



PART ONE

MUSEUMS AND MARKETING

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DIVERSE WORLD OF MUSEUMS

The fourth floor of the American Museum of Natural History was the shrine, the principal magic place, the sanctum sanctorum of my youth. I first visited with my father at age five and decided right then to dedicate my life to paleontology.

STEPHEN JAY GOULD

Museums are as different from one another as the Smithsonian's National Zoo, the Chicago Botanical Garden, and the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, and the Miraikan National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo, Japan. Museums can be encyclopedic like New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, thematic such as California's Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage, or focus on particular sites similar to the City History Museum of Barcelona in Spain. Museums can be devoted to a single subject such as electric toy trains. They may be collections driven, like many archaeological museums, zoos, and botanical gardens. Some museums are activity centered such as children's museums or research oriented like the National Archaeological Museum in Agrigento, Sicily.

What, then, can be said about most, if not all, museums? Many museums are organized around collections. They share the goals of acquiring and conserving their collections and interpreting and exhibiting this human and natural heritage to public audiences. They are expected to care for and preserve their collections as a public trust for future generations. Museums are places where visitors encounter authentic, aesthetic, inspirational, and learning experiences. They also function as interactive, recreational, and contemplative spaces. Museums are normally invested in missions that serve the public. They offer memorable experiences, ideas, and activities not found in other places.

Museum Experiences

A visit to the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Grand Salon from the Hôtel le Tellier in Paris or to its Indian Hindu temple offers the extraordinary experience of being transported in time and immersed in an enchanting environment of great beauty. The experience of remembrance and bonding with the history and heritage of the United States was a prominent part of visits to America's Smithsonian, a traveling exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Smithsonian Institution's founding in 1846. The exhibition was filled with great objects of the American past, including the famous 1853 Rembrandt Peale portrait of George Washington, a sword worn by Washington in the Revolutionary War, gowns worn by the wives of U.S. presidents, technological objects such as the *Apollo 14* space capsule, and the top hat that President Abraham Lincoln was believed to have worn the night he was assassinated in 1865. Visitors stood in awe of these objects. One said, "I feel like somebody sprayed me with gold. That's how beautiful and fortunate I feel." Another said: "The longer I stay, the more intense it gets. To see the things that Abe Lincoln wore, to be so close to something that is woven into the fabric of our history—it goes beyond words." Standing before the painting of Washington, another visitor said: "He looks so noble. Serene. It's holy" (Waxman, 1996, p. C6).

Visitors to the Monumental Ensemble of Placa del Rei, one component of the City History Museum of Barcelona, take an elevator ride that transports them deep underground and back in time. Exiting the elevator, visitors enter a subterranean excavation of the city's beginnings as a Roman town. As they walk through the site, visitors gradually move upward and forward in time and into medieval Barcelona, where they can experience the virtual reconstruction and deconstruction of a church on the archaeological site. It is an astonishing and magical experience.

A visitor to the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History in the early spring of 1996 could view *Landscape Kimonos*, a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition of Japanese kimonos, hand-woven and hand-painted by Itchiku Kubota. Kubota, then a seventy-nine-year-old Japanese artist, recreated a sixteenth-century technique and tradition of fabric dyeing, transforming it into a unique art form. Visitors encountered in a large, darkened oblong gallery a series of thirty-five glowing silk kimonos, hanging side by side. Each depicted a landscape reflecting a moment of seasonal time. Moving from the left side of the room to the right, visitors viewed through color, line, form, and texture the passage of seasons from spring to winter, a changing landscape of mountains, fields, lakes, and skies in the varying light and shadows cast by sunshine, rainfall, cloud cover, and snowfall. They were transfixed by the powerful artistic and sensory vision of the natural world that taught them to see nature in a wholly different light.

Il Museo Leonardiano di Vinci in Vinci, Italy, is devoted to the technical and architectural drawings and machines that Leonardo created. Located in the town of Leonardo's birth, the museum showcases models of the machines and inventions that Leonardo created in his sketchbooks. The visitor is able to work the machines that he envisioned. Near the museum, visitors can see the landscape that Leonardo drew as a child and compare it to his drawings.

