

The Marketized Museum: New Museology in a Corporatized World

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Abstract [1]

As a contemporary communications medium, the museum has undergone significant reinvention and reorientation of purpose within the past several decades. While the late twentieth century saw the rise of a fundamental reimagining of the museum as a visitor-oriented space where questions of representation, ownership, and voice were of paramount concern, the early twenty-first century has seen a repositioning of museums as market actors with a role to play in the economic aspects of social life. This article considers the growing disconnect between the corporatization of museums as a consequence of marketization policies and the paradigm shift within the museum profession emphasizing equity, inclusiveness, and community engagement. My aim here is both to reflect on the potential consequences of increasing museum marketization, as well as draw attention to several of the key issues that are emerging as foci for investigation and debate. Beginning with a discussion of the shift towards new museology in the latter half of the twentieth century, this article then explores how the ambitions of museum professionals are being sidetracked and corralled by the pressures of corporatization and a policy environment dedicated to the reduction of state subsidies and organizational restructuring. Particular attention is paid to the shifting basis of museum finance, emergent processes of commodification in museums, and finally, the role of museums in policies for economic regeneration around notions of cultural economies and the 'creative city'.

As a contemporary communications medium, the museum has undergone significant reinvention and reorientation of purpose within the past several decades [2]. The late twentieth century saw a fundamental reimagining of the museum and its place in both the community and nation. Traditionally a collection-driven institution, the museum has been transformed into a visitor-oriented space where questions of representation, ownership, and voice are of paramount concern. On an international level and within the context of emerging discourses on the rights of minorities and disadvantaged populations, museums are now attempting to foster an atmosphere of cooperation and reconciliation between themselves and the various communities they serve.

While much of the so-called ‘new museology’ discourse is laudatory of the museum as equitable, inclusive, welcoming, and community-based, gaps between the rhetoric of change and the reality of praxis are increasingly apparent in wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. Museums and other cultural institutions are faced with declining funding, increased competition for resources, and a neoliberal policy environment that conflates culture with economic competitiveness. The recent proliferation of ‘creative city’ policies, for example, have largely reconstructed museums as tourist attractions (for entertainment) rather than merely as places of education or knowledge. As such, we have begun to see the creation of museums as iconic in their own right, as opposed to for the objects they contain. Consider, for instance, the various Guggenheims, which people visit to see the unusual sculptural qualities of the buildings as much as (if not more than) for the exhibitions inside. In terms of museum exhibits, a desire to secure as much tourist revenue as possible can result in displays that idealize or sentimentalize the individuals or groups being represented, omitting potentially controversial elements of social life, including cultural, political, and class conflicts – a far cry from the new museology project of inclusivity, authenticity, and visitor empowerment.

Hooper-Greenhill (2000) has noted that in an era of funding cuts, museums are encouraged to think of themselves as market actors, and this has only been exacerbated in wake of the recent economic downturn. Such a fundamental change in museological discourse and practice, however, has yet to be fully considered in terms of understanding social change, power relations, or growing levels of museum corporatism [3]. In this article, I consider the growing disconnect between the increasing corporatization of museums as a consequence of marketization policies and the paradigm shift emphasizing equity, inclusiveness, and community engagement within the museum profession. In this context, use of the political economy of communication as an analytical approach raises questions about the production, distribution, and consumption of museum resources that other theoretical paradigms may obscure or ignore. My aim here is both to reflect on the potential consequences of increasing museum marketization, as well as draw attention to several of the key issues that are emerging in museology. Beginning with a discussion of the shift towards new museology in the latter half of the twentieth century, this article will consider how broader changes in culture and technology have intersected with evolving economic practices to shape the museum as a cultural institution that valorizes visitor experience and community engagement. The latter half of the article considers how museum professionals are being pressured by a policy environment dedicated to the reduction of state subsidies and organizational restructuring. Particular attention is paid to the shifting basis of museum finance, emergent processes of commodification in museums, and finally, the role of museums as vehicles for economic regeneration around notions of the ‘creative city’ and cultural economy. New museological understandings, the implementation of new technologies, and the growth of corporate sponsorship have fundamentally altered the museum as an institution. Its primary function has shifted from collection to education and outreach. Together, these developments have resulted in a profound change in the stories museums tell, the ways in which they construct meaning, and how they respond to challenges both internal and external to them.

Paradigm shift: The move to the ‘post-museum’

Though the scholarly investigation of museums as a form of cultural study and critique has existed since at least the late nineteenth century, the current formation of museology has only emerged in the past few decades (see Macdonald, 2006a; Vergo, 1989). As explained by Vergo (1989), the shift to a ‘new museology’ has been marked by a reframing of the meanings of museum objects as situated and

contextual rather than inherent, a questioning of how the museum and its exhibits may be perceived and understood by museum visitors, and an acknowledgement of areas of inquiry previously thought to be outside the purview of museology proper (such as entertainment or commercialization). Scholars such as Halpin (1997) argue that the new museology is multifaceted. In the French-speaking world, for example, the museum and its functions extend beyond physical walls into the community. In the Netherlands, curatorial voice and authorship take center stage and replace the former unidentified and nameless institutional voice, whereas in America much of the emphasis has been on the shift from museum methods to the purpose of the museum as such.

An immense expansion in the social role played by museums generated the new museology. Macdonald (2006a) notes the tremendous growth in the number of museums from the latter half of the twentieth century to the present day. It is estimated that 95 per cent of all museums were established following the Second World War. This amply demonstrates, she argues, that as a cultural form, museums retain their significance and the public's support. The variety of types ranges from small residential museums exhibiting local heritage to so-called 'superstar museums' featuring landmark architecture and exhibitions designed to appeal to an international audience.

The reconceptualization and reorientation of the museum occurred at a time of significant social upheaval, particularly in the United States. The late twentieth century was marked by what Hunter (1991) has termed the 'culture wars' – public conflict stemming from different groups' ontological positioning on questions of moral authority. He argues that American politics and culture have become polarized over an increasing number of controversial issues, including the separation of church and state, women's rights, censorship, and privacy, among others. Society now divides itself largely along two ideological viewpoints – namely, progressivism and orthodoxy – as opposed to markers of social difference such as class, ethnicity, or religion. The culture wars have played a key role in debates over remembrance and history. In 1994, for example, discussions over the development of national educational standards centred on whether a celebratory or critical approach to American history in the public education system was most appropriate.

