

Museums, Museology and Curators in Japan

Museus, Museologia e Curadores no Japão

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Abstract: The museum's social significance and universal value probably will also be common in museums around the world. However, since the cultural background and the legal positioning of museums are different, the definition of museums and curators also varies from country to country. In this paper, I would like to briefly introduce the position of museums in Japan, the present state of museology, academic society for museology, and the legal definition of curators as well as the training method in Japan.

Key-words: Museum definition. Museum act. Museums in Japan. Museology. Legal definition of curators.

Resumo: O significado social e o valor universal do museu provavelmente serão comuns nos museus ao redor do mundo. No entanto, uma vez que os antecedentes culturais e o posicionamento jurídico dos museus são diferentes, as definições de museus e curadores também variam de país para país. Neste artigo, gostaria de apresentar brevemente a posição dos museus no Japão, o atual estado da museologia, a sociedade acadêmica para a museologia e a definição legal de curadores, bem como o método de treinamento no Japão.

Palavras-chave: Definição de museu. Museum act. Museus no Japão. Museologia. Definição legal de curadores.

1. Introduction

Many museums in Japan today place greater emphasis on their communication functions than on their role as a storehouse, enthusiastically planning and offering exhibitions as a form of educational activity. Hands-on exhibits at science museums and science centers, art workshops at art museums, and programs such as environmental education and interactive nature workshops at natural history museums are offered in abundance. These programs offer educational activities that public schools could not hope to provide through their own resources. In today's Japanese museums, such educational services have emerged as the most important issue for these institutions, which are increasingly transforming their museum functions to focus strongly on educational programs. In consideration of this trend, this paper explores the following three topics:

1. An overview of the museum system in Japan

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2. Museology in Japan

3. Curators – New PEST Management for personnel training

2. An overview of the museum system in Japan

2.1 - Development of museums in Japan

Japan reformed its educational system immediately after the end of the Second World War. The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was enacted in 1950, followed in 1951 by the Museum Act. These acts established a registration system, provided government subsidies for public museums and tax concessions for private museums, and established a national qualification system for curators. The aim of this legislation was to increase both the quality and number of museums in Japan.

The numbers are certainly impressive. Today Japan is second only to the United States with its 18,000 museums nationwide, as a “museum superpower”¹. According to a survey by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)², whereas only 239 museums were scattered across Japan in 1955, by 2008 this figure had climbed to 5,775, reaching 5,747 in 2011. The latest figures in 2015, count some 5,690 museums in Japan nationwide.

According to the 2015 survey by MEXT Social Education, the number of visitors to all museums in Japan is roughly double the nation’s population: 279 million museum visitors in a country of 150 million people. Statistically, this means that each person in Japan visits a museum an average of 1.8 times per year. If we divide the population by the number of museums, Japan has one museum for every 26,000 people.

The modern era of museums in Japan began with the National Museum of Nature and Science. Its predecessor, the Museum of Education, was founded in 1877. Around 1967, during the era of high economic growth (a notable year as the 100th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration and of the organization of Tokyo into a metropolitan city), a rush of museum-building occurred in Japan. In response to this rapid proliferation of museums, MEXT established “standards for the establishment and

¹ The total number of museums in Japan depends on the statistical method used, Japanese Association of Museums (JAM)’s Museum White Paper and MEXT’s Social Education Survey (both in Japanese; the Social Education Survey is published at the national level once every three years), <http://www.mext.go.jp/component/b_menu/other/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/04/28/1378656_03.pdf>. Accessed: June 20, 2017.

² <http://www.mext.go.jp/component/b_menu/other/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/04/28/1378656_03.pdf>. Accessed: June 20, 2017.

management of public museums” in 1973. These standards succeeded in guaranteeing a certain level of quality in the nation’s museums.

