Links between Libraries and Museums:
a Case Study of Library-Museum Collaboration at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum

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1   Museums versus Libraries.What makes them different from each other?

Museums, archives and libraries belong at the very heart of people's lives; contributing to their enjoyment and inspiration, cultural values, learning potential, economic prosperity and social equity.[1]

Both museums and libraries have an important role in cultural preservation and transmission. According to Storey ("Libraries: Their Role and Relationship to Other Cultural Institutions"), "differences among libraries and museums can be profound." The assets, personnel, professional training, and the terminology used can be

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[1]Impact Evaluation of Museums, Archives and Libraries: Available Evidence Project. Available at: http://www4.rgu.ac.uk/files/imreport.pdf.

dramatically different from each other, partly due to the different materials collected and handled by each (Lester). While a 'knowledge artifact' can speak for itself, a 'cultural artifact' requires deeper interpretation. As a result, compared with libraries, museums tend to play a stronger role in providing the context via 'interpretation' (187). Finally, museums have generally a stronger tradition of liaising with the educational community (Allen and Bishoff66). This has led both the museums and libraries to develop distinct techniques and practices for describing, organizing, managing, as well as maintaining their collections (Ray and Choudhury).

However, the museum is also a special type of information system. According to Buckland ("Information as Thing"; "What is a Document?"), objects held in a museum are also considered documents. It is because objects collected and stored inside the museum are also meant to provide information about the object itself, i.e., the type of object, its context and relationships to other objects. From an information-science point of view, museums therefore are very similar to other types of repositories, such as libraries (books and other materials for reading and study) and archives (historical records and documents). However, for a long time, information science has to a large extent neglected the museums. Possibly, it is due to a restricted notion of the nature of information documents to be collected. As explained by Navarrete and Owen,

> *books, journals and archival records, even in their digital form, are readily accepted as carriers of information, i.e., as documents. The institutions that provide functions for the collection, storage and access of these documents are generally regarded as information systems in the wider sense, i.e., as the set of human and technical resources, procedures, methods and know-how that together perform one or more specific information functions.* ("Museum Libraries: How Digitization

Can Enhance the Value of the Museum")

As you can see, although both museums and libraries are considered heritage institutions, and are designed to assemble a single body of knowledge, their distinctive operational practices and standards tend to isolate them from one another. Despite of their similarities and differences, both libraries and museums have a strong educational and recreational role to play, and are both designed to provide resources and a wider range of services to the local community. Recently, there has been greater emphasis on the heritage and leisure function of both museums and libraries (Marsden20), with recognition of a shared common purpose as "cultural heritage institutions working for the public good" (Allen and Bishoff43).

2 Relations Between a Museum & Its Museum Library

Providing the contextual knowledge, and especially general background knowledge, is the function of the museum library. Museum libraries' collections can be made up of books and other archival materials for supporting the research and exhibitions related to the museum subjects. For example, for the museum objects, in order to go beyond the mere admiration and to derive meaningful information from them, one needs the necessary background knowledge (e.g., artistic periods or other technical and cultural information, etc.) and other specific contextual knowledge about the objects (e.g., by whom, when, for what purpose it was created, etc.), and such basic descriptive data is usually provided by the museum curators (Navarrete and Mackenzie Owen14).

On the other hand, the documents held inside the museum library provide general historical, technical, biographical, i.e., infor-

mation pertaining to the collection as a whole, as well as information on individual objects in the collection, and on the connections between individual or collections of objects (Navarrete and Mackenzie Owen). In fact, many museum libraries also collect materials related to the activities held or by the museum, e.g., conservation, restoration, and exhibition, etc. Other materials collected may include books, prints, maps, drawings, music scores, as well as supporting images, e.g., video art, film, postcards, and posters, etc. Occasionally, the museum library collects artists' objects, such as contracts, music scores, manuscripts and personal letters, etc (Navarrete and Mackenzie Owen). As a result, by managing both the museum collections and the museum library, one is able to give access to the "whole" story to the audience, i.e., including both the primary and secondary sources. This greatly enhances the interpretation, understanding as well as enjoyment of the objects and issues for all users, from the very inexperienced novices to the highly knowledgeable specialists.

