Anthropology in Museums:

Functions, Shortcomings and Potential

(Or: Are Museums "Museum Pieces"?)

A museum, properly considered, is not a collection of curiosities and artistic works grouped together in glass cases in a species of native confusion, but, if it deserves the name, is a place in which instruction is to be gained, and consequently in which order, arrangement and method is evident throughout.

William Bailey
(Registrar, British Society of the Arts) (Key 1973:44)

Surprisingly enough, the above plea for a "new philosophical approach" to museums is not a modern admonition, but one which was recorded in 1772. Unfortunately, after two hundred years, it is still something that needs to be said.

Traditionally, museums have been considered as the fountainhead of the anthropological discipline. Recently, however, museums have come under severe criticism for their failure to keep pace with the burgeoning of the field, and indeed, their apparent inability even to reflect an acceptable image of the present state of the science, to the public.

The purpose of this paper is to examine 1) the anthropological functions of museums, 2) the criticisms concerning museums' treatment of anthropological concepts, and 3) to survey some of the recommendations for improving the relationship between museums and the current thrusts of anthropology. Although reference will be made to various museum responsibilities, the major focus will be on that of education.

Historically, interest in the anthropological study of human cultures goes at least as far back as the third century B.C., when those such as Herodotus and Strabon began to describe the manners and customs of various peoples (Fenton 1960:327).

Anthropological museums as such had their beginnings in the private collections of the connoisseur and antiquarian among the elite during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These "cabinets des curiosités" intermitently became public institutions beginning by the end of the eighteenth century (Collier and Tschopik
This process is still continuing, of course, with the policy of Canada's National Museums Corporation to purchase private collections which have significance to the Canadian identity.

Museums, having themselves developed from "miscellaneous collections of objects", began to foster the development of a science based on "miscellaneous collections of facts". Between 1860 and 1920 museums were central to the development of a structured body of anthropological research, knowledge and theory, and it was the museum curators who formed the core of university anthropology faculties (Collier and Tschopik 1954:768, 772, Fenton 1960:328).

This intimate relationship began to break down, however, as anthropology began to progress beyond the classification of material culture and the study of technology into fields such as linguistics, socio-psychology and the other modern directions of the discipline. Presently, as Collier and Tschopik (1954:772) have maintained, in the past, there is an ever-widening gap between the total range of anthropological study and the traditional interests of museums; so much so that university anthropologists evidently have little or no use for museums. Professors teach and research in isolation from museums, and in fact deprecate the value of these institutions to the advancement of the science (de Borhegyi 1964:134, Mason 1960:343). D. Collier (1962:323) has stated:

Too many anthropologists feel that museums of anthropology are nice to have, especially for children and beginning students, but that they are of no great consequence for the important concerns of anthropology.

How then does the museum fit into the modern discipline of anthropology?

If on no other point, all anthropologists are agreed that anthropology can have important contributions to modern society. The particular benefits of anthropological concepts are identified under the following general categories.

First, anthropology provides an important link with the past in order to lay the foundations for the development of an identity which is a major stabilizing concept within society (Morley 1976:7). Anthropology can also act as an integrative force
by combatting ethnocentrism through promotion of knowledge about, and resulting understanding among, the different cultural groups in our emerging multicultural societies (Swauger 1975:116, Chaudhury 1976:44). Since Western countries have not been multi-racial in the past as they are now, P. Gathercole (1979:165) maintains that:

Only very recently have our people begun to learn that multiculturalism requires not only toleration of immigrant cultures, but also a conscious effort to understand their histories and subtleties of expression.

Anthropology provides the necessary cultural relativist outlook in this situation.

As well, the discipline is valuable because of its particular perspective on social analysis which is seen to be crucial in the development of strategies to combat modern social problems (Jaeger 1975:29, Mair 1972:287, Singleton 1973:327).

In particular O. C. Stewart (1973:56) promotes the contribution to be made by anthropology to the eradication of war. Stewart maintains that, if war was approached as a learned cultural response, instead of being perceived as being an "inevitable" structural consequence, then the world could also learn to live without war.

Beyond its applied value (now receiving the primary emphasis according to Morley 1953:2), anthropology of course contributes to the "pure" collection of knowledge which is valuable in its own right (Hutton 1943:2).

Nevertheless, as a scientific discipline, despite its obvious potential importance for society, anthropology per se is not by nature equipped to disseminate its valuable perspective to the public at large who remain largely outside the purview of the university. Herein lies the ideal role of the museum. Those such as Collier and Tschopik (1954:777) maintain that in fact:

Museums are potentially the most effective mechanism for transmitting anthropological knowledge and concepts to the public at large...

