

National Seminar on
PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEOLOGY

3rd & 4th December 2003



(Abstracts of Seminar Papers)

Government Museum,
Egmore, Chennai-600 008.

Phone No. : 044-2819 3238 Fax : 044-2819 3035

E-mail: govtmuse@md4.vsnl.net.in

National Seminar on
PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEOLOGY
3rd and 4th December 2003

(Abstracts of Seminar Papers)

Government Museum,
Egmore, Chennai-600 008.

Phone No. 044-2819 3238: Fax No. 044-2819 3035
E-mail: govtnuse@md4.vsnl.net.in

DISPLAY

PRESENT TREND IN MUSEUM DISPLAY

J.R.Asokan,

Curator for Design and Display,
Government Museum,
Chennai – 600 008.

Museums are of different types. Display in Museums differ from Museum to Museum. Previously the Museums were functioning as object oriented. Now the Museums are functioning as information oriented. Here, the Present Trend of Museum Display in some major Indian Museums has been cited. Even though these museums were having normal type of galleries, newly opened galleries show considerable change in their display methods. In the Present Trend in Museum Display we can notice there is a change from past to present in Show case Design, Museum lighting and Museum Labelling methods etc. The introduction of Computer based display is very much noticed in many museums. Display in the developed countries museums are highly advanced. In the future, the display technique will advance to such an extent that there won't be any necessity for original museum materials for Museum Education.

EXHIBITION AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION- PRESENT TRENDS

R.Balasubramanian,

Curator (Archaeology),
Government Museum,
Chennai-600 008

The Dictionary meaning of the word 'Exhibition' is 'a showing' but in our context it would mean 'showing for a purpose' The purpose being to affect the viewer or visitor in some pre determined way. The possibilities of an exhibition are boundless.

The most important advantage of a Museum exhibition is that it facilitates an encounter between the visitor or viewer and the three dimensional object which no other medium of communication can do. Only an exhibition provides a direct impact on the viewers Furthermore the Museum exhibition is not limited to the size of a Television screen or a printed page. A range of aims and objectives can be achieved in a single exhibition by the use of a variety of interpretive materials. Exhibition can appeal to a wider viewer group made up of different age groups, levels of knowledge and intellects.

Good exhibition do not come easily nor they are cheap. The production process of a major exhibition is normally complex, extensive and resource intensive and cost on specialists' time and skill. Apart from budget, space and time are two other major perquisites. In this paper it has been dealt with in detail.

In the Present Trend in the Museum Exhibition – Modernised show cases using modern lighting and new labelling trend all make the Exhibition as a medium of Communication

Exhibition should be conceived as a sculpture They are three-dimensional compositions, which recognize the importance of solids, and voids and strive for satisfactory spatial relationships

MODERNISATION OF MUSEUMS

Christy Veda,
Research Scholar,
Chennai

Museums have to change to the present day scenario in order to attract more visitors either in person or virtually. Unless one knows the taste of the visiting public, the refurbishment of the galleries may not be able to satisfy the visitors. One has to study the global changes in the techniques of Museology, museography, conservation, restoration, information technology, marketing, architecture including landscaping etc., it will be very difficult to satisfy the visitors through the refurbishment of the galleries in a museum. This paper deals with the refurbishment of the galleries in Tamilnadu.

ART OBJECT – NEW WAY OF SEEING

Ms. Durga Rajagopalan,

Lecturer, Fine Art Department,
Stella Marts College,
Chennai-600 080

India is a country with rich and varied heritage. The richness of the heritage of a nation is revealed through its art, crafts, archaeological remains etc., and they help us to establish a link with the past and understand the land we live in and perceive the great strides that India made in art and culture. One of the tools that aid to construe the past to the present day public is the museum. Museums play a very important role in bringing peace and hope to the society. Museums establish identities and attract visitors. Natural, cultural and artistic history is protected, conserved, managed and interpreted by families, clans, cities, States, nations or internationally.

