Article

Libraries Archives and Museums: Identifying the Bonds

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Abstract

This paper discussed differences and similarities among the libraries, archives and museums. The authors emphasized that museums, archives and libraries address the real needs in their communities and share many core values as the materials that museums, archives and libraries collect echo the human spirit. This paper reiterates the fact that museums, archives and libraries have similar technological needs as they all use computers to catalogue, track, and index materials. Most educational programmes for the training of library and archival professionals are located in the same department except for museum training that is sometimes located differently. This paper also discussed the similar daily concerns of the libraries, archives and museums as the duties of their workers are very similar. This paper discussed the problems with the boundaries among these institutions which have had very real and practical consequences on the treatment of both historical and current information materials   and the authors went further to proffer solutions to these problems. This paper concludes that the infusion of information and communication technologies (ICT) into the operations of these disciplines, tends to reduce the gaps among them and also help to consolidate their efforts and aspirations at meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)'s of 'information for all' in the year 2020 especially among the developing nations.

Introduction

Museums, archives and libraries share many goals and functions. The museum archive embraces the entire holdings of a museum service and includes both the material - the collections themselves, and also the entire associated record. The collections of most

museums, depending upon their size and length of history, are likely to involve a wide range of material, even, if theoretically this is concentrated in a narrow band of disciplines. Associated with all these will be a considerable volume of written, printed and pictorial records, including letters, manuscripts, note books, annotated maps, offprints from journals, watercolours, photographs and field notes, all in an enormous range of sizes and formats.

Museums and libraries address real needs in their communities. Beyond the -basics, of caring for collections and organizing them so that they are accessible, museums and libraries share many core values. They are institutions that acquire, catalogue, preserve, and interpret our history as well as the recorded history of other cultures and times. The library and the museum capture collective cultural knowledge, hold it for use, and expand it by allowing it to connect to our inward thoughts. They are all about the possibility to construct unrestricted knowledge, and to craft personal truths of individual design.

The materials that museums, archives and libraries collect echo the human spirit. Artifacts and books and manuscripts are all documents of the workings of human thinking and activity. They have been produced by people putting energy into selling their stories. Objects also have the power to summon forth stories and connotations of all kinds. The potential inwardness of objects is one of their most powerful characteristic, ambiguous and elusive though it may be. Objects hang before the eyes of the imagination, continuously representing ourselves, and telling the stories of our lives in ways which would be impossible otherwise.

Museums and archives serve as vehicles of individuals' identity preservation. They are places to which people entrust their most treasured items. Letters, diaries, a grandmothers' wedding dress, scrapbooks, a collection of coins can be entrusted to a museum or archive, and the donor can be assured of professional care. People attempt to solidify their identity primarily through accumulating legacies of letters, journals, memos, and poems and also through collections of objects like photographs and jewellery. These are often distributed to those who will care for them in hopes that their memories will live on in these collections. Often libraries, archives, and museums are the recipients of these hopes and collections, standing as institutions conferring and guarding the personal immortality of the public.

The shared educational focus of museums, libraries, and archives has received some attention by scholars. The International Museums and Libraries Society (2006) has emphasized that "museum and libraries are central players in the non-formal education sector". These organizations form an important network on which communities rely to help them share experiences, and grow in their understanding of each program as something libraries might emulate.

Aims and Objectives

This paper aims at revealing the interrelationships among the libraries, archives and museums as major institutions that deal in information acquisition, organization and dissemination to their various forms of clienteles or users among the society. The paper also aims to juxtapose these institutions and reveal both differences and similarities among these tripartite institutions. This paper intends to achieve the following objectives:

- Show the interrelationship among libraries, archives and museums.
- Compare and contrast the libraries, archives and museums.
- Review the routine services and daily concerns of these institutions.
- Identify the problems with the boundaries.
- Provide solutions to blur the boundaries.

The Concept of Library, Archives and Museum
Library and Information Centres

A library is a collection of information sources, resources and services, and the structure in which it is housed. It is organized for use and maintain by public body, an institution, or a private individual. In the more traditional sense, a library is a collection of books. The term can mean the collection, the building that housed such a collection, or both. The collection and service are used by people who choose not to or cannot afford to purchase an extensive collection themselves, who need material no individual can reasonably be expected to have, or who require professional assistance with their research (Adio and Ajala, 2006).

