

More than a cultural hub
– some issues and challenges of the museum in a rapidly
changing world
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Museums as Cultural Hubs: the Future of Tradition
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ICOM Museum Definition

- A **museum** is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” (**ICOM** Statutes) ...

Sabah Museum Objectives, Role And Functions

- A permanent state repository, largely a showcase of Sabah's cultural and historical heritage, founded on an ethnographic collection of artefacts known as Woolley bequest bequeathed by a colonial officer, GC Woolley who lived and worked in (North Borneo) Sabah from 1901-1945.
- Provide care and protection of objects, collections for present, future, long-term needs
- An important part of its mandate involves clear, accurate documentation of the collections in its custody, for planning and implementation of their care and protection, and also for various uses through exhibitions, displays for education and information for the public, stakeholders and users about Sabah's heritage.

Sabah Museum Collections

- Sabah Museum – encyclopedic – material heritage repository multi-disciplinary, largely cultural objects related to Sabah ethnography and history, and include plants
- Its holdings, wide ranging in size and different types of objects, immovable sites and monuments
- Its collections comprise in-situ and ex-situ artifacts consisting of organic and inorganic materials, living objects such as plants in the botanical garden, and structures and monuments such as the Atkinson clock-tower, Agnes Keith's house in Sandakan

Some definitions

- **Museum** – the institution or repository mandated to collect and preserve material culture and objects that represent intangible culture eg folklore, beliefs, principally according to its terms of reference, policy and role and functions
- **Artifacts** – objects made by human beings, for a variety of uses; however, some objects, such as a rock or any organic and inorganic material without any modification are ascribed certain uses – such as healing stones, for ritual purposes etc
- **Objects** – anything that is visible and tangible, implies an element of durability, stable in form, that does not vaporize. Consider ice, when frozen, it's a tangible object, it melts, becomes liquid, it is still an object, but only until it vaporises

Some definitions contd

- **Culture:** a system of tangible and intangible symbols with which people define themselves and construct their worlds. The symbols comprise objects and intangible features ranging from food, dress, attire, articles used at home as domestic implements to economic and livelihood tools used externally, as well as social and cultural behaviour, customs and beliefs, language, production of arts and crafts that include dance, music and associated material culture and so on

Cultural Centres

- **Cultural centres** and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible or intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity); (ICOM 2007).
- **Cultural identity:** a composite of symbols and features described above that define a person or group that subscribe to and are identified with.
- “No one is culture free”, and few now really live in isolation. The “nation, culture and society exert tremendous influence on each of our lives, structuring our values, engineering our view of the world and patterning our responses to experience (Peter Adler November 2002).

Definitions contd

- Culture in Sabah generally relates to cultural heritage of tangible and intangible elements and is the primary resource of especially indigenous traditions, and the other in the broader dimension as a platform to develop the creative arts.
- Creation of a physical cultural precinct with S Museum as a focus has been proposed (KKCCMPS)

Heritage culture and the performing arts

- **Traditional heritage culture** – the prevailing public perception of culture is still narrowed to those features directly associated with Sabah’s cultural heritage encompassing its colourful indigenous traditions, costumes, music and dance as well as history. Sabah’s claims to a rich and diverse cultural heritage which are not as visible as in many neighbouring countries, and this heritage is periodically exhibited in the Sabah Museum, at its various branch museums and other outreach programmes with local communities as this celebration of International Museums’ Day shows.
- **Creative Arts culture** – The creative aspects of culture are also manifest through the performing arts of dance, music and theatre forms, still very niche, undertaken by various performing arts groups in KK, involved in theatre arts, small but growing and vibrant. Traditional indigenous culture provides a multiple range of resources, from history, ritual and other elements which could serve the development of the performing arts.