Aimed as an art history paper with museological leanings, the exposition seeks to elaborate on new ways of seeing a work of art from a post – modern mindset. The intension of this paper is to understand a work of art, it is not enough to perceive just its artistic history. Rather, a work of art is dictated by the context from which emerges. This context comprises of social-political and ethnographic background. The paper operates upon critical theory of Historicism as the methodological tool. Taking the famed Amaravati sculptures as the focal point of the study, the paper looks at the history of how archaeologists, antiquarians and society at large have organised the remains from the past in relation to its site and surroundings. New historicist methodology defines the discipline of art history more broadly than its predecessors. It views art history as a social science like anthropology and sociology, whereas older historicists view history as the art objects immediate “background”

RECENT TRENDS IN MUSEOLOGY IN RECREATION OF CULTURAL CONTEXTS TO THE ETHNOGRAPHIC EXHIBITS

Dr. C. Maheswaran,

Curator,
Government Museum,
Erode

As the ethnographic exhibits lose their significance as and when uprooted from their original cultural contexts, the curatorial staff are entrusted with the responsibility of restoring the lost cultural contexts, by employing suitable presentation techniques to achieve their goal. A thorough knowledge of present trends in museology will keep fit not only the curatorial staff but their techniques of presentation as well in the fast moving track of modernisation.

While presented to public view the ethnographic materials acquire the elevated status of ethnographic exhibits from their early status of being mere ethnographic objects. The ethnographic exhibits, vary in form from the crudest to the finest. They form the media of interaction of the art and the culture of any tribal, folk or urban community. Thus, they in turn form the media of interaction of visual communication by keeping a link with the viewers.

In presenting the ethnographic exhibits, the task of the curatorial staff-apart from projecting the purpose, the use and the local origin of these exhibits-is to ensure that those ethnographic exhibits come alive to the visitors as individual ethnographic phenomenon grouped with their appropriate cultural contexts

This paper also deals with Dioramic presentation / Habitat presentation, Theme specific presentation / Thematic presentation, Wire-Mannequin presentation / Wire-Dummy presentation, Environmental approach, etc.

DISPLAY IN THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, SIVANGANGA

T. Pakkrisamy,
Curator,
Government Museum,
Sivaganga

In order to educate the public, display techniques are indispensable. In this connection, all exhibits are arranged in a systematic way. Labelling are excellent.

As this is a multipurpose museum, objects are exhibited in section wise viz. Archaeology, Anthropology, Numismatics, Art, Zoology, Botany, Geology, etc.,

Proper lighting arrangement are made. Showcases are new. Newly collected exhibits are also displayed. The gallery starts with art and ends with Science.

PRESENT TRENDS IN BOTANY GALLERY

M.N.Pushpa,

Curator,
Government Museum,
Chennai 600 008

Museums essential contribution is dissemination of knowledge and inspiring the visitors through display and updated informations. As a part of the Museum, Science galleries are the centres, which are organised in such a way that they develop a scientific attitude of mind to the people who visit the Museum. Today we are at the cross roads of civilization and entering into a new era of rapid global industrialization.

In this paper I would like to highlight how the Botany Section, through its gallery exhibits, Special Exhibitions, Medical camps, landscape and Botanical garden and through other activities which makes the public, students scholars and others to get the maximum benefit of knowledge in the subject.

Education through display serves as an information source for common man, students and Professionals. The botany galleries have been modernised on such a line that it generates sustained interest and inspire visitors towards creativity through exhibits, learning material and literature. Use of information technology like website, digital documentation of botanical objects into AA and A category and highlighting the landscape are some of the recent trends introduced in the botany section of the museum.

ROLE OF MUSEUM IN SHOWCASING ART HISTORY

Dr. Ramaa Narayanan

Reader,
Fine Arts Department,
Stella Mari's College,
Chennai

The presentation is an art historian's perception of museological issues pertaining to the public museums in India. The history of museum movement in India undergoes four distinct phases.

The founding of Indian Museum at Calcutta, Government Museum at Chennai; the Prince of Wales Museum at Mumbai and National Museum are integral part of the museum movement of the nation. In India, museums are part of colonial legacy started with serious aims by the British. The Renaissance tradition of collection as practised the eighteenth century west gets crystallised in the colonial establishments in India.

In India, museums were closely associated with Archaeological Survey of India. Lord Curzon, Sir John Marshall and Mortimer Wheeler were instrumental in burgeoning the museum movement ahead. A few museums were under the direct control of the Survey. Many site museums, known now as archaeological museums were founded.