However, with the collection of media other than books for storing information, many libraries are now also repositories and access point for maps, prints, or other documents and works of art on various storage media such as microform (micro film/microfiche), audio tapes, CDs, LPs, cassettes, videotapes, and DVDs. Libraries also provide public facilities to access CD-ROMs, subscription database, and Internet.

Thus, modern libraries according to Allen (2005) are increasingly being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. In addition to providing materials, they also provide the services of specialists, librarians who are expert at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs.

More recently, libraries are understood as extending beyond the physical walls of a building, by including material accessible by electronic means, and providing the assistance of librarians in navigating and analyzing tremendous amount of knowledge with a variety of digital tools. The term "library" has itself acquired a secondary meaning "a collection of useful material for common use", and this sense is used in fields such as computer science, mathematics, and statistics, electronic and biology by traditional professional divisions. There are different types of library. Among the commonly identified are academic libraries which are located on the campuses of colleges and universities and serve primarily .the student and faculty of that and other academic institutions (Imam, A. et al, 2008). Some academic libraries especially, those at public institutions, are accessible to members of the general public in whole or in part. Public libraries provide service to the general public and make at least some of their books available for borrowing so that readers may use them at home over a day period or in weeks.

Typically, libraries issue library cards to community members wishing to borrow books. Many public libraries also serve as community an organization that provides free services and events to the public, such as reading groups and toddler story time.

Research libraries on the other hand are intended for supporting scholarly research, and therefore maintain permanent collections and attempt to provide access to all necessary materials. Research libraries are most often academic libraries or national libraries, but many large special libraries have research libraries within their special field and a very few of the largest public libraries also serves as research libraries while school libraries support primary and secondary schools curriculum (Alegbeleye and Nwalo, 2007). All other libraries fall into special library category. Many private business and private organizations, including hospital, museums, research laboratories, law firms and many government departments and agencies, maintain their own libraries for the use of their employees in doing specialized research related to their work. Special libraries may or may not be accessible to some identified part of the general public. Branches of large

academic or research libraries dealing with particular subjects are also usually called "special libraries", they are generally associated with one or more academic departments. Special libraries are distinguished from special collections, which are branches or parts of a library intended for rare books, manuscripts, and similar materials.

Archive

An archive refers to a collection of historical records, and also refers to the location in which these records are kept. Archives are made up of records which have been accumulated over the course of an individual or organization's lifetime. For example, the archive of an individual may contain letters, papers, photographs, computer files, scrapbooks, financial records, diaries or any other kind of documentary material created or collected by the individual-regardless of media or format. The archives of organization (such as a corporation or government), on the other hand, tend to contain different types of records, such as administrative files, business records, memos, official correspondence, meeting minutes, and so on.

In general, the archive of any individual or organization consists of records which have been especially selected for permanent or long-term preservation, due to their enduring research value. Archival records are normally unpublished and almost always unique, unlike books or magazines, in which many identical copies exist. This means that archives (the place) are quite distinct from libraries with regard to their functions and organization, although archival collections can often be found within library buildings. Archives are sometimes described as information generated as the "by product" of normal human activities, while library hold specifically authored information products. A person who works in archives is called an archivist. Archival is the study and practice of organizing materials in the archives.

Among various types of archives according to Alegbeleye and Nwalo (2007) are academic archives. Archives existing in colleges, universities, or other educational facilities are usually grouped as academic archives. Academic archives typically exist within a library, and duties may be carried out by an archivist or a librarian. Occasionally, history professors may run a smaller academic archive. Academic archive exists, celebrate and preserve the history of their school and academic community. The inventory of an academic archive may contain items such as paper of former professors and presidents, memorabilia related to school organization and activities, and items the

academic library wishes to remain in a closed-stack setting, such as rare books or thesis copies. Business (profit making) archives are located in profit making organizations like Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Motorola etc. These corporate archives maintain historic documents and items related to the history of their companies. Business archives serve the purpose of helping their corporations maintain control over their brand by retaining memories of the company's past while government archives include those institutions run on a local and state level as well as those run by the national (federal) government. Any one may use a government archive, and frequent users include reporters, genealogists, writers, historians, students, and anyone wanting more information on the history of their home or region.

