CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF MUSEOLOGY

By necessity, this study is both historical and museological; it examines the history of museology and museums as well as the ideological and organizational aspects of museums themselves. It resides, therefore, potentially in two identifiable methodologies which could result in a problem if either were to predominate. The simple solution would be to point to the interdisciplinary aspects of museology and thus proceed to prepare an historical study.

The field of museology, unfortunately, is much more problematical. First, the interdisciplinarity of museology is not necessarily proven. Second, an idea of museology is a prerequisite in our search for a British museological tradition if only to identify the museological elements of the study. Third, any history of museology will be modified by a concept of its place in the whole theoretical framework of museology; thus, the fundamental topics of museology must be identified. Contemporary British museum theorists, despite criticism by their peers, have long been requesting such a theoretical outline; the call is still repeated despite fifty years of the Diploma Programme and nearly one hundred years since the establishment of the Museums Association.

Geoffrey Lewis, Director of the Museum Studies Department of the University of Leicester, reminded us of the delayed evolution of museology:

If museology as a term has a respectable history, this cannot be said of the subject itself. Sufficient has been said to show that not only does the scientific base of museum work appear to be on shaky foundations but also at least some museum workers have been saying so for a very long time; few have done anything about it...We should have no further cause to debate whether museology is a subject in its own right; rather we should urgently lay the theoretical framework on which it, and the museum movement as a whole can develop.1

The contemporary British museology scene is interrelated with a recent international movement to upgrade museology spearheaded by a few theorists; much of the effort to articulate museology has been generated by the problems of educating individuals for museum work.
Where would one find the basis for museology? The first thought might be that it would exist in the beliefs of its practitioners but a study of museum people would hardly prove the existence of museology. Reference is seldom made to the subject of the study of museums. Outside of Eastern Europe, there are only a few articles where the terms are discussed or the methods of study analyzed by the museum peer group; most of these analyses have yet to be found by those teaching the subject. This is very suspicious in an age when the methodologies of the humanities and science are a major preoccupation of academics. Still, the terms ‘museology’ or ‘museum studies’ have been used freely in recent years but apparently in a number of different and often contradictory ways. Some people equate the word with any activity "in" the museum; therefore, anyone working in a museum is a museologist. Indeed, it has become a hackneyed bureaucratic adjective in certain circles and for some "that's not museologically sound" or "that's museological" in a tone of disgust appears to be an automatic response. In all of these approaches, the definition of museology is assumed, thereby escaping explicit discussion.

There are several opinions about the study of museums. One which is seldom seen in print, but which is articulated by museum workers usually in conferences or seminars, is that museum theory is nonsense and irrelevant; practice is the answer.

Another opinion is that museum work is purely a technique one uses to apply what is learned in a discipline to a museum context - this is taught widely in the United States (at the University of Michigan it is called Museum Practice). Another viewpoint which identifies the study of museums as a separate subject area, perhaps even a science or theory, has developed with more force over the last twenty years. It has been articulated by individual theorists in several countries and by the International Council of Museums through the work of George Henri Rivière, and the ICOM Committees on the Training of Museum Personnel and Museology. Sometimes the term ‘museology’ is used to mean the study of the theory of museum operation while the term ‘museography’ is used to refer to the techniques and practice of museum activities. However, ‘museology’ is often used to designate both the theory and
practice of museum work, like the words sociology or anthropology. During the last twenty years in Britain and the United States, museum studies has been used as a term that seems slightly more comprehensive and self-explanatory although its use has probably been influenced more by the suspicion of an 'ology' rather than by universal acceptance of an all encompassing term.

It may be that discussions about museology must remain essentially based on opinion, faith or perhaps even indoctrination; however, there can be an alternative. The evaluation of museology should not be based on the subjective belief-systems of museum people or their temporarily perceived needs but rather on the development of a rational, objective and scientific reality - that of the museum in society.

Whether admitted by most practitioners or not, there is a subject of study based on the museum and its purposes. What is not apparent is the subject, theory, structure, and inner logic of museology; indeed, there have been many different definitions and theoretical interpretations. As Barry Reynolds has written:

While it would be excellent to have firm definitions for 'museums' and 'museology', one must be chary of studies concerned solely with definitions. These resemble too easily the conscientious efforts of past philosophers to determine how many angels can stand on the head of a pin. In anthropology, concerned with the study of cultures, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) some decades ago were able to identify more than one hundred anthropological definitions of the term 'culture'. I suspect that in museology we should encounter a similar plethora of definitions of museums.
Indeed, there have been a number of words which have been used to represent the theory and practice of museum work: 'museology', 'museography', 'museum studies', 'museum practice', 'critical museology', 'neo-museology' (in English); 'Museumkunde', 'Museumwissenschaft' (in German); 'museologie', 'museographie' (in French); 'museographie' (in Italian); to 'muzeyvedenye' (in Russian), 'museoznawstwo (in Czech), plus adjectives such as 'muzeistic', 'museal', 'museality' and so on.