This specific relationship between the library and the museum objects is the main characteristic that differentiates the museum library from many other types of libraries. Furthermore, for museum libraries, they could be drastically different from each other, in terms of their curators' expertise, origin, collection contents, the way they are organized and funded, and most importantly, the nature and their relations to the parent institutions (i.e., the museum itself). As a result, the format and nature of collaborations between museum curators and librarians need be looked at on a case-by-case. However, it should be highlighted that museum libraries are not always considered part of the resources to be made available to the general public. Taking the Van Abbe Museum Library as an example, it was open to the public by appointment only 20 years after the opening of the Museum. The first librarian was hired 10 years after that (or 30 years after the opening of the museum) so that the Museum Library

could be made open to the public during regular opening hours (Franssen).

3 Reasons and Benefits for Ongoing Museum-Library Collaborations

In 2003, library-museum collaboration was described by Diamant-Cohen and Sherman as the "wave of the future" ("Hand in Hand: Museums and Libraries Working Together"). An archivist working in a museum setting, remarked that libraries and archives could learn more from museums about education, while museums could take a page from libraries in providing better access to collections (Wythe).

> *It is necessary for collaborators to understand the differences among themselves. A library's "patron" may be the same individual as a museum's visitor, but the reason that person has for going to the library may be quite different than the reason for visiting the museum. The library's funding structure is likely to be very different than the museum's, and its administrative and decision-making structure may not be at all the same as the museum's. While the museum has a "catalog" it uses that catalog for inventory purposes, and it may be difficult for a partnering library to understand why that catalog is not available for public use. A library does usually have a preservation program of some kind, but the library may not recognize the tremendous value placed by museums on preservation and conservation handling of collections. Therefore, the library's primary purpose for starting a digitization project may be to improve access, while the museum will want to include a far greater emphasis on preservation, as might the archival*

partner. The museum's traditional roles for curators might be compared to the role of university faculty or librarians, but they also are quite different as well. All of us already know these things, but we did not expect them to surface so often in partnership projects between libraries and museums, archives, and historical societies. A new sensitivity to the different systems, cultures, and decision-making requirements is needed. (Allen)

For many years, libraries, museums and archives have collected data in a variety of forms in an attempt to establish the efficiency of service, client use and satisfaction. According to Diamant-Cohen and Sherman (102), Lester (183), Brown and Pollack (212) and Yakel (13), the and aims and benefits of library-museum collaboration could be summarized as follows:

- attract new audience groups and expand the reach of the library and museum;

- improve public perceptions of museums and libraries as traditional staid institutions;

- identify new ways to encourage cultural heritage and preservation;

- foster of best practice from the museum and the library;

- share physical resources such as space and materials;

- share policies for preservation and conservation of collections;

- experiencing collaborative working;

- sharing expertise;

- sharing staff training costs.

By working together, applying collective attention and collaborative action to common challenges and solutions, not only can LAMs leverage network effects, they can also free up valuable time and resources to focus efforts on things only libraries, archives, and museums can do: meet local user's needs, collect unique materials, and preserve those artifacts. (Waibel and Erway)

Although the benefits of museum-library collaborations are self-evident, non-profit arts and culture groups are challenged as never before. Museums and libraries are without exceptions. Both institutions are constantly competing for audience against a variety of low-cost commercial entertainment products. The operating costs of most non-profit cultural organizations continue to rise. At the same time, we do not see much growth in ticket sales, fund donations and other possible earned income. Most importantly, audiences for the majority of non-profit cultural organizations are rather static, and in many cases, in fact, declining. In short, their audiences have limited attention, and the budgets of most cultural institutions have become increasingly tight. In the face of such of extraordinary challenges and difficulties, how can museums and libraries work together to address the lifelong learning needs of their community, and also working with the communities; and to become the centers for community knowledge creation and development of productive inquiry?