The asset-inflation bubble that began in 1986 saw a second boom in museum construction. This boom prompted dramatic progress in exhibition and presentation technologies. When the bubble burst, however, one museum after another closed its doors, as residents turned away from mere passive exhibits in favor of activities rooted in communities and educational activities came into sharper focus. Today Japan’s museum community, which boasts 140 years of history dating from the founding of the Museum of Education, confronts financial difficulties, and stands at a crossroads in terms of both operation and management.

The operators of museums, along with the community residents who are their users, are taking a dispassionate view to ask some hard questions: Have Japan’s museums achieved a level of quality on a par with world standards? Is there room for improvement in the management of Japan’s museums from the perspective of global standards? This question is really our challenges.

2.2 - The museum system in Japan

Japan’s modern educational system got its start with the Basic Law on Education (enacted 1947, overhauled 2006). The role of museums and libraries as lifelong learning institutions was spelled out in the Law on Social Education (1949), a law subordinate to the Basic Law on Education. Of course, the legal basis for museum management is contained in the Museum Act (enacted 1951, revised 2008). Both public and private museums can become “museums under the Museum Act” by obtaining registration by the educational committee in their regions. Such museums are known as “registered museums.” Similarly, facilities that are not registered museums but are specified by their local educational committees as facilities equivalent to museums are known as “museum-equivalent facilities.” Both registered museums and museum-equivalent facilities are regulated under the Museum Act.

Museums other than registered museums and museum-equivalent facilities are known as “museum-like facilities.” Though these are not governed by the Museum Law, they are included in MEXT’s museum statistics. Generally the term “museums” embraces registered museums, museum-equivalent facilities and museum-like facilities.

While MEXT has jurisdiction over the National Museum of Nature and Science, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, a body subordinate to MEXT, has jurisdiction over national historical museums and art museums. Most public museums are attached to their educational committees, though in recent years the number of public museums attached to bodies other than an educational committee has been increasing.

Until now public museums at the prefectural and municipal levels have customarily been managed by public-sector institutions (public management of public institutions). However, following a 2003 revision of the Local Government Law, the management of a public museum (museum or art museum) can be contracted to a private-sector operator, such as a joint-stock company or NPO (this arrangement is known as private management of public institutions). In addition, new museums can be built using approaches such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and private finance initiatives (PFIs).

Other than the national government, one organization that has come to play a significant role in the advancement of museums is JAM. Established in 1931, 20 years before the enactment of the Museum Law, JAM is one of the oldest museum associations in the world, with a history that spans over 80 years³. *Museum Studies*, the journal of JAM, has been in continuous publication since JAM's inception, except for a hiatus during World War II; its history and tradition are among the most venerable among all academic journals in Japan. In addition, once every five years JAM publishes *The Museum White Paper*, a survey of the current status of museums across Japan, providing comprehensive statistics on the nation's museums (however, because this publication is not available in English, information on Japan's museums is not widely disseminated internationally). Many other museum-related associations are also active in Japan⁴.

2.3 - Present status of museums: definition and classification of museums in Japan

The Museum Act stipulates that museums are “organizations with the purpose of collecting and preserving (including nurturing) materials related to history, the arts, folk customs, industry, natural science, etc., exhibiting them, providing them for use by

³ The Museums Association in the United Kingdom was founded in 1889.

⁴ For example: Japan Association of Zoos and Aquariums (JAZA), Japan Association of Botanical Gardens (JABG), Japanese Council of Science Museums, Japan Science Museum Association (JASMA), The Japanese Council of Art Museums, The Japan Association of Art Museums (JAAM), Japan Planetarium Association (JPA).

the general public on the basis of educational considerations, conducting necessary work in order to contribute to education, research, recreation, etc., and in addition undertaking surveys and research relating to these materials.”

Museums in Japan can be classified in various ways, such as by type of museum, by founder, and by legal status. By type of museum, broadly speaking, there are general museums (museums with both humanities and natural science sections), history museums (including archaeology, folklore, etc.), art museums, science museums (including science halls and planetariums), zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, and so on.