The functions of museums, therefore, seem to be extentions of those enumerated for anthropology as a whole, or is it vice versa? The modern origins of the two are so intertwined as to
make distinctions here difficult if not impossible.

Theoretically, museums are to collect, conserve and study artifacts and specimens which are significant to a particular natural or human history. The second major aspect of the museum's mandate is the dissemination of knowledge acquired via these activities through exhibits and education programs.

The first set of responsibilities for preservation arise from the rapid disappearance of traditional material culture elements under encroachment from industrial technology which is resulting in a "profound loss" to modern society (Morley 1976:5, Das 1976:84). The documentation of change has become a crucial responsibility of museums (Collier and Tschopik 1954:775).

Coupled with this accumulative function is that of research on and education about the collections. As M. N. Basu (1976:21) and J. A. Mason (1960:344) maintain, one of the most important functions of the modern state is the acquisition and spread of knowledge; for without these activities, society would stagnate. Of course, the modern museum is no longer a private preserve of the elite, but an arm of the state, and as such, has assumed an important educational role.

Corresponding to the educational goals adopted by anthropologists, museums are mandated with socializing, integrative, and applied functions. A. K. Ghosh (1976:33) sees the museum as a mirror to society which helps people to become aware of the critical factors responsible for integration and disintegration in society. This type of awareness is assumed to be the first step toward solving the problems of disintegration.

S. M. Beckow (1975:15) likens the museum worker to a therapist working not just with individuals, but with an entire community. S/he is able to "...give the community a sense of well-being and social relatedness, by illuminating the community's collective consciousness, its sense of shared identity." In the context of countries such as India, such a function is especially important according to N. C. Choudhury (1976:444) in the attempt to "...focus and bring about the elements of unity in an apparently divergent cultural milieu."

D. Jaeger (1975: 29, 31-2) maintains that such an awareness of cultural origins and identity is essential for arriving at
any meaningful approach to contemporary problems. The problem-solving value of anthropology in museums in areas such as reducing ethnocentrism and racism, increasing tolerance, international understanding and cooperation are adhered to by many authors.

Among them is G. T. Mills (1955:1009) who maintains that the museum has an important role to play in the dissemination of Malraux's concept of "worldwide humanism";

...the view that although human ways of life may differ they cannot be lumped in simple categories of inferior and superior -- the view that man should respect his humanity no matter where and in what odd clothes he finds it.

Unfortunately however, despite the confidence expressed in the potential value of museums, there is some question as to whether this educational function can indeed be achieved at all through institutions which are limited, or rather have limited themselves, to the realm of material culture. Some critics would maintain that material culture and technology have little if any use in the modern study of human behaviour.

T. S. F. McFeat (1962:3) points out that

In a field that no longer tends to be empirical and ethnographic, and that, above all, is itself undergoing dramatic change, the collection-centred museum appears to be lagging and in need of re-evaluation in relation to anthropology as a whole.

McFeat (1962:2) argues that artifacts in museum collections have not continued to be important on a large scale to the directions of modern study because museums have demonstrated only an inability to translate information on the observable artifacts back to the concepts of culture. As a result, modern anthropological research has tended to by-pass the material culture found in museums. As Fenton (1960:352) indicates, indeed "...much of anthropological enquiry lies in problem areas that are not represented by objects in museums..."

Nevertheless, there are strong advocates who hold that material culture is in fact indispensable to the complete study of culture. The key here is complete study. Since anthropology is by definition holistic, to ignore the material aspect of culture would be detrimental to the ideals of the science.

McFeat himself is critical that many modern social theorists
attempt to deal with society without reference to material culture. McFeat (1967:94) argues that too often man is depicted as if he were naked and without possessions as if it were embarrassing to anthropologists for him to be otherwise --

...one is not made aware that persons and groups also live in 3-D space, that they manipulate it, cut it up and nail it together, and wear it.

J. H. Hutton (1943:1) records the feelings of Malinowski who was one of those who have been "impatient with the purely technological enthusiasms" of museums. Malinowski asserted:

At the same time, I have come to realize that technology is indispensable as a means of approach to economic and sociological activities and to what might be called native science.

Hutton (1943:2), supported by others such as McFeat (1962:5), concludes his argument by asserting that research into material culture is important and valid qua research. That is, pure research cannot be criticised because it happens to have no immediate or obvious practical use.

Those such as Franz Boas (Fenton 1960:339), D. Jaeger (1975:31-2) and C. Levesque (1976:56) have argued that artifacts do indeed have important social elements and are actually representations of symbols of some very complex mental processes which are certainly valid subjects for research within the modern science. Wide ranges of values, social and economic relations are expressed in physical form through artifacts (Gathercole 1979:165). According to Collier (1962:325), any study not including the cultural-psychological insights that may come from a really intricate understanding of a whole technology would not fall within the holistic ideal of anthropology. Et al.