4 The Hong Kong Maritime Museum & Its CSSC Maritime Heritage Resource Centre

Collaboration changes behaviors, processes and organizational structures, and leads to a fundamental inter-connectedness and inter-dependence among the partners, making this transformative change the hallmark sign by which true collaboration can be known. (Waibel and Erway)

Museums and libraries can continue to enrich the education and knowledge building of society by consciously adapting their services to the new ways in which people want to seek, gather, and interpret information and to create meaning in the 21ˢᵗ century. (Pastore)

Established in 2005, the Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM)[2] is a relatively new museum that acquires, conserves, researches and exhibits all forms of materials related to the development of boats, ships, maritime exploration and trade, and naval warfare on the South China coast as well as its adjacent seas. This Museum aims to provide a comprehensive account of Hong Kong's growth and developments as a major world port and a maritime centre. The HKMM includes many semi-permanent and special exhibitions (e.g., the Canton Trade with Europe and the Americas,[3] Piracy in the China Seas,[4] etc.), interactive displays, educational events, café, and

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[2]http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org/.

[3]http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org/eng/explore/galleries/the-canton-trade-with-europe-and-the-americas/12/6/.

[4]http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org/eng/explore/galleries/piracy-in-the-china-seas/12/12/.

also a museum shop.[5] The HKMM does not only serve as a unique platform for teaching and learning of the local heritage in Hong Kong, it also contributes greatly to the promotion of community engagement and social connections. The HKMM is also equipped with its own museum library, and it is called the CSSC (China State Shipbuilding Corporation[6]) Maritime Heritage Resource Centre.[7] In addition to supporting various research activities carried out by the Museum, this Resource Centre also serves as a central and yet comprehensive repository for different publications and archival documents on maritime heritage and history related to Hong Kong, as well as Southeastern China. Some of these items actually date back more than 300 years, and represent work that cannot be found in the public domain anywhere else in Hong Kong.[8]

> *Participants identified museums and libraries as purpose-driven institutions - socially responsible and socially responsive. Museums and libraries already act as safe communal spaces for people to interact with one another. As opportunities for social engagement outside of private or working life and removed from the profit interests of commercial spaces, museums and libraries have the ability to identify and respond to community needs in ways that other spaces cannot.* (9)

> *Collaboration is essential to the sustainability and future growth of museums and libraries and can increase the ability*

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[5]http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org/eng/explore/galleries/introduction/12/4/.

[6]The Resource Centre is named after China State Shipbuilding Corporation in recognition for their support of the Centre's staff and resources.

[7]http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org/eng/resource-centre/introduction/about-us/30/59/.

[8]http://www.hkmaritimemuseum.org/eng/resource-centre/introduction/about-us/30/59/.

> of institutions to address 21st century challenges and opportu-
> nities and meet community needs. (17)

According to Kitty But and Robert Trio, the HKMM and the Resource Centre on both sides are actively gaining new facilities, new buildings, developing new collections, launching new education programmes, and improving access to collections through digitization. A large amount of resources are being invested in promoting the educational and heritage roles of the Museum and the Resource Centre museums. In short, collaboration has made it possible to set up many new education initiatives and outreach programmes, which would have been made impossible without the museum-library partnership (see interview transcript in Appendix for examples and other details).

In spite of all these new and drastic changes, the unique and yet core responsibilities of both institutions (the library and the museum) will remain the same, i.e., to continue to acquire and to preserve the original materials as well as other relevant information, and to make them as widely accessible as possible.

To summarize the key issues addressed in the interview, the aims, objectives, services and operations of both libraries and museums do and can fit well together, especially those concerned with lifelong learning, heritage preservation and social inclusion, etc. As pointed out by Pastore (*The Future of Museums and Libraries: A Discussion Guide. (IMLS-2009-RES-02)*),

> while museums and libraries as distinct entities may have
> equally distinct approaches to dealing with 21st-century issues,
> they also have common ground to stand on as organizations
> in the public trust and for the public good.

