

M CIDOC
Training

101 Introduction to Museum information management

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Chair CIDOC Training Association
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101 Introduction to Museum Information Management

INTRODUCTION

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Agenda

- **Introduction**
- The need for good documentation
- The scope of museum documentation
- Documentation issues
- Planning
- Conclusion

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Aims

- On completion of the course you will:-
 - Understand CIDOC's approach to Museum Information Management
 - Appreciate the key issues in museum information management



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Objectives

- On completion of the course you will be able to:-
 - Estimate the monetary value of your documentation
 - Create a documentation to plan
 - Know where to find more information



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Audience

- This course is intended for:
 - People interested in Museum documentation and information management
 - People who will use or develop CIDOC training materials



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Course Prerequisites

- This is a foundation course, there are no prerequisites



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THE NEED FOR GOOD DOCUMENTATION

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The need for documentation

CIDOC believes that collections without adequate documentation cannot be considered to be true museum collections.

- they cannot be adequately safeguarded and cared for
- the museum cannot demonstrate legal accountability
- their value for research and interpretation is greatly reduced



CIDOC Principles of Documentation, 2013

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Practical benefits of good documentation

1. Evidence of ownership
2. Information about each object's history
3. Unique identification of each object
4. Ease of location
5. Access to descriptions which help with the recovery of stolen objects
6. Control over intellectual property rights issues
7. Access to research and publications relating to the collection
8. Supporting information about themes of relevance to the collection
9. Material for educational purposes and exhibitions
10. Guidance on procedures and decision-making
11. A full audit trail of work done on the collections
12. Information about alienated objects

prac·ti·cal
/ˈpræktɪkəl/

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THE SCOPE OF MUSEUM DOCUMENTATION

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What is museum documentation?

- Document (noun):
 - found in a Museum
 - produced by a museum
 - used by a museum
 - About the museum's collections
- Document (verb):
 - The result of documenting



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Definitions?

- Find the definition of "documentation" in Key Concepts of Museology...
 - "Museum collections have always appeared relevant provided that they are defined in relation to the accompanying documentation..." p 28*
 - "The term museologist can be applied to researchers studying the specific relationship between man and reality, characterised as the documentation of the real by direct sensory perception." p 68*

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Documentation of collections

“2.20 Documentation of Collections
 Museum collections should be documented according to accepted professional standards. Such documentation should include a full identification and description of each item, its associations, provenance, condition, treatment and present location. Such data should be kept in a secure environment and be supported by retrieval systems providing access to the information by the museum personnel and other legitimate users.”

ICOM code of ethics for museums, 2006

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Memory of context

“Museum documentation, as an outcome, refers to information of any kind, whether tangible or intangible, written, visual, or aural, which preserves the memory of the context in which a museum object was found before its extraction from that context”

Dictionnaire encyclopédique de la muséologie
 André Desvallées, François Mairesse

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The scope of museum documentation

Documents used by the museum

Produced by the museum

Collections related

Context

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Exercise 1

- When is a document a *museum* document?
 - Examine and classify some examples
 - Think about why they do or don't qualify

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The ICOM definition of “museum”

“A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which *acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits* the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

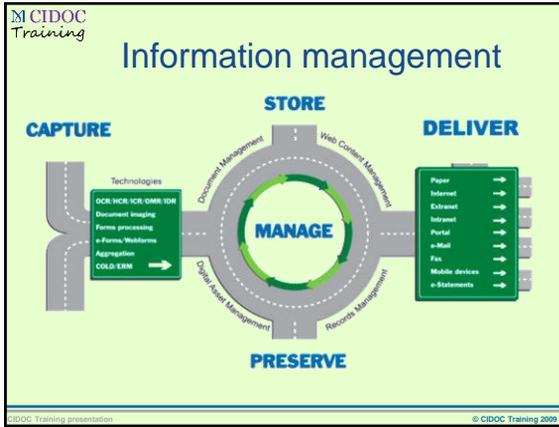
ICOM Statutes, Vienna, Austria, 2007

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The museum's mission

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DOCUMENTATION ISSUES

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Some documentation issues

- Confidentiality
- Comprehensive
- Complexity
- Convenience
- Mono-lingual staff
- Unlimited needs
- Communication
- Exhaustive
- Readability
- Permanence
- Multi-lingual public
- Finite resources



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Confidentiality vs Communication

- “Serving visitors and other audiences is part of the very essence of a museum... staff are in effect public servants” p 107
- “The museum could also consider providing the public and researchers with online access to information, both within the museum and on the Web.”
- “The museum must take special care to ensure that the information about the location of a particular object or collection is kept secure. This information can be of great assistance to criminals considering raiding the museum.”
Andrew Roberts, 2004 Running a Museum

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Comprehensive vs Exhaustive

- “One of the greatest costs associated with documentation is the work involved in developing records and particularly carrying out backlog cataloguing... It may be more important to have limited details across the collection than to record information in each ... field.”
Andrew Roberts, 2004 Running a Museum

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Exercise

- How many records can one person create in a year?
- How much did it cost to produce your documentation?

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Complexity vs Accessibility

- “records need to be consistently structured into discrete categories or fields, each of which can hold a specific piece of information.”
- *Andrews Roberts, 2004*



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Mono-lingual data vs Multi-lingual public

Liotard, Jean-Etienne
 “Training in Geneva in the painter Daniel Gardelle, then raises in Paris of the miniaturist Jean-Baptiste Massé since 1723. After three years, Liotard leaves its workshop and tries to earn its living as portraitist. It goes to Rome (1736) where it carries out there a series of drawings with the black stone and blood in which it restores manners and the habits of the daily life in Average Eastern.”

MEMO website, retrieved 2008

http://www.memo.fr/en/article.aspx?ID=PER_MOD_152



Thomas Lawrence
 “Portrait of John Angerstein, born Amelia Lock and his oldest child John Julius William circa 1921 ou 1922”
 MAHG website retrieved 2012

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Preservation

- Industrial Paper – 50 years
- B/w Photograph – 80 years
- Computer – 5 years (technical life)
- Digital storage medium – 10 years (technical)
- Computer program – 10 years
- Information - indefinite

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A documentation plan

- An audit of the existing situation
- Identifies problems and priorities
- Proposes a plan for the resolution of these problems
- Provides an estimation of the resources and time required
- Is subject to regular review
- Clarifies documentation policy
- Justifies investment
- *Collections trust Documentation planning pack*

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CONCLUSION

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Conclusion

- Museum documentation
 - is about information management
 - is expensive but indispensable
 - requires balancing conflicting needs

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Resume

- Definitions of museum documentation
- Information management
- Issues and dilemmas
- Quantifying documentation
- Preparing a documentation plan

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References

- *ICOM code of ethics for museums*, ICOM, 2006
- *Statement of principles of museum documentation*, ICOM CIDOC, 2006
- *Key Concepts of Museology*, ICOM ICOFOM, 2010
- Andrew Roberts, "Inventories and Documentation", in *Running a Museum, A practical handbook*, ICOM, 2004
- *Documentation Planning Pack*, Collections Trust, 2010

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THANK YOU












- Email: nicholas@crofts.ch
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