

Thomas R. Caswell

# Museum studies

## Online resources for students and practitioners

**M**useum studies, sometimes referred to as museology, is a growing field of interdisciplinary study devoted to the organization and management of museums and museum collections. Museology can also refer more specifically to the study of the social, political, economic, and cultural context of museums and other cultural institutions. Many universities and colleges now offer degrees and certificates in museum studies at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Most of the degrees granted are master's degrees in museum studies or some receive a master's degree in some other discipline (such as anthropology, archaeology, history, art, art history, education, law, or the sciences) with a concentration in museum studies or museology.

Museum studies literature and resources may be produced and used by museum practitioners (such as curators, museum educators, and directors) or by students, researchers, and faculty engaged in a museological academic program.

Topics for research vary according to specific course of study or area of interest, but major themes include: the museum's role in society, museum management, exhibition design, funding, conservation, preservation, visitor studies, accessibility, museum education, curatorship, collection management, museum ethics, law, and the impact of media and technology in museums.

The freely available online resources listed below are intended to help researchers and practitioners alike, as well as persons interested in learning more about museum management and organization.

### Professional associations and organizations

- **American Association of Museums (AAM).** For more than 100 years, AAM has been setting standards and best practices guidelines for museums in America. Their Web site contains a dynamic, searchable directory of more than 3,000 museums, as well as a subset directory of more than 750 museums, which have been accredited by the organization. The latest *AAM Code of Ethics for Museums* and full-text *Ethical Guidelines* are also available. *Access:* <http://www.aam-us.org/>.

- **American Association for State and Local History (AASLH).** This organization serves professionals and volunteers who preserve and interpret state and local history across the United States. The association is currently involved with the Federal Formula Grant Initiative to bring federal grant opportunities to states for their museums and archives. *Access:* <http://www.aaslh.org/>.

- **Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD).** Membership in this association is strictly limited to directors of museums in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and then only one representative per museum, but the Web site contains a valuable resource in its collection of position papers and reports of the association. These documents give insight into museum operations and how leaders of art museums deal with sensitive topics, such as Nazi-looted art, sacred objects, and

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corporate sponsorship. *Access:* <http://www.aamd.org/>.

- **Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC).** ASTC is an international organization of not only science-technology centers and science museums, but also nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, zoos, botanical gardens, space theaters, and natural history and children's museums. Search this site's online directory of more than 400 science-technology centers from around the world, or browse its online "Resource Center" for information on designing effective science exhibits for kids, adolescents, and elderly visitors. *Access:* <http://www.astc.org/>.

- **International Council of Museums (ICOM).** ICOM is an international organization for more than 21,000 museums and museum professionals, closely associated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It helps set minimum standards of professional practice and performance for museums and their staff by publishing and maintaining the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*, available online in three official languages (English, French, and Spanish) and several unofficial versions. *Access:* <http://icom.museum/>.

- **National Trust for Historic Preservation.** The National Trust is a nonprofit organization devoted to saving and preserving America's historic buildings and neighborhoods. Links for educational, advocacy, and funding resources are provided, as well as links to current lists of America's most endangered and distinctive historic sites. *Access:* <http://www.nationaltrust.org/>.

### Selected image collections

- **American Memory.** The Library of Congress's American Memory project is a free and open collection of written and spoken words, sound recordings, still and moving images, prints, maps, and sheet music that document American history and creativity. *Access:* <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>.

- **Artcyclopedia.** Artcyclopedia links users to online collections of museums from around the world, with the unique ability

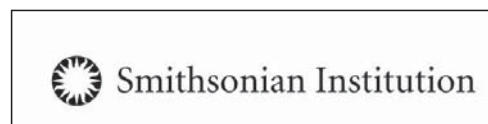
of allowing users to locate museums by the names of artists they have collected or specific titles of works of art owned by a museum. *Access:* <http://www.artcyclopedia.com/>.

- **Canadian Museum of Civilization.** Search or browse more than 200,000 digital images of cultural objects, including aboriginal art, military objects, porcelains, glass, and textiles. *Access:* <http://www.civilization.ca/collect/csintroe.html>.

- **Metropolitan Museum of Art.** The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City has been around since 1870, and its permanent collection is comprised of more than 2 million works of art and cultural objects. The online image collection is comprised of more than 6,500 important works, including the entire European Paintings and American Paintings and Sculpture collections. The image collection is one of the most scholarly in existence, with extensive physical descriptions, provenance notes, and detailed views of signatures and inscriptions. *Access:* [http://www.metmuseum.org/Works\\_of\\_Art/](http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/).

- **National Gallery of Art.** Search the National Gallery's extensive collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, and works on paper that spans more than 600 years of history from the Middle Ages to the present day. Bibliographies, exhibition histories, and provenance records are attached to many of the works. *Access:* <http://www.nga.gov/collection/>.