If museum curators and librarians begin to collaborate more in the future, they may also begin to re-define themselves, i.e., their new

educational and recreational roles in the local context and in the global knowledge society. As indicated in the interview above, there is no single concept of what a museum library should be, and there is no single solution to all problems currently faced by museum curators and librarians. Supportive to the ideology pointed out by Gibson, Morris and Cleeve (59), museums and libraries need to work together "to create a brand new model for learning in an information-rich environment by taking the best aspects of two informal learning environments and blending them to create a seamless integration of resources."

The new emphasis on museum-library collaborations will be carried across curation, education, marketing and even fundraising, and thereby replacing many traditional divisions of museum and library practices. Both museums and libraries are in a unique position to provide a rich experience for the visitors, and to engage the public in terms of their rich and exciting contents. The new collaborative efforts aim at providing a much boarder and experience that seek to be part of the lifestyle of its audiences, and a trusted source for their cultural and intellectual growth for the community as a whole. In order to achieve this, museums need to change their thinking about how to integrate both museum and library services in a digital context, thereby enhancing the informational value of the museum in important ways.

Perhaps, the greatest concern for museums and libraries today is - what they need to do to remain meaningful institutions in the future. In other words, how museums and libraries could stay relevant to the communities in which they reside and serve; and how to best preserve and provide access to the materials in a way that serves future generations. Such intimate partnership strategies via digitization does not only help engage the institutions in both physical and virtual communities, they also further promote the

preservation of the institutions' unique identity and resources - as an integrated living and breathing institution that actively publicize its role in the key contemporary issues, such as cultural heritage preservation. Since information contents and services over the Internet are increasingly syndicated for increased interoperability and connectivity, curators and librarians may take full advantage of this by identifying ways to enable the cultural collections to leverage the power of Google-, Amazon-, flickr- and Facebook-dominating networked environment.

> *In The Great Good Place, Ray Oldenburg defines the significance of the third place in a healthy society. Neither work nor home, the third place is a neutral community space, where people come together voluntarily and informally in ways that level social inequities and promote community engagement and social connection. As public gathering places organized around public service and the transfer of information and ideas across individuals, museums and libraries are a unique form of the third place because of their distinct resources as easily accessible, low-cost barrier places rich in content and experience.* (Pastore)

5   Conclusion

To conclude this paper, we would like to reiterate the importance of having both museums and libraries working closely together - to create engaging, pleasant and memorable experiences for their visitors, so that they could be fully inspired, enriched as well as entertained in their search for knowledge. Michael Fox (Minnesota Historical Society) expressed a sentiment during the RLG Forum,

> *I continue to argue that good museums need to become more*

like research libraries and archives just as good libraries and archives ought to adapt certain characteristics of the museum experience.

While "learning from each other" was presented as an opportunity, "lending to each other" was established as a real-life example of museum and library working hand-in-hand. As collaboration, collocation, and the blending of services continue, it is very likely that the boundary between museum and library will become increasingly less distinct in the future. However, this does not mean that the unique mission and identity of an individual institution must disappear; rather, the institutional goals can be expanded, and enhanced through ongoing collaborations that combine resources, knowledge, and experience for mutual benefits (9).

Postscript

Collecting conflicts

Libraries and museums have more in common than they are different. But it is the small differences that often lead to conflicts from an operational point of view. These conflicts arise especially when an organization has a shared space with a library and a museum. Although the library at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum acts as an independent office of the museum and follows standards and best practices of a library system, the library is heavily influenced by the mission and vision of the museum and its core practices.