Mason (1960:344) maintains that anthropologists working in any and all areas should be familiar with the basic principles of technology and its role in culture. Quite obviously, it is the museum where this basic understanding can be acquired.

Despite the educational mandate given to the museum by those such as Rivet (1954:86), Tuwan (1949:183) and Gathercole (1979:165), many are critical that museums (although they are able) have actually failed in their attempts to carry out their educational responsibilities (de Borhegyi 1969:318, Mills 1955:1009).
Part of this failure can be attributed to shortcomings in the curatorial functions which form the basis for educational programs.

There have been some very serious criticisms of museums concerning their acquisition and stewardship of collections, not only by professionals within the field, but by Third and Fourth World peoples as well. Very briefly, in another paper this writer found these criticisms to centre around slipshod and in many cases unethical or illegal collection practices, colonialist and even racist approaches to control and access to collections, and the deplorably poor care and conservation of irreplaceable artifacts held in trust for society. (Reynolds 1970:10-11).

McFeat (1962:5) maintains that collection-centred activities have moved along slowly and without apparent motivation in approach or theory which has severely limited the potential of museum collections. Fenton (1960:340) complains that competitive collection practices have actually destroyed much of the remaining potential of this activity by causing fragmentation and poor distribution of significant collections.

D. Collier (1962:323) asserts that the collections are in fact neglected in terms of care and study because of a modern tendency to concentrate on exhibits.¹

J. C. Ewers (1958:514) was critical of the typically nebulous documentation for many artifacts in museums, which of course negates their value. This is a serious condemnation of the museum's prime responsibilities.

B. Reynolds (1974:145) puts his finger on a major problem with museum collections from the viewpoint of Native people in North America in his comment on the museum's major concern with...

...building collections without proper regard for the damaging effect that could result in a living society through the removal of key objects from its material culture.

Perhaps one of the most serious condemnations of museums, and one of the reasons that they have not been successful in fulfilling their mandate for education, is the general attitude toward collection of modern material culture. Museums have typically backed away from collecting artifacts which show evidence of acculturation; preferring instead to search for the mythical
aboriginal artifact. On the other hand, McFeat (1967:93) points out that there is no valid reason for museums not to collect artifacts indicating change. S. F. de Borhegyi (1964:124) asserts that

...by refusing to collect, accept, or display objects which are of modern manufacture or not one hundred per cent native in origin, museum anthropologists are in effect responsible for misleading museum visitors about the "savage state" of native cultures around the world.

It has generally been accepted that the major function of museum collection is to document change -- to record how change has taken place within society as reflected in its material inventory. Studies incorporating acculturated objects have shown the value of this activity. As it stands, museums are truly failing their mandate here.

Besides the unacceptable state of affairs regarding collecting and preservation as such, the uses to which collections have been put are also roundly criticised. The research done by museums (and more widely by all anthropologists) has been found by the subjects themselves to have been carried out under questionable motivation, in an insensitive manner, without adequate consultation and with little or no beneficial return (Maynard 1974:402, Freeman 1977:71, Ortiz 1971:11).

From another perspective, de Borhegyi (1969:824) among others has found that museum research has failed to gather complete information on emerging native cultures. D. J. Hodges (1978:154) states that there is now some question as to...

...whether, under the guise of objectivity, anthropologists actually have deemphasized aspects of their research which might abet minorities in their own search for identities, no longer dependent on white models...

In academic terms, overwhelmingly the criticism is that museums have lagged far behind in their research efforts and have isolated themselves from the main streams of contemporary anthropological research (Collier 1962:322).

Beyond the failings in the basic curatorial functions dealt with above, it is the educational responsibilities, and particularly exhibits, which have received the majority of criticisms. Insofar as possible, the technical or museographical factors of
exhibition will be discussed separately from museological and educational philosophy issues in the analysis below.

Exhibits of course are the features which set the museum apart from other educational institutions. Unfortunately those exhibits dealing with anthropology have disappointed observers because they have not at all closely approached their potential (Morley 1976:5, de Borhegyi 1969:363, Choudhury 1976:40, 42). D. C. Devonish (1966:57) points out that there really has been very little thought given to the methods or philosophy of display.

From the earliest attempts at formally portraying the cultures of others in a museum setting, such as at the American Centennial celebrations in Philadelphia 1876, museums have not lived up to their anthropological potential. In discussing this major exhibit dealing with Indians in 1876, in accord with Trennert (1974:129), J. B. Zegas 1976:167, 172) reports that the...