Disregarding Barry Reynolds' warning for the moment, museology as a "science in embryo" or an "interdisciplinary field of study still emerging after forty years" suffers from a lack of definition and analysis through an absence of study of its history and theoretical base. As Z.Z. Stransky has argued, we lack so far the work documenting the originality of this development and singling out the factors conditioning this theoretical creation.

Some work must be done on the existing evidence of the theoretical place of museology.

Attempts to conceptualize a museological discipline have been concentrated in the period since World War II and centered in Paris at ICOM and UNESCO, in Eastern Europe and at university centres such as the Department of Museum Studies at Leicester. In 1958, one of the first attempts was made to codify definitions at the UNESCO Regional Seminar in Education held at Rio de Janiero. Museology was defined as a "branch of knowledge concerned with the study of the purposes and organizations of museums." These interpretations were restated at the Fifth Regional Museum Seminar in 1962 in Mexico City. From 1956 to 1965, the ICOM International Committee for Administration and Personnel examined the training for the museum profession culminating in a General Conference resolution that curators (meaning anyone involved with collections in the broadest sense) should be trained in museology by a post-graduate degree, internship or a type of basic training through seminars, workshops, etc. Naturally discussions about training or a profession returned to the subject and theory of museum work and museology. George Henri
Rivière led these developments; in a paper for a UNESCO Seminar on the role of the museum in society, he promoted the need for research on "museology as a discipline designed to establish definite relations between museums, on the one hand, and between science, culture and society, on the other." Museology (much like ethnology and archaeology), as presently treated, was not a separate discipline, and was essentially "ultra-conservative" and composed of "ready-made theories." The experimental route was his solution. His analysis was:

Museology was essentially synthetic in character, covering as it did a number of activities, which varied from one museum to another and from one country to another. Hitherto no large-scale endeavour had been made at the international level to systematize the theories and standards outlined in different countries, with a view to their adaptation to the various cultures and to the requirements of all museums. Such an endeavour must be made, because the need for a specialized museological training was universally felt and that training should be practical as well as theoretical.

Since 1962, UNESCO had begun to establish centres around the world to train museum technicians, beginning with a centre in Jos, Nigeria and followed by one in Mexico.

The Committee for Administration and Personnel was renamed the Training of Museum Personnel and an ICOM Training Unit for Professional training, headed by Georges Henri Rivière and Yvette Odonne, was formally established. In 1970, the book, The Training of Museum Personnel was published and the ICOM Training Unit, in conjunction with the University of Leicester, drafted a syllabus which was adopted by the Committee in June 1971 entitled Professional Training of Museum Personnel in the World: Actual State of the Problem the terms were further defined:

Museology is museum science. It has to do with the study of history and background of museums, their role in society, specific systems for research, conservation, education and organization, relationship with the physical environment, and the classification of different kinds of museums.
Museography covers methods and practices in the operation of museums, in all their various aspects.\textsuperscript{15}

The additional concept here was ‘science’. Some members of the ICOM Executive Council and Advisory Committee attempted to have these definitions written in the new ICOM Statutes before the Tenth General Conference of ICOM in Copenhagen in 1974 without success. Nevertheless, a new International Committee for Museology was accepted in 1977 at the Twelfth General Assembly in Moscow whose work has resulted in two issues of a new journal, \textit{MuWop}, “Museology - Science or Just Practical Work?” (1980) and “Interdisciplinarity in Museology” (1982).\textsuperscript{16}

The activities of ICOM have been a reflection of work in different centres where studies of museology have concentrated on a number of problems; is museology a science, is it a separate discipline and is it a professional field of knowledge? The answers to these questions fit into one or another of three categories suggested by Vili Toft Jensen, each offering a different articulation of museum theory\textsuperscript{17}:  Museology as Applied Science; Museology as an Independent Science a) Social Science, b) Metatheoretical (See Figure 1).

