

**Peter van Mensch „Towards a methodology of museology”**

**PhD thesis, University of Zagreb, 1992**

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## Introduction

Already at the first new style symposium of the ICOM International Committee for Museology (London 1983) John Hodge exclaimed: 'What we need is someone to outline a theory in finite terms which we all understand. Its philosophy, its statement of propositions used as principles of explanation for phenomena etc. needs to be clearly stated with concrete examples so that there is no misunderstanding of what is meant. Only then will we be able to have progressive discussion' (Hodge 1983: 61). During the past nine years attempts to summarise the ongoing museology discussion, as well as to outline the theoretical concepts have been scarce. It is hoped for that the present work meets the need as expressed by Hodge. It analyses the discussion about the identity of museology as academic discipline against the background of the characteristics of the museological field. In addition the publication presents the basic outlines of a theory and methodology of museology.

The 1983 symposium as a whole showed very clearly the conceptual and terminological chaos within the profession. This was in fact the immediate cause for an attempt to inventorise and analyse the different concepts in museology. One of the weaknesses of the museological field is the fact that apart from historical overviews and technical handbooks, there is no English textbook on the theory of museology. The bulk of the theoretical material is in the form of articles in a wide range of periodicals. Many museological topics are found in the publications of the many subject-matter disciplines. Although between 1983 and now a growing number of general and specialised textbooks have been published, the main problem still exists. Most articles are general, or even superficial treatments of topics. Cycles are evident as topics dealt with in earlier periods are returned to every ten or twenty years. This general treatment of topics combined with the cyclical return to subjects contributes to the repetitious and superficial aspects of museum periodical literature. This includes the publications of the International Committee for Museology. For these reasons Teather emphasises the need of preliminary research, i.e. a general survey of the field by means of library bibliographic search techniques, and the location of previous research in the identified topic in non-library sources, like archives, letters, diaries, unpublished investigations, etc. Investigative tools for research in the field have to be developed. Only after this work has been done have the necessary conditions been fulfilled to conduct basic research, which consists of original investigation undertaken to acquire new scientific knowledge (Teather 1983). An additional problem follows from the characteristics of the museum phenomenon. The museum field is a multidisciplinary field par excellence. Much has been published on the theory of museum work from the perspective of various disciplines. Not only this added to the dispersed literature, but also to the conceptual and terminological inconsistencies.

In his book on museum education Jürgen Rohmeder states that, in general, history museums

are led by historians, natural history museums by biologists, art museums by art historians, etc. (Rohmeder 1977). This might be necessary to keep control of the subject matter aspects of the museum, but, as Rohmeder concludes, it is not enough to make a museum a public institution. Considering museums primarily as educational institutes, Rohmeder suggests to take communication science as starting point and frame of reference. As will be shown hereafter this shift of perspective is typical for the second stage of development of museology as a genuine academic discipline, when museology is seen as an aggregate of theories and methods derived from other fields. The present work, however, follows a third - and supposedly more advanced - route. It starts from the presumption of the possibility of a specific museological approach.

The transitory phase of development is reflected by a big terminological confusion. Sometimes the term museology is limited to the theoretical approach. For example within the International Council of Museums, the International Committee for Museology deals with the theory of museum work. Similarly, at the Reinwardt Academie (Amsterdam, Netherlands) the courses in the theory of museum work are indicated as 'museology', while the courses in the field of practical museum work are distinguished by specialism, like conservation, registration, etc. Elsewhere, however, the term museology can be found indicating the practical dimensions of museum work. For example, one of the departments of the National Museum of Finland (Helsinki) is called the Department of Museology. This department is responsible for practical museum work, especially the organisation of exhibitions. At the Museu de Arte Moderna (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) the Department of Museology concentrates on conservation and registration. The Department of Museology at the Museu Lasar Segall (Sao Paulo, Brazil), however, is responsible for all activities concerning conservation, registration, exhibition and education, but also for research. Finally, the Department of Museology at the Moravian Museum (Brno, Czechoslovakia) does not concern itself with practical museum work but works out general concepts and acts as discussion partner rather than executor. The term museology is thus used on different occasions as describing either a defined field of activity, or the totality of knowledge about this field of activity, or even both at the same time.

The central questions this work attempts to answer are:

- \* what are the characteristics of museology as a science;
- \* what factors determine the number and nature of theoretical variants;
- \* what factors and considerations determine which intellectual variants win acceptance, to become established in the body of ideas.

From 1977 onwards the ICOM International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) has been the main platform for discussion about concepts in museology and the status of museology as academic discipline. Little has been published on the theory of museology that is not in

some way or another connected with this committee and its members. The present study is based on the materials produced during the period 1977 (the year of the committee's foundation) till 1989 (when Vinos Sofka resigned as its chairman).

At the end of the 1980s, however, a new group of German museum theoreticians appeared quite 'suddenly'. Although they do not form a structured group, their ideas are very similar, not the least since they refer to the same basic material. In general there is affinity to post-modern thinking. Their main sources of inspiration are Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, Henri Pierre Jeudy and Hermann Lübbe. An important influence was Jeudy's *Parodies de l'auto-destruction* (1985) which was translated into German and published as *Die Welt als Museum* (1987). Key-term in this publication is 'musealisation' which concept became the corner stone of contemporary German museological theory. It is not surprising that the only 'ICOFOM participant' they quote is Zbynek Stránský. The most important authors are Wolfgang Ernst, Gottfried Korff, Gottfried Fliedl, Eva Sturm, Wolfgang Zacharias, Klaus Weschenfelder (see for example Fliedl ed. 1988; Rösen, Ernst & Grütter eds. 1988; Sturm 1991; Zacharias ed. 1986 and 1990). The 'group' has the appearance of a school of thought as they frequently participate in the same conferences and contribute to the same books. The members of the 'group' frequently refer to each others publications. A remarkable feature is the lack of references to non-German museological literature, neither is their work translated into English or French. Because of this and because of the fact that no member of this 'group' has ever participated in ICOFOM activities, the influence of the 'group' is restricted to the German-speaking part of Europe. The publications of this 'group' of German museum theoreticians are not dealt with in the following chapters.

Neither will be dealt with a similar 'group' that arose at the same time around the Department of Museum Studies at Leicester. Like the German-group the Leicester-group relies heavily upon French structuralist and post-modernist thinking. In 1989 Susan Pearce was appointed director of the Department of Museum Studies of Leicester University. Within a few years an impressive series of monographs and conference reports was published by the department's main staff members: Susan Pearce, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill and Gaynor Kavanagh. At the conference 'Breaking new grounds', organised by the department in April 1990, it became obvious that staff and students/graduates share a basic orientation to museum work, based on the one hand on some French philosophers (Foucault, Barthes, Bourdieu) and emphasising on the other hand a critical stand (Kavanagh ed. 1991a, 1991b). The 'Leicester-group' has participated in many publications (for example Vergo ed. 1989, Lumley ed. 1988). The title of one of these publications: 'The new museology', suggest a clear connection with the French 'muséologie nouvelle' movement. Apart from Susan Pearce's view on the object as data carrier this emerging post-modern museology is not discussed in this study. Like the German-group the Leicester-group does not seem to be interested in museology as academic discipline.

Another important development concerns the theory and practice of the care of monuments and sites. New terms have been introduced which overlap the term museology: heritage management and cultural resource management. Both terms arose in the USA during the 1970s, especially in connection with the preservation of archaeological sites (see for example the contributions of Dunnell and Raab in Green ed. 1984). The World Archaeological Congress at Southampton (Sept. 1986) contributed to the introduction of the terms in Europe (see Cleere ed. 1989). During ICOFOM meetings the link with these developments has never been made explicit. In this study the link will also remain implicit rather than elaborated.

During the last stage of the study dramatic changes took place as to the political situation in Middle and East Europe. It is obvious that museological thinking in Middle and East Europe was based on marxist-leninist principles. As these principles were abolished as leading dogmas, East European museology changed accordingly. However, the consequences of these changes are not yet (i.e. 1991 !) visible. Therefore, it was decided to finalise the text disregarding the possible impact of these changes on museums and museology.

The emergence of post-modern museology in Germany and the United Kingdom and the abolition of marxist-leninist museology in the period 1989-1992 unexpectedly added to the significance of 1989 as the end date of a historical period. It also added to the importance to take stock of the achievements of the period before 1989.

To analyse the content and the purport of the museology discussion of the 1970s and 1980s it is necessary to follow the work of ICOFOM. For this reason it is considered useful to start the following study of the museology discussion with a detailed survey of the history of the committee, followed by an general impression of the persons that supported the discussion individually and as a group. The emphasis on the characteristics of the scientific forum of the museology discourse follows from the ideas as expressed by Kuhn concerning the sociological dimension of the progress of science (Kuhn 1976). It is assumed that the cultural and professional background of the participants of the museology discourse has an important impact on that discourse and, as such on the development of museology as academic discipline.

The discussion on the profile of museology as academic discipline took place in connection with a series of symposiums and other meetings. The present study, however, does not focus on the themes of these meetings as such. The papers and discussions are used as a source of approaches, concepts and methods of different museologists. This material is brought together within a pre-conceived structure, which follows from the central questions of this study rather than the content of the papers themselves. Successively the cognitive orientation, the purpose of museological understanding and the structure of museology will be discussed. The aim is neither to define the best, nor the most popular version of

museology. The main aim is to establish the number and nature of theoretical variants. In addition some fields will be explored in which the emergence of a specific museological perspective is visible: research, terminology, professionalisation and ethics. It is assumed that either these fields show an increased awareness of museological thinking or might profit from a further development of the theoretical discourse.

The second part of this study goes beyond the museology discourse as it took place within ICOFOM. The aim is to design a conceptual frame work for basic concepts and theoretical assumptions relevant to the museological field. This frame work could to serve as a 'disciplinary matrix'. The heuristic power of this conceptual frame work is not tested empirically. This could be the next phase of the project. This stage of the project is mainly restricted to the stock-taking and analysing of the basic elements of such a conceptual frame work.

As will be argued, one of the drawbacks to the development of museology is the fact that many of the contributors to the museology discourse had a limited exposure to theoretical museological literature, partly because of language barriers and partly because of limited availability. It is hoped for that this publication also facilitates the access to museological sources.

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## The museology discourse

Since the 1960s several attempts have been made to take stock of museological theory, often in order to assess the current status of museology as an academic discipline. The first comprehensive publication about the theory of museology, being more than just a handbook on museum work, was published in 1968 by Jiri Neustupny on occasion of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the National Museum in Prague and the Moravian Museum in Brno (Neustupny 1968). From 1976 onwards the ICOM International Committee for Museology has played a central role in this discussion (Sofka 1992). Apart from the work of this committee mention should be made of the symposium on the theory of museology organised by the department of museology of the J.E. Purkinje University (now Masaryk University) at Brno in March 1965 (Strjnskz ed. 1966), both conferences on museology organised by the German National Committee of ICOM in 1971 and 1988 (Dyroff ed. 1973 and Auer ed. 1989), and the conference organised by the former Museum für Deutsche Geschichte (Berlin) together with the State Historical Museum (Moscow) in May 1988 (Grampp et al. 1988). Also mention should be made of some publications that contributed to the stock-taking. For example, a special issue of the Czech museum journal *Muzeologické svesity* published in 1983 on occasion of the 100th anniversary of the famous statement by J.G.Th. von Graesse (see below). Altogether, it was estimated that until the beginning of the 1980s at least 600 publications dealt with the subject matter of museology, mainly in the (former) socialist countries of Middle and East Europe (Razgon in Grampp et al. 1988: 28) [note 1].

As early as 1883 J.G.Th. von Graesse stated in his *Zeitschrift für Museologie und Antiquitätenkunde sowie verwandte Wissenschaften*: 'If somebody had spoken or written about museology as a branch of science thirty or even twenty years ago, the only response from many people would be a compassionate, contemptuous smile' [note 2], meaning that museology had acquired the status of a discipline in its own right by then. Nevertheless, after more than hundred years many workers in the museum field still reluctantly accept the idea of museology as something more than a series of practical activities. One of the main doubts regarding the profile of museology as an autonomous academic discipline concerns the relationship between museology as a discipline typically related to the field of museums at the one hand and the collection-related subject-matter disciplines at the other. The term subject-matter discipline commonly refers to those disciplines involved with the uses of museum collections as resource, like art history, anthropology, natural history, etc. Despite the close links between initiatives within the society to take care of its heritage and the subject-matter disciplines, it can be argued that the development of these tendencies and their institutionalisation are not initiated by scientific research, but (also) by the perceptions of the need of such institutions (in its widest sense) in society (Davallon 1993, Möbius 1986). It seems that the history of museology can be described as an emancipation process involving the breaking away of museology from the subject-matter disciplines and the profiling of its own cognitive orientation and methodology. This process has been described by the Czech museologist Zbynek Strjnskz as a three stage development: pre-scientific, empirical-descriptive, and theoretical-synthetic (Strjnskz 1980: 71), or in other words: formative stage, stage of unification and synthesis and stage of maturity. Since the 1960s Strjnskz himself has been one of the key personalities who contributed to the establishment of the theoretical-synthetic stage.



Not by coincidence, the emancipation of museology as academic discipline is connected with the professionalisation process of museum work. This process has been described in terms of a series of revolutions. The term 'museum revolution' was used first by Duncan Cameron to characterise the radical changes during the 1950s and 1960s in the United States (Cameron 1970). In 1983, in his contribution to *Museologie* 9, the Yugoslavian museologist Antun Bauer distinguished between two museum revolutions [note 3]. According to Bauer the first revolution in museum work was initiated by the publication of *Musées* (Paris 1931), based upon an inquiry among 41 leading museum authorities. This publication provided the professional perspective for the first international congress of museum workers in Madrid in 1934. Bauer's second museum revolution relates to the impact of the student revolts of 1968 on the museum field (Bauer 1983).

### Museology's pre-paradigmatic stage

The introduction of the term museology and its related term museography is not very well documented. Whereas the term museology seems to have come into being in the second half of the 19th century, the term museography was already used in the early 18th century. Interestingly, both terms seem to be used first in Germany [note 4]. The first recorded use of the term 'museography' is found in C.F. Neickelius' *Museographie oder Anleitung zum rechten Begriff und nutzlicher Anlegung der Museorum oder Raritätenkammern* (1727). Museography was defined as the understanding concerning and the establishment of museums. The first recorded use of the term 'museology' is found in P.L. Martin's *Praxis der Naturgeschichte* (1869). In the second part of this book (titled 'Dermoplastik und Museology') museology is defined as the exhibition and preservation of collections of naturalia.

The fact that both terms were used in the context of early handbooks on museum work reflects the feeling that problems concerning collecting techniques, conservation methods, registration, storage, exhibition design, etc. required solutions which did not automatically arise from the methodology of the subject-matter discipline(s) involved. Nevertheless, the theory and practice of museum work was commonly considered as subordinated to and derived from the subject-matter discipline. In this sense museology - when at all accepted as a science - was considered an applied science [note 5]. Such was the view held by Neickelius and, despite his bold statement, also by Von Graesse. The conceptual frame work of the subject-matter discipline was thought to be sufficient for museum work; museology needed no conceptual frame work in itself. Therefore, Strjnskž refers to this approach as the 'pre-scientific phase' of museology as academic discipline. Other authors have described this formative phase as 'museolore stage' (Tsuruta 1980: 47) or 'Implizitstufe' (Jahn 1979: 270). In terms of Kuhn we could also call this phase museology's pre-paradigmatic stage (Kuhn 1976).

### First museum revolution

The professionalisation trend that started at the end of the 19th century - of which Von Graesse's journal was an early prove - gradually acknowledged that many of the practical problems are shared by all kinds of museums. New concepts were introduced in connection

with a strong educational orientation. This new school of thought in museology has been called 'museum modernization movement' (Carle & Metzener 1991) [note 6].