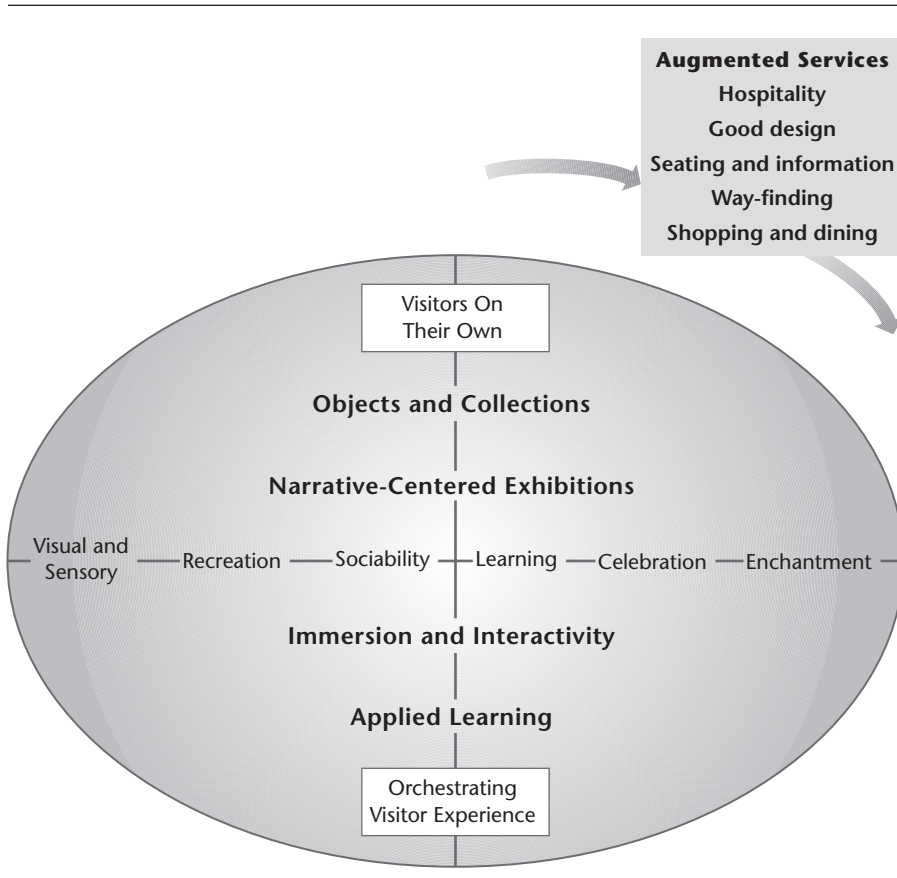
Science and natural history museums offer biological specimens, settings, scientific instruments, and objects of engineering and technology that arouse curiosity, illuminate patterns, and lead to important discoveries. Maxine Singer, a biochemist and former president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, recounted memorable experiences as a youngster visiting New York City's American Museum of Natural History. Freeman Dyson, a physicist and former scholar at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, related visits as a youth to London's British Museum and the Museum of Natural History, experiences that shaped his love and pursuit of science. Museum collections and exhibitions are often a springboard to aesthetic, historical, and scientific vocations.

Great museum exhibitions offer visitors transformative experiences that take them outside the routines of everyday life. The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) termed these "flow experiences"—experiences that are totally absorbing and at the same time transform perceptions and understanding. The psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954) referred to great museum experiences as "peak experiences."

Museums in recent years have recognized that other types of experience that are less cerebral and intuitive are nevertheless widespread and enjoyable. Many visitors to museums seek sociability. This can take the simple form of people watching one another. Some people prefer educational and participatory experiences and enroll in museum art classes. Families often look for experiences that will engage and educate their children. Others seek recreational opportunities as well as learning. In addition to viewing exhibits, visitors seek variety—places to shop, dine, and enjoy areas in which to relax.

Figure 1.1 illustrates on the horizontal axis a range of potential museum experiences. The vertical axis highlights ways that visitors engage with museum offerings. Some enjoy objects and collections. Others are drawn to narrative-centered exhibitions. Others seek immersion and interactivity. Still others want to be able to connect and apply what they see in a museum to their lived experience and learning. Museum exhibitions themselves are designed to offer degrees of involvement. Exhibitions range from the simple display of objects to complex and interactive immersion experiences. There is room for the visitor who wants to engage museum offerings without mediation. There are visitors who want to encounter museum activities that are highly mediated. Today many exhibitions are orchestrated by

FIGURE 1.1: DEGREE OF DESIGN AND ORCHESTRATION OF MUSEUM EXPERIENCES



curators, educators, and exhibition designers to actively engage and assimilate visitors in powerful, educative, evocative, and transformative ways. Augmented experiences are offered in museum programs and services as ways to expand and facilitate the museum-going experience.

What Is a Museum?

The American Association of Museums (AAM) defines a museum as “organized as a public or private nonprofit institution, existing on a permanent basis for essentially educational and aesthetic purposes, that cares for and owns or uses

tangible objects, whether animate or inanimate, and exhibits these on a regular basis . . . that has at least one professional staff member or the full-time equivalent,” and “is open to the general public on a regular basis . . . at least 120 days per year” (1994, pp. 18–19). Museums are harder to define today than in years past. Owning collections is a regular feature of museums. Museums typically are in the business of caring for, interpreting, and showing authentic objects. However, the Museo del Falso (Museum of Forgeries and Counterfeits), which opened in 1991 in Salerno, Italy, is dedicated to collecting, studying, and viewing fake objects. Its earliest exhibitions were devoted to counterfeit foods, detergents, and precious metals.