2.4 - Founders and operators of museums

By founder, museums in Japan can be classified as having been established by the state (national), independent administrative institutions, local governments (prefectures, municipalities, etc.), general incorporated associations or general incorporated foundations, private entities and others. According to the FY 2005 Social Education Survey, there are 129 museums established by the state, 68 by independent administrative institutions, 4,023 by local governments, 603 by general incorporated associations or general incorporated foundations, and 791 by private entities and others. Japanese museums adopt various management methods. For example, while some are managed directly by their founders, others are operated by designated managers, that is, the founder consigns the management to a designated group or organization.

At present, the management of major national museums is carried out by Independent Administrative Institutions. For example, the National Institute for Cultural Heritage, an independent administrative institution, manages the Tokyo National Museum, Kyoto National Museum, Nara National Museum, and Kyushu National Museum. By delegating the task to an Independent Administrative Institution, business and financial management can be conducted according to corporate management methods, and efficiency, quality improvement, and autonomous business management are ensured. In the case of public museums (where the founder is a local government), as a result of a revision of the Local Autonomy Law in 2003, a designated management system began in which the founder can also consign management to a private enterprise, such as a designated company or nonprofit organization, and an increasing

number of museums are conducting management that utilizes the know-how of private enterprises.

MUSEUM ACT

Act No.285 of 1951

Last Amended by Act No.59 June 11,2008

Chapter 1 General Provisions

(Definition)

Article2.

The term “Museums” as used in this Act shall mean institutions established by local public governments, by general incorporated associations or general incorporated foundations, by religious juridical persons or by other juridical persons prescribed by Cabinet Order (excluding Independent Administrative Agencies prescribed in Article 2, Paragraph 1 of the Act on General Rules for Independent Administrative Agencies (Act No.103 of 1999). The same shall apply to Article 29) and which are registered pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 2 (excluding citizens’ public halls falling under the Social Education Act and the libraries falling under Library Act (Act No.118 of 1950)).

The purpose of these facilities is to collect, to keep in custody (inclusive of to foster; the same shall apply hereinafter), to exhibit and offer materials on history, art, folks, industries and natural science for public use in an educational perspective, and to conduct necessary business to serve people’s cultural attainments, research, surveys, recreation, etc., and to conduct research and surveys concerning these materials.

2. The term “Public museums” as used in this Act shall mean those established by local governments, and the term “Private museums” shall mean those established by general incorporated associations or general incorporated foundations, by religious juridical persons or by other juridical persons prescribed by Cabinet Order in the preceding paragraph.

3 The term “Museums materials” as used in this Act shall mean those collected, kept in custody or exhibited by museums (including electromagnetic records, which shall mean records made by electronic systems, magnetic systems or other systems unrecognizable by human perception).

2.5 - Legislation relating to museums

In Japan’s Social Education Act, museums are defined as organizations and facilities that contribute to social education. Matters relating to setting and operation are

stipulated in the Museum Act, which was enacted on the basis of the spirit of the Social Education Act. However, museums in the Museum Act are defined as those that have been established by local governments, general incorporated associations or general incorporated foundations, religious corporations, and juridical persons stipulated by Cabinet Order (Japanese Red Cross Society, Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK)) and that have received registration according to the provisions of this act. Museums established by the state or by Independent Administrative Institutions cannot become registered museums, so many are designated as museum-equivalent facilities. The main legislation relating to museums in Japan are as follows;

Fundamental Act of Education

- Gives provisions relating to the definition and position of school education and social education in Japan.

Social Education Act

- In accordance with the spirit of the Fundamental Act of Education, gives provisions relating to the position and establishment of museums as organizations of social education.

Museum Act

- On the basis of the spirit of the Social Education Act, gives provisions relating to the registration of museums, the business of museums, curator qualifications, the establishment of public and private museums, museum-equivalent facilities, etc.

Enforcement Regulations of the Museum Act

- On the basis of the provisions of the Museum Act, gives provisions relating to the certification of curators, the designation of museum-equivalent facilities, etc.