...goal of attempting to enlighten the public about native culture probably did not succeed largely because exhibit techniques were not sophisticated enough to deal with the general attitude that Indians were inferior and primitive beings. In fact, it might be said that the exhibit reinforced these beliefs by displaying Indian cultures amid the other examples of America's finest accomplishments...The exhibit was certainly very popular, and many people passed through it. But it is probably accurate to say that few visitors increased their knowledge and understanding of the American Indian from the exhibit. The Indians were essentially displayed as specimens, not as human beings who maintained a different lifestyle.

Anthropologists of the day were simply not sophisticated enough to know how to present culture to the public. Despite Zegas' confidence that the situation has improved today however, modern museum exhibits are still being criticised for the same failings in evidence over one hundred years ago.

Unfortunately indeed, stagnation and lack of change in museum exhibits has been a real difficulty. Collier and Tschopik (1954:773) assert that most exhibits of their time were dated about 1920 in terms of the techniques and concepts presented. Ewers (1958:522) had been able to see no major changes in many museum exhibits for the previous forty years. By 1962, McFeat was still complaining that museum exhibits were lagging behind
in theoretical content. Presently, it is distressing to note that the photographs illustrating the American Centennial Exhibit of 1876, for instance, are quite similar to the modern day exhibits in the Royal Ontario Museum, the senior and most respected institution in Canada.

Again, in another paper, this writer found Native people in particular to be dissatisfied with the quality of exhibits dealing with their cultures. Criticisms were focused on display of sensitive religious and skeletal materials, ethnocentric -- even colonialist and racist -- approaches to Native materials, perpetuation of stereotypes, outright misrepresentation, lack of treatment of the concepts of culture change, lack of holistic treatment, and symbol manipulation. 2.

Professionals within the field are also critical that museums do not deal adequately with the concept of cultural change, often giving the impression to visitors that culture is static (Mason 1960:341). S. F. de Borhegyi (1964:123) indicates that "...in far too many exhibits the North American Indian makes his 'last stand' along with General Custer at the Little Big Horn."

Just as Zegas (1976:169) is critical of the 1876 Centennial Exhibit in Philadelphia, McFeat (1962:8) points out that, in dealing with such aspects as the potlatch for example, modern museums have neglected the acculturative factors which were integral, and even causative, in the elaboration of the potlatch in its most familiar form. Museums tend to exhibit coppers and boxes as potlatch goods, but not gramaphones and sewing machines which were every bit as important to the complex as the more traditional items.

A related difficulty is the tendency toward use of the ethnographic present in labels. This becomes confusing to visitors according to A. H. M. Kirk-Greene (1960:244). M. Arth (1975:323) maintains that the ethnographic present tends to foster the idea among the public that cultures are unchanging. Exhibits themselves, in dealing with traditional life styles in solution from modern ones, can lead to misconceptions. Arth (1975:323) states: 

\[...\text{museum educators fond that many visitors to period exhibitions of other peoples (even American Indians) come away with the feeling that they saw what "these people" are like because they have no experiential}\]
reference point. A neat disclaimer saying "this is a historical look" does not counteract the power of the image.

Naturally, in order to be optimally successful, exhibits should bear some relationship to the visitors' own life experiences. Without this relationship, Swauger (1975:116) asserts that the information presented will not likely be understood, or be seen as important or relevant except as a curiosity. If significant learning is to occur, therefore, it must be clear that the information presented has some value in terms of the visitor's own existence. Ideally, the treatment of traditional cultures on a continuum with their contemporary manifestations would help the visitor to perceive this information as something important to him/her in the present.

There are, however, some pitfalls in attempting to exhibit modern cultures, particularly those that are characterized by poverty and anomie. A. E. Parr (Loomis 1974:1) cautions:

Exhibits of contemporary poverty displayed by museum methods in a museum setting may also, quite possibly, have only the effect of making the terrible conditions appear less terrifying. By making them seem more impersonal, we may destroy their impact. Before being carried away by our indignant sympathies we must be quite certain that our aid will help the cause and not hinder its advancement. For this we need some very sophisticated research into the emotional qualities of the museum ambience.

Labels in exhibits also seem to be a continuing source of discussion. Early criticism by Collier and Tschopik (1954:772) held that the label copy of the time was too extensive and "monographic" and acted to repel the "average visitor". Now, however, the pendulum has been perceived to have swung too far in the other direction. S. F. de Borhegyi (1964:122) is critical that modern labels are so simplified as to be useless, or even worse, misleading.

Ideally of course, anthropology takes a holistic approach to the study of cultures. Gathercole (1979:165) points out the trap into which many museums fall of displaying only the "exotic" aspects of the cultural heritage, giving visitors the perception that this is the totality of the culture. Cultural heritage becomes confused with the cultural dynamic itself.