Changing context

- We live in the 21st century, just consider how much IT, communication technology and media, and transport has impacted and changed our world and eroded the barriers that “have throughout history, geographically, linguistically, and culturally separated people”.
- Globalisation
- The World entering its 4th industrial revolution, adapting to forms of competitiveness and new technologies – digital technology powered by cloud, social media, virtual space, mobile and internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence, increasing power, speed and data

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

DETERMINANTS AND INFLUENCERS (a)

INTERNAL	GAPS AND CHALLENGES	EXTERNAL
Museum Operations and Management		Local (State) Ministerial Jurisdiction MTCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined by Type and Role 		Policy – tourism and leisure, economics driven
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Functions 		Local public demand needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Std Operating Procedures: - government financial, administrative and other procedures - museum principles and ethics 	Constraints of accountability KPI (Key Performance indicators) Museum work vs administrative needs & other policy directives	Ministry directives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources: - Staff and personnel - Finance - Site, buildings, infrastructure - Supporting services eg technology 	Professional Capacity Financial Constraints Maintenance Technological support	Grants and selected funding support

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

DETERMINANTS AND INFLUENCERS (b)

INTERNAL	GAPS and CHALLENGES	EXTERNAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and activities: - collection - acquisition, conservation, - research - exhibit and display - tangible and intangible heritage through appropriate interpretation, - education, promote heritage appreciation, preservation - conservation and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI usually quantitative rather than qualitative outcome • Research – proper and reliable documentation • Exhibition – transforming static and passive objects through appropriate interpretation to dynamic, interesting and authentic presentation, providing the sense of cultural space • Interpretation – making sense or illustrating intangibles through tangibles • Education – making sense of objects and the values of the physical, social and cultural environment, enhancing enjoyment and appreciation of user • Supporting publications and literature • Globalisation, technology and digital media influencers 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Public Perception and Expectations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media reports • Demographics – profile of users, visitors and stakeholders • Sophisticated and more knowledgeable public • Social Media influencers

The Influencers

DEMOGRAPHICS –

Some recent findings of media consumption and digital use and communication

Who are the INFLUENCERS

- **Baby-boomers** : born 1944 – 1964
- **Gen X** : born 1965 – 1970
- **Gen Y (millennials)**: born 1980 – 1994
- **Gen Z**: born 1995 – 2015

	GENERATION	BORN	MEDIA PREFERENCES	KEY TRAITS
1.	Baby-Boomers	1944 – 1964	Traditional, read newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, also FB	
2.	Gen X	1965 – 1970	Newspapers, TV, radio, more time on FB	Gen X as parents of Gen Z

The Influencers contd:-

	GENERATION	BORN	MEDIA PREFERENCES	KEY TRAITS
3.	Gen Y (Millennials)	1980 – 1994	Watch TV, heavy mobile use, purchase online through computer, digital tool savvy, multiple social media ac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want fulfilment, need a <u>VISION</u> to engage, need to explain and communicate the <u>WHY</u> which provides the <u>PURPOSE</u> • <u>BRANDING</u> important • Avoid repetition
4.	Gen Z	1995 – 2015	Gen X as parents. Internet savvy children, available mobile phones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposed to tech. – tablet, mobile etc since birth • Like to solve problems, used to tech. software • Self-aware people • Ambitious, independent • Want truth, authenticity and facts • Dislike fakes • “Phygital”

Cultural and Heritage Tourism

- Cultural and heritage tourism is travel oriented towards experiencing the arts, heritage and activities that represent the people and their stories of the past and present of a destination.
- It has become an powerful economic tool, but it **can also be a double-edge-sword as it can damage and even destroy the very resources that the museum is mandated to preserve** without careful and appropriate management and documentation.
- **“ museums are now playing a major role not only in the wider sphere of arts, but also within tourism and leisure. Museums cannot no longer sit back and expect that people will start queuing up. Their roles have changed to attract more audiences”.**

(The Role of Museums in Cultural and Heritage Tourism for Sustainable Economy in Developing Countries - *Kamani Perera*)