Cultural conflicts have also played out in venues such as museums, heritage sites, and monuments. In 1995, vice-presidential spouse Lynne Cheney protested that "[m]useums used to be places that invited visitors to learn about great works of art, to understand their society, and to know more about the course of history. Today, like so many other cultural institutions, they are apt to be in the business of debunking greatness, Western society, and even history itself" (Cheney, 1995: 144). These places become what Dubin (2006) has defined as 'sites of persuasion': public knowledge is produced through the social construction of memory and meaning at and about these sites. This is manifested through the renewal of particular beliefs and values, the assertion that certain standards or codes are significant, the reclamation of prohibited cultural practices or forms, the repatriation of forbidden knowledge or objects, and in the development of new relationships and new understandings for progressive social change across time and space.

As articulated by Hooper-Greenhill (1992), museums are part of this general cultural shift. The essence of the 'modern' museum – codifier of knowledge and source of 'the correct' interpretation and dominant narrative through place-based exhibitions – was that of the building. The 'post-museum', however, is more a process or an experience, with museums 'moving out' into community spaces. No longer mere repositories of "material culture that articulates personal and national identity", museums are now actively involved in a "process of cultural exchange that perpetuates community dialogue and ongoing constructions of meaning" (Watermeyer, 2012: 3). Four major changes as a result of this paradigm shift to the 'post-museum' are apparent: an acknowledgement of

the fusion of interpretation and exhibition within museums; a questioning of issues related to power, ownership, and voice; the emergence of a discourse that emphasizes the education and welcoming of the visitor as the museum's *raison d'être*; and, finally, growing use of information and communication technologies to enhance visitor engagement.

Museums have traditionally been thought to have five interrelated responsibilities: the collection, study, and conservation of artifacts; the interpretation of these objects; and the task of creating and mounting exhibitions. As articulated in 1970 by Noble, these responsibilities were thought to form an entity, "like the fingers of a hand, each independent but united for a common purpose" (as quoted in Weil, 2004: 74). By the early 1990s, however, this paradigm was superseded by one which was critical of past museum practices. While the responsibility to study remained unchanged, collecting and conserving were collapsed into one function, as were interpretation and exhibition. Significantly, a new discourse emerged whereby museums did not merely broadcast messages, but were necessarily involved in their formulation and construction. As noted by Weil, "an exhibition is shaped from its very outset by the values, attitudes, and assumptions of those who choose and arrange the objects that it contains" (Weil, 2004: 76). As such, the act of interpretation cannot be viewed separately from the act of exhibition, particularly as it is the exhibit itself that radiates the strongest interpretive emanations.

The emergence of new discourses on the rights of minorities and disadvantaged populations has had a profound effect on the reinvention of cultural and historical museums. Questions of whose cultures are being preserved and represented – and how these preservations and representations are created and communicated – are of central importance in an era of espoused cultural equity and plurality (see Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). The museum is now conceived as being community based, audience focused, and responsive to visitor needs. The public is invited into a "conversation about the future of the museum and about the shaping of exhibitions, programs, collections, and other activities" with the goal of making diverse cultural voices heard (Anderson, 2004: 5). For example, traditional mission statements focused on an individual's subjective experience of the museum, whereas it is now more common to emphasize the group identity of museum visitors, particularly in terms of ethnicity or gender (Stam, 1993). Ultimately, according to this new paradigm, every action undertaken by museum professionals should adhere to the principles of external focus and social responsibility [4].

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is the final constitutive element of the 'post-museum' project. Scholars such as Anderson (2004) see this shift, in part, as an attempt by museum professionals to ensure the continued relevance of museums in the information age. The reinvented museum makes use of information and communication technology in order to accommodate visitor needs, whether these are education or entertainment-based. This being said, it is important to remember that while the move to the 'post-museum' entails the use of ICTs, there is also a larger historical relationship between media and museums to consider. Museums have frequently been early adopters of new technology, and have also been able to use existing technologies and media in innovative ways [5].

Rapid acceptance of emerging media became prevalent from the mid-1990s, with email and general Internet usage rising dramatically. The creation, processing, compression, storage, and display of digital images also became prominent. To foster interactivity, museums also began to experiment with technology in exhibitions and in the creation of their own websites (Burton Jones, 2008). Formerly analogue audio tours have been digitized, and in some instances uploaded to the museum's website as a free download or podcast (see Samis, 2008). Interactive modules on

computers are increasingly common in museum exhibits. Additionally, museums are boosting visitor participation and feedback through digital networks and by encouraging people to discuss their experiences on the museum website or by uploading their own personal images to a photo sharing site, which the museum then streams online. The advent of museum websites meant that people no longer necessarily had to physically visit a museum in order to view part or all of its collection. This move from physical-only space to a hybrid of physical and virtual space corresponded with the shift from a local to a global orientation, as museums tasked themselves with serving a larger, potentially worldwide audience.

Adopting computing technologies has transformed the way museum professionals store, manage, and access information (see Marty, 2008). These technologies have also changed the ways in which museums mediate relationships with their visitors and this reflects the 'post-museum' emphasis on social inclusion and cultural plurality. This shift is exemplified in the notion of 'interactivity' with regard to museum exchanges with museum visitors. Staff consider interactive displays to be dual purpose – they provide the visitor with entertainment while also giving them a certain amount of agency in their museum experience. As shown in Macdonald's (2002) ethnographic study of the Science Museum, curators felt that interactive displays allowed them to engage with the new museological practice of empowering the visitor, while working within the constraints of the corporatist managerial model that required an increase in the museum's popularity and profit margins.

Most recently, museums' use of social media has been a major avenue for audience engagement. Fletcher and Lee (2012) observe that many museums use blogging and microblogging, social networking, podcasting, and streaming. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for instance, has an active presence not only on Facebook and Twitter, but also on Flickr and Pinterest. Creating social media is an active process. While museums use social media to communicate promotional and informational material to their audiences, museum staff acknowledge that these media should be used to engage with audiences on a deeper level. Visitors and fans should find social media content humorous and intriguing; it should make them eager to visit the museum and to maintain interaction with the museum's social media sites. For museum personnel, the quality and range of material is seen as more important than content quantity. Although museum practitioners have enthusiastically adopted social media, few in Fletcher and Lee's study had specific goals for their use. Goals were centered upon particular campaigns, events, or exhibitions. Even without a particular aim in mind, most museums do monitor and track statistics and comments, and adjust the topics and information posted accordingly.

Although social media enable museums to connect with visitors in new and potentially innovative ways, maintenance of sites can strain already limited staff resources. Museums must continually provide new content or risk visitors losing interest. At the same time, Osterman et al (2012) caution museums to avoid overplaying social media promotion. They note that while exhibition related tweets are useful, followers may be turned off by repetitive, informational posts, especially if the information is also available on the museum's website, Facebook page, and through email. Establishing a vital community of followers on a social media site is in itself no easy task. In many cases, user comments and content generation come from a "soberingly small segment of potential and actual users" (Kidd, 2011: 69).