Very early J. Tuwan (1949:161) was critical that museums
were overlooking the intellectual and social aspects of culture. Arth (1975:325) goes so far as to assert that the so-called "soft" aspects of culture are not even able to be successfully communicated through artifact/exhibit. S. M. Beckow (1975:15) is also critical that museums seem often to concentrate on only one or two aspects of cultures, most often sticking to the formal, functional, temporal and spatial.

Of course, there are the physical constraints of this problem; the major one being content of the collections at hand. But the factors of time, facilities and even the interests of curators play a role here. For instance, de Borhegyi (1964:122-3) maintains that in many cases curators are too subjective in their selection of artifacts for display. In some instances this subjectivity can distort the meaning of an object, all too frequently leading to a "false, sometimes greatly magnified or an excessively minimized impression of a specific aspect of culture".

Das (1976:87), Choudhury (1976:33) and Tuwan (1949:181) are critical of incongruous, disjointed and out of context exhibitions where artifacts chosen are not closely enough related to portray a holistic view of culture. G. T. Mills (1955:1006) makes the point that since all understanding necessitates reduction, that "fictitious arts and cultures" may in fact be created by such exhibits.

By far the most often mentioned criticism leveled at museum exhibits however, is the subordination of the objects themselves to design and aesthetic considerations. ³

After criticisms of early exhibits for over-crowding and lack of interpretation (Zegun 1976, Mason 1960:343) the pendulum has again swung too far in the opposite direction. As early as 1949 Tuwan (1949:181) was beginning to lament the loss of "scientific and instructive value" in exhibits in favour of "decorative arrangement". T. F. S. McFeat (1962:9) has asserted that the infusion of modern display techniques resulted in exhibits becoming "...at best artistic arrangements and at worst romanticised vehicles of misinformation".

In asserting that in recent years content has become secondary in importance to concern for aesthetic presentation, D. G. Davies (1978:125) states:
We are in danger of allowing the display to become more important than the material, and the feeling that we are displaying less and less material better and better and that eventually we shall display nothing perfectly is one that worries some people.

Despite the preponderance of critical comment concerning the museographical techniques of exhibition, it is a mistake to place the major emphasis on exhibit content per se. The real problem tends to be one characterized by a lack of a theoretical basis on just exactly how museum learning occurs. One of the reasons behind this is the ongoing conflict within the field over which function—research or education, should take precedence in museum efforts.

There is a school of thought which laments the "unjustifiable precedence" of education, holding that the prime responsibility of the museum is to research (Davies 1978:125). On the other side of the argument are those such as R. L. Bunning (1974:59) who maintain that the research efforts of museums should in fact be subordinated to the educational function.

Despite the medieval origins and nineteenth century mentality evidenced in this argument, it nevertheless still continues to be a point of contention among museum workers and it percolates constantly under the surface. This constant tension of course results in a lack of real effectiveness in either direction. The financial squeeze brought on by the prevailing "Proposition 13" mentality merely exacerbates this conflict according to Hodges (1978:149) because the two factions are competing for limited funds.

One of the central problems in the educational failure of museums according to A. P. Taylor (1976:26) is that most museum workers are unaware of learning theories and the methods of curriculum development. For example, museum education goals and objectives are seldom clarified (Mills 1955:1005, Wohler 1976:13) and very little is known about the potential learners' characteristics, motivations, desires or needs. Mills asserts that there has been a general failure to understand the distinctive purposes and particular limitations within the museum education setting itself.

Like a man who ought to search his soul but has time
only for taking his pulse, the museum curator talks about dioramas, cataloguing methods, connoisseurship, fund-raising and art mobiles while avoiding more fundamental issues of educational philosophy as they pertain to the museum. As a result, our conception of our task does not rise much above that of bringing in the public by fair means or foul, a view that seems to put us in a class with P. T. Barnum. (Mills 1955:1002).

Obviously effective education cannot be achieved by neglecting these factors.

As A. K. Das (1976:85) L. A. Parsons (1968:96-7) report, museum visitors are becoming more educated and critical. As a result they are beginning to demand more emphasis on education in the museum. Dixon reports that little study has been done on the museum client, while Hodges (1978:149) maintains that museums are in fact at odds with the needs of a significant segment of the potential audience.

There also seems to be a tendency to underestimate the abilities of the visitor to profit from the museum experience beyond the level of "intellectual entertainment". Parsons (1968:97-8) believes that there is no need to be afraid of the abstract concepts of anthropology in their exhibits, and that museums should avoid excessive simplicity and over-design which result in the "pre-digestion" of information. It seems that if the visitors are not in fact challenged and forced into asking questions in their own right, that is unless dissonance is established, much of the value of the museum goes unrealized. Locher (1954:91-2) asserts that if not challenged, then traditional attitudes are in fact reinforced. Thus, if the museum is in the business of education—that is fundamentally to produce some change—they must not fail to stimulate and challenge the visitor, even if it means making him/her intellectually uncomfortable.