Most museums are organized around a specialized collection or else multiple collections specific to a particular field. However, the Carnegie Museums in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, comprise four separate museums: the Carnegie Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Science Center, and The Andy Warhol Museum. A number of U.S. museum organizations do not own collections; they host temporary exhibits in exhibition halls, art, and cultural centers. An example is the museum at Florida State University, which hosts temporary exhibitions rather than housing a permanent collection. Science and children’s museums may lack collections as traditionally defined, but do have hands-on, teaching collections. Some museums have collections that cannot be added to or sold. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston has a distinguished collection of more than twenty-five hundred objects of Western art that cannot be sold or added to according to the founding charter. In addition, the installations and interior design of the building cannot be altered in any significant way.

According to a 2006 survey, there were an estimated 17,500 museums in the United States. These figures may underestimate the number of museums because of the possible omission of small historic houses (Merritt, 2003, 2006). There has been significant growth in the number of museums in the past few decades. According to the AAM (2006), “A quarter of all responding museums were founded in the last twenty years or so after 1983. . . . One can see a surge of new museums in the 1960s through the 1990s” (pp. 47–48). It appears that a similar level of growth has continued into the twenty-first century. The most recent count of museums worldwide identifies 53,017 in 202 countries (*Museums of the World*, 2005). Numbers fluctuate, of course, as museums start up or shut down.

The great majority of museums in the United States are organized as private, nonprofit organizations or as agencies of state and local governments. As nonprofit educational organizations, these museums receive certain privileges and exemptions under U.S. laws and tax regulations in return for which they are expected to

function as publicly minded educational and public service organizations. While the majority of museums in the European Union are run by governments—local, regional, and national—for the most part, they do not have a tax-exempt status. Although most U.S. museums are nonprofit organizations, a growing number, like the Spy Museum in Washington, D.C., are for-profit.

An estimated 59 percent of all U.S. museums are privately governed, and 41 percent are government run in some form. In France, by comparison, approximately 80 percent of the museums are run by the national government. Museums in Great Britain vary from national museums, such as the British Museum, which are substantially maintained by the national government, to small local museums and museum services, which are supported by a combination of local government grants and private contributions.

An institution's operating expenses provide the basis for classifying U.S. museums on a scale from small to large. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, according to its 2005 annual report, showed total revenue of more than \$269 million. Similar large U.S. museums have several thousand employees and budgets in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The Museum of Modern Art in New York City at the end of fiscal year 2005 had assets of more than \$1.4 billion and income of \$347 million. Another large U.S. museum, the Exploratorium in San Francisco, had income of over \$44 million and assets of \$82.5 million. A few U.S. museums have endowment funds reaching \$1 billion. The J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu and Los Angeles, California, is a subsidiary of the Getty Trust, a U.S. charitable foundation that has in excess of \$4 billion in assets.

At the other extreme are museums with small budgets and volunteer staff. One example is the Waterloo Farm Museum in Stockbridge, Michigan. Another is the Archer County Museum in Archer City, Texas. Small museums, defined by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, have "five or fewer full-time paid or unpaid staff." Small agricultural museums exist throughout the world, such as the Fratticiola Museum of Farming Culture outside Florence, Italy. The great majority of U.S. museums are small in size, income, staff, and audiences (Merritt, 2006). Most are historic houses and history museums, often located in small towns and counties and supported by local historical societies. Associations and networks of houses and heritage sites are exemplified by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, headquartered in Harrisburg.

There are outdoor museums in the United States such as Colonial Williamsburg and Old Sturbridge Village, which consist of many properties on extensive acreage. The City History Museum in Barcelona consists of four significant sites: the Monumental Ensemble of the Placa del Rei, the Museum-Monastery of Pedralbes, the Verdager Museum-House, and the outdoor Centre for Interpretation in Park Guell, Antoni Gaudi's visionary architectural space.

Even if *museum* is broadly defined, it is sometimes difficult to know what is a museum and what is not. Indeed, many visitors to Venice, Italy, regard the entire city as a museum, not just the particular buildings that promote themselves as museums, such as the Museo Archeologico and the Museo Orientale. Oxford, England, is a museum on a large scale with one of the great world collections of historic colleges, museums, churches, neighborhoods, and gardens that can be viewed as multiple collections in a single site, connected by history and culture.

Origin and Evolution of Museums

The word *museum* is Greek in origin, yet there are signs of the development of the museum idea in the early part of the second millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia's Larsa region. There, copies of old inscriptions were created for schools and for public use. In the sixth century B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Ur near Babylon, the kings collected antiquities that were housed in rooms close to temples (Lewis, 2004). Museums developed among the ancient Greeks prior to the Christian era as scholarly, religious, spiritual, and creative centers, engaging a small number of participants and far removed from everyday life. The word *museum* comes from the Greek *mouseion*, a temple of the Muses—in Greek mythology, goddesses of inspiration and learning and patrons of the arts. One of the earliest museums was built in Alexandria, Egypt, in the third century B.C., by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the most accomplished of the Ptolemaic kings following Alexander the Great. At the time, Alexandria was the preeminent city of learning in the Mediterranean world, and the Ptolemaic museum functioned as a scholar's library, a research center, and a contemplative retreat.