Favorable Standards Relating to the Establishment and Operation of Public Museums

- Gives provisions on standards for public museums, such as number of days open to the public, exhibition area, number of materials, securing curators, etc.

Other

- National Institute for Cultural Heritage Act (matters relating to national museums); regulations of prefectural boards of education relating to the registration of museums; prefectural and municipal ordinances on the establishment and management of public museums; etc.

2.6 - Classification based on the Museum Act

In terms of their legal status, museums in Japan can be classified as registered museums, museum-equivalent facilities, and museum-like facilities. Their respective definitions, conditions, etc. are shown in Table 1. Registered museums are given preferential treatment with regard to the real estate acquisition tax, fixed asset tax, and so on. In addition, it is easier for them to receive donations, because donators to registered museums are granted preferential treatment in the tax system. Furthermore, public museums can receive subsidies.

Table 1 - Classification Based on the Museum Act (MEXT, 2008)

Classification/definition	Founder	Conditions, etc.
<p>Registered museums</p> <p>Registered museums are organizations with the purpose of collecting and preserving (including nurturing) materials related to history, arts, folk customs, industry, natural science, etc., exhibiting them, providing them for use by the general public on the basis of educational considerations, conducting necessary work in order to contribute to education, research, recreation, etc., and in addition undertaking surveys and research relating to these materials; they are registered in the museum register.</p>	<p>(1) Local governments</p> <p>(2) General incorporated associations or general incorporated foundations</p> <p>(3) Religious corporations</p> <p>(4) Juridical persons stipulated by Cabinet Order (Japanese Red Cross Society, NHK)</p>	<p>(1) Must appoint directors and curators.</p> <p>(2) Must have the museum materials necessary to achieve the objectives stipulated by act.</p> <p>(3) Must have the curators and staff necessary to achieve the objectives stipulated by act.</p> <p>(4) Must have the buildings or land necessary to achieve the objectives stipulated by act.</p> <p>(5) Must be open at least 150 days a year.</p> <p>Note: Registered by prefectural boards of education.</p>
<p>Museum-equivalent facilities</p> <p>These are facilities that engage in work similar to the work of museums and are registered as facilities equivalent to museums.</p>	<p>No restrictions</p>	<p>(1) Must appoint staff equivalent to curators.</p> <p>(2) Must have the materials necessary to achieve work that resembles the work of museums.</p> <p>(3) Must have the special facilities and equipment necessary to achieve work that resembles the work of museums.</p> <p>(4) Must be open at least 100 days a year.</p>

		Note: Facilities established by the state or independent administrative institutions are designated by the Minister of MEXT; other facilities are designated by prefectural boards of education.
Museum-like facilities These are facilities that engage in work like that of museums; they do not receive registration or designation.*	No restrictions	None

*This is the definition not in act but in the Social Education Survey conducted by MEXT.

2.7 - Present status of museum registration

According to the FY 2015 Social Education Survey, there are 1265 registered museums and museum-equivalent facilities, and 4,434 museum-like facilities in Japan⁵. This Social Education Survey is implemented every three years. The number of museums in Japan is on an upward trend, and the number of facilities in all three categories registered, museum-equivalent, and museum-like is increasing.

3. Museology - Issues in Museology research in an Era of Globalization

3.1 - Museological research in Japan

This paper turns next to museum research conducted in Japan (leaving aside personal research projects by individual museum researchers). In Japan, a number of academic societies related to museums are active, in addition to JAM.

The revision of the Museum Law in 2008 was preceded by wide-ranging research activities on the part of JAM. The organization tabled a series of reports, which may properly be considered preparation for the above-mentioned revision. These included *Museums in Dialogue and Partnership: Dialogue for Understanding and Partnership for Action: Creating a New Age of the Museum with Citizens* (2001) and *The Desired State of Museums* (2003), as well as *Mission Planning Handbook* and *Handbook of Collection Handling* (2004).