Whether or not the term museology was used to denote the emerging academic field, the museum modernisation movement brought about many activities that contributed to the shaping of a shared paradigm. Handbooks were published and training courses were established. In addition associations and specialised journals were founded. The first museums association was founded in 1889 in the United Kingdom (Museums Association), followed in 1906 by the foundation of the American Association of Museums. In 1901 the Museums Association started its *Museums Journal*, the first national journal for the museum field as a whole. In 1908 the first museum training program in the United States was offered at the Pennsylvania Museum (Philadelphia). Museology thus gradually became recognised as a field of interest with its own identity. As 'museum studies' or 'Museumskunde' museology entered its empirical-descriptive phase. The stage of unification and systematisation is also described as 'museography stage' (Tsuruta 1980) and 'Emanzipationsstufe' (Jahn 1979).

The approach to museum work gradually shifted from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary, but an all encompassing museological theory and methodology was not yet developed. It is significant that, for example, in the United States museum training programs are almost exclusively called 'museum studies programs' rather than 'museology programs'. The term 'museology' is avoided as these courses are developed on an empirically-descriptive level (Malt 1987). Probably for the same reasons French authors preferred the term 'muséographie' rather than 'muséologie'. Anyway, at the first General Conference of the International Council of Museums (1948) its president, George Salles, pointed out that one of the main changes brought about by ICOM was that museology ('la mission muséographique') was increasingly regarded as the connecting factor in museum work.

## Second museum revolution

During the 1960s attempts were made to define museology as a science and to have it accepted as academic discipline to be taught at universities. Not by coincidence this (new) interest in museology was (again) related to a 'revolution in museum work' [note 7]. This revolution concerned the recognition of the social (educational) role of museums. In the catalogue of the exhibition 'Van Gothiek tot Empire' organised by the Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam) in 1957 J. Guérin, chief-curator of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Paris) wrote: 'The newest museography has placed on record principles and rules and claimed the status of science, which could provide the ideal museum director universal standards'. The principles of modern museography (= museum practice) as given by Guérin were: recreation next to education, a dynamic presentation of the objects, and hospitality.

On an international level a major turning point was the ninth General Conference of ICOM, held in Grenoble and Paris in 1971 on the theme 'The Museum in the Service of Man, Today and Tomorrow'. 'After a quarter of a century of focusing on the traditional roles of museums - collecting, conservation, curatorship, research and communication - ICOM in the Grenoble sessions, now placed a major emphasis on the potential role of museums in society, in education and cultural action, arguing that the traditional primary functions of museums should be seen as "first and foremost in the service of all mankind", and of a constantly

changing society' (Boylan 1996).

At the UNESCO International Regional Museum Seminar on the role of museums in education, held in Rio de Janeiro (1958), museology was defined as a branch of knowledge concerned with the study of the purposes and the organisation of museums, thus re-emphasising the paradigm that was developed during the early 20th century. This new approach is reflected in the resolutions adopted at the 11th General Assembly of ICOM (= 10th General Conference) at Copenhagen (1974). It was concluded that museology was still subject to social and cultural situations belonging to the past. The resolutions call for a transformation of the museum based on the demands of the community in its cultural, environmental and demographic position. Investigation, conservation, and preservation are called 'the traditional and still essential functions', but 'conditions of the modern world lead the museum towards assuming new commitments and adopting new forms'. These new commitments should be based on the interpretation of 'the cultural needs of the community completely independent of circumstantial factors, with an understanding of the problems of the contemporary individual and a respect for the liberty of information'. It is considered to be 'imperative to bring up to date a museology still subject to social and cultural situations belonging to the past' (quoted from Resolutions 1-5).

#### The emancipation of museography

The first full ICOM General Conference in 1948 called for the proper recognition and training of the museum's technical staff using the then current title of 'museographers' to cover a wide range of support staff, including collections care and exhibition technicians (Boylan 1996). The following General Conference, in London in 1950, recognised restorers as a distinct museological profession. The next General Conference, held in Milan in 1953, recognised the need for museums to have education specialists with teaching qualifications.

The 'emancipation of museography' was a logical consequence of the 'revolution in museum work' during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. There was an increasing concern about the improvement of museum practice. For each field experiences were collected and confronted with knowledge from outside the museum field. An example is the publication of Jürgen Rohmeder's *Methoden und Medien der Museumsarbeit* (1977). In his introduction Rohmeder states that, in general, history museums are led by historians, natural history museums by biologists, art museums by art historians, etc. This might be necessary to keep control of the subject-matter aspects of the museum, but, as Rohmeder concludes, it is not enough to make a museum a public institution. Considering museums primarily as educational institutes, Rohmeder suggests to take communication science as starting point and frame of reference.

In this way professionalisation in the museum field paradoxically lead to the divergence of a wide variety of professional disciplines: conservation/restoration and education, with in their footsteps registration (documentation), exhibition design, public relations, security, etc. The concept of the curator as the chief carrier of theoretical museology (as suggested at the 1965 conference of ICOM) and determining factor in the museum administration was undermined. This situation initiated two reactions. Firstly, the curator, whose position was also weakened because of shifts in scientific perspectives, attempted to give new theoretical

foundation of his work. Secondly, in the field of training museologists tried to overcome the diverging tendencies by creating an unifying theoretical frame work.

### Theoretical museology

During the seventh General Conference of ICOM (New York 1965), which main theme was training of museum personnel, it was concluded that it was necessary to develop university courses in theoretical museology. It was the first time an overall theme was chosen for the General Conference of ICOM. In view of the museum revolution of the 1960s/70s with its emphasis on the renewal of museum work, it is not surprising that museum training was chosen as the main theme. As a result of this conference a meeting of experts on training was organised in Brno in 1967 [note 8]. This meeting brought about the creation (in 1968) of an international committee on training (ICTOP).

In view of the content of the papers presented on the subject at the conference of 1965, it is clear that despite the use of the adjective 'theoretical', museology was considered predominantly an applied discipline, which content is empirical-descriptive. The resolutions of the 1974 conference show that within ICOM in ten years time the concept of museology evolved from an applied discipline towards an independent field in connection with the changing views of the social role of the museum institute. From a predominantly research institute the museum became a social-cultural institute with an educational function. It is significant that during the 1960s a new edition was prepared of the Soviet-Russian handbook on museum work (first published in 1955) adding some theoretical chapters, including one about museology as a science. At the same time, museologists from the German Democratic Republic proposed the use of the term 'Museumwissenschaft' to replace 'Museumskunde', thus emphasising a shift towards a theoretical-synthetic stage of the discipline. On an international level ICOM and UNESCO initiated the preparation of a treatise on museology. At one of the first meetings of the editorial board (1971) much attention was paid to the balance between museological theory and practice. The whole work should be 'a coherent structure organised in a single and all-embracing conception of museology'. Obviously there was no difference of opinion about the content of museological theory. However, the treatise of museology was never realised. Apart from a demarcation dispute between the ICOM International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) and the ICOM International Committee for the Training of Museum Personnel (ICTOP) the preparation seems to have been hampered by a new tendency of the 1960s and 1970s: the 'emancipation of museography'. Another problem was the questioning of the existing paradigm. The apparent unanimity of 1971 was replaced - at least within ICOFOM - by a confusing multitude of competing paradigms.

### Washburn vs. Neustupny

Although from a metamuseological point of view the transition of the empirical-descriptive to the theoretical-synthetic stage started to take place around 1970, museology as an autonomous academic discipline is not generally accepted yet. Many museum workers even reject such notion. A typical example at the beginning of the transition phase is the American museum worker Wilcomb E. Washburn. He ironically used the term 'grandmotherology' in connection with museology to show the - in his eyes - ridiculous pretensions to provide for a

theoretical basis for museum work (Washburn 1967). Washburn rejected the idea of establishing a museum profession and considered 'the almost total lack of theoretical discussion of the museum's right to claim professional status for its housekeeping skills [as] a clue to the barrenness of the philosophy underlying the claim to professional status'. His paper does not deal with the content of museology as academic discipline, but it is clear that where there cannot be such a thing as a museum profession, there is no place for a museum theory. To Washburn museum work has no autonomous identity, but is derived from the subject-matter disciplines. Like the keeping of libraries, the keeping of museums is to serve the user and to facilitate his purpose. Following the example of librarians and archivists, the professional museum administrator and the educator tend to downgrade the subject-matter over which he presides as administrator, and to upgrade the techniques by which that subject-matter is preserved or communicated to the public, at the cost of the real purpose of the museum which is to support scientific research.

Washburn's critical attitude is dictated by the shift in the balance of power within the museum organisation. Professional administrators and educators have taken control over parts of the museum domain (i.e. the emancipation of museography). Washburn represents the group of scientists who feel threatened by this development. Following naturally from this line of argument he rejects the idea of museology as independent discipline.

In the same period the Czech museologist Jiri Neustupny took another route. Whereas Washburn is not aware of the emerging museological thinking in East Europe, Neustupny has read Washburn's publications in *Curator*. This one-way flow of information is characteristic. It influenced the museology discourse to great extent, at least till the end of the 1970s.

Neustupny was one of the first to discuss the status of museology as academic discipline. His ideas were first formulated in 1950 (in his PhD thesis *Problems of modern museology*) and were fully developed in 1968 (Neustupny 1968). At the end of his life Neustupny once more summarised his views on the status of museology as academic discipline (Neustupny 1980 and 1981).

Initially Neustupny made a subtle distinction between theory and methodology at one side and science at the other. For him museology is a theory, a methodology of museum work, not a science. As a field of theory museology has its own identity and is even a relatively independent branch of the theoretical knowledge concerned with a relatively independent, well-defined and culturally important aspect of human activity in museums, but as a science museology does not have its own specific method of study. Museology is, says Neustupny, an aggregate of scientific disciplines, each of the disciplines which it comprises has its own subject of study. In this connection the term 'museological discipline' is introduced. Each 'museological discipline' has its own specific method of work, corresponding to the character of the branch of science represented in the museum collections. For example, historical museology uses the same method as history. In 1980, however, Neustupny abandoned his formal objections: 'The question, asked by some authors, whether museology is a separate academic discipline or not has little significance within the contemporary system of knowledge and contemporary sociology of science. Even the most classical academic disciplines have undergone considerable changes, extensions and regroupings during the last decades. As a consequence of such changes "theory" and "discipline" appeared as quite

synonymous terms. What is important with regard to museology is that it does exist as a discipline, irrespective of whether, according to a prescriptive judgement, it should be separate or should not'.

Contrary to Washburn Neustupny has accepted museology as scientific discipline, but Neustupny is not able to define its cognitive orientation. Museology is considered by him as an aggregate of different theories and methodologies. Starting from the work of Neustupny it was Zbynek Strjnskz who made the decisive step towards the formulation of a theoretical-synthetic orientation in museology.

### Shifting perspective

The historical development of the museological orientation within the museum field can be described in terms of a major shift of perspective shifted from 'special museology' (i.e. museology as seen from the perspective of subject-matter disciplines) towards 'applied museology' (i.e. museology as seen from the perspective of support disciplines) and finally towards 'theoretical museology' (i.e. museology seen as a genuine academic discipline). In the course of this development the subject-matter content of museum theory decreased.

The ICOM International Committee for Museology, founded in 1976, has played a crucial role as to the acceptance of museology as a 'science'. However, even when they accept the possibility of a theoretical-synthetic museology, most authors consider the transition from the empirical-descriptive to the theoretically synthetic stage as not yet completed. In this respect Gluzinski distinguishes between Real Museology and Postulated Museology (Gluzinski 1983). Real Museology refers to the present state (empirical-descriptive), museology not yet being a self-contained discipline. Postulated Museology refers to the future state (theoretical-synthetic), which will eventually emerge from the theoretical discussions. The main drawback in the transition from Real to Postulated Museology is the lack of a generally accepted new paradigm which fulfils the present needs of theory as well as practice. The 'emancipation of museography' and the fragmentation of the museum profession have undermined the current paradigm. Different new paradigms have come to the fore but have not yet crystallised into schools.

Even if the gradual emergence of the theoretically synthetic stage is not yet generally accepted the dawn of the mathematical stage has been heralded. Attempts have been made to apply mathematical models for museological phenomena. Perhaps the most interesting example is Thompson applying Thom's catastrophe theory in the description of the biography of artefacts (Thompson 1979). Other attempts are concerned with visitor behaviour (Cialdea 1988), the quality of collections (the Arts & Auction survey of American corporate collections), the degree of museality (Suler 1981), and the growth of collections (Van Mensch 1989). These approaches do not only aim at developing descriptive models, but also claim to have predictive value.

### Doubts and criticism

The Polish museologist Wojciech Gluzinski pointed at the necessity of clear concepts. Museology cannot be both a science of a given field of activity and this field of activity itself

at the same time. In the context of his work the museum worker is not practising museology as a science in the same manner that an historian is practising history. What this museum worker is practising is either a science different from museology, or a practical activity based on the knowledge of museology (Gluzinski 1983). This view agrees with the distinction between museology and museography as theory and practice of museum work.

Even if we accept Gluzinski's reasoning and consequently use the term museology for the theoretical component of a given field only, we are confronted with a confusing diversity of approaches. There is no consensus among museologists concerning profile and identity of the discipline. Different approaches have not yet crystallised into 'schools'. According to Razgon there is no need to be alarmed by the lack of a generally accepted definition of the subject-matter of museology. In a contribution to the first ICOFOM symposium (1978) he refers to other disciplines (like philosophy, sociology, ethnography, historical geography, cybernetics, ecology) coping with similar problems. Nevertheless, the problem of identity continued to preoccupy many museologists, despite Neustupny's question - ten years before Razgon's remark - if it is really necessary to ask whether museology is a scientific discipline (Neustupny 1968).

Notwithstanding Razgon's reassuring words and despite Neustupny's rhetoric question there appears to be a strong wish among a certain group of museologists to have museology recognised as a science by becoming a discipline accepted by the academic world. As Judith Spielbauer suggests, the underlying assumption seems to be that if museology has a place in the university, museologists will gain in prestige, support and position within the museum profession and the community at large (Spielbauer 1981). In this respect there is a close connection between the attempts to have museum work recognised as a profession in countries like the United States, and attempts to have museology recognised as a science in the former socialist countries. A key role is played by those involved in training programmes. The status of museum training programmes very much depends on the degree in which museum work is considered a profession and the degree in which museology is recognised as a more or less autonomous discipline. At the same time, in order to teach museology it is necessary to develop conceptual frame-works and a clear terminology.

Perusal of museological literature, notably ICOFOM's Museological Working Papers and ICOFOM Study Series reveal a recurring set of basic questions: is museology a discipline, and if so, what is its object of knowledge, its purpose of understanding and its methodological orientation? Many authors mention the need to analyse and classify the variety of opinions in order to promote well-structured discussion. It is a necessary step to be taken, even if some authors seem to doubt its usefulness. However, the rather optimistic view expressed by Tomislav Sola: '...one thing is certain: somewhere in the future individual witnessings and annunciations will merge into a compact system ...' (Sola 1984) could be met with some doubt.

Benes explains the lack of unanimity in three ways (Benes 1981). Firstly, museum work has the disadvantage of heterogeneity of documents (objects) which belong to at least twenty different branches of science. This is perhaps the main reason why the work in libraries and archives has already brought about some shared higher level of conceptualisation than work in museums. A second reason for the lack of unanimity is the fact that most museum

workers tend to concentrate on their own domain. Especially those working in the field of research deny the scientific character of other museum activities. They identify themselves with the subject-matter discipline, rather than their specific museum related task, which is re-enforced by the fact that usually no special museological pre-entry qualifications are required. Finally, museum workers are inclined to restrict their interest to their own type of museum, not identifying themselves with the whole museum field. In the early 1980s Zeller made a study of the professional profile of educators in major American art museums. The result of this study confirms Benes' observations. Zeller found that art museum educators see themselves primarily as art historians, i.e. as subject-matter specialists rather than educators or museum workers (Zeller 1984).

According to Strjnskž some museum workers fear that transition from the empirical to the theoretical phase would separate museological theory from the reality of the museum itself (Strjnskž 1981b). This same fear might be reflected by the points raised by Benes. Moreover, as Burcaw put in his usual very direct way: 'In the United States, and in western countries generally I believe, we tend to view museum work more from the aspect of measurable results than from theoretical foundations' (Burcaw 1981: 30). In order to avoid a theory that is disconnected from practice museum workers tend to concentrate on a special subject-matter discipline, a particular museum or category of museums, or one particular technical field. On the other hand, in one of his early publications Kenneth Hudson expressed the specificity of the museum/museological situation as opposed to the subject-matter interests: 'The museum [...] removes the picture or the statue from its context and compels us to see it as an abstract think, a work of art, demands a new attitude, special training and a specialised phraseology' (Hudson 1977: 11-12).