In ancient Rome during the second century B.C., museums became associated with the storage and display of collections acquired in military campaigns. The instinct for collecting evident throughout human history was elevated by the Romans into an art form and a systematic enterprise. After imperial wars and conquests, Roman generals returned to Rome, as Fulvius did in 189 B.C., with thousands of bronze and marble statues and gold and silver pieces, the plunder of military campaigns. The center of Rome itself became a museum, filled with objects from subdued nations (Alexander, 1979; Lewis, 2004; Ripley, 1978).

During the medieval period in the West, the Roman Catholic church became a preeminent intellectual center and patron of the arts. A significant art collection, overseen by Pope Sixtus IV, was amassed in Rome by the end of the fifteenth century. Collections also existed in princely estates. The Renaissance in Italy, beginning in the late fourteenth century, marked the rise of humanism and secularism as

leading ideas in society. Renaissance thought reflected strong interest in the study of nature and in inventiveness and artistry. By the sixteenth century, Italy was home to great private collections and museum-like buildings that housed botanical and zoological specimens, historical artifacts, skeletal remains, curios, shells, coins, bronzes, sculptures, and paintings. Collections depicting the range of world habitats and cultures were highly sought after, becoming known in the eighteenth century as *cabinets of curiosities*. The term applied to the collections as well as to the spaces and furniture in which they were housed (Ripley, 1978). One of the earliest museums, established as a public institution for public benefit, is the Ashmolean Museum at the University of Oxford, opened in 1683. Far-ranging, encyclopedic collections developed out of these earlier collections, and today they are found in great international museums such as the Louvre, the British Museum, the Hermitage, and the Prado.

Collections in modern Europe and in England were assembled by kings and nobility, by churches, and later by wealthy merchants. Housed in palaces and grand private residences, they were open to highly selective audiences. Science and natural history collections were available to scholars but off-limits to most other people.

The public museum, open to people regardless of rank or class, arose in London in the eighteenth century. Sir Ashton Lever, a country gentleman and graduate of Oxford, collected live birds and, later, shells, fossils, stuffed birds, costumes of native peoples, weapons, and a large variety of exotic objects. Having outgrown the space of his ancestral home, he opened a public museum in London in 1774. An admission fee was charged to cover costs and regulate the number and manner of visitors. Lever's experience with visitors, however, was adverse, and he eventually put this notice in a London newspaper: "This is to inform the Publick that being tired out with the insolence of the common People . . . I am now come to the resolution of refusing admittance to the lower class except they come provided with a ticket from some Gentleman or Lady of my acquaintance" (Ripley, 1978, p. 32).

The conflict between serving scholars, connoisseurs, and savants, on the one hand, and encouraging public learning, on the other, grew in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, museums gradually evolved into broader, public-minded institutions. In the transition stage, they often set aside special hours or times of the year for ordinary people to visit. The British Museum, for example, opened its doors to the public in 1759, at least to visitors with proper identification who applied for one of the limited number of tickets issued daily, between the hours of 11:00 A.M. and noon. The Louvre in 1793, following the French Revolution, opened its doors to the public three days each week.

Museum Development in the United States

The pattern of museum development in the United States differed from the pattern characteristic of museums in Europe. Although there are exceptions on both continents, many European museums were created as instruments of ruling classes and governments to celebrate and glorify the national culture and the state. The great majority of U.S. museums, by contrast, were created by individuals, families, and communities to celebrate and commemorate local and regional traditions and practices and to enlighten and entertain people in local communities. The earliest American museums emerged in the latter part of the eighteenth century in places like Charleston, South Carolina; Salem, Massachusetts; and Philadelphia.

U.S. museum development was influenced by the ideas of leaders such as Charles Willson Peale in the late 1780s in Philadelphia; George Brown Goode at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., in the late nineteenth century; and John Cotton Dana in Newark, New Jersey, in the early twentieth century. Others exerted major influence: Philip Youtz, director of the Brooklyn Museum; Francis Henry Taylor, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Henry Watson Kent, the Metropolitan's supervisor of instruction; and Theodore Low, the Metropolitan's head of education.

Charles Willson Peale, the celebrated early American painter and portraitist, opened an art and natural history museum in Philadelphia between 1782 and 1786. Its explicit purpose was to instruct and engage ordinary citizens who lacked formal education (Brigham, 1995). Peale's museum was open certain evenings of the week to reach working people. He advertised that the extended evening hours were "to accommodate those who may not have leisure during the day light to enjoy the rational amusement which the various subjects of the Museum afford." Burgiss Allison, a supporter of Peale's museum, explained this mingling of reason, education, and entertainment: "With regard to amusements . . . it must be evident to every person of the least reflection . . . that if we can contrive to amuse whilst we instruct, the progress will be more rapid and the impression much deeper" (Brigham, 1995, pp. 19–20).