In this regard the museum public does not seem to have been well served. Basu (1976:25) notes that museums seem to be failing in their anthropology education mandate in that there is still a wide discrepancy between the vague preconceived ideas of most museum visitors and the present state of anthropological science. G. N. Locher (1954:93) maintains that museums have not in fact made visitors aware of the multiplicity and diversity of culture, nor have they shown the dynamic processes of change.
Critics such as Hodges (1976:135) find that minorities are very often neglected by the white middle class bias of museums. Elias (1972:34) indicates that, in North America, Native people are the most alienated of all and least likely to obtain any benefit from museums.

The public least likely to visit museums, those students and adults and students in rural and northern communities, are also not being well served. There is now an ideal gaining prominence in museum circles toward the "democratization and decentralization" of collections. In plain language this means extension programs. Despite this ideal, however, Taylor (1976:25) and Grinsell (1960:7) assert that school extension exhibits is an old idea which is still underdeveloped.

A major factor in the success or failure of museum education programming is the staff. According to Mason (1960:345) museum anthropologists are themselves not interested, effective or indeed trained in the process of visual education -- the concept upon which the museum is founded.

Another staff factor is the frontline of museum education, the docents. In another paper this writer found that docents, most of whom were volunteers, have been criticized for lack of knowledge and preparation, difficulty in relating to minority visitors, a lack of knowledge about the concept of cultural relativity, as well as their basic qualifications and effectiveness as educators. F. Rivet (1949:712) was relatively early critical of the adequacy of guides in ethnological museums. Bay (1974:28) asserts that it is in fact quite difficult to give guides unfamiliar with anthropology a sufficient grounding in the discipline to be able to present acceptable interpretations of anthropological concepts. Obviously more time and effort must be spent on staff training.

Finally, de Borhegyi (1968:77, 1964:125) is critical of a lack of attention to evaluation of educational activities in the museums. Obviously, one of the reasons why museum education has been allowed to continue in such an unacceptable state for so long is the fact that there has been no serious evaluation; some would say because there have been no specific goals set.

Of course, the effect of all the difficulties discussed above
is that the museum is failing in its educational mandate and particularly in its responsibilities to disseminate anthropological knowledge. It is a reflection of the state of museology that, at this stage, there are still more criticisms than there are proffered solutions. The following will examine some of the directions of the solutions that have been suggested.

In terms of collection and preservation, recommendations have come from all quarters to improve the quality, not only of the documentation of artifacts as they are collected, but the legality and ethics of their acquisition (Collier and Tschopik 1954:775, Reynolds 1974:146, 155).

In order to fulfill its traditional mandate of documenting change, museums must begin to pay much more attention to the collection of acculturated objects (Collier and Tschopik 1954:775-7), and modern technology, both of which have important implications for modern society. D. Collier (1962:326) recommends documentation using non-traditional methods such as sound recording and photography to which we might add video tape.

One solution to the conflict between museums and minorities over control of collections is to return artifacts to the care of these groups as is implied in Hodges' (1978:150) recommendation to decentralize resources and services. Such strategies have already worked well on a number of occasions with Canadian and United States Indian groups.

The problems stemming from the research mandate of anthropology museums can be solved through increased sensitivity about, and consultation on, the needs, desires and concerns of the subjects involved. As B. Reynolds (1974:147:8) maintains, research must be directed more toward service to the host community rather than strictly toward the professional goals of the researcher as it has been the case traditionally.

D. Collier (1962:323, 325-6) indicates that the greatest need of museums today (beside increased funding) is to develop new lines of research into such fields as technological and cultural change, economic development, cultural ecology, symbolic patterning and the like. These new research directions would serve to end the present isolation of museums from the mainstream of anthropology.
Because the development of anthropology in recent years has evidenced a lack of interest in studying technology, the museum must spearhead research into such areas as the loss and displacement of technologies in order to determine what are the effects of such change (McFeat 1962:8). Again, to ignore material culture is to deny the holistic nature of the science.

Collier and Tschopik (1954:776) and de Borhegyi (1964:125) call for research within the walls of the museum itself. There needs to be research into display techniques and their effectiveness for anthropological concepts and indeed study on the relationship between formal and informal education in the museum setting.

Several critics have called for increased flexibility in the organization of museum research. Cooperation is needed in cross-disciplinary research within the institution itself which provides an ideal setting for such activity. (Collier and Tschopik 1954:777). As well, cooperation on a cross-institutional and international basis, especially with universities, is called for by Davies (1978:25). Cooperation with the groups such as Native people, who feel they are being poorly served, is necessary to help increase the significance of museum related research. (Nason and Silver 1973:106). Such efforts would begin to more closely approximate the great potential here.