The obstinacy of museum curators to stick to the view of museology as applied science can partly be explained by the structure of the museum field, and especially the organisational structure of museums. Museum curators have every reason to keep the status quo. They resist new paradigms as these might threaten the current balance of power. Their reactions on the work of ICOFOM are sometimes hostile. Even within the committee doubts were expressed as to the applicability of theoretical and metatheoretical thinking. As one of the opponents wrote: 'We should stop worrying about defining museology. To define museology and to give it a spiritual and even metaphysical connotation seem to be the hobby of some museologists. They are wasting their time. Museology is simply a tool to good museum organisation and management' (Nair 1986: 227).

In this respect some authors metaphorically refer to religion, like Tomislav Sola who explains: '... so far we are in the worse position than fourteen century catholic church with all its popes and schisms. We have some canon law and liturgical rules (i.e. museography that we ambitiously call museology) but we do not have religio curatoris, some theology of ours - whether our god is museum object or museum itself, it is still some golden calf, - nothing else. [...] We have some considerable epiphanic messages, but we still lack our bible' (Sola 1992: 16). Hudson uses the same metaphor to express his abhorrence of an unifying theory in museum work: 'Every profession has its theology and its own ways with heretics. I personally mistrust all theologies' (Hudson 1989: 188). Nevertheless, museology has send out her apostles to spread the word (Sofka in Auer et al. 1989), but their emphasis on the need of a theory often has a defensive character. 'An error is made when we think that a



theory which serves practice should be the theory of practice. [...] It is not the theory of practice, but the theory of reality lying in the range of practice ...' (Gluzinski 1987: 116). A remark made by Burcaw may be added to this statement of Gluzinski: 'Theory and its application may grow at different rates. In the past, the museum raced ahead. In some locations and among some museum workers the opposite may now be true. But growing apart does not have to mean divorce. It may mean only that one partner needs to catch up' (Burcaw 1983: 23). On the same subject Gluzinski states: 'It has appeared that museology is not able to deal with that what is new. This crisis is not however caused by the internal development of museology, which may happen to old renowned sciences, but by external factors that are not dependent on museology. It indicates that within museology there is a lack of a mechanism which would correct its own development and could stimulate it' (Gluzinski 1987: 118).

### Theory and practice

Museological practice can have its own autonomous development. This development is initiated by different factors:

- \* social (socio-economic, socio-cultural, socio-political) developments outside the museological field;
- \* scientific developments within the field of material culture studies, natural history, art and art history, etc.;
- \* developments within the field of management, marketing, education, etc.;
- \* the influence of (museum) professionals with non- museological training;
- \* the general creativity of people.

What can be the role of theory? Bedekar has given a useful overview of the theory-practice polarity (Bedekar 1987: 51-52). In his view museology is related to museums in three ways. Firstly it follows the initiative taken by museums in solving their own professional problems creatively or at least innovatively. Secondly, museology may generate ideas, concepts, skills, methods and techniques which ought to be accepted by museums. Thirdly, museology does contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of museums when the surveys, teachings and researches in the formal museology centres get transmitted to students or trainees who are ready to turn their insights into plans and projects or for updating the contemporary procedures in museums.

As academic discipline and as new foothold for the museum field, museology has to create a structural consistency, integrating the different approaches as mentioned in preceding chapters. As such museology may contribute to the development of the museum field in a five-fold way:

- \* serving as a clearing house of ideas and practices;
- \* providing an unifying principle in museum work;
- \* providing basic concepts for the development of governmental policies concerning 'cultural resource management';
- \* providing the theoretical basis of the curriculum of professional training courses;
- \* providing a theoretical frame of reference for the development of research programmes.

Gluzinski presented a general model of a mechanism to solve the dysfunctional divide between theorists and practitioners. This model starts from three parameters: museology ('Real Museology discourse'), training ('training discourse'), museum ('activity of museums'). The development of museological knowledge enriches the training's content and thus indirectly influences the perfection of the museum praxis, which in its turn finds its reflection in the 'RM discourse' and the cycle is repeated. This model emphasises the special role of those involved in training programmes. The 'cycle', however, is no one-way direction. Museology as theory may contribute to the development of practice in more than one way.

The rationale behind the development of museology as academic (theoretical) discipline is the relationship between theory and training. The conceptualisation, structuring and standardisation of terminology are 'by-products' of teaching. The contribution of theory and training to the development of practice depends on the degree of acceptance by the museum profession. Some of the limiting conditions of this acceptance have been mentioned before. In addition it should be noted that the museum profession is not a closed profession. Pre-entry training is not obligatory, and sometimes even seems to be a handicap (see Chapter 9). The future of museology as academic discipline is in the relationship between theory and practice, i.e. the ability of theoreticians to participate in and contribute to relevant discussions. One way is to provide a necessary 'critical objectivity' (Sola 1992: 11) which will enable the museum worker to transcend the specialist outlooks of the subject matter disciplines and of the 'museological disciplines'.

## Criteria

In 1965 Strjnskž was the first to summarise the different views held among museum workers as to the question whether museology could be considered a true academic discipline (Strjnskž 1966). Ten years later (in 1975) Villy Toft Jensen conducted a survey among museum workers as to their opinions about museology. The results were published five years later in the first issue of *Museological Working Papers* (Jensen 1980). Jensen's findings proved to be very similar to Strjnskž's. On the basis of the work of Strjnskž and Jensen distinction can be made between three lines of thought:

- \* museology is an independent science,
- \* museology is an applied science, i.e. concerns the application of the theory and methodology of subject-matter disciplines,
- \* museology is not a scientific discipline.

Jensen did not quantify the responses to his questionnaire. The majority of contributors to *Museological Working Papers* 1 and 2, dealing with the question 'Is museology a science?', considered museology an independent discipline or at least on the way to become one. Only a few considered museology a field of action rather than a field of study. When in 1990 during a conference in Leicester a similar survey was held 90 % of the participants of that conference considered museology an independent discipline, while only 4 % argued that museology as a discipline makes no sense. It seems that during the 1980s museology gradually has been accepted as academic discipline.

Strjnskž mentions three basic criteria to consider museology a genuine academic discipline: historicity, an inner logic of scientific knowledge, and objective social need (Strjnskž, unpublished paper 1989). As to the first criterion authors like Ennenbach, Gluzinski, Neustupny, Schreiner and Strjnskž, put much effort in demonstrating the continuity of museological thought from the 16th century onwards. Either Samuel von Quicchebergh (who published in 1565 his *Inscriptiones vel tituli theatri amplissimi, complectentis rerum universitatis singulias materias et imagines eximias* on the management of collections) or Johann Daniel Major (who published a similar book in 1674 titled *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken von Kunst- und Naturalien-Kammern insgemein*) is considered being the first theoretical museologist. In addition Ennenbach refers to the contribution to museology made by philosophers like Comenius, Leibniz and Goethe (Ennenbach 1983). The general conclusion is that at least the criterion of historicity is fulfilled. As to the inner logic Strjnskž elaborated five questions that need to be answered (Strjnskž loc.cit.):

- \* Does museology have a special object of knowledge?
- \* Does museology have a characteristic scientific language?
- \* Does museology have its own characteristic methods?
- \* Does museology have its own scientific system?
- \* Can museology be fitted in the existing system of sciences?

These are in fact the building stones of the discipline's paradigm. They give shape to the identity of the discipline. In the present transition from the empirical-descriptive to the theoretically-synthetic stage of development follows from different attempts to create a new paradigm of the basis of the points raised by these five questions.

The discussion concerning the specific cognitive orientation in museology will be discussed in Chapter 4. In addition attention will be paid to the different views concerning the purpose of museological understanding (Chapter 5). The scientific system, i.e. the structure of museology as a discipline, will be discussed in Chapter 6. The aspect of scientific language is discussed in Chapter 8. The aspect of methodology is discussed in Chapter 7 in relation with the distinction between museology and the subject-matter disciplines.

As to the criterion of social need some authors, like Jahn and Strjnskž, point out that the most decisive criterion whether museology is to be considered a science, is the need for such scientific knowledge. Within the frame work of marxist-leninist philosophy this is a most relevant aspect, especially since according to this philosophy the needs of the society can objectively be determined. In western publications the social accountability of the discipline takes another form. It seems to focus on the social relevancy of museological practice rather than museological theory. The relevancy of the theory is related to the needs of the profession itself. In this respect it has been stated that the acceptance of the discipline by the workers in the field is a *conditio sine qua non*. But not only do they need to accept the theory, they should also have the ability to absorb theoretical ideas, and they should have the willingness to apply them.

New academic disciplines do not come into existence by proclamation or statement; they develop through their activities, which are reactions to the needs of the developing society.

Their validity and concomitantly their recognition derive from the internal integrity, structure and methodology of the discipline itself. Despite the rather cynical, or sometimes hostile attitude of some museum workers, museology is widely recognised as a field of interest having its own set of characteristics. These characteristics mainly follow the needs of the professional field that museology intends to cater for. Significantly, the main contributions to the development of museology come from those involved in training, as it is especially the field of professional training that profits from a theoretical framework. But significant is also that as yet no textbooks are available (at least not in English) that reflect this notion of museology as an autonomous discipline. It shows that the transition from 'proto-science' to 'normal science' is not completed. The old museum-centred paradigm was adequate only to establish the plausibility of the discipline and to provide a rationale for the various 'craft-rules' which govern practice. To Kuhn the demarcation criterion is whether the discipline has puzzles to solve. Apart from object-oriented subject-matter research, the appearance of the puzzle-solving approach in the museum field was brought about by other disciplines that took an interest in museums as research object rather than museology. The emergence of museology as scientific discipline is partly an attempt to re-claim the museum field as research object by the museum field itself.

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## Notes

1 Razgon more or less suggested that mainly museologists from East Europe contributed to the development of a theory of museology. 'In Rahmen der sozialistischen Staatengemeinschaft führten kollektive Anstrengungen der Museologen zu Ergebnissen, die bei weitem alles übertrafen, was in der vorangegangenen Zeit erreicht worden war'.

2 Although the article was published anonymously, the author is generally considered to be the editor of the journal *J.G.Th von Graesse*. For a general description of this journal and information about the author, see Ennenbach 1982.

3 Brazilian museologist Waldisa Russio distinguishes between five stages of development of museology as academic discipline (Russio 1989). The first stage is the creation of the Mouseion of Alexandria; the second stage refers to the Renaissance; the third stage is the period of Enlightenment and the Romantic period. The fourth stage, which is not clearly dated (around 1900 ?), sees the recognition of the necessity of professionalisation and specialisation in connection with the emergence of new publics, resulting from urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation. The fifth stage is the present time, characterised by new reflections on the social responsibilities of museums in view of world disasters. >back<

4 According to French dictionaries the term 'muséologie' did not appear before 1931. Apart from an accidental use in David Murray's *Museums, their history and their use* (1904) both terms seem to be avoided by English museum professionals (Agren 1992).

5 In this respect Gluzinski speaks of 'museological scientism' (also described as the 'institutional-instrumental approach') as 'a particular attitude of museologists, who see the museum as an auxiliary organ of science, which blocks then the purely museological point of view, effectively draws their attention from its basic problem of the substance of the museum' (Gluzinski 1980: 439).

6 This agrees with Russio's 4th stage of development.

7 The same movement became influential in Europe during the 1970s en 1980s. In France and the United Kingdom the 'new museology' movement found its origin in this museum

revolution (see Chapter 5). In the initial concept of the Treatise of museology the term was also used for a chapter on the transition of 'the museum as temple to the museum as forum' (ICOM News 24, 1971, (4): 21). In 1989 the term 'museum revolution' was used again in the invitation and programme of a seminar on natural history museums organised by the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 27-29 September 1989). The use of the term refers to the same new approach to museum work as advocated by Cameron. In the same sense the term is used by Renaud 1992.

8 Incorrectly referred to as 'the first effort to have museology recognised as a scientific discipline in universities' (Museum 32, 1980, (3): 158).

**Ke stažení:**

- [The Museology Discourse](#)



## **International Committee for Museology**

Founded in 1976 the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) has become the third largest international committee within the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The committee can be considered the main platform for international museological discussion. Members of the International Committee for Museology are as such members of the International Council of Museums. However, participation in ICOFOM activities is not limited to formal membership of either ICOM or ICOFOM. Participation from outside these organisations is even sought after. So, in fact we are dealing with two populations within the committee: (1) the ICOFOM membership as a whole, and (2) the participants in ICOFOM activities. On the basis of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of both populations it will be attempted to define the professional context of the international museology discussion.

### **ICOFOM's pre-history**

Two strong personalities have put their stamp upon this committee as successive chairmen: Jan Jelinek and Vinos Sofka. Both have their personal and professional roots in Brno (Czechoslovakia), a town which, curiously enough, has continued to play a special role in the history of ICOFOM and museology from the early 1960s onwards.

In 1951 Jelinek (born 1926, graduated in anthropology at Brno university in 1949) was appointed curator at the Moravian Museum [1]. In 1958 he became director of the museum[2]. In this position he made great efforts to convert the once neglected provincial museum into a truly scientific as well as an educational institute[3]. He launched an extensive reconstruction programme of the museum premises and initiated new departments. For example, he established a scientific institute-cum-museum, Anthropos, based on multidisciplinary research of the Pleistocene period. The museum, in fact a department of the Moravian Museum, was opened in 1964 in a purpose built building. Physical and cultural anthropology, palaeontology and geology were integrated in order to obtain a better insight into the life of Pleistocene man (Jelinek 1969). According to Novotny there was no precedent for such a concept, which offered a complex approach to the period to be researched (Novotny 1986: vi).

Because of this innovative approach Jelinek very soon attracted attention not only within the field of palaeoanthropology but also from the international museum world. His first museological publications concerned the concept of Anthropos in which he explained the multidisciplinary approach[4]. Among those who became interested in Jelinek's concept of a multidisciplinary museum was George-Henri Rivičre, who visited the Moravian Museum in 1964. This visit contributed to the development of Rivičre's museological thinking, which eventually led to the concept of the ecomuseum. It was also Rivičre who introduced Jelinek into ICOM, where soon after Rivičre's visit Jelinek was asked to become chairman of the International Committee of Regional Museums. In 1965 Jelinek was elected chairman of ICOM's Advisory Committee, while in 1971 he became president of ICOM, a function he held for two terms of office, till 1977.

In the meantime, having been appointed director of the Moravian Museum, Jelinek was confronted with a lack of consensus among his curators about the policy of the museum. As

the curators felt themselves scientific researchers rather than museum workers, Jelinek was forced to consider two basic questions: (a) what is the profile of the museum profession, and (b) what is the essence of scientific research within the museum context?[5] The importance of these questions prompted him to take two initiatives: to create a department of museology at the Moravian Museum and to (re)establish a chair in museology at the Jan E. Purkinje University (Brno). The department of museology, created in 1962, had a two-fold task. Firstly, it should provide a theoretical basis to the policy of the Moravian Museum itself, and secondly it should give advice to the smaller museums in the region. Having been elected a member of the Scientific Committee of the university, Jelinek succeeded in establishing a department of museology at the university too[6]. This department had to cater for the training of future curators. Established in 1963 this department was the first post-war university-based training opportunity in Europe[7]. Initially Jelinek himself directed the courses, but soon Zbynek Stransky (from Prague) became his assistant. In 1964 Stransky was given full responsibility for both the departments of museology of the museum and of the university[8].

As chairman of the Advisory Committee and subsequently as president of ICOM, Jan Jelinek discovered that the problems he had met in the museum were also found within ICOM. There was little rapport between the growing number of specialist committees. The discussions about establishing special committees on museums of literature and of Egyptology prompted Jelinek to propose the foundation of a committee on museology, which could serve as the “conscience “ of ICOM. The proposal met with approval from the Advisory Committee in June 1976, after which it was discussed by the Executive Council[9].