P. T. Barnum created the American Museum (1841–1865) in New York City. For a twenty-five-cent admission, visitors enjoyed both sensational attractions and galleries that promoted education. The museum showcased contortionists, a midget named Tom Thumb, and beauty contests, as well as natural history exhibits, paintings, wax figures, and Shakespearean dramas in its "Lecture Room" theater. In a city increasingly marked by diversity, Barnum's museum uniquely brought together immigrants and native born, working class and middle class, and

rural visitors, with the exception of African Americans, who were not allowed to enter (Barnum Museum Archives, 2007).

George Brown Goode, director of the Smithsonian's earliest national museum, advanced the view that museums should serve the broad public and have clear educational purposes. He wrote: "The museums of the future in this democratic land should be adapted to the needs of the mechanic, the factory operator, the day laborer, the salesman and the clerk, as much as to those of the professional man and the man of leisure. . . . No museum can grow and be respected that does not each year give additional proofs of its claims to be considered a center of learning" (Boyer, 1993, p. 18). Goode pioneered in making museums accessible by creating the first explicitly educational exhibitions, with labels and texts to enlighten the public. In the late nineteenth century, some museums began to offer classes. The Metropolitan Museum of Art offered lectures for adults beginning in 1872, two years after its founding. Boston's Museum of Fine Arts inaugurated adult education classes in 1876.

John Cotton Dana, founder of the Newark Museum, continued in Goode's path and became the leading proponent in the early twentieth century of audience-, community-, and education-centered museums. He wrote: "We believe that it will pay any community to add to its educational apparatus a group of persons which shall form the staff of a local institution of visual instruction. . . . [And museums] will transform themselves slowly into living organisms, with an abundance of teachers, with ample workshops, classrooms and spaces for handling the outgoing and incoming of objects" (Dana, [1917] 1988, pp. 7–8). His "new museum" made special efforts to attract young people.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some urban American museums embraced as a component of their missions the training of workers in the arts, design, and engineering skills needed in the industrial era. In Ohio, the Toledo Museum of Art and the Cleveland Museum of Art established training programs. The charter of the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1913 stated, among its objectives, to "maintain an industrial training school" (Newsom and Silver, 1978, p. 14). This reflected the nation's growing interest, converging with the new philosophy of progressive education, in self-improvement, self-teaching activities, and informal and supplementary adult education practices.

During the same period, America's industrial and mercantile leaders, including Andrew Carnegie in New York City and Marshall Field and Julius Rosenwald in Chicago, founded museums and libraries in the spirit of noblesse oblige for the explicit purpose of reaching lower-income and working-class people and immigrants who lacked formal education and strong acculturating influences. In Chicago, Field, Rosenwald, and other municipal leaders built a series of museums that were situated in the city's public parks. Both the museums and the

parks were intended to be people's parks, reaching the majority of citizens who were unschooled or out of school, combining recreation, education, and nature study and offering wholesome, all-encompassing leisure-time activities.

Contemporary U.S. Museum Development

The number of museums has grown since the 1960s. For example, 47 percent of U.S. history museums have opened since 1960. Between 2003 and 2006, a representative sample of 806 museums showed that 50 percent had begun or completed in the previous three years construction, expansion, or renovation. Twenty-three percent of respondents (186 museums) reported being involved in a capital campaign, with a median goal of \$10 million, three times the size of corresponding endowments (Merritt, 2006).

The Washington, D.C., area exemplifies the growth in the number of museums under development or newly developed. These include the \$400 million Newseum (a 250,000-square-foot museum of the journalist, news, and First Amendment rights); a branch of a Madame Tussauds Wax Museum; a law enforcement museum; a U.S. Army museum; the U.S. Marines Museum; and a large children's museum. Museum expansion is expected to create more space for exhibitions and collections, attract larger audiences and earned income, and interest new donors. New museum buildings increase the market value of areas of cities in which they are located. They attract media, tourism, and national and international attention. Expansion also raises operating costs. Some expanded museums are thriving, and others face financial troubles as a result of expansion (Morris, 2007).

The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis constructed a major new building, and the Denver Art Museum built a new addition. Other examples of expansion are the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Milwaukee Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum, Cincinnati's Contemporary Art Center, the Smithsonian's second Air and Space Museum (known as the Udvar-Hazy Center located at Dulles Airport), and the Peabody-Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. The contemporary architecture of these museums is riveting. "These are virtuoso worlds," writes Claus Kapplinger (1997). "[They are] stage sets for experience and happenings which try to appeal to all the senses of the public. . . . Their architecture clamors for attention. . . . They are themselves the focus of attention" (p. 6). Alongside architecture, the public enjoys out-of-door spaces, such as sculpture parks, gardens, and terraces, connected to museums. Museums are magnets of economic development. The Newseum's building includes luxury rental apartments. Similarly, the Denver Art Museum is surrounded by condominiums, both designed by Daniel Libeskind, an internationally acclaimed architect.