In Britain, the United States and Canada, there has been a tendency to avoid the discussion of the theoretical substance of museology and focus on the secondary aspects which were of more immediate concern: definitions of curatorial positions, the validity of a ‘separate’ discipline and the existence of a museum profession. Since these questions are never resolved satisfactorily for all of the museum occupational group, the energy of museum people is directed away from discussions about the nature and theory of museum activities. There have been only a few accessible works which have dealt with the theory of museum work in English, one being an article by Jiri Neustupny, the Czech museologist, published in 1971\textsuperscript{18} the second are the works of Raymond Singleton of the Museum Studies Department, University of Leicester (1966-1977) who has been a major contributor to museum thought in
the English-speaking world. Although most of these writings have been directed to the question of a museum profession and the appropriate training for museum work, his particular contribution has been to articulate the concept of 'museum studies' (first popularized in the U.S.).

For Singleton, museum studies can be defined simply as "to study museums"; it includes both museology and museography but has an even wider concept. The chief asset of 'museum studies', in his opinion, is that it is self-explanatory. Given the resistance of the museum working group, especially in the English-speaking world, to adopt the terms museology or museography, there is some validity to Singleton's logic. Although in concept museum studies may seem to have a broader, unified subject, in practice it has been interpreted as technique or at best applied science in training program in North America. However, Singleton's own definition is precisely museological, centered on the 'purpose of museums' and their relation to their community as he has written:

Yet it is here, in the role of the museum in society, that the essence of a true museum profession lies...This is the common ground, the one factor which unites and integrates all museums, whatever their size and function, into a single body, with a special, unique contribution to make to the life of the community.

Like Rivière, he contends that museum thought should be a rational study based on the "why" for "it is only by questioning and analyzing and considering everything we do in museums" that practice will be improved.

Singleton does not directly address questions which have occupied the Eastern European theorists such as whether museum study is a science, an interdisciplinary study or a unified subject. But his interpretation can be placed between Toft's Categories I and II (See Figure 1).
Figure 2

FRAMEING OF A MUSEOLOGICAL THEORY ACCORDING TO CATEGORY I

Theory, methodology, and interests of the
disciplinary professions

basis for the framing of the theory

History Archaeology Zoology etc. Art

→ discipline engaged in the museums

framing of the museological theory

result →

basic museum purposes described and defined

further adaptation with a view to practical application

derivation of criteria for the application of disciplinary professions

criteria for practical application

history arch, zoology etc. art

performing museum functions

→ MUSEUM

* From Wili Toft Jensen, "Museological Points of View - Europe 1975".
Figure 3
FRAMING OF A MUSEOLOGICAL THEORY ACCORDING TO CATEGORY II

Institutional roles; development -
structural and organizational aspects
Instructional functions; with regard to
culture, science and education

basis for
the framing
doing of the theory

archaeology & science & natural
history technology history etc.

different types
collection of kinds of
museums

framing of
the museological 

sociological analysis of museum

general formulation of those features
which are common to all kinds of museums.
but unique to the museum
as an institution among institutions

result →

further
adaptation
with a view
to practical
application

derivation of common criteria
for the performing of the museum
functions - irrespective of kind
of museum

criteria for
practical
application

criteria
collecting
conservation
research
exhibition

performing
museum
functions

"From Vivi Toft Jensen, "Museological Points of View - Europe 1975"."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Museology as an applied science</th>
<th>Museology as an independent science</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical characteristics</td>
<td>Category I</td>
<td>Category II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis of the theory</td>
<td>Interests, theory, and methods of the disciplinary professions</td>
<td>The institutional roles and functions of the different kinds of museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the theory</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary interpretation of museum activities</td>
<td>Sociological interpretation of the museum and museum work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final goal of the theory</td>
<td>Criteria for the application of the concerned disciplines in the museum</td>
<td>Common criteria for the performing of museum functions irrespective of the kind of museum</td>
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Figure 1
A SCHEMATIC SURVEY OF THE MUSEOLOGICAL CATEGORIES

On the subject of the existence of a museum profession, Singleton has no doubts about it but sees how the "incoherent" and "curious" mixture of museum activities contributes to some resistance and the tendency of curators to seek sanctuary in their scholarly interests; he has given one of the clearest analyses of the museum process which is the basis for museum theory; museums are about:

the physical care of objects (combined)
with the academic knowledge which surrounds them
with the information which can be extracted from them,
with the presentation and exhibition of these various objects
(each demanding differences of treatment both in display and general preservation),
concern with the educational value of the objects, and with their aesthetic value,
concern with a multitude of types of visitors and users, each with different needs.22