The task of the newly proposed committee was described in the document The establishment of a new international committee on museology: “Every branch of professional activity needs to be studied, developed and adapted to changing contemporary conditions – and not least that of museology. To pursue the aims of distributing knowledge of modern museological ideas and to help in different fields of museological development, this will be the programme of the ICOM International Committee for Museology”.[10]

The Executive Council decided to establish an ad hoc working group to meet before the next General Conference in order to define the work of the new committee. This meeting was held at Brno in March 1977[11]. At the 34th session of the Advisory Committee (May 1977) the report of the ad hoc working group was approved and ICOFOM was accepted as a new international committee[12]. Its chairman was Jelinek, then retiring president of ICOM[13]. At that time the committee counted thirteen members[14].

First period, 1977-1982

It took some time for the committee’s administrative and scientific structure to take shape. [15] Most of the documents had a rather ad hoc character. The first constitutive document (Rules) was a brief, rough outline, defining the aims of the committee as:

1. to establish museology as a scientific discipline;
2. to study and to assist in the development of museums and the museum profession, to study their role in society, their activities and their functions;

3. to encourage critical analysis of the main trends of museology.

The first triennial programme focussed on three points: (a) research in museums, (b) relations between governmental bodies, other sources of funding, and museums, and (c) relations between museums and other cultural institutions[17]. The first point became the theme of ICOFOM's first annual meeting (Warsaw 1978). It reflected Jelinek's life-long interest: the identity of research typical for the museum[18]. Not surprisingly, the theme of ICOFOM's second annual meeting (Torgiano 1979) referred to another topic typical for Jelinek: multi- and interdisciplinarity in museum work.

Jelinek was a practical man rather than a philosopher. The topics of the first triennial programme followed from his practical outlook. The theme of the third meeting (Mexico 1980), however, shifted the perspective to the 'metamuseological' level as it focussed on Systematics and systems in museology. The triennial programme for 1980-1983 listed four topics to be discussed within the committee: (a) selection of museum objects and building of collections, (b) museology and its applications to different types of museums, (c) museology and public relations, and (d) systems of museology[19]. Only the last theme was actually dealt with (Paris 1982).

In September 1979 the International Committee for Training of Museum Personnel met in Leicester. Vinos Sofka reported on behalf of ICOFOM about the committee's first meeting in Warsaw. The reactions were mixed. Surprisingly George-Henri Rivičre reacted very negative. Another critic was Giljam Dusee, first director of the newly founded Reinwardt Academie (Amsterdam). Both speakers represented a considerable group of ICTOP members with doubts concerning content and ideological orientation of ICOFOM. Many ICTOP members felt uncomfortable with the number of Eastern European museologists in ICOFOM. This feeling was made explicit by Burcaw (ICTOP member) in his contribution to the joint ICOFOM-ICTOP meeting in 1983 (Burcaw 1983). Despite the doubts, and sometimes even hostilities, ICOFOM and ICTOP organised joint meetings in 1983 and 1984. Many voting members of ICOFOM are non-voting member of ICTOP and vice versa.

After 1979 Jelinek more or less lost control over the committee. This was partly due to a decreasing interest on his part. At the end of his career he wanted to concentrate on his scientific work (anthropology). Another problem was his delicate health, which forced him to set priorities. The main reason, however, was the lack of support from the Czech authorities. As result of his activities and opinions expressed in 1968, Jelinek was forced to resign from the position of director of the Moravian Museum. Having been elected president of ICOM he was allowed to continue his international activities. The end of the presidency was the end of his activities as simply no money was made available any longer.

The committee's third annual meeting (Mexico 1980) ended in chaos. Only a few of the scheduled lectures actually took place, while Rivičre tried to impose his own approach on the committee's sessions[20]. Due to lack of a stimulating chairman the committee failed to meet in 1981. The meeting in 1982 (Paris) took again a rather chaotic turn. As in Mexico, Rivičre tried to manipulate the meeting, which was chaired by Sofka since Jelinek was unable to attend[21]. The main problem was the status of ecomuseums and the so-called new museology within ICOFOM. As a kind of compromise it was decided to have two symposiums

during the next meeting (London 1983): one in cooperation with ICTOP about the methodology of museology, and one about ecomuseums.

Second period, 1983-1989

At the 1983 annual meeting in London Sofka was elected chairman. Sofka (born 1929; graduated in law at Prague University in 1952) had worked from as deputy director of the Archaeological Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences at Brno from 1956 till 1968. He succeeded to escape the country in 1968. In Stockholm he worked successively as Head of the Exhibition Department, the Management and Administration Department, and the Museum Development Department of the Museum of National Antiquities[22]. Jelinek and Sofka had got to know each other in Brno, and Jelinek saw in Sofka the enthusiastic organiser the committee needed.

During his two terms as chairman, Sofka developed a modus operandi which gradually became characteristic for ICOFOM and formed the basis of its unexpected success. It was based on three interconnected symposia and extensive publishing. The basic document is the ICOFOM aims & policy, which is the basis for the Long-term programme. For each triennial period, the long-term programme is translated into a Triennial programme. The ICOFOM aims & policy and the Long-term programme were discussed and finally accepted at the 1986 meeting in Buenos Aires.

The Long-term programme mentions the following means of achieving the objectives given by the ICOFOM aims & policy: symposia, lectures, workshops, publications and museological exhibitions. The core activity is the annual symposium, which is seen as a place for direct discussion and debate on museological questions. In addition lectures may be organised, offering the opportunity to benefit from the unique circumstances afforded by the host country and its institutions. In practice this idea resulted into seminars, i.e. sessions during which a group of invited speakers presented their ideas and experiences, followed by discussion.

1984 seminar Museums in society and their role in the cultural policy of the country. Case study: the Netherlands (joint session with the International Committee for the Training of Personnel)

1985 lecture programme on the new museology movement

1986 seminar Cultural policy, museums and museology in Latin America (joint session with the ICOM national committees of the Latin American countries and the regional secretariat of ICOM)

1987 (a) seminar Cultural policy, the heritage, museums and museology in Finland

(b) seminar Cultural policy, the heritage, museums and museology in Sweden

(c) seminar The need of museology

(d) seminar National museum documentation centres – cornerstones of an international museum documentation network

1988 seminar Case study: the heritage, museums, museology and the Indian cultural policy

1989 (a) seminar ICOFOM 1976-1988 – assessment of achievements

(b) seminar Dynamic preservation (joint session with the Working Group on Theory and History of Restoration of the ICOM Committee for Conservation)

(c) seminar Regional museums as generators of culture (joint session with the International Committee for Regional Museums)

(d) seminar Museology and landscape preservation

A special activity mentioned in the Long-term programme is the ICOFOM Museology Workshop. In 1986 the first international workshop was organized in cooperation with the Nationales Museumsrat der DDR (see below). The Long-term programme also mentions the possibility to organize regional workshops providing the opportunity to meet locally to boost membership participation. Finally, the possibility of museological exhibitions is mentioned. These exhibitions could give an overview of relevant museological publications from all over the world. During the ICOM General Conferences in 1986 and 1989 such exhibitions have been organized, but without direct involvement of the committee.

At the end of the second period ICOFOM appeared to have succeeded in having acquired respectability as an international platform for theoretical discussion, while at the same time museology itself seems to have become recognized and accepted as an academic discipline. The many symposiums and seminars, as well as the publications resulting from those meetings produced much useful material on the three fields mentioned in the Rules. Even though the distribution of this material was limited, it wielded a stimulating influence. The invitations to ICOFOM key members to participate in a large number of meetings on the theory of museology organized by national and international organisations contributed to the spreading of the ideas that were developed within the committee. The amount of these meetings in 1988 prompted Sofka to speak about 'the museology boom in 1988' and '1988 as break-through-year of museology' [23]. After ten years the committee seems to have reached a position in which its aims have acquired new impetus.

#### The meetings

The main activities of the committee are concentrated on the annual symposia. The theme of these symposia arises from the Long-term programme and is usually decided upon during the meeting in connection with the ICOM General Conference[24]. During the 1983 meeting a model was worked out to provide a structure for the successive symposia, based on the interrelationship society-object-museum[25]. Specific topics were to be chosen within these parameters. The model was followed during the triennial period 1983-1986, but abandoned in the next period (though retained in the triennial programme)[26]:

1984 (Leiden) Collecting today for tomorrow – highlighting the relationship between object and society

1985 (Zagreb) Originals and substitutes in museums – highlighting the relationship between object and museum

1986 (Buenos Aires) Museology and identity – highlighting the relationship between museum and society

1987 (Espoo) Museology and museums

1988 (Hyderabad) Museology and developing countries

1989 (Den Haag) Forecasting – a museological tool?

At the invitation of the Nationales Museumsrat der DDR a museology workshop was organized. The workshop was held in Berlin and Alt-Schwerin (16-22 May, 1986). Fifteen experts from thirteen countries participated (on invitation), ten of them members of the board of ICOFOM[27]. The aim of the workshop was to finalize the study on the first theme of the publication *Museological Working Papers: 'Museology – science or just practical work?'*. In addition papers gathered at ICOFOM meetings (and published as ICOFOM Study Series) were studied as well[28]. During the workshop it was concluded that there was no consensus as to the essence, intent nor appropriate direction of the discipline. An attempt was made to distinguish some main lines of thought. This work was used as the starting point of the analysis given in Chapter 4.[29]

After the first workshop no second one was organized. In order to provide for some structure to assess the work of the committee two seminars were organized: one in 1987 on 'The need for museology' and one in 1989 on 'ICOFOM 1976-1989: assessment of achievements'. The papers that were presented at these seminars were published in *Museological News*, and were thus available to all members of the committee.

The publications

Although the discussions did not always lead to satisfactory results, the successive issues of ICOFOM Study Series from a tangible proof of the committee's academic potential. The large number of papers serve as a sort of goldmine which can also be explored outside the context of the original symposiums. They are used in readers by different museum studies programmes, and many of the papers are translated and published in other languages.

ISS 1 Methodology of museology and professional training (1983)

ISS 2 Museum-territory-society (1983)

ISS 3 Addenda (1983)

ISS 4 Addenda 2 (1983)

ISS 5 Addenda 3 (1983)

ISS 6 Collecting today for tomorrow (1984)

ISS 7 Collecting today for tomorrow, comments (1984)

ISS 8 Originals and substitutes in museums (1985)

ISS 9 Originals and substitutes in museums, comments (1985)

ISS 10 Museology and identity (1986)

ISS 11 Museology and identity, comments (1986)

ISS 12 Museology and museums (1987)

ISS 13 Museology and museums, comments (1987)

ISS 14 Museology and developing countries (1988)

ISS 15 Museology and developing countries (1988)

ISS 16 Forecasting – a museological tool? (1989)

The first issue of *Museological News* (MN) was published in May 1981. It was edited by the committee's secretary and assistant-secretary André Desvallées and Gerard Turpin. After two issues the production of the bulletin was taken care of by Vinos Sofka. The size of the publication increased from 12 pages (MN 2) to 45 pages (MN 3), reaching a maximum of 287 pages in 1988 (MN 11). From its 9th issue onwards *Museological News* was published annually instead of biannually. The bulletin served two purposes. The main purpose was to keep the committee's membership informed about administrative matters. Gradually (from the 9th issue onwards) papers referring to the topics of the meetings were included. Most of the papers presented at ICOFOM seminars were published in *Museological News*.

The main publication series of the committee was supposed to be *Museological Working Papers* (MuWoP). This ambitious initiative is well documented in a series of proposals, reports, etc. published in the journal itself and in *Museological News*[30]. At the meeting of the committee in 1978 an Editorial Board was formed[31]. The activities of this working group resulted in the publication of MuWoP 1 in 1980. The journal was intended to be an open forum focussing on the fundamental questions within the field of museology. The first issue raised the question that had been discussed within and without the committee for years: is museology a science? By a letter to the secretaries of all national and international committees of ICOM the international museum community was invited to contribute[32].

After two issues the publication of this journal was no longer possible due to lack of financial support. A lot of interesting material remained unpublished since it had been the intention

to publish the final reports of all ICOFOM meetings in MuWoP. Consequently, papers started to be published in *Museological News* (hence its increase in size). The publication of MuWoP being interrupted, ICOFOM Study Series became the focal point of the publications programme. However, ISS had a limited circulation as it was only distributed among the contributors and the participants of the symposiums. The distribution of ISS illustrates the committee's main dilemma. The scientific work of the committee was supposed to be based on the open forum idea. Everybody should be able to contribute to the conference themes, either in person or by writing. But, the main body of material was not widely distributed. This hampered the transfer of points of view from one symposium to the next. This is illustrated by the fact that only a very small number of authors refer to earlier ISS papers. The wider circulation of both MuWoP issues is shown by a more frequent mentioning.

	number of authors referring to other publications	number of titles mentioned	number of ICOFOM titles mentioned	number of non-ICOFOM titles mentioned	number of non-museological titles mentioned
1983-1	7	37	13	11	13
1983-2	3	9	0	6	3
1984	7	27	3	19	5
1985	8	20	2	13	5
1986	15	129	9	51	69
1987	17	83	18	47	18
1988	16	88	15	40	33
1989	15	19	13	69	37

Table 1. References to other publications by contributors of ICOFOM symposia, 1983-1989.

### ICOFOM and New Museology

The difficulties that arose during the Mexico 1980 and Paris 1982 meetings were caused by difference of opinion about the position of ecomuseums and new museology within the committee. A group of members, headed by Rivičre, attempted to make new museology the focus of the committee's policy.

During the 1983 meeting the Canadian 'ecomuseologist' Pierre Mayrand proposed the forming of a working group on 'muséologie communautaire' [33]. The newly elected board decided 'to establish only function-oriented working groups and not constitute any permanent working groups to deal with the different problems within the field of museological research' [34]. Moreover, the board considered that 'in a situation, where the principal matters concerning museology, as such, are still being studied and discussed, and where the justification of museology – and consequently of ICOFOM – is even called into question, constituting working groups for detailed museological matters, and especially for different "museologies", could cause not only a split in limited personnel resources but first of all interference in the committee's work in its entirety'. Nevertheless, Mayrand was asked to establish a temporary working group to prepare a special session on ecomuseums and new museology during the 1984 meeting of ICOFOM which was to take place in Canada.



The 1984 meeting of ICOFOM did not take place in Canada[35]. Thus the temporary working group had nothing to prepare, nor did it take any other initiative regarding ICOFOM. Instead something else happened. Disappointed by the lack of response during the 1983 meeting in London and by the failure to organize the committee's annual meeting in Canada[36], the Canadian museologists organized the First International Workshop for Ecomuseums and New Museology in Quebec (8-13 October 1984). At this meeting a policy statement was adopted, known as the Declaration of Quebec (Mayrand 1986).

The Declaration of Quebec expressed 'the will to establish an organizational basis for joint reflection and experiments'. ICOM was requested to accept the creation of a special international committee on ecomuseums. The creation of an international Federation for New Museology was also proposed. The first request was rejected by ICOM[37]. At the second international meeting of this group (Lisbon 1985) the Movement International de Muséologie Nouvelle (MINOM) was founded, an organization that was eventually accepted by ICOM as affiliated organization[38].

The discussion about Mayrand's proposal during the 1983 meeting and the creation of MINOM threatened the newly found stability of the committee (Sofka 1989: 70). The issue was not only the creation of a new working group. Much more was at stake, as André Desvallées explained later: '... the question was complicated by the problems of language, or even more of mentality, and the French found themselves supported by the French Canadians, the Belgians, the Spanish and more generally what one would call the "Latins", and facing perhaps even against ... I let you make the substraction. Is it a problem of civilization? Or a political problem? In any case, I believe that it is a problem of language. The Anglophones did not understand, or rather, misunderstood the Francophones ...' [39]. Nevertheless, key persons of the new museology and ecomuseum movement, like André Desvallées and Mathilde Bellaigue, stayed loyal to ICOFOM where they held important positions (as vice-chairman and secretary respectively). Besides, many founding members of MINOM remained members of ICOFOM. Throughout the years new museology and ecomuseums kept a dominant position on the agenda of the committee. For example, all French authors contributing to the Buenos Aires 1986 symposium belonged to the new museology movement[40]. Special meetings on ecomuseums were organized in connection with the Leiden 1984 and Zagreb 1985 conferences.