- **Smithsonian Institution.** Explore the world's largest complex of museums and other affiliated collections via the Smithsonian portal. The Smithsonian collections own more than 136 million artworks, objects, and specimens, and each museum maintains its own Web site, usually comprised of thousands of online images and hundreds of educational materials. *Access:* <http://www.si.edu/>.



### Databases and information gateways

- **Conservation OnLine (CoOL): Resources for Conservation Professionals.**

Served up by Stanford University, CoOL is a full-text library of conservation literature for libraries, archives, and museums. Lots of information on pest management, digital imaging, and even disaster planning for a variety of media, including video and audio materials can be found here. *Access:* <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu>.

- **The Getty.** The Web portal for the J. Paul Getty Trust provides a gateway to a wealth of information for museum studies-



related research, particularly the databases produced by two of its main programs: the Getty Research Institute and the Getty Conservation Institute.

Users can freely search conservation literature abstracts, a provenance database, and structured vocabulary databases for art, architecture, and material culture. *Access:* <http://www.getty.edu/>.

- **The Museum Studies Bibliographies.** Made available through the Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS), the Museum Studies Bibliographies portion of the database indexes more than 1,200 articles, theses, and conference proceedings dealing specifically with the role, function, history, philosophy, nature, and structure of museums. Once connected to SIRIS, search for “museum studies” as a keyword to most efficiently search and retrieve the Museum Studies Bibliographies’ entries. *Access:* <http://sirismm.si.edu/siris/siris-museum-studies.htm>.

- **Museum Studies Training Package.** Aimed at improving the knowledge and competencies of museum personnel in developing countries around the world, UNESCO and ICOM have jointly produced and made available key documents, like *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook*, through this Web site. *Access:* [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/admin/ev.php?URL\\_ID=32886&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/admin/ev.php?URL_ID=32886&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201).

- **PACIN: The Packing, Art Handling and Crating Information Network.** PACIN is one of the Professional Interest Committees of the American Association of Museums, and its Web site provides a forum for

an exchange of ideas related to methods and techniques and materials used for packing and transporting works of art and museum artifacts. The archives of articles and electronic list discussions uncover tricks of the trade such as how to hang a large, heavy painting or how to most effectively use box tape and bubble wrap. Even nonpractitioners of the museum field can learn a great deal from PACIN’s “Materials Definition List” which lists the pros and cons of using various packing materials. *Access:* <http://www.pacin.org/>.

- **Smithsonian: Museum Studies.** Maintained by the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies, this site aggregates scholarly and professional resources for museum studies on national, regional, and international levels. Included are links to online reference works and journals, federal funding sources, accessibility information, curriculum materials, and archived research and project reports. *Access:* <http://museumstudies.si.edu/>.

- **Timeline of Art History.** The curatorial, conservation, and education staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City produce the *Timeline*, which is an easy-to-use geographical, chronological, and thematic representation of art history. Users can compare and contrast works of art from around the world, with accompanying thematic essays and maps, putting each work of art in cultural and historical context. *Access:* <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>.

## **E-journals, discussion lists, and blogs**

- **The Attic.** Museum studies students at the University of Leicester (in the U.K.) run this blog, providing a unique, European perspective on museum studies research. *Access:* <http://attic-museumstudies.blogspot.com/>.

- **AVISO.** Browse back issues of the Association of American Museums monthly newsletter “AVISO” (December 2005 to present). Full-text searching is available. *Access:* <http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/aama/issues/>.

- **Global Museum.** An online museum Webzine with headlines and news items from around the world. *Access:* <http://www.globalmuseum.org/>.

- **H-Museum.** This is a moderated mailing list maintained by H-Net (the Humanities and Social Sciences Network) connecting thousands of scholars from around the world. Even if not subscribed, users can search and read the vast archives of informational postings and excellent reviews of museum-related literature. *Access:* <http://www.h-net.org/~museum/>.

- **Museum 2.0.** This blog aims to increase awareness and use of Web 2.0 applications and technologies within museum settings in order to make museums more engaging, community-based, and user-defined. *Access:* <http://www.museumtwo.com/>.

- **Musematic.** A blog devoted to the latest trends in museum technology and informatics. Major contributors include members of the Museum Computer Network and American Association of Museum's Media and Technology Committee. *Access:* <http://www.musematic.net/>.

- **MuseumBlogs.org.** Initially developed by an interactive design company that creates interactive exhibits and Web sites for museums, MuseumBlogs.org is a virtual directory of museum and museum-related blogs, as well as a clearinghouse for repostings. *Access:* <http://www.museumblogs.org/>.

## Directories

- **Art Museum Network.** An online directory of only the major players (in terms of museums) from around the world. More than 200 museums are listed, membership in this organization is by invitation only. *Access:* <http://www.amn.org/>.