In his 1969 outline of the ingredients of a teaching programme, Singleton emphasized the parts of museum training:

A curator needs to be trained partly as an historian (or art historian, or natural historian, or whatever his particular subject may be) in order to be able to study and appreciate his material; partly (whatever his speciality) as a scientist, to understand the physical care of his collections: partly as a technician to show how to present and to display them effectively: partly as a philosopher, to show why he is displaying them or storing them or conserving them; partly as an educationalist to be able to interpret and explain; partly as a showman, to attract and hold his visitors' attention; partly as an administrator and manager, to be able to organize his institution or department efficiently.23

But even this breakdown of particular skills he counterbalanced with skills in information retrieval, communications, management and most of all the purpose of museums, which represent the integrating elements of museum work.

By 1977, Mr. Singleton was concentrating more on the problems of the common base of museums and research on them:

...Before we venture any further into the future we really should look closely at this strange and diffuse group of widely-differing institutions which we call 'museums'; and we should determine, if we can, just what they have to offer, and to whom, and how they should best be
organized to fulfil their function. Although I am carefully avoiding the word, I am of course talking of 'museology' and the need for research in museology. This is probably our greatest need today (apart from money) because it is only on the results of such research that we can plan our future effectively; all else is guesswork, and the fruits of our more traditional research nurtured within our respective disciplinary fields, are liable to be largely wasted, unless they can be distributed and as it were, 'marketed' effectively.  

In North America, there has been a failure to approach museology as a theoretical study; the contributions in the article "Museology Science or Just Practical Work?" start from a different point than those other countries, particularly in Eastern Europe and Japan, and show little familiarity with the thirty year international debate on museology let alone earlier roots. A contributing factor may be that museology has been replaced with the term 'museum studies' which has become a catch-all phrase for any type of study of museums and need not necessarily be museological. As in Britain, the denial of museum theory has most often been expressed in the debate about a museum profession and its training. This discussion began in the 1930's with the claim against a museum profession by the naturalist Alexander Ruthven and the contradiction by Laurence Vail Coleman in 1939 in his book The Museum in America. But discussion resurfaced in the 1950's and 1960's in the writings of Carl Guthe and A.E. Parr and many others. At their extreme the negative opinions are that museum work is either capable of being followed by a layman without training (the view of small, volunteer-staffed museums) or that it is the work of subject specialists (the view of large museums).

When a theoretical base for museum work is discussed there is outright scepticism. Wilcomb Washburn, of the Smithsonian Institute, stated his aversion to the trend to define a profession based on museology at least in its present state in his article "Grandmotherology and Museology":

The almost total lack of theoretical discussion of the museum's right to claim professional status for its housekeeping skills is a clue to the bareness of the philosophy underlying the claim to professional status. Only Curator had addressed itself to the question with any
persistence or depth. Washburn took particular exception to the assumption that museology equals museum administration. Yet, earlier A.E. Parr had rejected the statement made by W. Glover that museology was based on interpretation of collections for the purpose of instruction. Obviously, there was some confusion about what the museology being criticized represented.

Museum theory has not been generated from university programmes in museology or museum studies despite the large number of programmes in North America. One reason may be that most courses must include postgraduate training in a subject area at the same time as studying museum work; thus, museum theory becomes a parallel and often secondary study. Many courses teach applied museography rather than theory. This approach to educating the potential museum employee reflects an interdisciplinary view of the study of museums or even a multi-disciplinary view, and thus falls under Category I (See Figure 1). This view is summarized by James L. Swauger, Senior Scientist-Anthropology at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh,

I believe it most fruitful to consider museology a body of museum techniques for advancing the purpose and organization of museums that has been developed and found practical and productive by museum employees as they performed their daily tasks.

There are a few exceptions to this pragmatic definition of museology. Ellis Burcaw, at the University of Idaho, has through his writings and teachings, promoted the idea of museum theory and the use of the ICOM definitions of museology and museography as for example in his book Introduction to Museum Work. He has also been one of the outstanding critics of the state of museology teaching; he summed up the interconnection of training, professionalism and museology that predominates in North America when he pointed out that the most common view is "the tacit conclusion that there is no museum profession, no such thing as museology and consequently, no need for general museum training."