Although new museology was often discussed within ICOFOM it was always considered as one possible approach rather than the main perspective. Each symposium was seen as an open forum, with a free exchange of ideas. Conclusions were never considered as final statements (Sofka 1989: 65)[41]. Besides matters concerning the aims and policy of the committee, ICOFOM never published 'official' statements, not even about the definition of museology. All contributions were taken seriously and were included in analyses and summaries. As chairman Sofka wrote: 'The decisive contribution of the committee lies in its collecting function: it brings museum workers and museum researchers together, and by providing an international forum for discussion and a place for publication of ideas and opinions about museology, it leads to systematic studies and deepening museological questions' (Sofka 1989: 65). His approach was much appreciated by the participants and certainly encouraged participation[42].

## Membership

In August 1989 the number of ICOFOM members totalled 606, coming from 73 different countries[43]. At the same time the total number of ICOM members was 8583, distributed over 116 different countries[44]. The overall pattern of ICOFOM membership follows from ICOM membership. On the whole ICOFOM membership comprises 7 % of the ICOM members. Latin America as a whole far exceeds this figure, but some countries show an even stronger involvement.. While an average of 23 % of the Latin American ICOM members is member of ICOFOM, in Brazil 40 % is.

### ICOM ICOFOM ICOFOM/ICOM

Africa 2% 4% 14%

Latin-America 7% 21% 21%

North America 16% 19% 8%

Arab States 1% 1% 9%

Asia 11% 7% 4%

East Europe 4% 3% 5%

West Europe 57% 45% 5%

Oceania 2% 1% 5%

Total 100% 100% 7%

Table 2. Regional distribution of ICOM and ICOFOM membership (1989)

The membership profile shows a dominance of Europe and the so-called developed world within ICOM: about 61 % of the (active) membership is European, while on the whole 86 % belong to the developed world[45]. In view of the specific role of the (former) European socialist countries in the development of a theory of museology (see Chapters 4-8) it is useful to distinguish between the (former) socialist and the capitalist parts of the developed world. Following the traditional three-fold division of the world, ICOM counts 7072 members (82 %) from the so-called First World, 324 members (4 %) from the Second World, and 1187 (4 %) from the Third World[46]. The overall pattern of ICOM follows from ICOM membership with a few notable exceptions. The committee is on the whole less European based. "Only" 45 % of its active members comes from Europe. However, like ICOM, a majority of the members comes from the developed world (71 %).

The limited number of members from East Europe is mainly due to the limited admittance to the national ICOM committees because of control by the national governments and currency regulations (E.Zell, pers.com.). In many countries, especially in the Third World, national ICOM committees seem to apply their own set of criteria as to admittance (V.Sofka, pers.com.). To what extent these limitations influence the number of members cannot be estimated, but is not to be neglected.

ICOM membership grew from 6036 active members in 1984 to 8583 in 1989, a growth factor of 1.4[47]. Between 1984 en 1986 the recruitment of members attained a level heretofore unequalled. The "new generation" represents almost 40 % of the total membership. The

evolution of ICOM's individual membership has been stable between 1986 and 1989. During Spring 1989 a new influx of members could be welcomed[48]. No research has been done as to the motives of museum workers to become member of ICOM and especially for expressing their wish to be considered as member of ICOFOM. According to the rules of ICOM it is possible to join more than one international committee. Each ICOM member can, however, be registered as voting member by one committee only. The right to vote thus may reflect the member's main interest. At the same time the voting members give shape to the core of the committee. On the whole 41 % of the ICOFOM members is voting member. The general geographical distribution of the voting members is remarkably similar to the membership in general. Within the voting community Europe takes half the votes.

members voting member vm/m

Africa 4% 10(4%) 45%  
 Latin America 21% 51(21%) 41%  
 North America 19% 39(16%) 35%  
 Arab States 1% 4(2%) 67%  
 Asia 7% 20(8%) 50%  
 East Europe 3% 9(4%) 50%  
 West Europe 45% 111(45%) 41%  
 Oceania 1% 4(2%) 44%

First World 68% 160(65%) 39%  
 Second World 3% 9(4%) 50%  
 Third World 29% 79(32%) 45%

total 100% 248(100%) 41%

Table 3. Comparison of regional distribution of ICOM members and ICOFOM members (1989)

In view of the history of the committee it is useful to compare the membership profiles of 1983 and 1989. In December 1983 ICOFOM counted 113 members from 40 countries. Numerically the First World dominated in both 1983 and 1989. In Latin and North America a comparatively high growth factor is found. The increase of members from Africa and East Europe stayed behind. Throughout the years France remained one of the most important countries as to membership. The high number of members from Brazil and Argentina in 1989 may be influenced by the ICOM General Conference held in that part of the world (Buenos Aires 1986).

1983 1989 growth

Africa 7(6%) 22(4%) 3.1x  
 Latin America 13(11%) 125(21%) 9.6x  
 North America 15(13%) 113(19%) 7.5x  
 Arab States 1(1%) 6(1%) 6.0x  
 Asia 8(7%) 40(7%) 5.0x  
 East Europe 8(7%) 18(3%) 2.3x

West Europe 59(52%) 273(45%) 4.6x  
Oceania 2(2%) 9(1%) 4.5x

Europe total 67(59%) 291(48%) 4.3x

First World 78(69%) 411(68%) 5.3x

Second World 8(7%) 18(3%) 2.3x

Third World 27(24%) 177(29%) 6.6x

total 113(100%) 606(100%) 4.2x

Table 4. Regional distribution of ICOFOM membership in 1983 as compared to 1989.

### Participation

The policy of the ICOFOM board has always been to encourage as many people as possible to contribute to the symposia. The working method of the committee is based on the assumption that the world-wide interest in the symposium topics would be greater than the possibilities for ICOFOM members to travel. Therefore all members are encouraged to contribute to the discussions by writing, and to participate "in spirit" when physical participation is not possible. Writing presupposes an active involvement; being present at a meeting cannot always be described as a contribution to the development of the discipline (though it might be very instructive for the participant). The policy has proved to be a valid approach during the past period as is shown in table 5. While the number of contributors is rising, a larger number of them is unable to attend the meetings in person. During ICOM General Conferences (1983, 1986, 1989) there generally seems to be a larger number of authors present.

	number of authors present at meeting	number of authors	
1983-1	21	16(76%)	
1983-2	15	13(87%)	
1984	22	13(59%)	
1985	32	15(47%)	
1986	48	24(50%)	
1987	43	20(46%)	
1988	49	20(41%)	
1989	43	22(51%)	

Table 5. Number of contributors present at the symposium to which they contributed in writing, 1983-1989.

During the 1977-1989 period 149 different museologists contributed to the committee's symposia and MuWoP in writing. The 149 authors represented 39 different countries. Again a clear eurocentricity is reflected in the figures: more than half of the contributors is

European. There is a clear dominance of western thinking: 60 % of the authors is from West Europe, North America, Israel, Australia and New Zealand. This dominance, however, is not as high as could be expected from the membership profile. The interest in the committee's work from East European museologists is stronger than their ability to join its membership (3 % membership, 15 % participation), which is an interesting circumstance in view of the recent political developments in this part of the world. If a solution can be found for the financial problems, a growing number of East European members might be expected.

	membership 1983	participation 1978-1982	membership 1989	participation 1983-1989
Africa	6	0	4	5
Latin America	11	5	21	17
North America	13	20	19	17
Arab States	1	2	1	1
Asia	7	2	7	10
East Europe	7	34	3	13
West Europe	52	32	45	38
Oceania	2	5	1	3
First World	69	60	68	54
Second World	7	36	3	13
Third World	24	4	29	33

Table 6. Number of contributors as compared to membership (in %), 1977-1989.

When we compare membership profile and participation we see that the degree of involvement of museologists from Africa, Latin America and Asia has increased more than their membership. North American museologists seem to be less inclined to participate. The share of East European museologists in the activities of the committee dropped in proportion with the decrease in membership. It should, however, be noticed that the absolute number of authors did not decrease, but while the number of contributors from other parts of the world has increased, the number of East European authors has remained fairly stationary.

The share of museologists from Third World countries has increased quite suddenly in 1986 and had remained rather high ever since. The increase in 1986 is the result of the conference in Buenos Aires, which attracted new members and new participants. Although the majority of this group of new participants have become regular contributors to the committee's symposia, participation remained restricted to two countries only: Argentina and Brazil. The 1988 symposium held in India, again attracted a group of new participants. This time only participants from the host country itself. The participation of some of these new contributors in 1989 might indicate a lasting involvement of Indian museologists in ICOFOM activities.

ICOFOM's Long-term programme intends to provide a structure for continuity and a step-by-step development of museology as academic discipline. However, the 'demographics' of the committee clearly show some limiting conditions. From 1983 till 1989 the number of

members grew from 113 to 606. 'Only' 46 % of the 1983 members were still member in 1989. In other words, 54 % of the members of 1983 left the committee in the following six years. The same phenomenon can be observed in participation. There is a growing number of contributors, but a lack of continuity. Usually about half the contributors are new, i.e. contributing for the first time, many of them being 'one-time contributors'. Apparently these participants were only interested in the theme, or were encouraged to write on the theme by the local organisers.

The average degree of participation, i.e. the number of symposia the author took part in, during the first period (1977-1982) was 1.6; the degree of participation during the second period (1983-1989) was 2.1. In the first period 66 % of the authors participated only once, in the second period 56 %. Only very few authors contributed to all symposia: only one in the first period (Razgon) and three in the second (Schreiner, Sofka and Stransky)[49]. At the end of the second period a new generation of regular contributors seems to announce itself. It is no coincidence that many of these new authors are from Latin America (Argentina and Brazil). This reflects the increased involvement of this continent in ICOFOM matters.

museum studies programmes	museums	museum-related organizations	government
Africa	1 4 1 2		
Latin America	6 9 3 4		
North America	6 12 1 0		
Arab States	0 0 0 0		
Asia	7 8 0 1		
East Europe	8 9 4 2		
West Europe	10 32 8 1		
Oceania	2 2 0 0		
total	40 76 17 10		

Table 7. Professional background of contributors to ICOFOM symposia 1977-1989, at the time of their contribution.

Table 7 gives a rough indication of the professional backgrounds of the contributors. Those who were employed outside the museum field have not been included. On the whole they have made one contribution only, sometimes by special request. Close on half of the contributors worked in museums, one fourth was full-time or part-time engaged in museum studies programmes.

members

contributors

female male female male

Africa 4 96 0 100

Latin America 74 26 73 27

North America 49 51 35 65

Arab States 17 83 0 100  
Asia 30 70 21 79  
East Europe 6 94 22 78  
West Europe 51 49 29 71  
Oceania 22 78 40 60

total 49 51 36 64

Table 8. Male-female ration of ICOFOM members and contributors to ICOFOM symposia, 1977-1989 (in %).

Roughly one third of the contributors was female, while about half of the membership is female. However, the male-female ration differs per continent. The profile of the membership of the committee follows the general pattern found in ICOM[50]. Latin America is characterized by a majority of women in the profession. The degree of their participation in ICOFOM symposia equals the share in membership. West Europe and North America have a balanced male-female ration in the membership. The discrepancy between membership and participation in these regions remains to be explained. There is, however, an interesting parallel between the share of women in the publishing activities of the committee and their participation in other activities. For example, one third of the board members during the 1977-1989 period is female. Also one third of the so-called nuclear group (see below) is female.

For only 30 % of the contributors one of the official conference languages was their native tongue (English 17 % + French 13 %). For 10 % of the contributors, coming from former colonies, English or French was their second language, or perhaps even the first. For 60 % of the authors the situation was different. They had their texts translated by professional translators (usually not familiar with museological terminology) or made the translation themselves. This caused criticism among native speakers, complaining about the quality of the texts (Burcaw 1983: 18; Hodge 1983: 59; De Varine 1986: 72). In accordance with the preference expressed by the majority of non-native-speakers English has been designated the leading language. This is in agreement with the language preferences within ICOM membership. In 1989 the language preferences of new members of ICOM were: 73 % English, 21 % French, 6 % Spanish. The position of Spanish as official language within ICOM has much been discussed[51]. In ICOFOM too the number of Spanish speaking members & contributors is growing and they seem to feel the need to publish in their own language[52]. From 1991 onwards a Spanish-Portugese edition of *Museological News* is published by the regional working group (ICOFOM-LAM).

#### ICOFOM's nuclear family

It is difficult to define a criterion to find the most influential ICOFOM members. Board membership might be considered as one. The board of the committee plays an important role as 'brain trust'. It is no coincidence that many of the board members belong to the most active participants. From a quantitative point of view the board does not reflect the membership. From the outset there has been a lack of balance. The most 'dramatic'

difference between the composition of the board and that of the membership concerns East Europe. Three of the thirteen board members elected in 1986 were East European, while only 3 % of the membership belongs to that part of the world. The increase of Latin American membership is not reflected in the composition of the board. The 1986 board consisted of only one Latin American member. The majority of the board members (7) was West European. When we compare the composition of the four boards of the period 1977-1989 we see a gradual shift from a predominantly socialist and French speaking board to a West European and English speaking board.

Apart from board membership participation in ICOM activities can be used as criterion for involvement. A (rather arbitrary) system is developed in order to find listing-criteria:

- \* participation in writing: number of symposia concerned (max. 8 points);
- \* participation in the actual annual conference: number of conferences concerned (max. 7 points);
- \* special duties during symposia, such as discussion leader or summarizer (2 points);
- \* participation in special ICOFOM meetings (3 points)
- \* board membership: chairman (3 points), office holder (2 points), member (1 point), re-election 1 point extra;
- \* representation outside ICOFOM (1 point).

The maximum score is 25. On the basis of this calculation a group of twelve ICOFOM members can be indicated as ICOFOM's nuclear group, i.e. the group of most active and most committed members in the period 1983-1989:

Sofka (Sweden) 25  
Van Mensch (Netherlands) 23  
Bellaigue (France) 22  
Sola (Yugoslavia) 22  
Spielbauer (USA) 20  
Desvallées (France) 19  
Schreiner (GDR) 19  
Stransky (Czechoslovakia) 16  
Carrillo (Spain) 15  
Morrall (Spain) 14  
Grote (FRG) 13  
Kaplan (USA) 12

CHAPTER 4 MISSING!



## **Purpose of understanding**

Although within the diversity of opinions concerning the cognitive intention of museology some groups can be distinguished, one can hardly speak of 'schools'. Typically 'schools' have been formed around the purpose of museological understanding rather than the object of knowledge. Diverging views concerning the aims and purposes of the discipline even lead to a schism in the museological community. In 1985 members of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) founded the Movement Internationale pour la Nouvelle Muséologie (MINOM).

### Three approaches

As has been mentioned in Chapter 2 one of the basic criteria to decide whether museology is a genuine academic discipline is the degree in which the discipline is able to fulfil a social need. In this respect distinction should be made between the relevancy of the practical work in the museological field, i.e. museum work, and the relevancy of museology as theoretical frame work of that field. If museology is to be accepted as academic discipline, it must be made clear what kind of contribution it will make to the general knowledge; if museology is to be accepted as the theoretical frame of reference of museum work, it must be made clear to what extent museum workers may profit from it. Especially concerning this last point different views have been expressed. An analysis of these views gives the following basic approaches: the empirical-theoretical approach, the praxeological approach, the philosophical-critical approach.

These approaches do not exclude each other. While the empirical-theoretical approach is mainly heuristic and the praxeological approach designs strategies of behaviour, the philosophical-critical approach wants to develop a definite point-of-view with resulting guidelines. The philosophical-critical approach in museology in relation to the empirical-theoretical and praxeological approaches.

