

ICOM Define | Consultation 3: Evaluation of keywords and concepts

I- ENTITY: A museum is ... Hub

ENTITY: LIMITATIONS AND APPLICABILITY

- While Museums often serve as “hubs” i.e. “centers of activity,” the other meanings of “hub” may prove confusing in the context of ENTITY. In my opinion, the word “hub” is better used in conjunction with ACTION/FUNCTION and not in regard to ENTITY. See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hub>
- Space – hard to give legal powers to a space.
- Museum is an institution in sociological meaning – a specific system of values, goals, rituals, system of action and agency etc. In my committee museum means much “organization” than others.
- In the Italian experience public museums are strongly constrained in their capacity to manage artworks and exhibits on one hand, human resources on the other. This acts as an important obstacle against any strategies aimed at operating as a territorial hub exchanging and sharing activities, resources and orientations. If we consider non-cultural organizations, the constraints might prove even tighter.

ENTITY: Additional Term

- Memory hub: museum objects as museum’s media, inclusive and cooperative institution
- Historical hub, cultural hub
- Media, space /Cyberspace: Museums today manage more and more of their records and activities online, including managing "born-digital" assets.
- Factory: a museum is a powerful cradle of interpretation, critical elaboration, crafting and strategic acting. It should become a creative and productive organization where past experience could become the source for new creative orientations. Museums should host creative residences and technical libraries.

II- ENTITY QUALIFIER: What qualifies a museum

Open to the public, Ethical, Professional, Inclusive, Accessible

ENTITY QUALIFIER: LIMITATIONS AND APPLICABILITY

“Independent/Autonomous” may not apply to very small museums/historic houses who are managed by larger bureaucratic institutions. While ideally there is local involvement, in practice, this is not always easily achievable while maintaining professional standards.

ENTITY QUALIFIER: Additional term

- Tangible & Intangible: Museums have the ability to collect, preserve, display and interpret tangible and intangible cultural assets for the benefit of the public.

- Familiar: a museum should be part of the ordinary everyday urban trail, offering space and time for leisure and social time to everybody (both residents and visitors).
- Critical
- Authenticity

III- OBJECT/SUBJECT: What are the museums' objects/subjects

Heritage, Tangible & Intangible, Knowledge, Identity, Culture / cultural

OBJECT/SUBJECT: LIMITATIONS AND APPLICABILITY

No comments

OBJECT/SUBJECT: Additional term

- Collections: Tangible and intangible (including 'born digital') objects/specimens/art works.
- Spirit of time: a museum should offer a clear, extensive, and intensive evidence of the spirit of time being incorporated in exhibits and the related documentation, At the same time, it should offer to visitors the critical appraisal of the cultural layers between the artwork and the present time, filtering such a rich and intensive endowment of critical knowledge through the present spirit of time.

IV- ACTION / FUNCTION: What a museum does

Collects, Researches, Displays / Exhibits, Preserves, Interprets, Communicates

ACTION / FUNCTION: LIMITATIONS AND APPLICABILITY

No comments

ACTION / FUNCTION: Additional term

- Promotes
- Shares access to its collections and knowledge through in person visits and activities, through displays and online

V- EXPERIENCE: What do people experience at the museum

Knowledge, Experience, Dialogue, Inspiration, Discovery / curiosity

EXPERIENCE: LIMITATIONS AND APPLICABILITY

Transmission: not a helpful concept with bureaucrats

EXPERIENCE: Additional term

- Emotion
- Interpretation

VI- SOCIAL VALUES: What values shape museums

Inclusivity, Service to society, Diversity, Accessibility, Sustainability, Accountability

SOCIAL VALUES: LIMITATIONS AND APPLICABILITY

At the present time “Democracy” means different things to different people and may be construed as imposing western values on the rest of the world. Therefore, it is best avoided. Many of the values listed above are intrinsic to democracy but far less controversial.

SOCIAL VALUES: Additional term

- Professionalism
- Openness: open to new ideas and/or ways of working, including sharing authority, community collaborations (i.e. not rigid in always following the same models of practice – flexible/adaptable, prepared to take some risks)

VII- TARGETS: Who museums work for and the nature of their relationship

Public / open to the public, Community / Society, Collaborative, Partnership / network

TARGETS: LIMITATIONS AND APPLICABILITY

No comments

TARGETS: Additional term

Source communities: the people (or their living descendants) whose heritage is cared for and presented through the museum and its activities (including online)

Friends: I mean those who visit, cooperate, give notes; for specialists too