More recent initiatives by JAM have been notable for their reflection of themes suited to the times, acting on advice from MEXT. Examples of survey and research

⁵ <http://www.mext.go.jp/component/b_menu/other/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2017/04/28/1378656_03.pdf>. Accessed: June 20, 2017)

reports and manuals published by JAM in recent years include International Comparison Survey of Educational Support for Museums (UK, France, Germany, US, Canada, Japan, 2001–2003); Development of Educational Support Programs by Curators, Development of Educational Programs for Elderly Visitors to Museums, and Development of Programs for Effective Use of Museums by Junior-high-school and High-school Students (both 2001–2004); Foreign Visitors, Barrier-free Design, Elderly Visitors, part of the Making Museums Friendly to Everyone series (2005–2007), and Museum Management and Management Indices: Developing Systems for Evaluation (2006–2008).

JAM has had virtually of the major recommendations and academic papers presented at ICOM conferences and the like translated into Japanese and distributed. Examples include Museum Registration Methods (AAM, 1957), translated in 1967, Museums Today and Tomorrow, translated in 1972, The organization of museums: practical advice (UNESCO, 1960), translated in 1973, and Museum Basics, translated in 1995. JAM translated and published these works in its capacity as the ICOM Japan Committee. Needless to say, ICOM Code of Ethics and Key Concept of Museology (2010, ICOM/ICOFOM) are also translated into Japanese.

Academic associations related to museums in Japan include the Museological Society of Japan, the Japan Society of Exhibitions Studies, the Japan Museum Management Academy (JMMA) and the Japan Art Documentation Society. Among those major academic society, JMMA is very active and publish many museological journal and its works⁶.

3.2 - Formation of Japan Museum Management Academy

In museum research it is imperative to understand international trends and conduct research from an international perspective. The activities of JMMA in particular are international in scope. For example, every year since 1998, JMMA has invited one or two museum researchers to Japan for research and debate; to date over 25 researchers have participated. JMMA actively researches and gathers information on trends and conditions overseas, seeking out new trends in the world of museums, approaches not yet seen in Japan, changes in policies and systems, and emerging directions in all of the above.

⁶ <<http://www.jmma-net.org/>>

While the number of people invited is small, JMMA is extensively engaged in debate and dialogue with researchers from overseas. A special project to invite overseas instructors to Japan not only helps the association to build personal contacts but also plays a role, however modest, in joining the Japanese museum community to a larger international network. From the first invitation in 1998 to the 10th in 2008, researchers were invited from Western countries (the UK, France, the Netherlands, the US and Canada); from the 11th occasion onward, however, JMMA dedicated itself to exchange with researchers from South Korea, Taiwan and China. Its reason was that it had adopted a “thesis” (basis for activities) of “building Museology for Asia.” The shift can also be viewed as a clear expression of a desire to learn from neighboring countries and pursue joint research.

3.3 - First Dictionary of Museum Management

In 2015, JMMA celebrated its 20th year of operation. In preparation for this auspicious anniversary, Japan’s researchers were focusing their efforts on creating an “encyclopedic dictionary of museum management.” This project, over 10 years with 50 authors, which was made the fruits of Japan’s Museology research visible to all, should seek international evaluation.

Before this big project to edit the dictionary of its kind, new museological textbooks (accepted by the MEXT) for younger professionals and for university students were edited by Prof.Ohori (former president of JMMA) and me. Called “New Museum Studies”(2012-2013), This textbook consists of four volumes, and are now standards in Japan.

Precisely because of the rapidly changing times, the methodology of museum management is undergoing a rapid transformation. Today’s museums must respond to the needs of the times. If research results in Japan are to serve the needs of society in a meaningful way, Japan’s museum community must make clear efforts to enunciate models and theories geared toward returning benefits to society.