### Rationality [note 1]

The empirical-theoretical approach aims at substantial rationality, i.e. the ability to see signifying relationships between different phenomena in reality. Its aim is mainly descriptive. It tries to understand museological phenomena in their historical and socio-cultural contexts. Its usefulness is primarily heuristic. The praxeological approach focuses on functional rationality. Functional rationality is the ability to develop adequate means (methods, techniques, procedures) to realise ends that have been defined beforehand. Its aim is applicability. It should give very concrete answers to very concrete questions. In connection with the (museum) institute distinction can be made between cultural content and structural form. Cultural content concerns values and norms, meaning and role, i.e. the museum as institution. Structural form refers to the division of labour, hierarchy of functions, etc., i.e. the museum as organisation. Structural form is characterised by functional rationality, while cultural content can be characterised by substantial rationality. The empirical-theoretical approach in museology tends to focus on the cultural content (i.e. substantial rationality), while the praxeological emphasises the structural form of the museological phenomena (i.e. functional rationality) [note 2].

Both approaches do not exclude each other. As Vinos Sofka states, the aims of museology are to investigate, analyse and study the museum and its activities and thereby procure knowledge and experience that can be generalised and arranged within a system of museum theory having methods and a uniform terminology of its own, as well as to draw up objectives, to work out methods and suggest means for the museological activity and to solve its various problems and create a basis for its continued evolution (Sofka 1980). Burcaw, on the other hand, clearly aims at functional rationality. He expresses the point of view that the nature of museological knowledge should on the whole be pragmatic: '...museology describes how museums came to be what they are today, prescribes what museums ought to be in regard to society (ethics), and defines the particular organizational and procedural structures ...' (Burcaw 1983). In his pragmatism museology is seen as normative. It should describe 'a desirable organization'. Burcaw's norms, however, are of a practical nature, or, at any rate, meant to be so. He rejects axiological norms (see below). Benes also emphasises the technical nature of museology: 'The application of general museology to specific conditions does not concern the essence of the museum, it only means a modification in the forms of work to suit the available means and social needs. (...)' The fears of undesirable manipulation or abuse of museums against the interests of the nation should not be addressed to museology (but to enforced cultural politics)' (Benes 1988). Similarly, Desvallées distinguishes the museological point of view (both theoretical and practical) from the socio-political forces that sometimes mis-use museums for their own ideological aims (Desvallées 1988). In this connection he speaks of 'l'objectivité muséologique trahie pour des raisons politiques'.

Korff rejects the idea of museology as an autonomous academic discipline on the level of philosophical knowledge [note 3]. He considers museology as 'Theorie der Praxis' concerned with (1) reflection on museum work, (2) supporting the development of museum work, and (3) optimizing museum work. Following Hegel Korff sees museology in connection with the concrete: 'Wer Museologie betreibt, handelt mit den Konkreten und sieht darin alles'. In other words, Korff emphasises the primacy of the praxeological approach.

In his dichotomy of theoretical and applied museology Zbynek Stransky distinguishes between three levels of knowledge within the field of theoretical museology: empirical, theoretical and philosophical knowledge (Stransky 1983). The initial level is represented by empirical knowledge. In Stransky's view empirical knowledge is not identical with knowledge based on sensory perceptions. Though based on facts, empirical knowledge refers to a system of notions. Through this system we gain access to the level of theoretical knowledge. Patterns that are not directly discernible on the empirical level can be recognised and analysed on the level of theoretical knowledge. The level of philosophical knowledge is concerned with the fundamentals of museology and a higher degree of synthesis.

The distinction between the empirical-theoretical and praxeological approach follows Gluzinski's distinction between Postulated and Real Museology (Gluzinski 1983). In the present stage (Real Museology) 'factographical' and practical matters prevail. As such the praxeological approach in museology is, according to Gluzinski, an expression of a mechanistic conception of the activity of museums (museum as tool), while it diverts attention from the problems of museum's essence and sense whose study and explanation

should be the main task of his Postulated Museology. The main contribution of museological as academic discipline should thus be in the direction of what has been called the empirical-theoretical approach. Only when museology is able to evolve into the level of empirical-theoretical thinking, it can contribute to the improvement on a practical level. Similar views are expressed by a wide range of authors, like Neustupny, Stransky, Russio, and Maroevic.

#### Philosophical-critical approach

The third approach towards museology concentrates on the development of a critical social orientation. In this respect Stransky speaks of 'programme orientation' instead of 'cognitive orientation' (Stransky 1988). It is often suggested that the prevailing attitude among museologists is one of non-commitment (Sola 1991). This criticism concerns museums, the museum profession, as well as museological theory. Views as to a more active social role of museums initiated some explicit opinions concerning the programme orientation.

One of the most eloquent critics of traditionalist museology is the Croatian museologist Tomislav Sola. In view of the present degradation of our environment and other global problems, the traditional museum - even if it looks modern - is in his opinion a 'temple of vanity' (Sola 1992). Object-centered, technologically perfectionist, traditional museums are unable to respond to new needs. Museologists as theoreticians too often help reformers by focussing on pragmatic solutions. The world, says Sola, needs a new philosophy, i.e. a new programme orientation. In this respect post-war museology has offered three main schools of thought: marxist-leninist museology and new museology, and critical museology [note 4]. Marxist-leninist museology is a very normative approach, where axiological norms are applied leading to a rather strict system of rules. New museology and critical museology advocate an attitude rather than the application of rules. As it was stated at one MINOM conference: 'Il n'y a pas qu'une seule methodologie de la nouvelle museologie. Il y en a donc plusieurs qui se construisent et s'appliquent dans des projets qui repondent ses principes et qui ont pour base des realities sociales particulieres' (Conclusions de 4e Atelier International de Nouvelle Museologie, Saragosse 1987; quoted by Desvallées 1988: 134). A similar attitude of/in museology is advocated by critical museology. Theorisation should have the role of questioning, more than defining the frame for a systematic and systematising work. As such the philosophical-critical approach in museology is connected with what has been referred to as 'the revolution in museum work' (see Chapter 2).

#### Marxist-leninist museology

One might wonder whether one school of thought in museology could be identified as marxist-leninist museology. The existence of an uniform marxist-leninist museology was suggested by Stransky when he proposed to prepare a dictionary of relevant terms (Stransky 1988b). This proposal was criticised by Hofmann. Hofmann pointed out that a marxist-leninist (i.e. socialist) museology did not yet exist (Hofmann 1988). Nevertheless, one finds many similarities among authors from the former socialist countries, especially concerning the purpose of knowledge. Within the ICOM International Committee for Museology the marxist-leninist approach was represented by Razgon (Soviet Union) and Schreiner (German Democratic Republic), and to a lesser extend by Stransky (Czechoslovakia). Razgon is very explicit in his opinion that impartiality is a bourgeois fiction that has to be fought (Razgon

1977). Museums are ideological instruments and should, as such, be controlled by the Party. This point of view is summarised by Zaks in a handbook on museum exhibitions: 'The methodological basis of exhibitions of museums of the Soviet Union is the Marx-Lenin doctrine about nature and the society. The ideological content of the exhibition must be expressed clearly. The selection and grouping of the presented material and its interpretation must be done in such a way that the exhibition might contribute to the formation of the Marx-Lenin world opinion, that it might reflect events and phenomena of the past or present from the viewpoint of the Party, that it might fulfil the tasks of communist education' (Zaks 1980: 60). Consequently museology should follow the lines of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

In the (former) German Democratic Republic the development of socialist museology was seen as reaction against the bourgeois museology of the Federal Republic of Germany [note 5]. This line of thought is, for example, followed by Klaus Schreiner. To Schreiner the principal objective of museology is 'the evolvement of special theoretical fundamentals and sets of instruments and/or procedures for convenient practical action (...). Museology is thus becoming a guide for museum activity, a guide for practical action' (Schreiner 1985: 36). This sounds non-committal, but it should be noted that Schreiner's position in museology is defined by his Marxist-Leninist starting point and has, as subsequently strong political drive as can be found in 'new museology'.

The East-Berlin Institut für Museumswesen defined the subject-matter of museology as the relationship between society and museums, as well as the specific scientific and cultural role of museums. The purpose is the development of a socialist museum field. As Schreiner puts it: 'As social discipline museology has class character (in the class society). The world view and thegnoseological and methodological foundations of marxist-leninist museology is derived from dialectical and historical materialism' [note 6]. Museology has class character, which means that it is defined by the ideology of the class using it. In the case of the German Democratic Republic this meant that museology should help museums to contribute to the development of a socialist society and the foundation of a socialist culture [note 7].

Not by coincidence, this class character of museology is rejected by the American museologist Burcaw: 'If each political system (...) is to decree its own museology, it will hurt the museum profession as a whole, making it difficult to understand where our common ground lies. It would be better for all of us, world wide, to accept that there is one general profession and one general museology' (Burcaw 1983: 11). Burcaw advocates a museology free from ideology. He sees a difference between museums in western countries and those in socialist countries. In socialist countries 'the purpose, beyond general education, is to spread Marxist ideology to the public' (Burcaw 1981: 29). 'In western countries, "service of society" means giving people what they want, consistent with the museum's serious educational nature, not what government decides the public should be given' (Burcaw 1983: 12). Burcaw's claims are easily disproved. Museums in western countries are not clear of ideology, hence museological thinking in western countries is not free from ideology either [note 8].

Nevertheless, views as expressed by museologists like Burcaw have influenced the acceptance of ICOM as a committee, as well as museology as academic discipline in the

Western world. As has been stated before, Burcaw said what many others thought: the international museology discourse is used to spread communist ideas. The role of museologists from the socialist countries from East Europe in the International Committee for Museology seemed to support this opinion (see Chapter 3). However, at the moment when the political changes in Europe were settled the most militant supporters of a marxist-leninist museology were already retired (Hühns, Jahn) or dead (Razgon, Schreiner) [note 9].

### New museology

The term 'new museology' has been introduced in museological literature at at least three different times at three different places. The term has been used by Benoist (1971: 29) in connection with the developments during the early 20th century when the art museum started to present well selected masterpieces in a sparse and neutral way (cf 'museum modernization movement'). The term was also used in 1958 by the Americans Mills and Grove in their contribution to De Borghegy's book *The modern museum and the community*. In 1980 the term 'muséologie nouvelle' was introduced in France by André Desvallées when he was asked to write an article on museology for the supplement of the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*. Finally, the term was introduced in Great Britain by Peter Vergo when he published his book *The new museology* in 1989. The use of the term was always connected with the changing role of museums in education and in the society at large. Current museum practices were considered obsolete and the whole attitude of the professional was criticised. The profession is urged to renew itself in the perspective of a new social commitment.

It is the French concept of 'muséologie nouvelle' that gradually became recognised as one of the main streams within museology. The term has been monopolised by two, related, organisations: the Association 'Muséologie Nouvelle et Experimentation Sociale' (MNES), and the Movement Internationale pour la Muséologie Nouvelle (MINOM). MNES was founded in 1982 in France to united the supporters of the new museology. It criticises the dominant role of curators, of art museums and of the museums in Paris. MINOM was founded in 1985 by a group of people who were not satisfied by the policy of ICOFOM (see Chapter 3).

The philosophy of MNES is expressed by Hugues de Varine as follows: 'Comme mouvement, l'association marque bien son engagement dans la société, contemporaine. Comme rassemblement, elle remet en cause, non pas les techniques du musée, mais ses missions fondamentales, soit pour les valider en précisant leur signification, soit pour les contester en proposant des alternatives'. A similar starting point characterises MINOM. Its supporters are dissatisfied with 'the monolithic nature of the museological establishment, the superficiality of the reforms which it proposes and the marginalization of any experiment or viewpoint which might be described as at all committed' (Mayrand 1986). They express their frustration about 'the museums establishment's delay in coming to terms with a number of contemporary, cultural, social and political developments' in the context 'of world crisis and re-evaluation of all human endeavour' (loc.cit.). New museology does not create new museums (René Rivard at the ICOFOM 1992 conference). Its intention is not to renew the museum institute, it rather advocates a completely new perspective to community development by putting the people in the centre of consideration. Conventional museums

are seen as based upon obsession (Bernard Deloche) and as such as 'schools of repression'. Objects should be de-sacralised.

In the statutes of MINOM initiatives in the context of this new museology movement have been attributed following common characteristics:

- \* their role is to provide a population with access to a better self-knowledge and understanding of the conditions of their existence;
- \* this museological activity is characterised by an interdisciplinary approach in which the human being is considered in the natural, social and cultural environment. Within this perspective the concepts of 'milieu' and 'context' are essential.
- \* in this museological activity, methods and practices are used to actively involve the population;
- \* this museological activity is characterised by flexible and de-centralised structures which are appropriate to the territory and population involved.

In new museology the museological objectives are geared towards community development, hence the term community museology. The objective is to contribute to the development of a given community by re-enforcing a sense of (cultural) identity. Presentation and preservation of the heritage are considered within the context of social action and change. As the communities concerned usually suffer from a negative self-image, it is necessary to provide positive imagining. Heritage is a resource to be considered and developed within the context of community improvements. The people of the community themselves have to take care of their own heritage, hence the term popular museology. Key-concept is the 'reappropriation du territoire, du patrimoine, pour l'autodeveloppement individuel et collectif'. Characteristic is the view that the concept of museum is not confined to a building. The museum can be anywhere, and is anywhere and everywhere within a specified territory. For this museum concept the term ecomuseum has been coined, hence the term ecomuseology.

MINOM is aware of the relativity of the term 'new', but it is clear that in the context of 'new museology' 'new' must not be interpreted only in the sense of modernizing the museum through modern methods of research, documentation, management, animation, etc., but in relation to its objectives, its stance and its initiatives (Statutes art. 5-3). Distinction is made between the 'monolithic' museums in the large metropolises and the local museums in rural and urban communities. Both types of museums should adopt a more active socio-cultural role. Especially local museums are asked to free themselves from rules, institutional structures and financial dependency.

### Critical museology

The critical tradition within museology mirrors that within other related cultural fields, although until recently it has shown a distinct tendency to lag behind (Pearce 1992: 7). The term critical museology itself has been introduced by Lynne Teather to characterise the approach to museology as adopted by the Reinwardt Academie (Teather 1983). A similar approach is reflected in Hawes' statement that the museologist must strive for the 'critical museum', i.e. one that raises questions about myths, the national past and directions for the

future' (Hawes 1986). The term 'critical' has also been used by Brachert writing about restoration (Brachert 1985: 30-33). He rejects the 'Konservierungspositivismus' of the scientific trained conservator, but also the 'Renovations nihilismus' of some modern conservators. Referring to Friedrich Nietzsche (Der Wille zur Macht) Brachert describes nihilism as the devaluation of the highest values ('Entwertung der obersten Werte'), What is lacking is the purpose; there is no answer to the why of restoration. Brachert's answer is critical restoration.

It seems as if the adjective 'critical' is used as unsystematically as the adjective 'new'. The distinction between 'critical' and 'new' is not clear. In the United Kingdom the term 'critical curatorship' seems to refer to a similar general attitude as advocated under the heading 'new museology'. The term refers to a radically new curatorial practice which starts by engaging a non-specialist audience. However, whereas new museology as community museology emphasises positive imagining, critical museology aims at critical imagining. Such inversion of priorities in, for example, art curatorship is considered necessary to cope with issues like censorship, racism and internationalism [note 10].

The term critical has also been used in the United States in relation with museum work. Davis and Gibb emphasise the role of history museums to teach critical thinking (Davis & Gibb 1988). In this case, however, the critical attitude refers to the aims of the museum rather than its policy. Nevertheless, teaching critical thinking presupposes a critical attitude of the museum itself. In this respect Susan Pearce sees clear relationships between post-modern thinking in material culture studies and museum theory as part of a critical cultural theory (Pearce 1992). According to her, the critical evaluation of the whole museum phenomenon is the new paradigm of museology.