The potential of collaborative social media to radicalize community engagement is quickly gaining traction in museological discourse. In practice, this can result in greater frequency and intensity of community consultations, perhaps including the creation of youth or advisory panels. Kidd (2011) examines how social media is used to structure personal narrative and story-making.

Members of the public are asked to provide accounts of their personal and community histories through use of communicative technology. This information (videos, audio recording, digital photographs, and so on) becomes a valuable compilation of source material, allowing museums to fill gaps in knowledge or to reassess the value of their collections. This material can be displayed online through a museum's website or its social media spaces. Kidd notes, however, that the abundance of information collected frequently overwhelms museums' abilities to critically assess such material. Such material is rarely curated to any great extent; those who access the material must determine how to approach, assess, and understand this content on their own. By paying lip service to the rhetoric of inclusion, museums risk alienating or angering people who have contributed stories primarily because they have been encouraged to think that all histories and stories will be given prominence.

In light of the move towards the 'post-museum', with its outward emphasis on inclusivity, openness, and community, it is worth considering how museums are accessed, used, and understood by the populations they serve. Simply put, museums critically influence how people understand and relate to the past. As noted by Rosenzweig and Thelan (1998) in their nationwide study on popular uses of history, Americans are most likely to place their faith in historical accounts produced by public actors and cultural institutions. Significantly, the researchers found that regardless of age, gender, economic status, or education levels, a majority of Americans feel that museums are the single most trustworthy source of information about the past. Museums give visitors a sense of immediacy, personal involvement, and a connection to the past that is being presented to them. Rosenzweig and Thelan's survey also found that allowing visitors to interact with actual artifacts made them feel as though "they were experiencing a moment from the past almost as it had originally been experienced – and with none of the overwhelming distortions that they associated with movies and television, the other purveyors of immediacy" (1998: 106). Despite feelings of deep connection to the past, many museum outings are of an incidental nature – undertaken with another purpose, such as a vacation, in mind. Even so, museums spark "an associative process of recalling and reminiscing about the past", which allows people to feel connected to their own history (1998: 32). Additionally, survey respondents felt that visiting museums allowed them to deepen interpersonal relationships and better understand shared pasts. Personal histories are constituted through associations with artifacts and exhibits and through eyewitness accounts (involving their own mental processes and conversations with friends and family). While the notion of the museum as a source of unbiased and trustworthy information about the past may certainly be critiqued, Rosenzweig and Thelan's study clearly illustrates that, if anything, museums are more relevant now than ever, particularly as agents of knowledge production and dissemination, identity formation, and national heritage.

The marketized museum: Philanthropy, funding, and museum corporatism

According to Alexander (1996), modern museums have experienced three distinct funding periods. In the early twentieth century, they were primarily funded by individual philanthropists. These were wealthy men and women who collected art and artifacts and frequently ran their own museums. By the 1960s, however, the rise of institutional funding, and museums' desire to tap into that funding, resulted in museums entering a transition period in which they moved "from more internally-focused organizations concentrating on collections, conservation and scholarship, to more externally-oriented organizations focusing on funders, exhibitions and audiences" (Alexander, 1996: 123). The current

funding era can be described as one of ‘institutional funding’, in which museums are funded through four primary sources: governments; corporations; individual philanthropists; and internal museum activities, such as admission charges and museum cafeterias and shops.

The transition period of funding was marked by a significant increase in funding from corporate entities. As noted by Alexander (1996), in 1965 the New York Board of Trade founded its Arts Advisory Council; this was followed by the creation of the Business Committee for the Arts two years later. Corporate leaders saw that cultural philanthropy could assist in improving public perceptions of corporations and their business activities. In fact, it has been argued that corporate philanthropy was (and is) directly tied to the need of corporations to improve their reputations in light of labor and environmental concerns, among others (see Muirhead, 1999; Schwarzer, 2006). Museum sponsorship and the funding of large scale, popular exhibitions allows corporations to align themselves with institutions that are seen to advocate education and the public good. Prior argues that multinationals and banking giants have appropriated museums and galleries “as their own public-relations media” (2006, para 24). In the United Kingdom, for example, Thatcherite policy allowed corporate donors to solidify their grip on contemporary culture by sponsoring the arts. This led to corporations having their own curators and art departments and to the appointment of business-oriented museum directors in public institutions.

Corporate sponsorship and individual philanthropy are also strongly encouraged in the United States. Hughes and Luksetich’s (1999) examination of the interrelationship among funding sources in art and history museums found that the latter are more likely to receive high levels of federal funding if they also seek out and receive high levels of private support. A museum’s age and reputation, and public expenditure priorities in a given state, also influence federal funding. In contrast, state and local support for museums has a negative effect on federal funding. Evidence of development spending and federal funding also has a negative effect on state funding (suggesting that federal funding is seen as a substitute, rather than supplement, for state funding). Once again, high levels of private support positively influence state funding. As the authors note, “[m]useums that show success in obtaining private support are rewarded with public money” (Hughes and Luksetich, 1999: 33). In the UK, by contrast, Maddison (2004) found that increases in non-grant income results in reductions in government grant money. This reduction typically causes a shortfall in museum funding, as non-grant income is usually not enough to sustain museum operations.

The shifting basis of museum finance has encouraged the planning and installation of special exhibitions. Accessible, popularly themed ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions that attract large numbers of visitors have generated high levels of publicity and revenue for museums. One of the first was the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s *Treasures of Tutankhamen*, which drew 8.25 million visitors across multiple venues throughout the United States in the 1970s. While the blockbuster cannot be regarded as an entirely new phenomenon [6], this type of exhibition has become more frequent as museums respond to funders’ concerns about audiences and accessibility. Both government and corporate sponsors are interested in attracting broad audiences (as opposed to individual donors, who rarely give financial support for this sort of spectacle; see Alexander, 1996). Blockbuster exhibitions with special charges have also become an important source of earned income, in part to help offset the high costs of their production [7].

Though institutional funding has enabled museums to mount larger and greater exhibitions, it has also meant a certain level of financial instability. Museums face competition for limited financial resources, not only from other museums but also from other venues of cultural heritage, including historic sites, monuments, and even community centers. An additional challenge for museums is

variability of funding. Funding comes from a variety of sources, but this is not always guaranteed. Revenues generated by endowment investments, for example, tend to fluctuate according to stock market performance. Museums caught in a cash crunch may face selling off items in their permanent collections to fund operating expenses, or even be forced to close (Skinner et al, 2009).