Church archives are found in denominations and Christian churches. The most famous church archive is the Vatican secret archive while non-profit archives include those in historical societies, not-for-profit businesses such as hospitals, and the repositories within foundations. Non-profit archives are typically set up with private fund from donors to preserve the papers and history of specific persons or places. Often, these institutions rely on grant funding from the government as well.

Museum

A museum, as defined by the International Council of Museums (1998), is a "permanent institution in the society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity".

Museum enables people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artifacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for the society. Museums collects and care for objects of scientific, artistic, or historical importance to make them available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary.

Many museums offer programs and activities for a range of audience including adults, children and families, as well as those for more specific professions. Programmes for the public may consist of lectures or tutorials by the museum faculty or field experts, films, musical or dance performances, and technology demonstrations. Many times, museums concentrate on the host region's culture.

Most museums do not allow physical contact with the associated artefacts. Museums are usually open to the general public, sometimes charging an admission fee. Sometimes museums are publicly funded and have ft e entrance, either permanently or on special days e.g. once per week or year. Museums can be great sources of information about cultures and history.

There are many types of museums, namely: Arts Museum, Maritime Museums, Mobile Museums, Natural History Museums, Open Air Museums, Science Museums, Specialized Museum Virtual Museums, Zoos and Zoological Gardens.

Methods of Acquisition and Management in Library, Archive and Museum

Curators, librarians and archivists are guided by different technical principles, and they deal with materials that differ in terms of their origins and characteristics (Pederson, 1987). Aina (2004) observed that the activities in libraries are complementary to one another. There are circulation, reference, acquisition, cataloguing, reprographic units, etc. He further posited that "in functional specialization, the library is departmentalized along the functions and activities of the library; hence, the need for departments such as technical, readers, system and administrative. In form of specialization, the library is departmentalized along the forms of materials in the library. This has arisen because of the increase in the number of non-book materials. Thus, there could be serials library, map library, Arabic and manuscripts library, etc. All the functions of a library are handled by each department. Subject specialization is based on broad subjects offered in an academic institution. Usually, libraries combine all these forms of departmentalizations. Thus, there could be in one library a science department, map department and circulation department."

Objects come to the collection of museums through a variety of means. Either the museum itself or an associated institute may organize expeditions to acquire more items or documentation for the museum. More typical, however, museums will purchase or trade for artefacts or receive them as donations or bequests. The museum is usually run by a director who has a curatorial staff that cares for the objects and arranges their display. Large museums often will have a research division or institute, which are frequently involved with studies related to the museum's items, as well as an education department, in charge of providing interpretation of the materials to the general public. Museum curators seek to acquire objects and artefacts, and any associated documentation that may shed light on their characteristics, uses and

importance. These objects or artefacts may be unique, for example the prototype of the orbital engine, or may be representative of something extremely common but significant to daily life of the time, for example a telephone. They seek to acquire material that is relevant to and will reflect their institution's role and objectives. For example, a mining museum, a museum of performing arts and a social history museum would each have different objectives, roles, clients and therefore collecting policies. Curators also seek to control the material in their collections. This is done by systematically allocating a permanent, unique number to each item in the collection. The number need not reflect anything about the location or characteristics of the item; it is purely a mechanism to link the item to the paperwork about it.

According to Pederson (1987), archives on the other hand are unique, organic materials with evidential and informational properties. They are usually organized numerically and used numerically by their creators. Arranging them alphabetically by suburb name also make them easier to use. Discerning the original order and interpreting the context and use of the records pose the archival challenge and require the exercise of professional skills. Archivists are the custodians of records systems regardless of their format that are judged worthy of permanent preservation.

Similarities among the Libraries, Archives and Museums
Carr (2005) details the similarities between museums and libraries in his presentation at the International Federation of Library Association. He has a dozen points of comparison between libraries and museums, many of which concern education. He notes that both are institutions that offer individuals the opportunities to continue their education throughout their lifetime. This education is informal, with no designed curricula, and requires each person to be an active participant and pursuer of his or her education. The physical design of both museums and libraries are such that they encourage independent use, with the assistance of trained professionals whose job it is to facilitate learning.

Carr (2005) maintains that both are essentially information agencies: "At heart, both museums and libraries are institutions that give information to their users: through vision, words, comparison, connections, or the powerful presence of a reorganization concept." Libraries connect information to the processes of individual cognitive and economic life. Museums connect information to the experiences of awe and surprise that follow from seeing the unique thing.