Economic development related to museum construction is not limited to the United States. In March 2007, the French minister of culture signed an agreement with the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority to build a “Louvre Abu Dhabi” museum in the desert kingdom of the United Arab Emirates. The \$1.3 billion deal includes the temporary loans of treasured Louvre art and the purchase of a portion of the Louvre brand (Moore, 2007). The Madame Tussauds wax museums are not ordinary museums, yet in March 2007 the Blackstone Group, the private equity giant, purchased six of them for \$1.9 billion. The wax museums have 14 million visitors a year. The purchase becomes part of the world’s second largest theme park group after Disney, with fifty theme parks throughout the world.

Some museums have excelled not only in construction but also in notoriety. Museum collections are featured on television, videos, and DVDs. *Night at the Museum* was a hit movie at the end of 2006. Nature and natural history museums, such as Chicago’s Field Museum, witnessed a surge in interest in their family night programs. Showtime, a cable television station, entered into an agreement with the Smithsonian Institution to create 130 hours of programming each year with a budget of at least \$10 million annually. Smithsonian Networks also said it established a coproduction deal with the BBC for its *Timewatch* series (Trescott, 2007).

Changes in Exhibition Design. With some exceptions such as John Cotton Dana at the Newark Museum, museum leaders used to regard their art and artifacts as stand-alone objects of learning and enjoyment. In art museums, the convention was to limit text other than labels, on the theory that text would distract viewers. Along with the isolation of objects was the passive relation of visitors to objects. Seeing was the exclusive mode of knowing the objects. Gradually museums, especially children’s and science museums, set aside for young people learning collections with objects to experiment with and manipulate.

Presenting art and artifacts in their historical and cultural contexts is a growing trend. Some art exhibits offer information about artists—their creative origins, intentions, and challenges. An example is the Joseph Cornell exhibit, *Navigating the Imagination*, held in 2006–2007 at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The exhibit included wall text that furnished information about the artist’s life—self-commentary as well as interactive computer programs, books, and artifacts owned by the artist that illuminated his life, motivation, and artistic vision.

Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia is employing an increasing number of actors to tell stories about colonial America. Actors are dressed in clothes of the period. They tell stories about the life of African American slaves and the gentry. Ceremonial days are set aside for special events, one of which in 2006 was

known as Revolution Day. Stories transform static and stand-alone objects into connected, compelling dramas.

Museums increasingly provide visitors with immersion experiences. Dioramas historically filled this function. Along with immersion, visitors want to participate actively in the stories museums tell and the methods by which stories are told. The Historical Museum of the Landing in Sicily, 1943, in Catania, Sicily, tells the story of the Allied invasion originating in North Africa, the aim of which was to root out Germans and Italian fascists. Sicily was a crossroads of Ally and Axis war machines. In one section of the museum, small groups of visitors are escorted into a bunkerlike building. They sit quietly in the darkened bunker. Airplanes are heard overhead. Bombs are dropped, and the bunker shakes. Sounds become nearly deafening. The shaken person who leaves the bunker is not quite the same person as the one who entered it. Something new has entered his experience. The impact is a memorable experience of fear, entrapment, and disaster.

Museums have designed a growing number of social and recreational programs that in the past would have been considered ancillary, instrumental (raising funds), or irrelevant. Such programs, however, have had historical antecedents. The *Statistical Survey of the American Association of Art Museum Directors* (2007) reported the “educational programs and cultural activities” of museums of different disciplines. Among activities supported were guided tours, lectures, films, concerts, arts festivals, study clubs, hobby workshops, drama classes, and dance recitals. Art museums, history museums, and historical houses and heritage sites reported the largest number of programs.

Today social events are widespread and intensive in the museum world. At a number of museums, Saturdays are times for participatory programs for families. At the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., visitors explore the textile arts on Saturday afternoons in special programs. On a recent Saturday, more than ninety people, including families, children, teenagers, and college students, listened to a storyteller relate tales based on an exhibition of crimson textiles, featuring a fragment of a sixteenth-century Persian cloth. Participants then wrote about the exhibition or told their own stories. After the program, visitors could attend the museum’s Textile Learning Center, which offers a range of hands-on activities. There they can examine raw linen, learn to embroider, and see how patterns are woven into fabric (Feeney, 2007).