During the fourth phase, museological concerns dominated the museum movement all over the world and India was no exception. The public museums, among them the Government Museum at Chennai, are poised to meet the many challenges of a post modern society, yet hesitate to take the plunge. Postcolonial criticism and New Historicism are helpful in the understanding of the impasse and hold key to the possible solutions. A projection into future on the possibilities by which the museum can fulfil its role of message bearer of a national heritage is useful.

COMPUTER APPLICATION IN MUSEOGRAPHY

K. Sekar,
Curator,
Children's Museum,
Government Museum,
Chennai - 600 008

Museology is the super set of Museography. Museologists are the persons who develop concepts, looks for beyond and propagate knowledge through the material evidence and artefacts. The application of Information Technology is the modern trend in the multi disciplinary and multi purpose functions. The use of the electronic devices like computers and information highway is a sine qua non for the modern information technology based era. The myriad computers and their network cut cost and time in the global market, supports transparent administrative operation in the four vital stages to provide Information, Interaction, Transaction and Transformation.

Museography denotes the entire spade works that need to be done to convert the visualisation of the museologists in to a real form. The specially trained skilled persons involve in this museographic venture is collectively known as Museographers. Computer Application and the utilisation of computer peripherals to the museographers in each and every aspects of museography are the main focus of this paper.

MODELS AND METAPHOR IN MUSEUM DISPLAY

R.D. Thulasi Brinda,

Curator,
Government Museum,
Krishnagiri-635001

Recent trends in Museology is to attract visitors and modern technology is introduced much in museum filed. Museums not only educate its visitors but also entertain them. Museums should create impression on visitors' mind. Archaeology plays a major role in museum area revealing cultural history.

Students of Archaeology are familiar with recent reactions against the otherwise popular New Archaeology with regards to latter's methodological biases, particularly formulations of rigid scientific laws on human behaviour and insistence on systematic ecological functionalism and techno-environmental determinism:-One finds here a systematic effort to treat archaeology as a natural science, rather than human science.

The word 'metaphor' has been described in two ways, i.e. in poetics it is conceived as something larger than analogy in Rhetoric analogy becomes the paradigm for metaphor C. Tilley describes archaeology as a socio-political action in the present (E.g.) decision theory, game theory and optimisation models. tainted with contemporary way of thinking are being applied with great enthusiasm in archaeological researches.

We are forced to employ models when for one reason or other we cannot give a direct and complete description in the language we normally use. Ordinarily, when words fail we have recourse to analogy and metaphor The model functions as a more general kind of metaphor.

The use of a number of metaphors behind the scientific models is useful for effective communication of the message But such metaphor should not be out of context

Therefore, I conclude that caution must be taken against the continued use of insensitive metaphors in archaeology. It is necessary to invent new healthy metaphors, not for archaeology but for all branches of social sciences

EDUCATION

OUTREACH PROGRAMMES IN THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, VELLORE

M. Gandhi,
Curator,
Government Museum,
Fort,
Vellore-632 004

Museum is not a mere storehouse of art and curious objects but a place, which imparts knowledge and entertains people. A curator's main duty is to attract people to visit the informal higher educational institution – museum. For this purpose outreach programme is a tool to lure all kinds of people to a museum. This article aims to illustrate types of outreach programmes held in the Government Museum at Vellore.

PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

P. Jawahar
Curator
Zoology Section
Government Museum
Chennai-8

The Museums are "Cabinets of Curiosities" since they educate the literate and illiterate. Generally, Museum is a place of wonder, as well as of instruction. The Museum is distinguished from all other institutions of education by teaching by means of the direct experience and direct visual contact with the real objects. The Museums not only collect and preserve the objects, but also carry out the functions of exhibiting and interpreting the collections. Thus a Museum is able to render unique educational service, which no other institution can render by displaying and interpreting its collections. Students are the important part of the community which needs special attention of a Museum.

Present Trends in Museum Activities

- 1. Introduction of animation in the display and setting up of dioramas in current trends*
- 2. Introduction of Training programmes in different facilities of Museum to the students community.*
- 3. Extension service to the educational institutions (Schools, Colleges and other institutions).*

For the students, the object matter collected is the source for study and research, the objects provide a source of pleasure and delight, joy, knowledge and experience drawn from all parts of the world.

PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEUM EDUCATION

M. Mohan,

Curator for Education,
Government Museum,
Chennai-600 008

The main function of the museum is connected with the collection of objects, interpretation, preservation, exhibition, study and research of the various types of museum objects. The Chennai Museum is known for its educational activities from the time of its inception. Various training courses such as Taxidermy, Care of Museum Objects etc., were started to train personnel from various museums, institutions etc. The educational services such as loan of museum objects to schools, colleges etc. Guidance to students to study for Ph. D. is also given. Presently the Chennai Museum utilising the computer application for its development. Computer was used for documenting museum objects. Over the two decades the Museum has a tremendous change. But the perception of the public about museum is not yet changed. In view of this, the Chennai Museum has recently refurbished and renovated its galleries in an attractive manner. Latest techniques have been adapted in presenting the exhibits in the showcases. The present development in the Chennai museum will certainly change the perception of the visiting public that museums are more important institution in respect of preserving our cultural wealth for posterity.

This paper emphasizes the value of museum objects with reference to attractive display and latest methods of educating the public.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES – NEED FOR A SUCCESSFUL MUSEUM

P. Sam Sathiaraj,
Curator,
Government Museum,
Madurai

Apart from the basic general functions of a museum like acquisition, preservation and interpretation, the present day museum gains its popularity and momentum through its ancillary services. It is accredited for its yeoman services to the society. The term storehouse of knowledge attributed to the museum in olden days would become an appropriate term only if its services reach the society. It should be a centre for entertainment. A progressive museum should develop close co-ordination with the local public, press, radio Tele Vision and other like-minded institutions. A museum should get its support from the public. A scholar rightly says, "Museums are service, run by people for people and their continued existence can only be justified in these terms.

In the above sense, this paper highlights some of the extra curricular activities like the arts and crafts demonstration camps, special exhibitions and museum extension services rendered by the Government Museum, Madurai in order to popularise it and the ultimate aim of a museum is achieved.

The paper tries to substantiate the importance of the remains of the Amaravati Stupa in different parts of the world, as it will enable the world community to understand and appreciate the richness of ancient Indian culture and artistic tradition. The Amaravati sculptures play an important role in drawing people to Indian art in general and assist in crossing boundaries into a world that often seems inaccessible and difficult to understand.

MUSEOLOGY

PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEOLOGY

Dr. R. Kannan Ph.D., I.A.S

Commissioner of Agriculture and Museums,
Government of Tamil Nadu.

This paper outlines how museums have to compete with pure entertainment attractions like amusement parks for visitors. This was not the position in the past, when the usual tourist attractions were only museums and zoos. Museums were inwardly oriented and felt that their only duty was to collect and preserve antiquities, while entry was free. Now they have to find a place in the market spectrum as educational entertainers while charging entry fee in order to attract visitors, local and tourists. How they use new display techniques to market viewing of their collections like scenography (simulating nature or themes as backdrop), interactive display, virtual reality etc to make themselves a magnet for visitors is discussed with illustrations with special reference to history museums mostly from India. It concludes that while information technology may be able to move images of the objects and information on them over large distances, still the need to see and feel objects is indispensable. Therefore, museums are likely to reinvent themselves and remain relevant for a long time to come.

PALE IMITATION: THE INDIAN RESPONSE TO MUSEOLOGICAL CHANGE TODAY

N. Harinarayana,

Former Director of Museums,
Government of Tamilnadu,
120, Big Street,
Tnplicane,
Chennai-600 005

Trends in Museology today depends on

1. *Propagation of the principle that museums should be people-oriented rather than object-oriented.*
2. *Free and full adaptation of hi-tech devices in museum work*
3. *Turning museums in to being handmaids of the tourism industry for endless commercial exploitation.*

These trends are critically evaluated in this paper

THE PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEOLOGY AND THE DILEMMA THEY CAUSE TO THE TRADITIONAL MUSEOLOGISTS

K. Lakshiminarayanan,

Assistant Director,
Government Museum,
Chennai-600 008

In the last century Museologists defined Museums as a ' non-profit making permanent institution in the service of Society and its development and open to the public. This definition implied the moral obligation of the Curators and Directors to be a well trained scholar with broad human sympathies. They should have belief in popular education and adopt visitors' friendly attitude and approach.