Only in 1982, fourteen years after being initiated and after long discussions and battles, has the Masters Programme in Museum Studies at the University of Toronto been acknowledged
as a study of a discipline; the recent review committee arrived at the following confirmation of the theory of museum work yet points to its problematic state:

Museology is a new academic discipline and practising profession. It endeavours to find the theoretical basis of museum work and aims at a further development and improvement of museum activities, not only on the basis of experience but first and foremost on theory. Theory and methodology are the foundations of all aspects of museology.

The cognate departments have, however, appeared reluctant to recognize the emergence of this embryonic field. The result has been schizophrenic attitude shared by both the students and the Program itself.30

Most of the theoretical examination of museums has been prepared in Eastern Europe and falls into three categories: those who see museology as interdisciplinary, as a social science and finally as a meta-theory. One of the first practitioners to formulate a theory of museum work was Jiri Neustupny, who in 1950, in the document Questions de museologie moderne, proposed a Centre for Museological Studies in Czechoslovakia to offer aid to numerous museums in the province based on the most modern museological principles.31 He offered a definition of general museology as the "theoretical aspects of museum work" consisting of "scientific research and collecting, educational activities, conservation, exhibitions, theory and technique." Museography was defined as the descriptive and technical part of the doctrine, while museology was the theory. This definition influenced developments in Czechoslovakia and, internationally, the work of Rivière at ICOM. Neustupny added a concept to general museology, 'special museology' which consists of the application of subject disciplines to museum work as an applied science serving museum needs.

Thus, Neustupny defined museology as a theory but qualified his view by defining it as dependent on the subject disciplines found in museums. For Neustupny, museology can be compartmentalized into different methods. Thus, he denies the scientific character of museology; only parts of museology are scientific, those which retain the scientific character of their subjects.
In writings in the late 1960's, Neustupny went further with his interpretation of the interdisciplinarity of museology\(^{32}\); if museology was "the theory, the methodology of the application of various disciplines in museums and museum work" and it has "neither its own subject of study nor its own methods...(it) must use and apply methods of other disciplines, according to the branch of museology concerned.\(^{33}\) The methods of museology come from other disciplines which are the basis of general and special museology. The special museologies are obviously based on the methods of history, archaeology, natural history, and so on. But general museology is also composed of methods from other disciplines, such as the:


2. Theory and methods of mass communication - educational discipline.

3. Theory and role and function of museums in society, science and culture; the organization of museums, museum work, museology, training - Sociological discipline.

4. The history of museums, museum work and museology - Historical discipline.

5. A group of museum problems: mass communications, scientific information, buildings, financial.\(^{34}\)

In agreement with Neustupny were the museologists of the German Democratic Republic who in 1966 presented museology as a "composite body of a number of disciplines that are related to a common social institution, the museum."\(^{35}\) For them museology is an interdisciplinary or marginal science (Grenz oder Querwissenschaft) which co-ordinates and integrates. It has its own subject and structure: the theory of museum work, history of museums and museum work and the methodology of collecting, research and exhibition. Thus, the entire work of the museum depends on individual disciplines, and museology as a whole depends on special museology.

Another view is that museology is an independent scientific discipline. Apparently this
principle was presented in Russian literature as early as 1954 in the Soviet Encyclopedia in which museology was defined as a 'sphere of knowledge':

Museology is a sphere of knowledge about the organization and activity of museums. It is engaged in the study of the theory, history and practice of museum work, and in problems of the architecture and equipment of museums.\(^{36}\)

In Russian, to simplify matters, the term 'muzejevedenie' is used for both museology and museography. In Eastern Germany, this opinion has been followed by a number of thinkers. In 1964, some museologists used the term 'Museumwissenschaft' for an independent scientific discipline with a place in the system of science to replace the more general term 'Museumkunde'.\(^{37}\) Museumwissenschaft is a separate and a scientific discipline: its unique subject is museums while it studies the tasks and functions of museums which are arranged into systems from which can be drawn valid precepts. In the recent publication by the International Committee on Museology, Klaus Schreiner, Director of the Agrahistorisches Museum and a number of the Museum Council of the Ministry of Culture of the German Democratic Republic, itemized this idea:

Museology is a historically grown social scientific discipline, dealing with laws, principles, structures, and methods of the complex process of acquiring, preserving, decoding, researching and exhibiting selected movable original objects of nature and society as primary sources of knowledge, which creates the theoretical base for museum work and museum system with the aid of generalized and systematic experience.\(^{38}\)