Similar Daily Concerns

The duties of library, museum and archive workers are very similar. The three components of a professional librarian are acquisition, organization and interpretation and service. These are also the goals of museums and archives, perhaps with different emphases on different points for each institution. The fields share concerns that other disciplines do not: copyright, visual freedom, educational programming, nonprofit funding, outreach, preservation, volunteers, security, technical public divisions, and stereotypes of being dusty and antiquated places of   quiet. The attempts to delineate the three institutions merely reify their similarities. In the archival profession, a publication of the Society of American Archivists (2004), reaffirmed that the work of the archivist is compared and contrasted with other similar professions: the librarian and the archivist for example, both collect preserve, and make accessible materials for research, but significant differences exist in the way these materials are arranged, described, and used. The museum curator and the archivist are associated; however, the museum curator collects studies and interprets mostly three-dimensional objects, while the archivist works with paper, film and electronic records.

The degree of similarity between the professions makes it clear that they are closely related. The Society of American Archivists (2004) further reiterates the overlapping functions among these fields when it writes: Archivists are familiar with nature and characteristics of all types of human documentations from ancient Egyptian papyrus to contemporary computer e-mail. Crucial information resides in contracts, minutes of meetings, maps, diaries, account ledgers, and artworks. For example a tapestry may illustrate an event otherwise unknown. Tapestries, papyrus, and artworks, these examples of archival materials are examples of the overlap between the fields. A more narrow definition of the nature of archival materials as solely administrative records has been used by several prominent writers in the archival field recently, but that definition has been challenged by some.

Technology and Digitization

Museums, archives and libraries have similar technological needs. All three use computers to catalogue, track, and index materials. Many museums, archives, and libraries use the same database programmes. The most talked about topic in the museum world is the virtual museum. The archival world is grappling with the issue of electronics records. Articles on digital images are appearing in museum, library and

archive journals. Conferences on the topic of electronic access in these disciplines abound and are attended by information professionals regardless of their institutional or disciplinary membership.

As the use of computer technology increases in museums, libraries and archives, the gaps between the three are shrinking. Digitization of images changes both objects and texts from their original state of two or three dimensions to zero dimension as they exist only in the electronic memory of a machine. Rayward (2003) notes that as more institutions present their collections online, museums, archives and libraries are becoming a seamless web. Hypertext connections between the virtual collections allow researchers to make connections regardless of the physical location of the object or text.

This new functionality as it emerges   creates the need for new definitions of   the roles and responsibilities of collecting institutions, network providers, users and authors of the new kinds of resources. In summary, as collecting organizations become more and more concerned with electronic information they will take on the character of complex databases and information systems held locally for universal access through the Internet. Being able to respond to contemporary challenges effectively may largely depend on how well the different kinds of professionals are able to transcend the limitations that their highly developed cultures impose on them so that they can work across the ever diminishing boundaries that separate them.

As this happens, areas of research once exclusively used by one field are being required by the others. For example, while library professionals have researched the factors that influence access to collections, museum professionals, with their differing focus, have not. The creation of online museums has made patron access to collections an important issue in both museum and libraries for the first time, even as the computer technologists agreed that at the heart of all good database systems is the effort applied to understanding the needs of the people that will use the database. This is a sentiment any library professional would endorse.

Software and consulting companies have responded to the similar needs of museums, archives, and libraries with digital need. United States archives serve "archivist, curators, historians with its digitizing services. Some have created new terms to encompass all the possible professionals who might use their products. Information management profession refers to librarians, archivists, curators, researchers and record

managers. Cultural heritage professionals is the term used by the Archives and Museum Informatics, a group that organize conferences, workshops and seminar, to facilitate communication between all organizations grappling with digitizing technologies.

Professional Training

There have been some efforts to trail cultural heritage professionals under a unified programme. The field includes museum professionals, government historians, historical consultants, archivists, professors and students with public history interests, and many others (Carr, 2005). Some leading universities set themselves as training archivists, museum educators, curators and docents, editors, researchers and writers; managers of historic properties, corporate historians, an policy analysts, and private consultant who work with architectural, legal o. engineering firms. However, critics of these programmes note that they focus the majority of their coursework on history, not on access, acquisition, service and interpretation. Students being trained in public history are not being trained as information managers. Other criticisms of the field have beer levelled (Rayward, 2003). The public history field has risen with little regard for or understanding of the many professions it presumes to include within its own parameters. Another educational model offered by few programmes in library, information archival and museum studies.

