

# Baltic Museology School 2004

## Sunday June 27

### Kremerata Baltica festival

Participants were invited to a concert of Shostakovich and Shnittke given by *Kremerata Baltica* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Turaida Church.

### Opening ceremony at Turaida Castle

The Director, Janis Garjans, welcomed everyone. He introduced Dr Hans-Martin Hinz, Chair of ICOM Europe, who spoke of the great changes in Europe and the continuing need to reintegrate the former East and West. He stressed the role of museums in explaining our and others' culture and in celebrating common values, and he wished everyone 'days of inspiration'.

The State Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Daniels Pavluts, spoke of the special role of cultural heritage in a changing society, of society's need to access both material and non-material heritage, and the need for innovation. He hoped the BMS would become an annual event.

After a glass of wine, the presentation of Sigulda walking-sticks, and a group photograph, a buffet supper was offered at the Administration building of the Turaida Museum Reserve, hosted by Anna Jurkane. There followed a tour of Gutmanis Cave, Knights' Stronghold and New Sigulda Castle, led by Ilga Korklisa.

## Monday June 28

### Contributions from participants

Each participant was invited to give a brief presentation on his or her museum, its strengths and achievements. These made clear what a rich variety of museums was represented, and how greatly they varied not only in size, subject and governance, but in their underlying purpose and emphasis. Moreover, the roles participants played within their museums also varied very much.

### Stephen Weil: *The Museum as a Social Enterprise: from an Inward Focus on Collections to an Outward Focus on Community.*

During the past 40 years, virtually all museums in the USA have turned around so that they face outwards, towards the community, and their collections are used to support community service.

US museums are mostly run by self-electing Boards of Trustees, and supported by staff led by the Director. The museum operates within both the law of the land, and the rules set out in its foundation document. Public oversight is given by the Public Revenue Service (at Federal level) and the Attorney General (at State level), but above all by the public through published Annual Reports. It is a complicated but effective system.

*Supplementary Handout* contained:

- Some basic definitions, which threw light on the way American museums work,
- Some communal needs that a museum might satisfy, which emphasised how a museum should meet a real public need,
- Some purposes to which a museum might be devoted, which emphasised the need for every museum to have a public purpose.

Organisations cannot have rights or form purposes – only people can do that.

'Social Enterprise Theory' identifies what is different between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. In a for-profit organisation the **output** is a product (eg buttons from a button-factory), and the **outcome** is profit. In a not-for-profit organisation the **output** is the programme (eg exhibit, catalogue, education program) and the **outcome** is a public benefit.

Key difference is how their products are priced and so how they get their resources. Not-for-profit organisations typically sell their product under cost. Though for-profit organisations can often sell poor-quality products, not-for-profit organisations have to have excellent products because it is excellence that persuades donors to reinvest.

In both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations three groups of people can block the work: shareholders/donors, workers, purchasers/public.

A successful museum must:

- Be dominated by **Purpose**
- Have the necessary **Resources** to achieve that purpose
- Do so **effectively**
- Do so **efficiently**

### Country presentations

In the evening groups from each country gave very varied brief presentations about their countries.

## **Tuesday June 29**

### Stephen Weil: *Exercise in decision-making*

*Handout: An exercise in decision-making by consensus*

Participants divided into four groups which – by consensus – agreed on which they preferred among 12 possible models for admission-pricing suggested in the handout. Each group gave its reasons.

- The 'winter group' preferred model 3, aimed at stimulating membership.
- The 'spring group' liked 3, but preferred a simple version of 4, emphasising fairness through different prices for different social groups.
- The 'summer group' devised their own model, with a changing seasonal pattern of pricing reflecting changing exhibitions targeted at different markets.

- The 'fall group' proposed a mixed model, with a variety of prices.