A third view is represented in the work of Z.Z. Stransky and others (Category II A, See Figure ) Stransky has been important in the development of the Museological Department of the Philosophical Faculty of the E. Purkyne University of Brno, Czechoslovakia affiliated with the Moravian Museum. This university had a lectureship in museology as early as 1921 and a course in 1932. But as of 1963, a department was reconstituted, a course set up by 1963 and a post-graduate degree in 1965. Stransky's work is sometimes referred to as meta-theoretical in the sense that Stransky does not concentrate on the question of the existence of museology as a science which he feels is beyond solution
for the moment; what is critical is the existence of museum theory, a methodology and system for the study of museums, for the realm of practice will not solve museum problems as he underlined, Were we to hide our heads in the sand and stick to the traditional methods and procedures, and remain satisfied with the current practice, museum work would get into the increasing contradiction with the general progress of society: museums would be pushed onto the periphery of social interest and in the end they would lose not only their function but also their raison d'etre.

The aim of the theory must be "to discover the objective sides of reality, to define its laws and to find the optimum ways of both solving daily tasks and working ahead. For Stransky the 'raison d'etre' of museums is not the museum itself but the "social reason from the existence of museums." At this point, Stransky is similar to Singleton and Rivière.

However, Stransky adds another concept; for him, the heart of museology is the human activity of "conserving against natural decay certain objects and creations which represent for man certain values closely linked with his humanisation." Museology is thus, about "the specific relation of man to reality." In particular, museology is based on objects which make up collections and function as material documents, evidence which should be related to what he calls "integrated scientific knowledge" and which served its purpose only if communicated for example by exhibition. For Stransky museology does not replace the role of subject disciplines found in museums but neither do the special museological disciplines function as a substitute for museology; in this he has departed from Neustupny.

Discussions about the scientific character of museology have been muddied by different definitions of a 'science' and of 'scientific' in discussions, a problem common to definitions of the social sciences and science itself. Karl Popper's approach is useful to gain perspective:

A scientific theory is a net which we throw out to catch the world we want to rationalize, explain and rule. Museology certainly qualifies as an attempt to rationalize the phenomena of museums.
The irrelevance of the 'scientific' question is pointed out by Neustupny in his recent writings who reminds us that even the traditional academic disciplines have been evolving and altering in recent years; the distinction between a 'discipline' and a 'theory' have virtually become non-existent.\(^{44}\) Therefore, the significant issue is that museology is a heterogeneous discipline, whether it is separate within the divisions of academe or a sub-set of a traditional subject. From this viewpoint, museology is similar to subjects like sociology or the theory of culture.

In fact, discussions about the scientific character of other studies can guide the museologist. A thesis of James Ackerman holds that attempts to teach art history as if it were a science is a product of misplaced nineteenth century positivism resulting in schizophrenia\(^{45}\). Theorists use scientific methods thereby masking the use of cultural and personal value judgements in their work. Those who insist on the scientific character of museology are in danger of hiding symptoms of its pseudo-scientific history and definition as well as the personal and ideological values of the theorists, themselves.

To complicate the museological scenario, two new terms have entered the field since 1975: 'critical museology' and 'neo-museology'. Critical museology has been introduced at the Reinwardt Academy in Leiden, Holland. The subject is still the theory and practice of museum work but emphatically approached from the viewpoint of the museum as a process not as a static institution. 'Neo-museology', which has been introduced by Rivière and French-Canadian museologists, starts from the premise that museology represents what occurs within the four walls of the museum; if so, then neo-museology deals with the museum-like activities of society which occur beyond the traditional institution of the museum represented by eco-museums, open-air museums and so on. Both definitions have been created to fill shortcomings in the perception of museology; as such if museology is properly defined, these new terms become unnecessary as both the critical aspects of museum theory, as well as the activities beyond the four walls of museums should be covered by the one word, museology.
Other theories of museology have been defined in Japan, by Soichiro Tsuruta, Professor of Museology, Department of Education, Hosei University, Tokyo who believes museology is "a highly developed applied science" which is suspended between values of objects and human beings... Another centre for discussion on museology is in Poland, at the Museological Institute attached to the National Museum in Warsaw.