Table 1: Differences among archives, libraries and museums

	Archives	Libraries	Museums
What do they keep?	Inactive records that have been selected for permanent preservation. Usually published/unpublished (can be in any format) and unique	Published material (can be in any format, e.g. CD, DVD, computer) that is not unique.	Objects and artefacts (and associated documentation) which may or may not be unique.
How is the material arranged?	In the order determined and used by the creator(s).	According to a predetermined classification system (e.g. Library of Congress).	Arrangement is not significant. Control is.
Who can consult the materials?	Depends on archives policy e.g. serious scholars only, anyone over 18) and on conditions imposed by depositor or donor.	Any member of their community (e.g. academic library allows students, staff and community members).	Any member of the public.
How do you find what you want?	Through consultation of guides, inventories and other documentation made available to researchers.	By consulting manual or automated catalogue known as OPAC or by browsing through the shelves.	You may only examine what is on exhibition or display.
Where do you consult the material?	In the search room on the archive's premises and under supervision.	On the premises, online via Internet or if you borrow, anywhere you wish.	In the display galleries or exhibition areas.
What is their objective?	Protection of archives and their evidential and informational values.	Building appropriate and comprehensive collections that are properly housed, controlled and effectively used	Collection and protection of selected objects for the community.
Why do you visit?	For proof of transactions and actions, to study, undertake research, for enjoyment.	For educational and recreational purposes.	For educational, aesthetic or recreational reasons.
Who looks after the material?	Archivists	Librarians	Museum curators

Adopted with minor review from Pederson (1987)

Problems with the Boundaries

Most educational programmes for the training of museum, library and archival professionals are located in different departments. Coursework in each field only very rarely includes instruction in handling materials from the others. This is unfortunate, as most repositories contain materials of wide variety of forms. There are also a great number of historical societies, small colleges, businesses, and museums that rely on one person to be the specialist in managing collections regardless of form. Training that focuses on only one type of material will not prepare the professional for the broad range of responsibilities in these professional positions.

The conceptual boundaries among museums, archives and libraries have had very real and practical consequences on the treatment of both historical and current information materials. An example of this kind of problem is the lack of common knowledge among the local museum's representatives, archives and the libraries, which has constituted a barrier to communication among these institutions. Libraries and information centres and their specialists also, at times act as if archives and museums are far distant fields of disciplines and seldom show interest in associating and relating with them as partners in progress. The librarians tend to refer their clients to other libraries to meet their information needs because of the inter-library cooperation also known as library networking than they do to archives and museums (Rayward, 2003). Pederson (1987) noted that the skills, the experience and the principles that a practitioner of each brings to his work vary. Where they do not differ is that each is a protector of material in custody, a controller of the materials in custody and the intermediary between the collection and the user.

Suggested Solutions

- Training in archives and museums should be taken more seriously especially at the tertiary educational level in order to   produce qualified manpower both at the paraprofessional and professional level.
- More courses in archival and museum should be included in the curriculum of library and information science especially at the postgraduate level where professionalism is emphasized. This hopes to promote the relationship among the three institutions noting the fact that the advantage of many more libraries at the school, state, research and academic institutions may translate into

propagating the ideals of archives and museums as well if the librarians have basic knowledge in these areas.

• Trained and certified professionals in archives and museums should as a matter of urgency unite to form strong associations both at the state, national and international level. Qualified museum curators and trained archivists should be able to form a strong alliance where their voices could be heard loud and clear.

• Archivists and museum workers are undoubtedly information specialists in their own rights. Therefore, they should be more confident and proud of their works and also be ready to market their services through the use of advertising and public relations.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, this paper, has attempted to show the interrelationships among the libraries, museums and archives. The differences and similarities among these all important fields of disciplines have been treated. It is however noteworthy that the issue of technological applications vis a vis digitization of materials available in these conjoined institutions is at the heart of this work. It is therefore expected that the infusion of information and communication technologies (ICT) into the operations of these fields of disciplines tends to reduce the gaps among them. It is also expected that the incorporation of electronic equipment into the daily routines and wide operations of these institutions will help to consolidate their efforts and aspirations at meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)s' of 'information for all' in the year 2020 especially among the developing nations.

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