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## Notes

[1] This analysis is based on Zijderveld 1983. >back<

[2] A special form of the praxeological approach in museology is Cyril Simard's economuseology. >back<

[3] In a lecture for the Nachdiplomstudium Museologie at Basel, 13.11.1992. >back<

[4] In connection with a philosophical-critical perspective in museology some other terms are proposed. For example, Hoover and Inglis speak of 'liberated museology' (Hoover & Inglis 1990). >back<



[5] 'Die spätbürgerliche Museologie vertritt einen Museumsbegriff, der (...) gesellschaftlich isolierten ästhetischen Genuss propagiert (...) oder zeigt offen reaktionäre und revanchistische Tendenzen, (...). Da die Museen in der BDR im wesentlichen Einrichtungen des Staates oder Stiftungen kapitalistischer Unternehmer sind, wird die Museologie von den Kämpfen der Arbeiterbewegung wenig beeinflusst' (Hühns 1973: 292). >back<

[6] These two sentences are translated from the original German version of Schreiner's thesis (Schreiner 1984: 37). They do, however, not appear in the official English version of his work (compare Schreiner 1985: 34). In general Schreiner's contributions to the ICOFOM conferences are less dogmatic than his German texts (see also Schreiner & Wecks 1986, chapter II). >back<

[7] 'Damit tragen sie dazu bei, das allgemeine kulturelle Niveau zu entwickeln, das bewusste Erkennen und Nutzen von Möglichkeiten zur schöneren Gestaltung unseres sozialistischen Lebens anzuregen' (Hühns 1973: 292). >back<

[8] See, for example, Carnes 1986, Duncan & Wallach 1978, and Schlereth 1978 and 1980. >back<

[9] An interesting case in point are the Czech museologists. Despite their age and despite their commitment to the former socialist regime Benes as well as Stransky were able to continue their work as lecturers in museology. Notwithstanding the many references to marxism-leninism and the explicit proposals for a marxist-leninist museology Stransky denies the political implications of his former ideas. Contrary to their colleagues from (former) Soviet Union, (former) German Democratic Republic and (former) Czechoslovakia, Maroevic and Sola (Zagreb) never referred to marxism-leninism. >back<

[10] From a report on a seminar on curatorship in art museums organised by the City University, London in November 1985 (Museums Journal 90, 1990, (5): 21). The title of the seminar, 'Critical curatorship', refers to new curatorial practices that emerge.

## The structure of museology

In 1980 the International Committee for Museology organised a symposium about 'Systematics and systems in museology'. The original intention of the symposium was to discuss the internal structure of the discipline. The theme was considered to be relevant for (a) the structure and the theoretical field of museology, (2) for teaching in universities, and (3) for practical structure of museum organisations (Jelinek 1981: 69-70). It was felt that like any other academic disciplines museology has - or should have - its own scientific structure, i.e. a system of related fields of research. As opinions differ among museologists concerning subject and purpose of museological knowledge, the proposed structures of the discipline differs accordingly. The subdivision into 'heuristic fields' (Stransky) depends on the scope of the discipline as such. Throughout museological literature simple two-fold structures have evolved into four- or five-fold structures.

### Toward a five-fold structure

When ICOFOM took up the theme of the identity of museology as an academic discipline many authors referred to the model as developed by Neustupny. Traditionally, distinction was made between general museology and applied museology [note 1]. Neustupny added the distinction between general museology and special museology [note 2]. The combination of both subdivisions gave a three-fold structure which was generally applied since [note 3]. The three study areas are: general, applied and special museology. General museology deals with the principles of preservation, research and communication of the material evidence of mankind and its environment, and with its institutional framework. It also examines the social pre-conditions and their impact on the tasks mentioned above. Applied museology concerns itself with the implications of the general principles of museology on museum practice. Special museology connects general museology with the particular subject-matter disciplines and concerns museums and collections in the field of art, anthropology, natural history, etc. Special museology also deals with other groupings of museums, for example museums of A certain geographical area, like a country, a continent or an otherwise defined part of the world.

The concept of special museology was rejected by the Arbeitsgruppe Museologie (German Democratic Republic). In their opinion there was only one museology, applicable to all types of museums. However, it cannot be denied that different types of museums are confronted with different problems following from their collections or their social role. In this sense the concept of special museology was used during the ICOFOM Hyderabad 1988 conference. It was stated that special museology represents a lower level of abstraction than general museology, forming a bridge between general and applied museology. In his earlier publications Neustupny did not use the term theoretical museology. In his opinion museology has no organised set of theories of its own. At the ICOFOM London 1983 symposium, however, some authors (re-)introduced the concept of theoretical museology, which prompted Spielbauer to suggest a four-fold structure: theoretical museology, general museology, special museology, applied museology [note 4]. Some authors, like for example Stransky, suggested to add historical museology as special branch of museological research. As separate field of research it provides the overall historical perspective within museology.

The resulting five-fold structure is (since 1982) used by the Reinwardt Academie to provide a frame-work for the curriculum and to provide a basic classification principle of the library of this institute. This structure is to be considered a methodological-didactical division of a consistent field of knowledge. General museology deals with the principles of preservation, research and communication of the material evidence of mankind and its environment, and with its institutional framework. It also examines the social pre-conditions and their impact on the tasks mentioned above. Theoretical museology lays the philosophical, epistemological, foundation of these principles, while applied museology concerns itself with the methodological dimension of museum work, i.e. the application of theoretical concepts in practice. Special museology connects general museology with the particular subject-matter disciplines. It deals with museums and collections in the field of art history, anthropology, natural history, etc. Special museology deals with other groupings of museums as well, for example museums of a certain geographical area, like a country, a continent or an otherwise defined part of the world. Finally, historical museology provides the overall historical perspective.

It should be noted that these terms are not used univocally. Although gradually adopting the five-fold structure as such, Stransky presently uses the term general museology for the whole field of museology. The term socio-museology (later social museology) he used to replace Neustupny's general museology. In doing so Stransky seems to be influenced by Tsuruta (see below).

In the curriculum of the Instituto de Museologia, Sao Paulo (Brazil) the term special museology is used in the meaning of 'special subjects in museology', such as museum architecture and community museology. Finally, some authors use the term historical museology for special museology concerned with historical museums (see below).

#### Other models

Although working from a different theoretical background, the American museologist Burcaw gives a subdivision that comes close to the proposals of his East European colleagues (Burcaw 1983: 15). Speaking about 'the system of museology' Burcaw mentions history, philosophy, education (pedagogics), the social sciences, and organisational theory as fields that make up museology. His approach, however, reflects the concept of museology as an conglomerate of methodologies rather than as an academic discipline in its own right.

Pearce developed a structure in which the terminology of Neustupny and others is avoided, but which in fact comes rather close to their general approach (Pearce 1992: 10). Pearce distinguishes between three fields: museum theory as part of critical culture theory, museum theory of resource management, and museum theory at specific work level. Within the five-fold structure of museology as given above these fields can be identified as theoretical museology, general museology and applied museology respectively.

A completely different structure is proposed by the Japanese museologist Soichiro Tsuruta (Tsuruta 1980: 49):

1 auto-museology (individual museology),

a museum taxonomy,  
b morphological museology,  
c functional museology;

2 specialised museology;

3 syn-museology (population museology);

4 socio-museology;

5 museum management.

This structure, in which we recognise the biological background of the author, is based on the museum as a 'minimum unit' in museology. Automuseology, specialised museology and syn-museology refer respectively to individual museums, categories of museums and the museum field as a whole. Socio-museology refers to the museum as a socio-cultural institution. Museum management speaks for itself. In 1992, after the participation of Tsuruta in the International Summer School of Museology, Brno, Stransky adopted the concept of socio-museology (later changed into social museology) to complete his hitherto three-fold subdivision (historical, theoretical and applied museology). Social museology (also referred to as structural museology) is equivalent to the field of general museology. Tsuruta's and Stransky's concept of socio-museology is different from Mario Moutinho's use of the term. Moutinho is director of the Centro de Estudos de Sociomuseologia (Universidade Lusofona de Humanidades e Tecnologias, Lisbon). Here sociomuseology is equal to "community museology" (see Chapter 5).

Further subdivisions

Although the five-fold structure underlies many of the training programmes all over the world, it does not function yet as a logically concise system of knowledge. The 'units' often use their own languages, based on quite different sets of predicates, which are in themselves based on (and claimed by) different disciplines (Gluzinski 1980: 441). Their connections are based on pragmatic relationships only. This is also reflected in some detailed subdivisions. Each field might, for example, be subdivided in areas of study or areas of application. Subdivisions of the field of theoretical museology mirror the different practical areas within the field of applied museology: preservation (i.e. collecting, conservation, registration) and communication (i.e. exhibition design and education). In this respect Neustupny uses the term museological disciplines, where Stransky speaks of heuristic fields.

Apart from his basic distinction between general and special museology Neustupny distinguishes between following museological disciplines (Neustupny 1971: 11):

- \* theory and methods of collecting source material of the individual branches of science, such as prehistory, history, ethnography, biology, mineralogy and others;
- \* theory and methods of the safe keeping and protection of source material, i.e. museum

collections (conservation, restoration);

\* theory and methods of scientific information (registration, catalogues, inventory work, machine-processed information, scientific publications describing source material);

\* theory and methods of research at the museum (identification, classification, work on collections, problems concerning the participation of museums in basic and applied research);

\* theory and methods of mass communication, popularisation of arts and sciences;

\* theory of the role and function of museums in society, science and culture;

\* the history of museums, museum work and museology;

\* architecture and technical museum problems.

Stransky divides the field of theoretical museology into three heuristic spheres: selection, thesaurisation, and communication. Similarly the field of applied museology is also subdivided into three such spheres: the institution, the methods, and the techniques. An almost identical subdivision is given by Razgon (in Herbst & Levykin eds. 1988: 33) and Schreiner (Schreiner 1982). The main difference between Neustupny and Stransky at the one hand and Razgon and Schreiner at the other is the inclusion of museological research on sources as separate field by the latter.

## Museography

Throughout literature the terms museology as well as museography can be found.

Museography seems to be the oldest available term as it was already used as far back as in 1727 in the famous publication by Caspar Friedrich Neickelius called *Museographia* (see Chapter 2). The term museology came into use in the course of the 19th century. From 1969 onwards ICOM used museology and museography in a distinctive way. Museology was defined as museum science, whereas museography was defined as covering methods and practices in the operation of museums. Following these definitions, most authors consider museography synonymous to applied museology. Klausewitz, however, very clearly distinguishes applied museology from museography (Klausewitz 1980). In his view applied museology includes the more theoretical questions of collecting, documentation, museum education, etc., while museography deals with techniques and methods on a day-to-day level, for example security and exhibition techniques. Klausewitz' use of the terms echoes Jahn's distinction between 'Museumstheorie', 'Museumsmethodik' and 'Museumstechnik', although she uses the term 'applied museology' for both 'Museumsmethodik' and 'Museumstechnik' (Jahn 1979: 283). Jahn suggests to use the term museography for the descriptive aspect of the discipline, whereas museology should be used for the explicative aspect. Her proposal has not met any approval, neither within ICOM nor elsewhere.

When the term museology is to stand for all the theoretical notions as opposed to (museum) practice, Klausewitz' proposal should be followed. In the above mentioned five-fold structure of museology applied museology refers to 'Museumsmethodik' rather than 'Museumstechnik'. It is interesting to see that the first recorded use of the term museography referred to theory and methodology rather than practice, whereas the first recorded use of the term museology was referring to museum practice only (see Chapter 2). Some authors seem to use the term museography for the practice of (museum) communication work only. For example, in France the term museography is usually used for

museum exhibition work [note 5]. For this specific field of applied museology/museum practice Swiecinski introduced the term expositiology (Swiecinski 1979: 16), comparable to scenography which is used in Brazil (Scheiner 1988).

#### Other museologies

Apart from the museologies mentioned above other differentiations can be found. However, terms like critical museology, new museology, and economuseology represent different lines of approach rather than fields of research. They are discussed as such in Chapter 5. As methodology rather than field of study the terms experimental museology (Van Mensch, Pouw & Schouten 1983: 87) and comparative museology (Van Mensch 1988: 185) are introduced. Experimental museology is suggested as branch of museology that experimentally investigate the influence of factors that add or erase information in the course of an object's biography. Comparative museology is expected to study the differences between different special museologies.

There is a tendency to divide the field of special museology into a series of separate museologies. The descriptive terminology depends on the perspective of the author. Those in favour of the concept of museology as applied science will use terms like museological anthropology (Mey 1988), others might prefer constructions like ethnographical museology (Stransky 1982), historical museology (Hofmann in Grampp et al. 1988; Dufrčsne in Coté ed. 1992) and 'muséologie scientifique' (Schiele 1989, Maitte 1989, Gros in Goery et al. 1989) or 'Kunstmuseologie' (Lemper in Arbeitsgruppe Museologie 1981) and 'Literaturmuseologie' (Kovac 1982), or zoomuseology, anthropomuseology and ethnomuseology (Stransky 1983).

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## Notes

[1] Also given as museology vs. museography, or theoretical vs. practical museology. See Gluzinski 1983: 33, Stransky 1983: 129, Arbeitsgruppe Museologie 1981: 3, and Jahn 1979.>back<

[2] Neustupny 1968: 146. The term 'special museology' has already been used by W. Schäfer in his contribution to the 1965 ICOM General Conference. After Burcaw (1983: 21), Hodge (1983: 62) and Russio (1983: 118) credited Lewis for this model, Lewis hastened to mention his source (Lewis 1983: 1). >back<



[3] Lewis 1981: 74, Sofka 1980: 12, Schreiner & Wecks 1986: 43, Burcaw 1983: 14. >back<

[4] Spielbauer 1983: 139. The same four-fold subdivision was given by Jahn in Arbeitsgruppe Museologie 1981: 47-48. Of course, the term 'theoretical museology' has already been used abundantly during the 1965 ICOM General Conference, as opposed to 'practical museology'. As was explained in Chapter 1 the concept of theoretical museology in 1965 differs considerably from the use of the term throughout the ICOFOM 1983-1 conference. >back<

[5] Giraudy & Bouilhet 1977. In A similar way the term was used by Guerin in 1957 (see Chapter 1). See also Feilden in Feilden & Scichilone 1982: 12, Cialdea 1988: 201.

## **Museological research**

(last updated September 1997)

If museology is to be considered an academic discipline, what is its content and methodology, and to what extent can it be distinguished from other disciplines? These questions were discussed from the very beginning of the foundation of the International Committee for Museology. Actually its first symposium (1978) dealt with this topic. Subsequent symposia tended to focus on the relationship between theory and practice, i.e. the use of museological theory for day-to-day museum practice.

### Different levels

The term museological research is not used univocally. During the ICOFOM symposium 'Possibilities and limits in scientific research typical for the museum' (Warsaw 1978), the term museological research was often used, but not always with the same meaning. In his contribution to this symposium Wolfgang Klausewitz, for example, used the term in a wide sense as synonym to 'research work within the museum', including analysis, description and comparative evaluation of collections as well as (applied) research with regard to conservation, restoration and exhibitions (Klausewitz 1978). Doing so, Klausewitz fails to distinguish between research in the museum (i.e. research as a museum function) and research of the museum and its functions. In this respect Razgon and Sofka made a more adequate and useful distinction between subject-matter oriented research and museological research. Subject-matter oriented research belongs to the so-called subject-matter disciplines, i.e. the disciplines that have an interest in the collections. As such, subject-matter research is synonymous to 'museum research'. Museological research follows from the cognitive orientation and purpose of museology as discipline. The relationship between museology and the subject-matter disciplines is one of the central issues within the museology discourse. This relationship can be studied on different levels:

- \* Level 1: the relation between museology and other academic disciplines in general (meta-museological level);
- \* Level 2: the relation between museology and subject-matter disciplines within the museological field (institutional level);
- \* Level 3: the relation between museology and subject-matter disciplines on the level of day-to-day museum work (museographical level).

If museology has its own object of knowledge it is then by definition distinct from other academic disciplines (level 1). On a lower abstraction level, the institutional level (level 2), the relationship between museology and other disciplines is not always clear and much discussed. The crucial and most convincing distinction lies on the level of daily routine and concerns the handling of objects and collections, the preparation of exhibitions, etc. (level 3).

### Meta-museological level

It is clear that views on the relationship between museology and other academic disciplines (level 1), as found in museological literature, depend on the concept of museology as a

science. Nevertheless, it can be stated that to a certain extent museology as well as the subject-matter disciplines are both determined by the use of collections. Subject-matter disciplines elicit new scientific knowledge from objects. They focus on the information content of objects in relation to the specific needs of the discipline. Usually there is an exclusive relationship between the museum collection and one subject-matter discipline. As such, priorities and methodology of the relevant discipline(s) are reflected in the contents and structure of the collections. Concerning the use of collections museological research has another orientation.