Above all, G. D. Berreman (1973:9) maintains that anthropology research as a whole must become more relevant and socially responsible by being accountable to subjects, colleagues and the public, all of which has unfortunately not been the case in the past.

Despite these feelings however, many such as McFeat (1962:13), in arguing the first element, would maintain that the only appropriate research philosophy under which museums should operate is that the relevance of a particular study may not be applicable or even knowable at the time, and that pure research is justifiable in itself.

Very simply, museums must begin to take up upon their research mandate, and in fact to take the lead in areas concerning the relationship of technology to society.

In terms of improving exhibit quality, one of the major recommendations to come out of the literature is the need for cim...
Many exhibits are simply out-moded and need new content and interpretation, and thereafter to be updated regularly (Arth 1915:323). Newsome and Silver (1973:104) assert that to be a "cultural shrine" is not a sufficient role for museums, and that change must take place in stale, unenlightening exhibit schemes which typically have merely had a "tribal orientation with a little bit of ethnology thrown in". S. F. de Borhegyi (1969:368) has stated:

...the museum anthropologist should be able, and should consider it his obligation not just to display a cluster of tribal objects or a collection of curious facts about remote cultures, but to convey current anthropological ideas and concepts.

Many others have called for an increased relevance of exhibits to modern situations and universal problems (Hodges 1978:151, Swauger 1975:118). Indeed, Arth (1975:115) maintains that anthropological exhibits will not be successful at all unless they do relate their contents to the visitors' own lives.

Displays need to be able to reach out to the visitor and open up a silent dialogue with him by drawing on his own social experience. They must endeavour to change it by demonstrating the similarities and the differences between the society being displayed and his own experience (Gathercole 1979:165).

There have also been several calls for museums to stop dealing with objects taken out of context, by introducing the concept of cultural change and cultural relativity (Mason 1960:314, Kelemen 1953:21).

Locher (1954:93) and Arth (1975:323) stress the need for the characteristics of the visitor's own dominant culture to be treated on an equal basis with other cultures, and that it must be made clear to visitors that exhibits illustrate specific types of culture in the past and are not "representative of the present state of affairs of non-Western peoples."

On the technical level, of course, the absolute necessity for accurate and sensitive use of information and terminology should not need further stress (Locher 1954:93, Kirk-Greame 1960:246). Anything else is totally unacceptable in a museum.

Above all, it has been recommended that museums not abdicate their responsibility to anthropology out of fear that the abstract ideas involved cannot be adequately dealt with in exhibits.
Museums must in fact expand their traditional focus beyond traditional culture history and culture area concept (Collier and Tschopik 1954: 776). As Fenton (1960:343) has indicated, abstract ideas such as kinship systems can indeed be dealt with effectively in exhibits if approached with imagination.

Another of the areas in which museums must improve is in the evaluation of exhibits for biases and inaccuracy, as well as for their effect on the public (Zegas 1976:172). Otherwise, how can the effective planning of exhibits be carried out as seen necessary by de Borhegyi (1968:79)?

Given the educational mandate of the museum and its consequent failure to live up to this mandate, there is a great deal of room for improvement in the philosophical approach to education.

M. Skilbeck and A. Harris (1976:18) maintain that one of the goals of education as a whole must be to increase the awareness of the cultural significance of everyday life.

Museums have an important role here by encouraging the visitor to engage in thoughtful comparisons among his/her culture and those of others (Kellers 1970:175). Swauger (1975:118) goes so far as to assert that museums should actually force people to assess their own culture in light of others, to create questions and dissonance, and to shock the visitor into looking at his/her culture from a different point of view. According to Singleton (1973:327), in light of Postman and Weingartner's Teaching as a Subversive Activity, it is this perspective, the anthropological perspective, which is more important than any of the specific content.

Tuwan (1949:182) has stressed that museums must organize their education programs with constant regard for their client's needs, desires and motivations. For example, it has been shown that museum visitors need and desire more direct participation in education activities (Veverka 1979). Kellers (1970:175) and Newsome and Silver (1974:105-6) see the need for providing a more complete experience beyond the mere visual, toward involving the visitor in active participation. S. F. De Borhegyi (1969:368) recommends such strategies as visitor self-testing, peer group teaching and earned rewards.

The literature has also strongly recommended that museums
expand their educational repertoire. One means of doing so is by further developing extension programs (Tuwan 1949:182). B. Reynolds (1974:154), supported by D. Elias (1972:34), indicates that such activities would also begin to help solve another difficulty, i.e. the frustration of Native people with the activities of museums. As Taylor (1976:155 asserts:

Obviously, self discovery is of greater advantage to those whose cultural roots have been maligned than it is to those who have suffered no such fate.