One can see from the HKMM library's current collection that it was predisposed in the early years not to collect not in a typical library fashion. The library's primary focus on collecting had been for first editions and rare copies. There was never an intention to lend items or have a juvenile section. The collection grew primarily

from the wishes of one person who approached the library from a researcher's point of view. And despite this focus, there were few reference materials collected. Collecting rare and first editions exclusively is consistent with how museum professionals think about collecting artifacts for the collection.

At HKMM this practice has led to some interesting dynamics when it comes to cataloging collections. Libraries tend to focus on cataloging records based on the idea that the item is identical to similar items of the same edition or printing. Museums tend to catalog items as if it is a one of a kind. And the item's individual story may be tied to a person who owned it or from it was created. So when a dual institution acquires a collection, difference of opinions often arise on how the item should be cataloged and what type of metadata should be collected on it.

Because personal histories are an important part of museums' missions, it is this concept that often drives the thinking behind how cataloging is done. Museums cataloging places the connection of the person to the object above all other things. It is the personal connection that provides the context of why the object is in the collection. For example, a printed copy of a Judaic prayer book from 1930 takes on a much greater meaning if that book belonged to a Holocaust survivor.

Case example

Recently a small group of nautical charts came into the collection of the museum. In many ways, this set of charts helps to illustrate the struggle that exists in a museum setting that also a library focus. The charts also illustrate the struggle that institutions that tell personal stories have when the materials are not yet old enough to be considered antiques but may be unique enough that in the future one may want to research because they belonged to a specific person.

The British Hydrographic Office produced this set of charts in the 1970's. Sailors of small vessels commonly used these charts for short hops from one island to another. The charts show landmasses and the depth of the water in stunning detail. In all, there were about 40 charts covering most of the major waterways of Hong Kong. This practice of using charts has now been replaced by modern GPS systems that are on board most small vessels.

The rub that soon ensued amongst museum staff was where to place this collection: the library, the museum or the archive. The librarian made a case that the charts were clearly a secondary source and fit under well-established library cataloging practices. Some argued that the charts all belonging to this one sea captain belong in the archives. In the future one may wish to research this particular person and the charts represent his life work. Lastly, because the charts contained unique notations and markings from this sea captain, they could be considered a museum collection item. The sea captain had also donated a set of nautical instruments to the museum. By making the charts as a part of the museum collection, all of these items could be stored together.

Resolution

The challenge for the museum was to preserve the set together. In the end, it was the concept that the personal story was the most important. The museum may never know if a researcher may wish to explore this person's life work but institutions like the Hong Kong Maritime Museum must ensure that it is possible if they do.

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ABSTRACT: Established in 2005, the Hong Kong Maritime Museum (HKMM) is a relatively new private museum that aims to collect all forms of materials related to the development of boats, ships, maritime exploration and trade, and naval warfare on the South China coast, as well as its adjacent seas. The Museum not only serves as a unique platform for teaching and learning of the local heritage in Hong Kong, it also contributes greatly to the promotion of community engagement and social connections. The HKMM is also equipped with its own museum library, and it is called the CSSC (China State Shipbuilding Corporation) Maritime Heritage Resource Centre. In addition to supporting various research activities carried out by the Museum, this Resource Centre also serves as a central, and yet comprehensive repository for publications, and other archival documents on maritime heritage and history related to Southeastern China.

This paper aims to compare the distinctive operational practices, and user needs between museums and libraries. It also examines the benefits and challenges of museum-library collaborations in the new knowledge-driven society. This paper

features an interview with Kitty But (Librarian, CSSC Maritime Heritage Resource Centre, The Hong Kong Maritime Museum) and Robert Trio (Project Officer for Technology, The Hong Kong Maritime Museum), and in which they discussed their professional experiences in the fields of audience education; the implementation of different new technologies associated with the museum and library services; and various collaborative initiatives carried out between the Museum and the Resource Centre. Upcoming challenges and opportunities faced by both the Museum and Resource Centre are also discussed in this paper..

KEYWORDS: HKMM; Hong Kong Maritime Museum; Library-Museum Collaboration; Operational practices; User needs.