Museums must adhere to specific application criteria or risk being denied grants, and demands for accountability and performance measurement are becoming increasingly prevalent as the discourse of fiscal responsibility and austerity gains prominence in political circles. Bises and Padovano (2004) have shown that a slump in total state expenditure for Italian cultural institutions in the mid-1990s corresponded with changes in the process and criteria for renewing state grants. Lindqvist contends that while the political priorities of governments dictate the level of economic support they are willing to give to museums, the state of public finances and “competition from other political fields on public resources” also play a role in determining levels of state support (2012: 4). Around the turn of the century, for example, several European countries decreased funding to cultural and other sectors in order to meet the requirements for membership in the European Monetary Union (see Getzner, 2002). Both Lindqvist (2012) and Janes (2007) consider patronage appointments to museum boards as potentially problematic as the appointees rarely have substantive knowledge of museological theory or practice. Frequent changes to a board’s composition can negatively affect long term governance, as each new appointee seeks to leave their mark. As such, choices made in the political arena can have as much of an effect on cultural institutions as fluctuations in the economy.

Museums are thus caught between their long term values and the short term nature of most funding. Butterfield (2001) observes that few institutional donors are interested in supporting long term programs. They prefer to provide starter grants for new and exciting projects. Ongoing programs, including those which have been proven effective and which demonstrably fulfill a community need, are less likely to engender the same level of enthusiasm or financial support. As noted by Lindqvist (2012), politicians and other external donors are more eager to establish new museums, rather than to support existing ones. The financial challenges faced by museums are thus not just related to maintenance and acquisition costs, but also to the “psychology of political action and private support for culture and the arts” (Lindqvist, 2012: 6).

Recent discussions of how to measure a museum’s value have been tinged with what Janes (2007) calls ‘corporatism’, whereby museums come to resemble their corporate counterparts with “revenues and attendance being the predominant measures of worth” (Janes, 2007: 227). Johnson and Thomas (1998), for example, view museums as a type of ‘productive unit’, which must engage with a series of inputs (such as technology) in order to produce outputs that are valued by others. Vandersypen (2012) sees this emphasis on accountability as directly tied to the rise of institutional funding. Camerero et al postulate that private sponsorship (as opposed to public funding) may lead to “higher expenditure on services to the client and innovation in value creation” (2011: 252).

There is a growing disconnect between the corporatist model of growth favored by museum directors and administrators and the conception of museums as equitable and inclusive places with inherent value. Equating museums’ value with consumption, including everything from visitation to sales in the gift shop or café, risks overlooking that these actions are carried out with the goal of fulfilling museums’ social mandate, and are not an end in and of themselves. As Janes concludes:

By confusing these fundamentally different realities, museums are forsaking the opportunity to creatively rethink their purpose, and are instead embracing an increasingly fragile and unsustainable economic model based on fickle consumerism and showmanship. To attempt to improve the current situation by adopting the very

same marketplace ideology that has reduced the level of public support for museums so dramatically over the past two decades could be ignored as wishful thinking or perhaps solipsism, if the implications were not so apparent (2007: 229).

The trend towards pursuing economic goals at the expense of social, ethical, or even creative concerns underscores the growing tension experienced by museums as they attempt to forge a place for themselves in a market economy. Museums are expected to be places of both education and entertainment, to be visitor-focused while still making efforts to expand their collections and conduct research, and to serve local communities while also competing for international audiences and sponsorship. However, by adhering to marketplace imperatives as opposed to emphasizing their unique societal position, museums may miss the opportunity to engage with alternative means of creating value.

Museums, commodification, and the production of cultural meaning

As indicated in the preceding discussion, museums have undergone a significant transformation over the past several decades. More than ever, museums confront questions of power and inequality, not only from a cultural or social standpoint but also from an economic or market-based perspective. As such, the development of a political economic analysis of museums is an opportunity to provide a critique of contemporary museum practice which might be downplayed or obscured by other means of analysis. This also presents an opportunity for the political economy of communication to develop new areas of scholarly investigation. Here, Mosco's (2009) discussion of commodification lays the groundwork for a political economic approach to the study of the marketized museum. As he explains, commodification refers to the "process of transforming use values into exchange values" (Mosco, 2009: 129). It is the process through which things that do not have economic value are assigned such a value and sold in the marketplace [8]. A commodity is not a neutral object with a life of its own; rather, it is the output of social relationships – of human needs, desires, and practices. The commodity is a social product by nature. It has 'use value' because it satisfies human wants, and 'exchange value' when one desires to exchange it for something else. As Murdock (2011) notes, the branding and marketization of a commodity often conceals the labor and social relations that go into its production. Branded goods appear as "the exclusive products of invention and entrepreneurship" with attention focused "solely on the object itself and the projected pleasures and gains of possession", and thus labor processes, worker exploitation, and ecological degradation remain obscured from view (Murdock, 2011: 19). Murdock goes on to observe that many cultural products and services are, in fact, "commodities in their own right". He argues that "enormous potential control over public culture and debate" has been ceded to "private ownership and the dynamics of profit maximization" and that social inequality is exacerbated when access to communication or culture is tied to one's ability to pay for it (2011: 20).

Schiller (1973, 1984) has also commented on the unique nature of the communication commodity, arguing that it is especially powerful because it facilitates the shaping of consciousness. Control of consciousness is embodied in: 1) the fragmentation of information dissemination, which obscures the social totality; and 2) the immediacy of information, which intensifies then diminishes the significance of all subject matter. New communication technologies amplify these processes by permitting "the transmission of torrents of irrelevant information", impairing one's ability to foster awareness and sound judgment and "further undermining the individual's almost hopeless search for meaning" (Schiller, 1973: 27). Schiller explicitly identifies consciousness control as manipulation,

and contends that individualism, personal choice, and media pluralism are little more than myths. People are given the impression that mass media are neutral, and that their organization is natural and inevitable, even though the media consists of corporate enterprises intent on maximizing profit. The illusion of choice is sustained when the abundance of media is taken to mean that there is diversity in content, irrespective of media ownership concentration. The ultimate ideological purpose is individual passivity and preservation of the status quo, including the maintenance of social and power relations that benefit the corporate and political elites.

Processes of commodification and communication can thus be seen to mutually constitute each other. In the economy as a whole, communication processes, technologies, and media contribute to a broad-spectrum process of commodification. Additionally, general processes of commodification within a society penetrate communication processes, and this influences communication as a social practice. Within this framework, the commodification of use values into exchange values – for example, the turning of stories into museum exhibits – is an integral part of explaining the ever-changing nature of social structures and social processes.