A developed scientific discipline requires internal coherence and complexity. Museology is a study full of substance but as yet, undeveloped, lacking internal coherence and clarity of the theoretical premises despite recent efforts. One is reminded of the early development of any subject area; for example, an undergraduate's summation of the early days of geology while attending Dr. Buckland's lectures at Oxford seem familiar:

To tell the truth, the science is so in its infancy that no regular system is formed. Hence the lectures are rather an enumeration of facts from which probabilities are deduced, than a consistent and luminous theory of certainties, illustrated by occasional examples. It is however, most entertaining, and opens an amazing field to imagination and to poetry.

Museology has progressed beyond this stage of youth. We can conclude with Stransky that:

Museum theory thus appears as a certain specific area of human intellectual activity, having certain characteristics of pure theory, with trends towards separating this theory and constituting it as a scientific discipline.

Museology is clearly a field of study, an interdisciplinary field with elements of a separate discipline or possibly a "heterogeneous discipline" as Neustupny wrote in MuWop II showing the evolution of his thought:

...we must state that museology is a very heterogeneous discipline and that it is obliged to accept the theories and methods of other disciplines...Museology applies these theories and methods to museum work. But, in spite of all this, museology remains a clearly limited discipline, fully and exclusively confined to the theory and methodology of museum work.

It uses some of the subjects and methods of separate disciplines but creates some of its own. Some may even feel it is more of a multi-disciplinary field. This will depend on whether the methods adopted from other areas when blended to focus on museums remain separate or
become integrated in their application to museum purposes.

In the end, how we classify the study of museums - as a separate scientific field, as an interdisciplinary field or as a sub-set of art or anthropology - may be less important than that the study is pursued. Museology contains elements of the methods of history applied to museums, museum work and museological thought, of anthropology and sociology in the stuff of the role of museums in society and their organization, of both education and communication theory as applied to exhibition and other methods of information dissemination, of business administration in museums management, of information science in collections management, of chemistry and physics in conservation to name but a few. But one could dissect most disciplines into other methods in a similar manner. What is significant is that museology isolates a unique study, the essential features of the museum that are unfulfilled by any other cultural or scientific discipline or institution in society. Individual subject areas and their methods may be an important part of museum thought and activity but we should recognize their limitations. The tensions between museology and the subject disciplines should be seem not as a battleground but as an incentive for expanding knowledge. It should be remembered that the museum provides one of the few places for the intersection and merging of traditional subject areas to reflect what is after all the unity of knowledge. The interdisciplinarity of the museum forum is one of its major strengths if also the sources of its theoretical problems.

The essence of museology is not the 'museum', although many theorists and museum courses concentrate on an empirical and static description of museum practices: it is the idea of the museum, the examination of the purposes of museums and their social, economic and cultural roles. Museology strives to refine further museum functions based on the theoretical analysis of what the museum should be, not merely what they have been or are. The basis of thought should be a rational and critical questioning of why, what and how the museum exists and functions. Museology should be an instrument to reshape museum practice in a rational
way, not in the usual ad hoc, particularist and defensive way: an instrument which may at long
last take us beyond discussions of museology as a science, discipline or profession.

It may seem as though we are arriving at this conclusion for the first time but again the
history of museology points out our naivety. F.J. North had arrived at this experimental
method in Museums Journal in 1951:

...a study of what has been done in the past should help us to see what had led to success
and what had resulted in failure, and with that knowledge we need neither continue to make
the mistakes of our predecessors nor waste time in rediscovering what is already known.50

Thus, the subject of museology is not a building, its administration, or the communication of
its contents: nor is it the application of individual subject areas to the museums. Museology is
about a process; the human activity of identifying and collecting certain objects from their
material world, whether natural or man-made, to represent a particular value-aesthetic,
sanctity, curiosity, entertainment, or scientific. It is the action of housing this objectified reality
in a social institution and presenting the object (or its symbol) for viewing by an audience to
communicate that value. The view that museology is based on man's relationship with reality
has been expressed by Stransky and others in Eastern Europe perhaps as an outgrowth of
the German schools of philosophy and Marxian thought. Anna Gregorova stated the case in
MuWop II:

In my opinion the special task of museology is to study precisely the specific relation of man to
reality which has led to the creation of collections of material documents on the development
of nature and society. Besides that, one of the tasks of museology is to study and generalize
the overall gnoseological potential fixed to material documents of the reality, as well as the
task of studying the specific features of and generalizing the possibility of the versatile
scientific and cultural educational use of the collections.51

For the sake of clarity, in this work museology will be used in the broader inclusive sense.
The structure of museology has four elements, a) the museum context, being the structure and
development of the museum in the cultural organization of society(ies); b) the museum,
process and ideology, being the philosophy, ideas on the purpose of the museum; c) the
museum - **internal operations**, 'the experience of the object', collections and their resources: d) the museum - external operations, 'the experience of the visitor', communication, educational and public service activities which this study will broadly follow. (See Appendix II for comparative historical divisions.)