- **Historic House Museums in the United States.** This site contains a dynamic directory that allows users to find historic house museums in the United State by name, state, region, and even time period (Colonial, Victorian, Antebellum, etc.). *Access:* <http://www.housemuseums.us/search.htm>.

- **Virtual Library Museum Pages.** A multilanguage worldwide directory of museums with a Web presence, subdivided geographically or keyword searchable. *Access:* <http://icom.museum/vlmp/>.

- **Virtual Museum Canada (VMC).** This gateway connects museums across Canada and provides access to online exhibits, educational materials for download, and vast image collections. *Access:* <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/>.

## Technology and museums

- **Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN).** A network of more than 1,200 not-for-profit collections across Canada, this Web site's mission is to develop, promote, and archive digital heritage content. The knowledgebase archived on this site contains hundreds of online documents devoted to collection management, intellectual property, museum standards, conservation principles, and strategies for creating and managing digital content. *Access:* <http://www.chin.gc.ca/>.

- **Museums and the Web.** An annual conference organized by Archives and Museum Informatics allows museum professionals and developers of Web applications for museums to exchange information on an international scale. Past papers of the conferences back to 1998 are searchable and available in full text. *Access:* <http://www.archimuse.com/conferences/mw.html>.



- **Museum Computer Network (MCN).** MCN is a network for information professionals from museum and cultural heritage institutions devoted to examining and exchanging ideas concerning digital media, intellectual property, metadata standards, collections management, and Web development. *Access:* <http://www.mcn.edu/>.

- **National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage (NINCH).** Unfortunately,

the Web site has not been updated since 2003 while a Transition Committee considers its future, but the site still contains the very exhaustive and informative *NINCH Guide to Good Practice in the Digital Representation & Management of Cultural Heritage Materials* (242 pages in length) for anyone undertaking or thinking of undertaking a digitization project involving cultural objects and resources. Access: <http://www.ninch.org/>.

- **Steve.Museum.** An art museum social tagging project. Access: <http://tagger.steve.museum/>.

### Employment opportunities

- **AAM Job Search (American Association of Museums).** Search or browse hundreds of museum jobs by category (curators, education, registrars, etc.) and/or by state/province/country. Access: <http://museumcareers.aam-us.org/search/index.cfm>.

- **Archivists, Curators, and Museum Technicians (Occupational Outlook Handbook).** A standard reference source for persons looking for a snapshot of a particular job or industry, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook* provides a brief overview of the various positions within museums and museum-related work, the nature of the work therein, qualifications desired, typical earnings, and future demand for occupations in these areas. Access: <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos065.htm>.

- **CultureWorks (Canadian Cultural Human Resources Council).** Find museum and cultural heritage careers across Canada. Access: <http://www.cultureworks.ca/jobs/search/index.asp>.

### Grants

- **The Getty Foundation.** Access: <http://www.getty.edu/grants/>.

- **Institute of Museum and Library Services.** Access: <http://www.imls.gov/>.

- **National Endowment for the Arts.** Access: <http://www.arts.gov/grants/>.

- **National Endowment for the Humanities.** Access: <http://www.neh.gov/grants/>.

- **National Historical Publications and Records Commission.** Access: <http://www.archives.gov/nhprc/>.

- **National Science Foundation.** Access: <http://www.nsf.gov/funding/>.

### Other resources

- **Academy of Certified Archivists.** Access: <http://www.certifiedarchivists.org>.

- **American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.** Access: <http://aic.stanford.edu>.

- **National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators.** Access: <http://www.nagara.org>.

- **Society of American Archivists.** Access: <http://www.archivists.org/>. *ZZ*

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(“Getting the most...” continued from page 420)

*Organizational Achievement*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004): 15.

3. Bryson, 6–7.

4. Henry Mintzberg, “Rethinking Strategic Planning Part I: Pitfalls and Fallacies,” *Long Range Planning* 27 no. 3 (1994): 19.

5. Loizos Heracleous, “Strategic Thinking or Strategic Planning?” *Long Range Planning* 31, no. 3 (1998): 485.

6. Jeanne M. Liedtka, “Strategic Thinking: Can It Be Taught?” *Long Range Planning* 31, no. 1 (1998): 122–24.

7. Gary Hamel, “Strategy Innovation and the Quest for Value,” *Sloan Management Review* 39, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 12–13.

8. Hamel, 12.

9. Jeanne M. Liedtka, “Linking Strategic Thinking With Strategic Planning,” *Strategy & Leadership* 26, no. 4 (1998): 34.

10. Hamel, 13.

11. Bryson, 12.

12. Liedtka, “Linking Strategic Planning,” 34.

13. Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning: Reconceiving Roles for Planning, Plans, Planners* (New York: Free Press, 1994). *ZZ*