To-day Computerisation, marketing and management are the three mantras chanted in every field of activities. Museums are not exception to their influence. Museologists who have been trained in museum moorings and ethics are in a fix to balance between their long cherished museum ethics and the rapid invasion of technological advancement in their sphere of actives.

This paper highlights the practical problems faced by the Curators and Directors in drawing the Lakshman rekha to the abnormal use of computerisation and blatant application of management and marketing tactics at the cost of serious scholarship and the nobility of public service.

PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEOLOGY

V.N. SrinivasaDesikan,

Formerly Assistant Director of Museums,
Chennai-600 017

Museum is defined as an institution whose artistic and educational materials are exhibited to the public. Most museums in India are financed by Government funds and as such the responsibility for care, preservation and exhibition entirely rests with the Curators / Conservators.

Museums perform three main functions (a) acquisition of materials (b) exhibit and care for materials and (c) provide various special services such as exhibitions, expositions etc., to convey the role of the exhibits in the socio-economic-cultural life of the people.

For the present paper two topics are taken up for review taking into consideration of the trends in the present day context. They are (i) Acquisition of objects and documentation and (ii) Exhibitions. These points have been dealt with in this paper

PRESENT TRENDS IN MUSEOLOGY

N. Soundarapandian,

Curator,
Government Museum,
Uthagamandalam.

In olden days the museum was a place wherein the total heritage was preserved, exhibited, researched upon. Now the concept is totally changed and now museum is an institution of culture educating the public in a non-formal way. In this paper various functions of a museum is dealt with in detail. Modern techniques used in exhibition are also elaborated.

CONSERVATION

ENVIRONMENT FOR THE STORAGE OF SILK SAREES

Bessie Cecil,

Research Scholar,

Jeyaraj, V.,

Curator,

Chemical Conservation and Research Laboratory,

Government Museum,

Chennai-600 008

A good environment is a must for the longevity of any object in a museum. Besides conservation of textiles in a museum in a gallery one should give equal importance to the conservation in the storage too. Both macro and micro climatic control is a necessity for increasing the life of any textile material either in a museum or at any place. In order to give a good environment to an-object the choice of the materials for display, storage, transportation etc., is very important. If the materials are not tested earlier and found suitable the conservator can do research and find out the suitability of materials for the storage of the materials. This paper deals with the type of box for the storage of silk sarees and the materials used for the storage box.

CURRENT TRENDS IN CONSERVATION REELATED ASPECTS IN THE USA

Divya Durga Prasad,

Research Scholar,

Jeyaraj, V.,

Curator,

Chemical Conservation and Research Laboratory,

Government Museum,

Chennai-600 008

Museums have been a part of civilization from time immemorial. However, with the evolution of time the purpose of museum has changed from mere storehouses of antiquities to institutions preserving and imparting knowledge to create awareness among the youth of today.

With rapid industrialisation and globalisation the approach now varies in developed countries. The paper is based on the observations of the first author's recent visit to the USA. This paper deals with various aspects related to conservation and Museology. The current approach in the aspect of display, training, education, research etc., related to conservation have been dealt with briefly.

CURRENT TRENDS IN CONSERVATION IN GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI

Jeyaraj, V.,

Curator,
Chemical Conservation and Research Laboratory,
Government Museum,
Chennai-600 008

Abstract

Conservation in Government Museum, Chennai started when Dr. Gravely was the Superintendent of the Government Museum, Chennai. The Chemical Conservation was introduced in 1930 even though the possibility of establishing a conservation laboratory was worked earlier. Chemical methods were used to get rid off the corrosion from metal antiquities etc. But now a days the use of mineral chemicals are avoided and passive chemicals are used. Physical methods are used to conserve the objects. Preventive conservation is tried for the objects. In order to aim at the effective conservation of the museum objects training programmes on conservation at various levels are conducted. This paper deals with the conservation principles like neo-conservation preventive conservation etc.