It is perhaps helpful to note the similarities in the attempt to establish the body of knowledge of museology with those in the field of library science. This has been defined "as the body of organized knowledge - in whatever form: - which is concerned with the purposes, objectives, and functions of libraries and the principles, theories, methods, organization and techniques employed in performing library services." There are two main sub-divisions of the field: the bases of librarianship and library techniques, and the principles underlying them. The bases of librarianship are:

a) the factual and interpretative history and development of libraries and librarianship - their economic, social, educational and cultural foundations and functions and their underlying principles, theories and philosophies;
b) the history of the book and its forms;...
c) the story of the lives of men and women who were a part of each trend, movement, or period. 

History, or the bases of librarianship, is a significant part of the subject. Thus, despite criticisms of 'historicism', for museology, the history of museums and museology will be an essential ingredient of defining our field of knowledge. The history of museums and museology in Britain could be a test case for the epistemological definition of museology.

Our search for a museology provides two starting-points for this study. First, the history of museology is clearly part of the first division of museology and is an element in the analysis of the museum process in society. Secondly, in our search for museological elements in the history of British museum theory the subjects we look for are: information about the museum process such as views about the purpose and role of museums; information on the internal operations of museums such as collections philosophies, their management and physical contexts; the external role of museums through presentation and communication, education
and public programmes and other public services.

The gathering, holding, presenting and active showing of objects in a collection or museum is essentially a process and thus, defies neat compartmentalization into parts or functions. Thus, ideas about the educational role of museums contain implications for the approach to objects, collecting, display, education and vice-versa for each term. Nevertheless, has been an attempt in this work to compartmentalize museum thought, to assist in coming to terms with the unwieldiness; hence, there is an overlap in ideas.

In conclusion, we can agree with Georges Henri Rivière. Current museology is in a paradoxical state caught between practitioners and theorists:

What a curious fate is that of museology. Those responsible for museums are still disputing its vocation. At the same time, eminent experts recognize its fundamental importance with respect to development and radiation of the museum institution...

Yet, museology exists in whatever form. The next question, then, is where was the genesis of museology?

Notes:

2. These four opinions were recorded by Z.Z. Stransky in Brno: *Education in Museology* (Brno, 1974), p. 21 and repeated by L. Teather, *Professional Directions for Museum Work in Canada* (Ottawa, 1978), pp. 207-
8. Ibid., p.34.
11 Ibid., p. 18.
12 Ibid., p. 18.
15 Ibid.
16 MuWop, Museological Working Papers, Nos. 1 and 2 (Sweden, 1980). The first periodical issue was published from the papers submitted to the International Committee on Museology of ICOM. Over a hundred circular letters (176) were sent out; fifteen committees (ten national and five international) replied resulting in fifteen papers in the first issue. This was not an overwhelming reaction and may explain why regions such as North America, Africa, India, Asia are not well-represented.
25 For the discussion of these developments see L. Teather, Professional Directions for Museum Work in Canada, pp. 165-168.
27 James L. Swauger, MuWop, No. 1, p. 46.
30 Review of the University of Toronto Masters Programme in Museum Studies (Toronto, 1982).
32 A review of J. Neustupny’s work to 1968 can be found in J. Neustupny, Museum and Research (Prague, 1968), pp. 157-159. This volume has been used here as the basis of information on Eastern Europe for this chapter, particularly
Chapter Eleven, as well as source material available in English or German translation or summary.

35 E. Czichon, B. Hellmuth, and J. Winkler, "Uber den Character der Museologie, Diskussionmaterial" (Berlin, 1966), p. 2. This work is also summarized by J. Neustupny in *Museums and Research*, pp. 154-158.
38 Klaus Schreiner, "Criteria on the Place of Museology in the System of Sciences, "*MuWop*, I, 41.
43 As quoted by Z.Z. Stransky in *Brno: Education in Museology*, p. 32.
46 These views are represented in *MuWop*, 1980. There are many other individuals who have referred to museology such as Jan Jelinek, J. Benes, and others who have been excluded for reasons of space.
50 " *Museum Journal*, 50 (March 1951), 281.