While the concept of commodification has typically been used to explore items within economic markets, this analysis can be extended to institutional areas, such as museums, that have, at least on some level, maintained the principles of use value. Adorno's (2002) critique of the 'culture industry' is particularly useful in this regard. Arguing that Marx's critique of commodity fetishism needed to be further developed to be applicable to late capitalism, he contends that the capitalist relations of production that have come to dominate Western society have led to a concentration of wealth and power which is not necessarily visible. The organization of capitalist society centers on the production of exchange values for the sake of producing exchange values and the tacit appropriation of surplus value; Adorno deems this type of society *Tauschgesellschaft* (an 'exchange society').

In 'The Culture Industry' from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno argues that the commodities produced by the culture industry have come to dominate culture. The emphasis on marketability has produced commodities which, while seemingly diverse and individualistic, are in fact conformist and highly standardized. Exchange value thus replaces use value in these products: "[e]verything has value only in so far as it can be exchanged, not in so far as it is something in itself. For consumers the use value of art, its essence, is a fetish, and the fetish—the social valuation [*gesellschaftliche Schätzung*] which they mistake for the merit [*Rang*] of works of art – becomes its only use value, the only quality they enjoy" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002: 128). Using 1940s popular music as an example, Adorno demonstrates how popular music is standardized and requires little cognitive effort on the part of audiences. As explained by Morgan, changes in musical consciousness thus have little to do with preferences or choice, but are instead manufactured:

For Adorno, the idea that the audience freely chooses mass-produced music is not only erroneous but dangerous. Such an idea potentially eliminates the transformative function of culture itself... When the function of music itself has changed from transformation to entertainment, this change homogenizes how an audience may perceive culture of any kind. In this total cultural apparatus then, the regression of the listener is such that they only consume culture for entertainment. According to Adorno, this invokes a passivity in the very audience for which passivity is not in their interests. The industry claims the audience's approval of the standardized cultural form, and undermines any preference for the potentially radical cultural forms as a pretence. This view is hardly surprising when indeed the commercialized musical form exists just for social approval (2013: 52–53).

Standardized music produces standardized reactions that affirm life as it is, including social, economic, and political processes. All cultural products that are oriented to the market help to structure the human psyche in socially conformist ways that reify capitalist exploitation.

The concept of a 'culture industry' is premised on the notion that popular culture is not developed spontaneously at a grassroots or community level, but is consciously and purposefully manufactured for non-elite segments of society. Having been purged of spontaneity, originality, and intrinsic worth, culture has lost all purpose outside of achieving maximum profitability. The outputs of the culture industry thus do not allow people to express themselves authentically or to truly communicate their cultural needs. While working class culture may have been previously characterized by defiance or protest against the injustices of capitalism, the culture industry rejects rebellious actions in favor of capitalist-approved forms of democratic expression such as voting [9].

An understanding of Adorno's critique reveals how corporate ownership and control of the culture industries help organize contemporary society. Political economists can thus examine the production, distribution, and consumption of particular cultural commodities, such as museum exhibitions and associated cultural products. As corporate sponsorship of museums increases, it is worth considering how economic power affects cultural production in this context. Is manipulation by an elite evident in the cultural products produced by museums? In what ways do museums attempt to influence consciousness, and what is the potential effect of this on working class consciousness, and solidarity?

Museum organization and the commodification of museum labor

The institutional funding of museum operations has downplayed the role of curators as accountants and public relations personnel have risen in number and status. While today's curators are better paid and have more stable employment than in times past, they are less likely to be appointed to the role of museum director. As Kotler et al (2008) have noted, directorships and other museum management roles are increasingly filled by those from a corporate background. Thus, fewer people with a curatorial point of view are involved in the running of museums (Alexander, 1996; Janes, 2013). Institutional funders' demands for accountability continue to strengthen the role of administrative departments in museums. Curatorial power is thus curtailed by directors seeking to assuage funders' concerns that their money is being spent appropriately. This new external focus has also resulted in an exponential growth of educational programs, and most such jobs in museums have been created only in the past few decades.

While total employment numbers in museums have grown, labor casualization and privatization pervade the marketized museum. As with other public sector cultural institutions, intensified fiscal and austerity measures have resulted in the intensification of worker exploitation, wage stagnation, major layoffs, and reliance upon temporary labor. Growing labor precarity has led to museum employment that is insecure, unprotected, and often poorly paid. It is not surprising that the past few years have seen major strikes among museum staff in the United Kingdom, France, Greece, and Canada. The 2009 strike of Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation employees (the CMCC operates both the Museum of Civilization as well as the War Museum) lasted 86 days. At the time of the strike, 38 per cent of museum workers were hired on a contractual and temporary basis, and nearly 90 per cent of tour guide positions were temporary and/or part-time (Lefebvre, 2009). Caught in a cycle of labor precarity and financial insecurity, employees feel pressured to continue to accept temporary contracts, which reduce the likelihood that they will later be able to secure permanent employment. Privatization of museum staff, meanwhile, decreases union power and results in job

shedding and overall losses in worker income and benefits. In 2014, for example, the National Gallery of London appointed a private security firm, Complete Integrated Solutions Security Limited (CIS), to guard artworks at its Rembrandt exhibition, with no prior consultation or agreement with Public and Commercial Services (PCS), the museum staff's union. PCS claimed that CIS contributed to fostering a hostile work environment for the museum's unionized security guards through actions such as removing guards' chairs. A gallery trustee later admitted that CIS had been brought in "to give the gallery staff a fright" (Toynbee, 2015). This backdoor privatization effort was soon revealed to be the first step in a wide-reaching plan to privatize all frontline employees, including visitor assistants, admission attendants, and security staff – approximately two-thirds of the museum's workforce. These actions resulted in the PCS staging 34 days of industrial action in the first six months of 2015, culminating in a 10 day strike and public rally held in Trafalgar Square (Atkinson, 2015).

It is interesting to note that casualized museum labor largely consists of hosts, animators, and guides – the first line of contact for museum audiences. As such, an emerging issue for research and debate concerns the tension between the commodification of labor in museums and the need for skilled museum workers. As articulated by Braverman (1998), labor is comprised of two components: conception, or the design of work and its execution. He posits that the pursuit of capitalist interests has led to the deskilling of the worker and the standardization of labor processes, which have been reconstituted under managerial control. Scientific management, in which the conception of work is separated from its execution, and certain technological developments, particularly those that reduce the role of the worker to one of automatization and monitoring, result in a situation whereby workers become largely interchangeable, and in this way the power of management is increased at the expense of worker autonomy.