Stephen Weil: *The Museum as a Purposive Entity: What Purposes can it Serve, and Who Decides?*

When a museum fails it is often because of a deficiency in

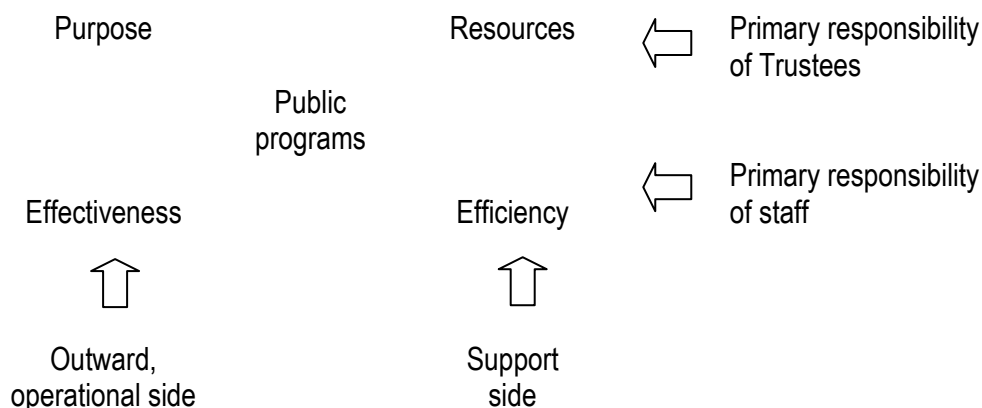
- Purpose
- Resources
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency

Resources include:

- Tangible resources: collections, staff, money, and facilities/equipment.
- Intangible resources: information, goodwill of community, demand.

Any mismatch between resources and purpose needs correcting. But too often museums are founded with a collection but no **purpose** corresponding to a public need.

Purpose X Resources = Program, which is what we do that connects with the public.

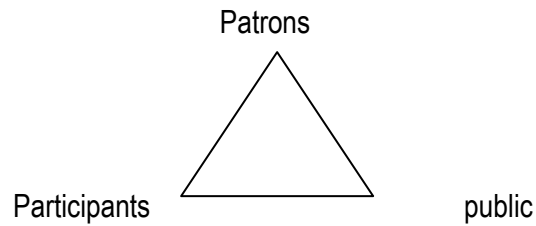


Sometimes there is tension between operational-side staff and support-side staff; the former is the important side.

Where does Purpose come from? Purpose is created by people.

Leadership is found at the point between the Board and senior staff – occasionally in an external donor or public authority. But leadership is always severely constrained by others. Three main groups have power of veto, and Leader needs the political skill to negotiate their relationships:

- Patrons: donors, people who control goodwill
- Participants: staff, volunteers, trustees
- Public: direct & indirect audiences



#### Purpose

- Must be a *public* purpose
- Must fulfil some public need
- Must be not trivial; must withstand public scrutiny over time
- Must be worthwhile (necessarily a subjective criterion)

See Supplementary Handout: 'Some Communal needs that a museum might satisfy'.

#### Crispin Paine: *Study-visit to Cesis Castle and Museum*

Anda Wilka led a tour of the castle and the museum, and explained the situation.

Cesis castle is the best-preserved castle in the Baltic states, but is now in very poor condition. A working group is preparing a project proposal for an EU Structural Fund grant, with the support of the Lords Consultancy. This will allow the conservation of the castle to the highest standard, the insertion of interpretive facilities, improvements throughout the site, and the restoration and redisplay of the museum building.

Interpretation of the castle will be based on the 1577 siege. Excavations have been in progress since 1974. Improvements this year include costumed interpreters. A new museum exhibit opened this year, as a test-bed for the complete renewal of the museum exhibits, which date from the 1980s.

Anda then gave a presentation on behalf of the Director of Vidzeme History and Tourism Centre. The Centre has developed from 2001 and already completed two PHARE projects. The museum has suffered serious management and staff difficulties over recent years, as well as severe underinvestment. The focus is now on public service rather than research, and the new Agency established by the Regional Council will unite museum, castle, exhibition hall, Tourist Information Centre, park, tourism servicing and marketing.

Crispin Paine led participants in a SWOT analysis of the castle and museum's situation. This picked up many of the themes already discussed during the BMS.

<u>Strengths</u> Nice place Important site Collections Staff Location Beautiful countryside Good relationship with local authority Tourism infrastructure good relationship with community international cooperation will for change! Exhibitions & events Support of new partners	<u>Weaknesses</u> Shortage of money Castle falling down Manor House (museum) in poor condition FAR too few staff for purpose Lack of local expertise Limit to growth: small site Conservation problems Storage Public safety Dreary exhibits
<u>Opportunities</u> Money now available EU Structural Funds Tourism (opening borders) Museum raise profile Interpretation More visitors! Better facilities for visitors Link between castle & town Motivation to raise funds Better salaries, better staff! Better public programming Distance/Lifelong learning	<u>Threats</u> Huge project, many partners Dispute over collections Danger of not getting EU funds Challenge of long-term revenue funding Loss of political support Vulnerability of museum within new Agency Threat to research

Dinner at 'Province' restaurant, followed by a visit to the Araisu Ezerpils, a reconstruction of a Viking settlement built over a lake.