4. Curators: new PEST management for personnel training

4.1 - Definition of “Curator”

The Museum Act stipulates that a curator is a “staff member with specialized knowledge” who “handles specialized matters concerning work relating to the

collection, storage, and exhibition of museum materials, research, and other tasks.” In addition, according to the Museum Act, it is possible to appoint assistant curators to assist the work of a curator. It is stipulated that a person who can enter university according to the provisions of the School Education Act has the qualifications to become an assistant curator.

Article 4.

4 Curators shall take charge of specialized matters concerning the collection, custody, exhibition, surveys, research, etc. of museum materials, as well as other matters of related business.

(Qualification of Curator)

Article 5.

Those coming under any one of the following items shall be certified as curator:

- (1) Those who have a Bachelor’s degree and have obtained in university the credits in subjects concerning museums in accordance with the Ordinance of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [hereinafter referred to as MEXT];
- (2) Those who have attended university for two years or more, who have obtained 62 credits or more including in subjects concerning museums as provided for in the preceding item, and who have had an experience of three years or more as assistant curator;
- (3) Those approved by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [hereinafter referred to as “the Minister”] as having an equivalent or higher level of academic ability and experience than those listed in the preceding two items as provided for by the provisions of the MEXT Ordinance;

4.2 - Acquisition of curator qualifications (certification)

It is possible to acquire curator qualifications by the following methods:

A. Completing necessary courses at university

(a) Acquiring credits at university for courses related to museums stipulated by a MEXT ministerial Ordinance and graduating with a Bachelor’s degree.

(b) Attending university for at least two years, acquiring at least 62 credits, including credits for courses related to museums, and working as an assistant curator for at least three years.

B. Passing a qualification examination

(c) Graduating from university with a bachelor's degree and passing a qualification exam.

(d) Attending university for at least two years, acquiring at least 62 credits, working as an assistant curator for at least three years, and passing a qualification examination.

(e) Acquiring an ordinary teaching license, working as a teacher for at least three years, and passing a qualification examination.

(f) Working as an assistant curator for at least five years and passing a qualification examination.

C. Receiving certification without an examination

(f) Acquiring a master's or doctor's degree and receiving certification without an exam.

(g) Working in a university for at least two years as a professor, assistant professor, or lecturer for courses relating to museums and receiving certification without an exam.

(h) Working as an assistant curator for at least 10 years, being recommended by a prefectural board of education, and receiving certification without an exam.

D. Other

(i) Becoming a staff member of a museum, completing the course for museum staff implemented by MEXT, and acquiring credits.

4.3 - Curator training systems in Japan

Curators work in the background to maintain the quality of Japan's museums. In Japan, curators obtain their qualifications at the national level, usually through a university. While some 300 Japanese universities offer courses in museum science, specialized departments and major subjects at graduate schools are few. In fact, most currently serving curators teach part-time. Since 2012, in tandem with a revision of the Museum Law, the national government has introduced a new curriculum for museum-curation courses, and students are required to pass certain "subjects involving

museums” to receive national qualification. These subjects are: introduction to lifelong learning, introduction to museums, theory of museum management, theory of museum collections, theory of museum collection conservation, theory of museum exhibition, theory of museum information and media, theory of museum education and museum practicums.

Heretofore the research activities of curators have tended to be cloistered. Today’s curators must shift their mindset toward activities in the service of citizens, seeing their duties from museum users’ point of view. At the same time, museums must join hands with partners, such as universities or their regional communities, to serve a diverse range of scholarly needs. It is time for a fundamental rethink of what a museum is.

Recent years have seen an increasing availability of curator training programs and textbooks for use in university Museology programs. By the same token, currently serving curators are finding that they are expected to possess strong professional skills not only in collection study and research, exhibitions and education, but also in the operation and management of museum activities. Recurrent education for curators may be another emerging issue. These modern demands cannot be satisfied at the undergraduate level. Japan’s museum community must take a serious look at graduate studies to prepare a more advanced grade of professional education. In some cases, with an eye on internationalization, museums may need to study the state of Museology and museum education at museums in neighboring countries. ICOM’s International Committee on the Training of Personnel (ICTOP) has published a document entitled *The ICOM Curricula Guidelines for Museum Professional Development*. Recalling the “subjects involving museums” at Japanese universities, these subjects consist of only a small part of the ICOM-recommended curriculum.