Thursday and Friday evenings in a number of museums are devoted to young adults. Museums offer music, drinks, and informal talks by curators and try to recruit new members. In an effort to engage young adults, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City with MTV2 has introduced *SonicVision*, an innovative digitally animated music show. It takes audiences on an unforgettable musical and artful journey in the Hayden Planetarium Theater at the Rose

Center for Earth and Space (American Museum of Natural History, 2007). The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History has had jazz performances on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Museums have engaged members as participants in creative museum processes. The Chicago History Museum is among numerous museums that offer young adult members roles in developing new exhibitions and planning programs. The trend in many museums is toward participation, especially among enthusiastic visitors, members, donors, community members, and volunteers. Museums today engage in self-assessment as a means to improve their offerings and organizations—examining opportunities and obstacles in the larger environment and planning tools with which to adapt to changing circumstances. Experiences in the museum, to the greatest extent possible, are orchestrated and staged. A range of deep, emotional, cognitive, and memorable experiences is offered to a range of diverse visitors: programs suitable for families, young adults, seniors, and youth. Attention is paid to services such as welcoming behavior, mapping of galleries, cleanliness of facilities, dining, and shopping.

Museum leaders have given emphasis to attracting a broader range of visitors, including ethnic, cultural, and gender groups. Hours of operation facilitate efforts to broaden and diversify audiences. Some small museums are open to the public only a fraction of the year. Others, like the Smithsonian Institution, are open eight hours each day, every day of the year except Christmas. Sixty percent of U.S. museums are open every week of the year, and less than 1 percent open only by special arrangement or appointment. One-third of museums open less than thirty hours a week, 44 percent open between thirty-one and fifty hours per week, and one-quarter open in excess of fifty hours per week.

Media. Digital media have been a part of museums for a number of years, but their growth and role in museums has accelerated. Media today are integral to museums and museum exhibitions. Web sites are powerful means to communicate and reach vast audiences. They provide useful services to the public, communicating museum programs, exhibitions, fees, hours, directions, and services. Items in museum shops can be purchased from museum e-stores and e-catalogues.

Web sites offer virtual exhibitions. Specialized mini-Web sites are prevalent for different audiences: children and families, young adults, seniors, and enthusiasts of all ages. Museum Web sites provide links to blogs and discussion groups in which visitors record their perceptions of an exhibit or engage in debate about a museum's qualities and deficiencies. A growing number of museums invite suggestions as well as criticism through online discussion groups and blogs, such as the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Museum visitors can offer suggestions and criticisms on-site as well. The Tate Britain in London created a

Write Your Own label contest. Visitors of the museum's Web site are asked to provide ideas on how paintings should be described. Chosen submissions are displayed next to the paintings in the actual galleries (Customer Made, 2006). The same tendency to include the public in museum discussions is found in podcasts, the medium in which visitors can present their own stories about museums and their exhibits and collections. Media democratize museums, opening them to wider audiences and audience participation.

It is commonplace for art museums to provide handheld audio and video guides that provide exhibition narratives, images, and other data providing in-depth information about exhibitions. They offer information beyond what is obtained in texts, and they contextualize museum objects. Several years ago, the Baltimore Museum of Art presented a Matisse exhibition that featured highly sophisticated digital technology. The Matisse paintings in the galleries were collected by the Coen sisters of Baltimore, and the paintings hung originally in their home. With the digital device, a visitor could touch a large screen and move about the apartment, viewing the paintings from several angles. The sweeping electronic image showed the Coens' paintings, furniture, and artifacts in context. An intimate view of the Coen home was presented. Some visitors complain, however, that the use of digital devices within museums inhibits contemplative aesthetic experience. Digital guides can become intrusive, diverting, and costly.

In a growing number of museums, computer stations are used to provide interactive learning experiences related to exhibitions. Some of these computer-driven interactive experiences are intended to explain complex ideas. Others are used to give visitors an opportunity to register their responses to exhibits and provide feedback to visitors regarding their attitudes as compared to those of others. Unfortunately computer stations tend to break due to heavy use, often frustrating visitors. Museums use films and video in small theaters to highlight and dramatize historical events and personalities. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., is a prime example of the application of media in exhibitions. The museum built a library of oral history tapes to preserve the experience of Holocaust survivors. The Omnimax Theater at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry blends information and entertainment in a unique medium.

Digital media have become part of everyday life, and museum visitors expect these media inside museums, whether they take the form of computers, audio and video guides, podcasts, or computer-generated interactive experiences. Digital media can pose problems when they take the place of actual museum visits, however, because they are virtual presentations rather than authentic, tangible ones. Nevertheless, the Internet offers linkages to countless museum Web sites. It is not clear whether museum Web sites encourage online visitors to visit museums. As an

example, in 2006 the Metropolitan Museum of Art recorded an online audience of 9 million as compared to an on-site audience of 4.5 million.

Informal Learning at Museums. Years ago the conventional belief among museum professionals was that art and artifacts spoke for themselves; little additional information was needed. Museum curators were seen as the authoritative shapers and interpreters of the museum experience. There was little attention to learning outcomes.

