will tackle difficult, contemporary issues, or issues with a contemporary relevance. It will offer up observations on the state of the environment, not just display lots of rocks; it will make the links between the architectural splendour of modern Liverpool, and the obscurity of the slave trade which so enriched Liverpool merchants; it will consider homelessness, prostitution and Gay Rights.

But more than this, the socially responsible museum will actively seek out people who do not use museums, and pursue programmes designed to include them. It will take positive action.

In our socially responsible museum we research our audiences, and we devise programmes to suit them. We listen to our public. We evaluate everything we do. We do not simply hunt down project funding, lurching from one scheme to another, but we have a



strategy and we have core funding. We have fast-track procedures for new audiences, who want things today or tomorrow, not in five years time.

We recognise that without access there can be no learning, and no fulfilling of social responsibility, so we take the broadest imaginable view of access - not just the physical but the intellectual; not just the programme but the promotion; not just the message but the medium. We wish to see the diversity of our communities properly represented in our museums. We remove all the barriers we can think of, including, if possible, admission charges.

But there is more that we have to do. The socially responsible museum needs to be networked on a grand scale. It will have scores, perhaps hundreds, of community, cultural and educational partnerships. These partnerships provide new ideas, contacts, information, audiences and confidence, and they often can enable the museum to short cut to the relationships based on trust which are so important when museums attempt to work with socially excluded people: we need to be a *listening* organisation.

Finally, let us consider the human rights museum, because it is here, I believe, that we see the socially responsible museum beginning to realise its full potential, and where we can most readily see the impact of museums campaigning for social justice.

The language of the human rights museum includes visceral terms like oppression, rejection, victimisation, intolerance, persecution, racism, genocide. The human rights museum explores issues such as these, challenges visitors to reject assaults on human rights, and actively campaigns against human rights abuses.

There is a growing number of museums of this kind, worldwide. One of them is Liverpool's International Slavery Museum, which opened in 2007. The museum explores the story of the transatlantic slave trade, the source of so much of Liverpool's early wealth. Though this is a big international story which has a wide resonance, it also addresses local issues, notably the ongoing racism which characterises the city. This is ironic in that Liverpool was a racially diverse city 250

years ago, when other British cities were mono-cultural. Nonetheless, the Black community in Liverpool, old though it is, feels alienated, undervalued and besieged. Recently, someone painted a swastika on the museum wall. This museum is absolutely not neutral on the subject of human rights abuse. It rejects the notion that museums should seek to be "neutral", or can even truly aspire to being neutral, and offers up the alternative vision that museums can be positive forces for change and progress, can offer positive spaces rather than "neutral" ones.

This is an extremely heretical view of the role of the museum, though it is a view that, exactly one year ago in Torreon, Mexico, was supported by an international group of museum professionals who gathered under the auspices of INTERCOM, ICOM's international committee for management. At that meeting, 150 people acclaimed the following Declaration:

**"INTERCOM Declaration of Museum Responsibility to Promote Human Rights:**

INTERCOM believes that it is a fundamental responsibility of museums, wherever possible, to be active in promoting diversity and human rights, respect and equality for people of all origins, beliefs and background."

If you look on the INTERCOM website you will find this Declaration in nine languages (<http://intercom.icom.museum/>).

I am hugely encouraged that the new generation of museum professionals are prepared to speak out in this way, to challenge the museum orthodoxy that we should be "neutral", and to place their museums at the centre of modern debate.

These are just a few thoughts on the social role of museums, on the social responsibility of museums, and on the need for museums to pursue a social justice agenda. I would argue that museums need fundamentally to rethink and re-envision how we manage ourselves. This is happening, but it is not without pain and disagreement, as our sector continues to modernise, seek public validation, and realise our full potential.

## The Authors

**Dr. Lynda Kelly**, Manager Online, Editing and Audience Research at the Australian Museum, Sydney has undertaken a number of senior management roles, with major outreach projects – the 20th Anniversary of the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, as well as managing the final stages of development and production of [australianmuseum.net.au](http://australianmuseum.net.au) – the Museum’s new website. Dr. Kelly’s interests include the strategic uses of audience research, new technologies and Web 2.0 in organisational change. She has published widely in museum evaluation and operates the ‘Audience Research in Museums’-blog and the ‘Web2U’-blog, and is active in Museum3, a not-for-profit social network site for museum professionals.

She is co-editor (together with Dr. Fiona Cameron) of *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums* released in 2010.

<http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/staff/lynda-kelly>

**Dr. David Fleming** OBE, has been Director of National Museums Liverpool, Liverpool, UK since 2001. In Liverpool he has supervised the completion of a number of major capital projects, and has currently been overseeing the creation of the new £72 million Museum of Liverpool. Museum audiences in Liverpool have grown massively during his directorship. Dr. Fleming has advised a number of governments and municipal authorities on national museum strategy, project management, and museum governance, including the Netherlands, Norway, Egypt, Moldova, Latvia and Germany. He has published extensively on museums and lectured on museum management and leadership, social inclusion, city history museums, and human rights museums. Dr. Fleming was President of INTERCOM, is currently Vice-Chair of the European Museum Forum, and Founding President of the Federation of International Human Rights Museums.

[http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/seniorstaff/david\\_fleming.aspx](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/seniorstaff/david_fleming.aspx)

## **The International Committee for Exhibition Exchange**

Fully supports the « Memorial Lectures Reader » event as part of its program of annual activities. The Committee is honoured to be part of the publication of the 2010 Memorial Lectures event that took place in Shanghai during the General Conference of ICOM.

The lectures given by Dr. Lynda Kelly and Dr. David Fleming were extremely inspiring and comforting to our professional community as we work together to support the role of museums in Society.

An important goal of the ICEE committee is to share information, thoughts and aims within the international community of museums. The exchange of exhibitions is an important goal but this should link to a larger exchange of ideas, professional experiences and topics in order to generate a better understanding of cultural heritage among our visitors. Exhibitions must display, and explain, the cultural function of museums around the World.

The ICEE has been a proud supporter of the Memorial Lecture program since 2007. It will be our honour to continue this support for the future.

**Anne-Catherine Hauglustaine-Robert**  
Chair ICOM/ICEE (2010–2013)

**Nancy E. Zinn**  
Past Chair of ICOM/ICEE (2007–2010)

This publication, the ICOM 2010 Memorial Lectures Reader was prepared by Hadwig Kraeutler for ICOM-Austria, and produced jointly by ICOM-Austria and four International Committees of ICOM.  
(<http://icom.museum/who-we-are/the-committees/international-committees/>)

Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA)  
Committee for Exhibition Exchange (ICEE)  
Committee for Training of Personnel (ICTOP)  
Committee on Management (INTERCOM)

© All texts with the authors and ICOM-Austria  
Vienna, Austria 2011.  
Design by fuhrer, [www.zehnbeispiele.com](http://www.zehnbeispiele.com)

ISBN: 978-3-9503327-0-4

With the friendly support of



Austrian National Committee of ICOM (<http://www.icom-oesterreich.at/>)

**Austrian Consulate General**  
**Shanghai**

**ICOM**  
2010 SHANGHAI CHINA



International Council of Museums (<http://icom.museum/>)