In his analysis of the position of museology as a science, Volkert Schimpff puts it very concise: museology studies the 'how' of museum work, the 'what' of the subject-matter disciplines stays outside the scope of its interest (Schimpff 1986). Other authors, however, tend to emphasise the 'why' of museum work as key-element in museological research by referring to the value of objects in relation to the social role of museums. This point of view is reflected in the works of, for example, Hofmann (Hofmann 1983), Maroevic (Maroevic 1983), Schubertova (Schubertova 1982) and Stransky (1974). These authors clarify the different orientations of subject-matter research and museological research on the basis of the distinction of two aspects of the (museum) object, described by Maroevic as scientific and cultural information. Subject-matter disciplines make use of scientific information (Hofmann: 'Fachwissenschaftliche Sphäre'), whereas museology makes use of cultural information (Hofmann: 'Museologische Sphäre'). The different levels of interpretation of the information potential of objects is analysed in a similar way by Schubertova. Following Stransky she makes a clear distinction between the object as part of a museum collection (in German: 'museale Sammlungsgegenstand') and the object as 'musealium' (German: 'Musealie'). The 'museale Sammlungsgegenstand' provides the data needed for subject-matter disciplines. Relevant to museology, however, is the recognised museality which distinguishes a 'museale Sammlungsgegenstand' from a 'Musealie'. To recognize this museality is part of museological research and can in this line of thought even be the very subject-matter of museology itself. In this respect Maroevic and Stransky see museology as one of the disciplines within the sphere of documentation, together with informatics, documentation science, archive science and library science.

The model as elaborated by Maroevic helps us to clarify the position of museology and the specificity of museological research in relation subject-matter research from the metamuseological level down to the museographical level, especially in connection with the position of the collection as research object. As to the position of the activities related to preservation (collection, documentation, conservation, restoration, registration) as specialised research object there is little competition in the field of sciences. There are several academic disciplines concerned with communication and education as well as with cultural institutions. The specificity of museology follows from the specificity of the exhibition and the museum (and related institutes) as research objects. In general it can be said that the rationale of museological research is the recognition of cultural information and the realisation of its social relevance on the institutional and the museographical level.

### Interdisciplinarity

Museology does not intend to replace subject-matter disciplines within the museological

context (level 2), but forms a necessary complement ('Komplettierungsforschung', Razgon 1977). The concept of museological research as complementary research involves interdisciplinarity. The question of interdisciplinarity in museology was briefly touched upon during the ICOFOM Mexico City 1980 symposium and elaborated in MuWoP 2 and at the ICOFOM Paris 1982 symposium. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the papers that were published. Part of the papers focus on the relationship between museology and other academic disciplines (the meta-museological level), while others discuss the relationship between museology and subject-matter disciplines on an institutional level.

At this point distinction should be made between the subject-matter disciplines - referred to by Stransky as 'sciences represented in museum affairs' - and disciplines that are used to improve museum practice - 'sciences applied in museum affairs'. This last category of disciplines, like sociology, chemistry, semiotics, pedagogic, management, etc., are usually described as 'support disciplines' or 'auxiliary disciplines'.

Obviously referring to the meta-museological level, Waldisa Russio mentions interdisciplinarity as the methodology for museology (Russio 1983: 121). It is, however, not clear from her paper what is meant. There may be some connection with Bernard Deloche's concept of 'muséologie comme logique de l'interdisciplinarité' (Deloche 1987). Deloche considers the museum as the frame work for the interaction of a wide range of disciplines. Possibly this point of view comes close to Jahn's. Ilse Jahn interprets the interdisciplinary character of museology as the ability, or rather the task, of museology to interlink subject-matter disciplines with support disciplines (Jahn 1981). In this respect she speaks of museology as 'Querschnittsdisziplin'. The same point of view has been expressed by Jiri Neustupny who considers the field of museology an aggregate of scientific disciplines bound by the theory of museology (Neustupny 1968).

The apparent conformity of above mentioned ideas is probably based on a different use of the term interdisciplinarity. Throughout MuWoP 2 and other ICOFOM publications the term - disciplinarity can be encountered in many forms: inter-, multi-, etc. Usually no attempts are made to define the used terms. Gluzinski considers the claim of interdisciplinarity to be unjustified, because what we have in museology is only multidisciplinary (in *Museologie* 9: 29). This approach is also found among authors that do not accept museology as distinct and coherent discipline (see, for example, Kavanagh 1992). This is, however, not necessarily in contradiction with the ideas of other authors. The relevant point is not the juxtaposition of disciplines, but the degree of integration on the institutional level as well as on the museographical level. Some authors tend to equal museology as academic discipline with the museological field, but in practice the present professionalisation trend brings about a multidisciplinary segmentation of the museological field instead of an integration of approaches.

In order to speak of 'real' interdisciplinarity it is necessary to have causal or genetic relations. This is far from being realised as yet. Instead there are, as Gluzinski states, only 'accidental, pragmatic relations of a teleological nature' in museum work. However, the example he uses to prove this, may also be used to prove the true interdisciplinary character of museum work (and museology). Gluzinski states, for example, that the scientific description of collections and the routine conservation work on the same collections are two different and separate

phenomena, involving two different sets of methods, but as is shown elsewhere there is a connection between both activities which can be expressed by some basic conceptual models (Van Mensch 1990). The same models show that there is also a connection between the group of activities referred to as preservation and those referred to as communication.

### Basic and applied research

The use of the term 'museographical research' precedes the use of 'museological research'. The gradual emergence of museology as academic discipline introduced the term 'museological research' not as synonym but as an extension of the concept of 'museographical research'. Starting from this point of view, Sofka divides museological research into basic museological research and applied museological research (Sofka 1980). The first category deals with issues that are common to all museums and that are not within the sphere of activity of any other branch of science. The second category (1) draws the attention of other branches of science to the museum and its activities, (2) initiates research on questions pertaining to the museum and its activities, and (3) applies the results of other branches of research to its own object of study. This approach echoes Neustupny's concept of 'museological disciplines'. In this concept applied museological research is not museological research proper. Museology *sensu stricto* plays the role of co-ordinator.

Teather's definition of basic and applied research differs from Sofka's (Teather 1983). She considers basic research to consist of original investigation undertaken to acquire new knowledge, with the primary purpose of contributing to the conceptual development of the field or adding to already accumulated, objective and systematic knowledge. Applied research consists of original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge with the primary purpose of applying knowledge to the solution of practical or technical problems. This approach comes close to Stransky's distinction of three levels of knowledge within the field of theoretical museology. Basic research thus refers to the levels of theoretical and philosophical knowledge, while applied research is related to the level of empirical knowledge and the field of applied museology. The distinction between basic and applied research runs parallel to the distinction made between the empirically-theoretical approach and the praxeological approach in museology. In this sense applied research is synonymous to museographical research, while basic research refers to the study of the cultural information of objects.

### Methodology

In his contribution to the ICOFOM London 1983 symposium Burcaw expressed an opinion shared by many museologists: 'I have never thought of museology as having one (methodology)' (Burcaw 1983: 10). Museological practice (and theory) is seen by Burcaw as an amalgam of many methods borrowed from outside the museum field. In his view there is no typical museological methodology, '... or at least not yet'. Other museologists, however, hold other opinions. Throughout the different publications on the theory of museology different views are expressed, ranging from the denial of the possibility of a museological methodology to the proposal of a detailed methodological approach. In order to clarify the apparent contradictions it is useful to distinguish between three hierarchical levels. The highest level of a methodological system is formed by general principles which pervade all

sciences. The second level contains methods specific for the cognitive intention of museology, i.e. its basic premises and philosophical foundations. The third level is the level of techniques, i.e. research practice. In this chapter the emphasis will be on the second level.

The complexity of the museological field and the lack of a generally accepted museological methodology gave rise to a wide spread pragmatism as to the level of research practice. 'Pragmatism is the basis for acquiring museographical knowledge. Whatever works is right. What works better is preferable. Experience and evaluation are the means employed' (Burcaw 1983: 17). This pragmatism - or what Judith Spielbauer has called 'useful borrowing' - is found by many museologists. Even those who emphasise the existence of one methodology of museological research, like for example Neustupny and Jahn, accept this borrowing. But if museology exists as a science, it is more than the simple sum of its parts. Museology must provide a broad, encompassing theoretical frame-work in which the interaction of all those different methods is interpreted and understood in explanation of problems and situations characteristic to the museological field. This suggests that within museology the second level of the methodological system is possible.

During the last twenty years, museologists working on the development of a special museological methodology seem to have chosen two different, more or less opposite, directions: a community-oriented and an object-oriented methodology. In modern management terms both approaches might be described as product-oriented versus market-oriented, or supply-oriented versus demand-oriented (Ashworth & Tunbridge 1990: 25), or perhaps more satisfactory as mission-driven versus market-driven (Ames 1988).

The community-oriented methodology is connected with the philosophical-critical approach in museology and has chosen a sociological perspective. This approach is usually museum-centred, but the museum is explicitly seen as a tool enabling the local population 'to understand and to control economic, social and cultural change' (Evrard 1980). In France and the United Kingdom the term New Museology has been introduced to distinguish this so called new approach from the object-oriented approach which is considered traditional or even reactionary: 'While preserving the material achievements of past civilizations and protecting the achievements characteristic of the aspirations and technology of today, the new museology is primarily concerned with community development...' (Declaration of Quebec, 13 Oct. 1984). As such the community-oriented approach is 'market-oriented'. Apart from research techniques borrowed from sociology and marketing, the new museology has not yet provided a research strategy.

It seems that at least a part of the discussion on the specific methodology of museology, i.e. its basic premises and philosophical foundations ('disciplinary matrix', Kuhn), misses its point as it refers to two different levels: the museographical and the institutional level.

### Museographical level

Although rejected by some as being reactionary ('positivistic'), the object-oriented methodology has recently received a good deal of attention among museologists. This approach met considerable support within the International Committee for Museology. The museum object is considered to be the basic unit of the museum working procedures, and

the basic parameter determining the complete character of this procedure. The possession of collections is what distinguishes a museum from other kinds of institutions. Consequently the object as key-element has determined the very character of the methodology applied to the museum working procedure. However, 'we do not have museums because of the objects they contain but because of the concepts or ideas that these objects help to convey' (Sola 1986).

Object-oriented methodological thinking has a long tradition especially in the field of conservation. 'There is only one methodology which unites all practitioners of conservation', writes Feilden (1979: 21). In his opinion this methodology should be based on the assumption that 'conservation is primarily a process leading to the prolongation of the life of cultural property for its utilization now and in the future'. Any interventions must be governed by 'unswerving respect for the aesthetic, historical and physical integrity of cultural property'. This underlying philosophical principle provides the framework for the practical work. For example, it means that the interventions must be minimal, reversible and not endangering future intervention. Besides each intervention must be harmonious in colour, tone, texture, form and scale. This approach, as summarised by Feilden, is reflected in most codes of ethics that underlie the museum profession. Nevertheless, there seems to exist a gap between those involved with conservation and its theory and those involved with museology and its theory. For example, in the ICOFOM papers very seldom reference is made to publications in the field of the theory of conservation/restoration. The lack of a consistent museological approach in which the information value of objects is respected and which is clearly distinct from other, subject-matter, approaches, is one of the main reasons of a weak profile of museology as a discipline and as a profession.

Recently a growing interest in museology as an information science can be observed. In this approach the object as data carrier plays a key role. As objects are seen as documents, the proper methodological approach is considered to be found in the information sciences. A case in point is the Croatian museologist Ivo Maroevic applying models developed by information scientist Miroslav Tudjman (Maroevic 1993). Their distinction of scientific and cultural information makes it possible to clarify the relationship between museology and the subject-matter disciplines. Museology focuses on cultural information, i.e. the social value. Like Stransky, Maroevic considers the determination of museality as main task of museology. However, Maroevic's concept of museality differs from Stransky's. Whereas Maroevic considers museality in terms of information, Stransky speaks of value.

Although working from a different direction and using different terminology, the American museologist Hawes agrees with Stransky and Maroevic where it concerns the evaluation of the cultural information (symbolic content in his terms) of artefacts: 'Every country has its symbolic artifacts commonly enshrined in museums. It is an important task of museology to identify them, to see how they misshape perceptions of past and present, to determine how they can be used to clarify historical processes that are still going on around us' (Hawes 1986: 139).

As to the methodological orientation in museology one can conclude that the main approach is object-oriented, but that there has occurred a notable shift from a 'muséologie d'objet' towards a 'muséologie d'idée' (Davallon 1993).

## Institutional level

On the institutional level the main lines of thought that can be distinguished reflect the three basic museum orientations as described by Gluzinski: (1) orientation on material objects - historical and research orientation; (2) orientation on man - sociological orientation; (3) orientation on values and meanings - cultural orientation. According to Gluzinski each of these orientations is founded on its own particular epistemological basis in the form of knowledge of different sciences, and thus involves its own methodology (Gluzinski 1988). A similar approach is given by Per-Uno Agren. He distinguishes three perspectives: (1) a historical perspective, which seeks to describe and understand the environmental heritage of a certain area and a certain place; (2) a sociological perspective, which studies the institutions and activities which have come into being as the result of the notion of a cultural and natural heritage; and (3) a communicative perspective, which applies to the attempts to mediate the environmental heritage in time and space (Agren 1992).

Following the first view as described by Gluzinski, research within the museological field is considered to be applied research, derived from the subject-matter specialism of the given museum, completed with other relevant disciplines. This approach necessarily implies that there can be no such thing as 'museological research' as each type of collection/museum requires its own research methodology. According to the second view as described by Gluzinski, as well as the three views as described by Agren, museums are seen as socio-cultural institutions. As such a unifying approach is possible. As this methodological approach tends to focus on the museum as institute the methodology of sociology can be adopted easily. This view has been advocated by many museologists.

In this respect an interesting approach can be derived from Kruithof (Kruithof 1985). The museological field is defined by four aspect or elements. Each aspect brings its own methodology: social relevance - sociology, acting subject - psychology, ideological context - cultural science, and ecological (social) context - anthropology . In this way the conceptual frame works of different social sciences are introduced within the museological field. The contribution of these approaches can be studied on three levels: the field of action, the form of action and the pattern of action. The combination of anthropology and sociology (social anthropology) studies the role of preservation and communication in a certain community. By combining psychology and sociology (social psychology) the relation can be studied between the individual member of a community and the social role of preservation and communication, for example socialisation processes. Finally, the combination of cultural science and sociology (cultural sociology) focuses on institutionalisation processes in the context of prevailing ideologies.

## Research topics

Teather emphasises the need of preliminary research, i.e. a general survey of the field by means of library bibliographic search techniques, and the location of previous research in the identified topic in non-library sources, like archives, letters, diaries, unpublished investigations, etc. Investigative tools for research in the field have to be developed. Only after this work has been done have the necessary conditions been fulfilled to conduct basic



research, which consists of original investigation undertaken to acquire new scientific knowledge.

The most comprehensive lists of research topics are provided by museologists from East Europe, like Gluzinski (1983), Hühns (1973), Jahn (1982), Lang (1978), Levykin (in Grampp et al. 1988), Pishchulin (1980), Razgon (in Herbst & Levykin eds. 1988), and Swiecimski (1981). The Japanese museologist Tsuruta provides a classification of the fields of museological research in relation to his proposal for a structure of the discipline (Tsuruta 1980). In addition some authors mention one task or a few tasks that according to their view is relevant for a given theme, or might be characteristic for museology. The most detailed research proposals are given by the supporters of an object-oriented, where the recognition of the information potential of the object is the prime concern of museological research.

Not surprisingly the research topics as found in literature reflect the basic parameters of the museological field (object, activities, institute), and their interrelationships, within their social context, i.e. including structural form and cultural content. The topics can be arranged according to a matrix based on the four basic parameters on one axis, and the five disciplinary fields within museology on the other. The above mentioned proposals focus on the fields of theoretical and applied museology, with special attention to the activities, i.e. collecting, documenting, conservation, registration, exhibition design, education.

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