Curatorial decisions, museum objects, exhibitions, interior design, and museum standards were known as “inputs,” the elements given major consideration. Later, “outputs” came into consideration. These were measures of museum productivity. Outputs reflect the number of exhibitions, visitors, press releases, print advertisements, and the extent of media attention. More recently museum educators have incorporated the concepts of “outcomes” and “impacts” (Weil, 1994). Impacts identify the impact of museum learning on visitors. Families with children may learn a particular set of things. Seniors are likely to learn other things. The point of informal learning is that museum exhibitions and other museum presentations are expected to advance visitor information and knowledge and, in some cases, transform a person’s perspective on art, culture, and life itself.

To achieve educational aims, museum exhibitions feature interactive electronic media; demonstrations; storytelling; theatrical, dance, and musical performances; and hands-on activities. Interactive and multimedia museum presentations embody educational concepts emphasizing multiple intelligences, diverse learning styles, and a range of culturally defined learning modalities.

Informal learning is central to the museum experience. In the past several years, there has been a renaissance of research devoted to exploring and measuring the process and products of the kind of informal learning that takes place in museums. Studies of museum learning take one of four forms: research that examines what visitors want to gain from the museum experience; how museum visitors behave inside museums; the effect of different variables such as guided tours on museum learning; and evaluative studies that probe whether exhibits and programs meet intended objectives (Donald, 1991). Museum educators examine the impact of museums on information processing, knowledge acquisition, and, ultimately, the role of informal learning in education. Educators have long studied the learning of children. The impact of informal learning in the museum context on adults has long been an object of study (Falk and Dirking, 1992).

Changing Museum Services. Even in nonprofit museums, commercial services have proliferated. Museums in the past provided dining in cafeterias, with conventional cuisines and relatively inexpensive food. Today museums have created

a variety of dining experiences, including upscale restaurants, cafeterias, and cafés. An example is the Baltimore Museum of Art's restaurant, which is as attractive to some visitors as the museum itself. In the past, shops were mere museum appendages, catering to demand for museum souvenirs. Then museums recognized the advantage of redesigning shops as commercial boutiques that carry expensive items as well as inexpensive gifts. Two very different shops, for example, exist at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. The shop located on the second floor offers mementos and inexpensive tourist items. The shop located near the museum entrance offers goods of the highest quality of art and artisanship: baskets, ceramics, jewelry, and textiles, for example. This shop sells high-priced items: some ceramic vases are priced in tens of thousands of dollars.

A Typology of Museum Orientations. According to Elaine Gurian (2006), five types of museum orientations exist:

- The object-centered museum focuses on artifacts and collections.
- Narrative-centered museums emphasize stories that are evocative of feelings and dramatic situations.
- Client-centered museums concentrate on audience and offer a variety of educational experiences for different audience segments.
- Community-centered museums focus on local relationships and are rooted in community experiences and life.
- National museums, largely government sponsored, have broad scope and represent and celebrate national character and values.

These five museum orientations represent analytical typologies. Museums can combine one or more of these types in their missions and identity. The differences in orientation among museums result in different kinds of visitor experiences, learning, and engagement (see also Figure 1.1).

Summary

The museum idea developed early in human civilization. Among the first people to collect and display objects were the Mesopotamians and the Sumerians in the ancient Near East. The word *museum* derives from the Greek word *mouseion*, a temple of the Muses, the goddesses of inspiration and learning and patrons of the arts. This genesis informs the aesthetic, educative, and transformative ideas that we associate with museums.

Museums are regarded as authoritative custodians and interpreters of culture and knowledge.

- The presumptive authority of museums resides in their rare and authentic collections and the knowledge of curators and scholars in interpreting them.
- Museums share in common the desire to design and orchestrate exhibitions that enhance visitors' museum experiences.
- During the early twentieth century, many U.S. museums began to evolve along egalitarian, democratic, culturally diverse, and popular lines. Museums in other parts of the world have followed a similar pattern.
 - To satisfy these museum goals, exhibitions increasingly offer multiple perspectives, narrative exposition, and interactive experiences.
 - Collections, the core of most museums, now coexist with educational programs, participatory social activities, and outreach to diverse communities as elements in museum missions and values.
 - The evolution of central museum concepts—from collections to information and education and from instruction to orchestrated experience—is reflected in the embrace by curators, educators, and other professionals of discovering and fulfilling the varied needs of visitors and in many cases encouraging visitor participation.
 - This idea epitomizes the commitment to the public purpose of museums and the provision of consumer value.
 - Exhibitions are increasingly developed to attract various audience segments, especially of underserved groups.
- Some museums, notably science and children's museums, may not have collections; nevertheless, like other museums, they provide unique educational experiences that encourage discovery and learning.
- The use of media facilitates the museum-going experience of visitors. Digital media, including video guides, podcasts, discussion groups, and blogs, appeal to young people in particular. The use of electronic media has vivified museum exhibitions.
- Museum Web sites reach vast audiences and serve to inform, educate, and encourage online visitors to participate in museum life.
- Museums increasingly offer evening programs for young adults, weekends for families, and festivals for whole communities.
- Museums have expanded their services to include comfortable seating, a range of shops, dining facilities, and gardens.