More recently, Head (2014) has argued that workers are faced with unprecedented levels of management and control in the contemporary information rich workplace. Scientific management practices combined with ever-increasing measuring and monitoring technologies are now applied across a wide variety of both blue-collar and white-collar occupations. Computer business systems, initially developed for military use, are now applied to all major sectors of the manufacturing and service economy. These systems are comprised of digital networks that interlink all workstations in an organization, virtual warehouses containing massive amounts of data are used to measure and monitor worker performance, and finally "expert systems that mimic human intelligence in performing the cognitive tasks that are integral to the business processes to be managed by that system" (Head, 2014: 7). With the exception of a small minority of elite managers and engineers in charge of activating and supervising these systems, most workers and middle management are left with little autonomy or creative leeway. Labor and skill are degraded, resulting in stagnant wages and unfulfilling, mindless work. For Head (2014), use of applied science in this manner acts as a tool of oppression by privileging short-term productivity and profit ahead of worker empowerment and advancement. In museums, managerial oversight and control is increasingly intensified through use of electronic – and even biometric – monitoring and surveillance technologies. In early 2015, San Francisco City employees working at the de Young and Legion of Honor museums rallied at City Hall to protest the implementation of a biometric authorization system, which required lower level workers (though not museum administration) to give their thumbprints to a third-party contractor as a condition of employment. Employees argued that this system was a major violation of the San Francisco Administration Code and infringed on employees' rights to personal security. Protestors pointed to the hypocrisy of Charlie Castillo, Director of Human Resources and Administration at the

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, noting that though he was one of the biggest proponents of the program, he had no obligation or intention of using biometrics himself. Given that there was “no known evidence that workers were stealing time”, the excessive surveillance measures put into place by museum management served little purpose other than to increase managerial control at the expense of employees’ autonomy (Albarazai, 2015).

Though the trend towards the standardization of knowledge and practice is framed as a desired outcome of museum professionalization and the move towards operational efficiency, it comes at a cost to worker autonomy, integrity, and face-to-face relations with museum visitors. While new museology is underpinned by the notion that welcoming and educating visitors is the museum’s core purpose, the marketized museum places greater emphasis on entertainment and spectacle, and as such downplays the importance of having a skilled, educated workforce in favor of one where workers can be easily switched around to improve the bottom line. In 2012, for example, the Getty Trust announced it was cutting 31 positions from its education department, including all but five of its gallery teachers. Guided tours, formerly conducted by paid professional staff, are now led by volunteer docents, many of whom do not have extensive training in art history or museum education (Steinhauer, 2012). At Manhattan’s Tenement Museum, guides are now more likely to be actors reading from a script rather than the historians and graduate students previously hired (see Agovino, 2014). The concern in both these instances is that without the necessary education and training to develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the museum’s subject matter, workers are essentially interchangeable (likely exacerbating labor precarity and low wages). Furthermore, museums are failing to live up to their own rhetoric that education is the cornerstone of the contemporary museum experience.

A political economic approach to work in museums allows for an examination of the division of labor in museums and an investigation of the separations between the conception and execution of particular tasks and responsibilities. It is able to consider the autonomy workers have within specific labor processes and explore management’s involvement in these processes and their role in building consent for the capitalist system generally. The impact of technological developments on museum labor can also be assessed. Finally, we can investigate the seeming contradiction between the desire for cheap, easily-controlled, unskilled labor on the one hand, and the growing professionalization of museum personnel on the other. Future research might consider, for example, how this tension plays out in museums particularly in terms of worker advancement and labor organization.

The emergence of the visitor commodity?

The notion of the audience-as-commodity, also known as the ‘blind spot’ debate in Marxist theories of communication, was first articulated by Dallas Smythe in an article published in the *Canadian Journal of Social and Political Theory* in 1977 [10]. According to Smythe (1977, 1981), audience power is produced, sold, distributed, and consumed. It has a price and can therefore be considered a commodity. Smythe proposes that the audience is the primary commodity produced by media (as opposed to, for example, radio or television programming). Audience members are not simply being entertained or passing time when they consume media; they are also using their labor power in disciplined ways whenever advertising-supported media is the primary focus of attention. Audiences also “market commodities, candidates and issues to themselves” through buying technological devices that provide access to media as well as demand for consumer goods (Smythe, 1981: 25–26). New communication technologies seemingly empower audiences to skip advertising and view only

content; however they are also being used by advertisers to colonize our attention (Meehan, 2005). Whether one is faced with targeted Facebook ads or motion-sensing audiovisual commercials in public restrooms, products and messages are encroaching on private and public spaces to such a degree that they are impossible to avoid.

Museums do not host advertisements in the same way as a television or radio program. This being said, it is not uncommon for museum exhibitions to prominently feature logos of corporate sponsors (the ubiquitous presence of BP's logo on posters for the British Museum's 2014 blockbuster exhibition *Vikings: life and legend* is a recent notable example). These sponsors may also be highlighted on a museum's website or its educational materials. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for instance, includes corporate sponsors' information not only on the title wall at the exhibition entrance and in all print and web advertisements, but also on all educational materials and audio guides complementing the exhibition, as well as the museum's website (with a direct link to the sponsor's website). While corporate sponsorship of museum exhibitions is not a new phenomenon, increasing marketization has led museums to play a growing role in the commodification of their own visitors. Tate Gallery, for example, frames its visitors as "new audiences" that can help corporate sponsors reach their marketing objectives through supporting specific exhibitions or projects. Tate also provides corporate sponsors with information on the types of visitors a particular exhibition will bring to the museum, informing potential sponsors that "[w]ith you we can build a campaign that reaches your target market most effectively" (Tate, 2015). As articulated by Rebecca Williams, Director of Audiences and Development, "[i]t's important to understand the project you are talking about so that you understand the reach – you think it will reach this particular audience and those visitors. You can then give the sponsor a clear understanding of the kinds of people they will be reaching if they partner with you in this way" (as quoted in Nightingale, 2008: 56). As opposed to appealing to a corporation's social responsibility mandate, the marketized museum is more likely to emphasize its utility as a vehicle for a corporation's entry into new market area.