Taylor (1976:29) and Hodges (1978:152) have also recommended closer cooperation with schools in order to coordinate museum offerings more closely with the curriculum. A Further extension of museum efforts is needed toward meeting the needs of anthropology students in order that they have the necessary fluency in ethnography (Collier and Tschopik 1954:273).

In general, museums have been enjoined to begin more serious planning for their educational program directions by simply looking seriously at who their clients are and what should actually be taught (de Borhegyi 1964:124, Mills 1955).

Out of all this, what are the implications for the future? Beyond the necessity of taking action on recommendations ignored since the beginnings of museum development, primarily what emerges is the need for museums to engage in a public relations program. The public (and governments too) must be informed as to exactly what the museum and its role are. Studies such as that by Dixon (1974) indicate that the museum has a relatively negative image among the public, but that those who visit find their experience to be much better than they had anticipated.

Additionally, misunderstanding concerning the function of the museum must be clarified. The museum cannot be compartmentalized as an institution strictly of research or education. It is a unique institution (just as the university is unique, and also having difficulty with its image in this respect) because it can only function as an integral whole, combining both research and education. The two are not mutually exclusive, but evidently compatible. The basic perception of those outside the museum, that it is primarily an educational institution, must be changed, because this perception leads to internal conflict and undersupport of the research mandate.
Museums are finding that funds for research are being curtailed to a much greater extent than those for funding exhibits and education, both of which just happen to have a more public profile. However, as indicated above, shortcomings of the curatorial mandates (in part related to the lack of sufficient funds) also have a deleterious effect on the educational function. By placing low ceilings on funding, governments place a correspondingly low ceiling on potential, and are thereby abrogating an important responsibility of their own, namely to foster academic and educational progress.

The potential is present. If the will is also, museums could and should take a much more significant role in the development of modern society.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that, on a number of grounds, museums have failed to advance with the times and have reneged on important responsibilities to the collections, to the advancement of knowledge, and to the public. It is not as if these failings were only recently coming to light, but ever since the mid 1900's (and even as far back as 1772) museums have been criticised and enjoined to mend their ways. Unfortunately they have failed to do so.

As a result, many critics indicate that the present financial bind in which many museums find themselves is in fact entirely deserved. The public nor the state will gladly support institutions that cannot demonstrate their value to the individual and to society. Museums must quickly move to improve their public profile before the prevailing "Proposition 13" mentality makes them into "museum pieces" themselves, instead of vital contributing elements of modern society.

approximately 6,300 words
Endnotes

1. This is more than apparent at the Manitoba museum of Man and Nature for example where there has been no curator of archaeology for several years and a recently vacated position for an assistant curator of ethnology is not being filled, while recently thirteen additional staff have been hired for the design department.


Bibliography

Arth, M.

American Indian Historical Society (AIHS).

Basu, M. N and M. N.

Bay, A.

Beckow, S. M.

Berreman, G. D.

Bunning, R. L.
1974 "A Perspective on the Museum's Role in Community Education". Curator 17/1:56-63.

de Borhegyi, S. F.


Choudhury, N. C.

Collier, D.

Collier, D. and Tschopik, H.

Das, A.K.
Davies, D. G.  

Demmert, J.  

Devenish, D. C.  

Elias, D.  

1972 "Report on Ethnology's Summer Extention Program". Dawson and Hind Quarterly 2/1:34.

Ewers, J. C.  

Freeman, M. M. R.  

Fenton, W. F.  

Gathercole, P.  

Ghosh, A. K.  

Grinsell, L. V.  
1960 "Children and Archaeological Museums". Museums Journal 60/1:5-12.

Hodges, D. J.  

Hutton, J. H.  

Jaeger, D.  


Morley, G.  
1976 "Museums of Anthropology: Their Role in Eastern and Southeast Asia". Eastern Anthropologist 29/1:5-20.

Morley, G. L. M.  

Nason, J. D., Hopkins, K. R. and Medicine, B.  

Newsome, B. Y. and Silver, A. Z. editors.  

Oritz, A.  
1971 "An Indian Anthropologist's Perspective on Anthropology". Indian Historian 4/1:11-4.

Parsons, L. A.  

Reynolds, B.  


Rivet, P.  

1948 "Organization of an Ethnological Museum". Museum 1/1:70, 112-117

Singleton, J.  

Skilbeck, M. and Harris A.  

Stewart, O. C.  

Sturtevant, W. C.  
Swauger, J. L.

Trennert, R. A. Jr.

Tuwan, J.

Van Dyke, B.

Varine-Bohan, H.

Wohler, J. P.

Zawistowicz-Adamska, K.

Zegas, J. B.

Dixon, B. et al.