As museum activities grow ever more international in character, Japan’s curators must become able to compete on an equal basis with their counterparts overseas. ICOM is expected to release a booklet entitled *International Standards for Improving the Quality of Professional Curators*. Japan’s museum community will need to be aware of these standards, applying them where appropriate, and once more review the Japanese system for curator development.

4.4 - A new kind of PEST control for a new age

Museums today must look squarely at the environment around them and the roles expected of them. In today's age of globalization, museum activities are subject to impact from 1) politics, 2) economics, 3) society and 4) technology ("PEST"). As museums become increasingly specialized, the environment they require for successful operation is framed by 1) competence, 2) professional ethics, 3) standards and standardization, and 4) approaches and orientation. The functions expected of museums are, broadly, 1) practical experience, 2) education, 3) skill and technique, and 4) education and training (see Table 2). In other words, a new age requires a new kind of "PEST control" (MIZUSHIMA, 2015).

Table 2 - New approaches as PEST control (prepared by the author)

Change in museum operating environment	Museum environments in which the trend toward specialization is strong	Areas in which museum specialists are needed immediately
Policy	Performance and evaluation	Practice
Economy	Ethics and conduct of behavior	Education
Society	Standards for management	Skills improvement
Technology	Renewed focus on professionalism	Training

The first step in such PEST control is evaluation; the Japanese experience offers a case in which a system for evaluating museums has been established. Museum personnel who visit the JAM website can enter basic information for each volume and appraise their own museum's capabilities in the country's current museum environment, using a self-evaluation system developed and published on the website⁷. A standardized version of this self-evaluation system for East Asia could easily be applied in the Asia-Pacific region, enabling comparative research for the evaluation of each museum.

⁷ This website 'Museum evaluation system' can be tried only in Japanese. <<http://www.j-muse.or.jp/04links/jikotenken.php>>.

The museums of the Asia-Pacific region need to shed their current practice of operating on a stand-alone basis, trying to do everything themselves. To accomplish this transition, we have entered an era when museums must work with surrounding regions and pursue common policies to promote museum operations. A relaunch is needed, in which museums engage in dialogue beyond national and museum-system frameworks, touching on museum, educational and cultural-promotion policy.

One plan that Asia's museums can easily implement is an "Asian Museum Award" or "Asian Award for Museum Management Quality." Such an award could be modeled after the European Museum of the Year Award. What is clearly needed is a series of training programs to contribute to the improvement of museum quality.

Conclusion

Globally, museum culture has entered a new phase. At the same time as museums embrace the international nature of modern society, their role as a core supporter of regional cultural identities, whether society is aware of that role or not, is growing in importance as never before.

In another seeming contradiction, museums are among the most conservative institutions in our modern world, yet at the same time they must apply the most state-of-the-art techniques and approaches in their work. Just as the barriers separating societies are falling all around us, our museum cultures are transcending national boundaries to become global in character, even as museums fulfill their missions as institutions of unshakeable support for regional cultural identities.

When we consider the key trends in Japan as well as East Asia, it is clear that museums must achieve their missions by dramatically bolstering the skills of their specialist personnel, so they can respond dynamically to the rapid changes unfolding in international society. For this reason, international cooperation is earnestly to be desired as a means for the cultivation of specialist personnel who combine high ideals with expert knowledge. These issues are of present and immediate importance. The formation of networks for the cultivation of and exchange among museum specialists is the starting point for a new age in museum development throughout Asia. These networks will surely serve as a resolute foundation for the achievement of Japan's museum positioning and also Asian museum culture.

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Data de recebimento: 02.07.2017

Data de aceite: 29.07.2017