Although a museum's stated goal may be education or entertainment, the complex relationship between museums and their funders (in particular their corporate funders) means that exhibitions necessarily extend beyond these functions to become part of a marketing strategy targeted to consumers. These consumers – meaning museum audiences – have a subsequent market value because they themselves are the commodity corporations are seeking to reach through their sponsorship of exhibits and other museum projects. We can also reflect on how digital technologies such as social media blur distinctions between producer and consumer, resulting in a phenomenon known as 'prosumption' (Cesareo 2011; Fuchs, 2009; Strangelove, 2009). As greater numbers of museums solicit stories, pictures, and opinions from audiences via social media sites in an effort to fulfill their community outreach mandates (including, for example, the Victoria and Albert Museum's *World Beach Project*), it may be worthwhile for political economists to consider how such projects have been conceptualized and how they are put into practice.

The spectacular museum and 'creative city' policy

The entrenchment of entrepreneurial forms of urban governance has been intimately linked to the rise of 'creative city' policy. Museums have become prominent sites in the reimagining of cities as places of artistic and cultural production and consumption. The early 1970s saw a shift in urban politics away from a managerial regime of public service provision towards the promotion of an entrepreneurial mode of governance that promoted economic competitiveness, market rationality, and

support for the private sector (Harvey, 1989). Entrepreneurial urbanism, which emerged in the context of deindustrialization and the subsequent erosion of the economic base of industrial cities, is characterized by the notion of a “public-private partnership” as well as a focus on the political economy of place rather than of territory. The construction of place (a new civic center, an industrial park) is consequently seen as a more pressing issue than the amelioration of conditions within a particular territory.

Contemporary urban entrepreneurialism is centered on the notion that culture and the creative industries are essential components of urban regeneration. Iconic architecture and cultural events are inscribed into economic policies for urban governance. This can be seen as part of a wider twenty-first century international urban planning trend of using arts and culture as a tool for social and economic development (Michels et al, 2014). The belief that there is a connection between culture, creativity, and participation in the international knowledge-based economy is propagated by government officials, researchers, think tanks, and international organizations. The basic argument here is that as cultural commodities constitute an increasing share of the output of modern capitalism, national, regional, and municipal economic success lies in the ability to produce and sell cultural images and products. It is thus claimed that cultural investment acts as a catalyst for economic success, while delivering a multitude of other outcomes, including social cohesion and civic pride (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000, 2008).

Economic competition between cities for tourism dollars and international investment has led to museums and other cultural attractions assuming a major role in urban marketing and branding strategies (Evans, 2003). Museums are urged to see themselves as market actors with a broader range of economic functions than in times past. In the ‘creative city’, museums are not merely places of education or even entertainment, but are also pivotal locations of consumption and place-based marketing. The quintessential example here would be the Louvre, which went so far as to open an underground shopping mall, *Carrousel du Louvre*, in the early 1990s. This repositioning of the museum as spectacle, however, has typically not been matched by a proportional increase in annual operating budgets. Museums have thus been compelled to seek alternative forms of revenue, typically through the expansion of commercialized spaces such as cafés and gift shops. Also required are growing levels of partnership with corporations and other private actors to fund special projects and blockbuster exhibitions.

This external reorientation of the museum’s purpose has led to both a remarkable multiplication of museums throughout Western countries since the 1990s (see Janes, 2013). It has also transformed the museum into a sort of spectacular ‘high art’ aimed at “sculpting an entrepreneurial image of the city” through the construction of architecturally iconic buildings designed by international celebrity architects (Michels et al, 2014: 11). The next decade will see “more than two dozen new cultural centres focused on museums... built in various countries, at an estimated cost of \$250 billion”. These include offshoots of the Guggenheim and Louvre in Abu Dhabi, a new cultural hub in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and M+ - a new contemporary art museum in Hong Kong’s West Kowloon Cultural District (the latter has become known as the city’s answer to London’s Tate Modern) (The Economist, 2013). The transformation of the museum into a mega-spectacle designed to enhance the city’s image is most prominently realized through the phenomenon of the ‘superstar’ museum. While the most famous of these is undoubtedly the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, designed by famed Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry, other notable examples include the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Getty Center in Los Angeles, and the Tate Modern. These museums are characterized by the exceptional quality both of their collections and exhibits as well as by the architecture of the buildings themselves. They

attract large numbers of visitors and thus have a significant impact on their respective local economies. Often defined by the most popular and well-known pieces in their collections, superstar museums become more about the spectacle of a famous painting (such as *The Night Watch* in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum or *The Starry Night* in the Museum of Modern Art) or artifact (for instance, the Parthenon Sculptures in the British Museum) rather than the collection as a whole (Frey, 1998).

Though the stated aim of the superstar museum is to provide a 'total experience' to its visitors, which notionally fits the idea of the 'post-museum' project, the proliferation of this type of museum also represents a co-option of the ambitions of museum professionals (with regard to their relationships with audiences and members of the community more generally). Open pursuit of tourist revenue and the 'creative class' risks alienating local residents by making gentrified claims on public space. The economic imperatives of 'creative city' policies, and by extension the organizational direction of museums operating within these policy frameworks, inevitably results in political support for culture that can be marketed and sold rather than culture that improves the lives of citizens. Artists and community groups in Bilbao, for example, have noted the near impossibility of obtaining government funding for local cultural projects, despite the city's reputation as an international cultural capital (Michael, 2015). While the Guggenheim Bilbao displays some Basque art and hosts several cultural workshops, its focus is on attracting foreign tourism and investment, rather than bolstering local arts and culture. Ultimately, the culture promoted in the 'creative city' is that which is most valued by those with the interest and capital to support it. As a result, museums risk not only overlooking opportunities for social development and community engagement, they may also produce and exacerbate social tensions by openly prioritizing particular class interests.

The museum as spectacle epitomizes a major shift in priorities. The desire to increase popularity and profits in the form of "high-profile exhibitions and architectural sensationalism" comes at the expense of other museum operations (Janes, 2007: 221). In their study of Montreal museums, for example, Tufts and Milne (1999) demonstrate that museums are increasingly directing their efforts towards popular entertainment, potentially at the expense of education. They point to the 1995 exhibit *Moving Beauty*, a display of rare automobiles, at the Musée des Beaux Arts, which was criticized as frivolous and an inappropriate subject for a fine arts museum. Museum administration, however, felt that the exhibit was a "necessary step" in attempting to pull the museum out of debt (Tufts and Milne, 1999: 621). In 2005, a similar exhibition, *Speed, Style and Beauty: Cars from the Ralph Lauren Collection*, was hosted by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston with the intention of attracting more male visitors. More recently, the Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) decision to acquire and display fourteen video games, including *Tetris* and *The Sims*, engendered a significant amount of controversy, with critics arguing that the mass-produced games were code, not art, and as such irrelevant to the museum's mandate to collect contemporary and modern art (Moore, 2013). While holding fast to the notion of museum as spectacle appears to be a successful strategy in the short term, it is worth questioning whether these types of activities are truly sustainable. As Janes (2007, 2013) argues, a corporate business model that focuses on perpetual growth and quarterly earnings is simply not applicable to an institution seeking long term sustainability. This said, museum directors are often constrained due to financial circumstances and the need to balance budgets, and pursuit of a marketplace agenda may be seen as the surest method to navigate a policy environment that conflates popularity with cultural value.

The museum of the future

In 2008, the Center for the Future of Museums (an initiative of the American Association of Museums) released a report entitled *Museums & Society 2034: Trends and Potential Futures*. The report projected current social trends – such as aging population demographics, the dramatic expansion of minority populations, and the ubiquitous presence of social media – twenty-five years into the future, and considered how museums might respond to challenges both internal and external to them. As Elizabeth Merritt, Founding Director of the Center, writes in the report’s preface, an “awareness of potential futures enables us to choose which future we most want to live in, and figure out how to bring it into being” (Center for the Future of Museums, 2008: 2). A similar discussion paper, *Museums 2020*, was released in 2012 by the UK’s Museums Association with the aim of anticipating the operating context for UK museums over the following decade. It was suggested that museums need to strengthen their connections not only with museum visitors but also with communities and society more generally by “address[ing] the issues that matter most to society and to promote public debate and beneficial social change” (Museums Association, 2012: 14).

Though both reports paint a relatively bright picture with regard to museums’ capacity to advance a socially progressive agenda of equity, inclusion, and civic engagement, they also note significant, long term obstacles (in terms of securing funding and managing resources). While the CFM report frames the issue primarily in terms of the potential erosion of the current base of corporate philanthropic support, *Museums 2020* discusses the need for a more “entrepreneurial, creative and collaborative” workforce as well as the necessity of reducing energy use and minimizing other running costs (Museums Association, 2012: 20). What becomes apparent through reading these texts is the tension between the rhetoric and practices enacted under the auspices of new museology and the ascendancy of corporatized values, interests, and operational forms. Museums are eager to assume leadership roles in the communities they serve, and to this end have positioned themselves as being ‘for the people’, giving increasing consideration to issues of gender, class, ethnicity, community, and environment (in their exhibitions, their mission statements, and declared strategies for the future). These aspirations, however, are being curtailed by an adherence to a marketplace ideology that encourages ever greater levels of commodification (both of culture and of labor). Investment in knowledge production is being superseded by the focus on consumption, economic development, and inter-urban competition (Dean et al, 2010). The more museums stake their future on culture as entertainment, iconographic architecture, and attendance figures (as opposed to broadening audience profiles), the less likely they are to attain the objectives set out in new museology discourse.

The past decade has seen museums as they grapple with the challenges arising from the importation of private sector rationalities and practices into the public sector. Museums are now subject to a range of organizational changes and management approaches that emphasize the maximization of profit and growth, including the use of benchmarking and quantitative performance measures, the adoption of financial models imported from the business world, and the diversification of revenue streams through commercial ventures and public-private partnerships. While commercial enterprises such as cafés, shops, and product development are clearly subject to market forces, activities such as scholarly research, collections management and care, and community outreach do not easily fit notions of operational efficiency. Ultimately, if museums fail to address the growing disconnect between their stated goals and the means through which they seek to achieve them, they risk diminished legitimacy and a loss of their core purpose.

Author Bio

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Endnotes

- [1] This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Award 767-2010-1848.
- [2] As Hooper-Greenhill (1995) argues, museums can be considered a form of media. On the one hand, museums engage in interpersonal, one-on-one communication with individual visitors. On the other hand, museums, and in particular their exhibitions, also “share the major characteristic of most forms of mass communication in that they involve a one-way process, a single message source with a large group of receivers, and the messages themselves are in the public domain” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 6). As such, museums can be viewed not only as exhibitors of objects, but also as places of action, experience, and communication – as media.
- [3] Studies of museums typically focus on questions related to pedagogy, interpretation, appropriation, and reconciliation (see for example Cuno, 2012; Dudley, 2010; Simpson, 2001; Trofanenko and Segall, 2014; Witcomb, 2013).
- [4] By the mid- to late 1960s, computing technologies had become a key element through which museum information could be stored, accessed, and manipulated. Two parallel developments in 1963 led to the introduction of data processing systems in the United States. At the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, an Automatic Data Processing Committee was formed, which led to the hiring of more personnel and the creation of information systems, including Self Generating Master (SELGEM). At the Institute for Computer Research in the Humanities, Professor Jack Heller created a system that came to be known as GRIPHOS, or the General Retrieval and Information Processor for Humanities-Oriented Studies. These two systems were among the first data-based management systems used in museums (see Vance, 1986). Moving museum information from paper to electronic format was the major transformation in technologies in museums from the mid-1960s up until the early 1980s. This was followed by the move from “mainframe computers to minicomputers to desktop computers to client-server models”, which in many ways paralleled technological developments outside the museum world, including within libraries and archives (Burton Jones, 2008: 11). The mid-1980s saw the rise of commercial software products designed specifically for the museum market. These products were often developed within particular museums or with the input and advice of museum professionals, which gave museums a certain amount of control over their data and the development of database systems.
- [5] One of the earliest proponents of community engagement was John Cotton Dana, founder of the Newark Museum. In *The New Museum* (1917), published

long before the conception of new museology, he argued that museums should generate beneficial effects for their communities by way of visual literacy and entertainment. Museums should be willing to lend out objects for personal study when not on display, to exhibit “products of the community’s activities in the field, factory and workshops”, and to establish “branch institutes” of education - true museums would be “homes and work-shops of the Muses” rather than mere collections of objects (as cited in Halpin, 1997: 54–55). Reflecting his era’s Progressivism, Dana believed that, through exhibiting the community, the New Museum would change that community for the better.

- [6] See Coleman (1939) for a description of an early popular exhibition.
- [7] Alexander notes that the cost of mounting the King Tut exhibition was \$2 million per museum, and that “[s]uch fees were often paid by a local corporation” (Alexander, 1996: 115).
- [8] Strictly speaking, the exchange value of a commodity is not identical to its price, but rather expresses the worth of one commodity in terms of another commodity.
- [9] As Babe (2009: 26) notes, these candidates are “pre-selected and heavily marketed”.
- [10] Smythe’s article kicked off an animated debate: see Murdock (1978), Smythe (1978), Livant (1979), and Jhally (1982).

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