### **Wednesday June 30**

Crispin Paine: *Where do we want to go, and how shall we get there? The 'Forward Plan' as a tool for managing change*

'If you don't know where you're going you're sure to end up somewhere else' (Mark Twain).

Short discussion of Cesis as an example of the difficulties of managing change from a research-oriented to a public-oriented museum, and the vital role of leadership and advocacy.

All organisations are born, become mature and decline, but museums cannot easily be allowed to die because of their responsibility to preserve collections for posterity. And museums always have to balance service to present audience with the ability to serve future generations. So coping with change is a vital skill of museum people at all levels.

Group exercise in identifying external changes in the Baltic museum environment, using PESTLE: political change, economic change, social change, technical change, environmental change. Also changes in fashion.

A useful tool in managing change is the Forward Plan (= Business Plan = Strategic Plan):

- Useful way of organising one's thinking
- Useful tool for planning museum's work
- Useful for persuading other people (eg funders) one knows what one is doing.

First stage is **Assessment and Appraisal**. We need to ask:

- What are we here for? Purpose
- What are our Resources? Collections, buildings, staff, money
- How successful are we?

Assess and define:

- Standards of operation: *handout on 'Range Statements'*. Participants ranked own museums' standards.
- Quality & usefulness of collections: *handout on importance of collections*.
- How good (suitable) are our buildings?
- How good is our staff? (appropriate skills?)

Second stage is **Discussion and Drafting**.

Difficult process to manage, but crucial to involve everyone, not just impose from above!

Forward Plan should include:

- Purpose
- Strategic Aims (outcomes)
- Objectives (outputs)
- Costs of each (cost centres)
- How well does the museum match these aims?
- Can fixed assets be adapted to deliver these aims?
- Where will the money come from?

Third stage is **Agreement and implementation**.

What might the Forward Plan look like? Participants discussed and criticised a bad and a good example, from Gilbert White's House and Jersey Heritage Trust.

Forward Plan should normally set out Performance Indicators, so that museum's success in achieving its Strategic Aims ('effectiveness') can be shown. Example of the Sponsored Bodies Funding Agreements used by the UK government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

(See

[http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive\\_2003/funding\\_agreements\\_mg03\\_06.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2003/funding_agreements_mg03_06.htm))

Fourth stage is **Evaluation and Updating**

Crispin Paine: Draw up pro-forma for analysis of a museum visitor's experience

Participants drew up a check-list:

- 'news': hearing about museum and deciding to go
- finding further information
- getting there: transport
- first impressions
- finding the door
- cost of admission?
- Opening hours?
- Reception staff
- First impressions inside
- Shop
- Cloakroom
- Orientation
- Toilets
- Access for disabled
- Rules
- Photography
- Guides: personal, A-V, booklets
- Languages
- Closing time
- Café
- Information on length of visit.
- Highlights
- Displays: lighting, labelling
- Displays aimed at who?
- Design quality
- Guards
- Who to consult?
- Pace/flow, orientation, rest areas
- Message: what are the exhibits saying?

Participants divided into small groups to visit and assess the museums of central Riga. All then reassembled at the offices of the State Authority to report on the examples of good and bad practice they had found.

**Thursday July 1**

Stephen Weil: Discussion of Required Reading

Discussed particularly opportunities for museums to create partnerships with other organisations: eg schools, tourism organisations, libraries, public service broadcasting etc.

Discussed challenge of evaluating outcomes. Measurement cannot be numerical.

Stephen Weil: *The Museum as an Effective and Accessible Organisation: What Constitutes Success and How is it Determined?*

*Handout: Outcome-based Evaluation*

Museums are human institutions, and can be good or bad; we need to study their impact on audiences. We need to evaluate outcomes, not outputs, and this is difficult: too often people try to find numerical measurements, but these seldom measure *outcomes*: they measure efficiency, not effectiveness.

A major problem is that there is no agreement on how people learn in a museum. Most recent research suggests that people's learning is incremental, and relates closely to their existing knowledge, to their mood, and to the narrative they bring with them. Moreover, the museum's

impact may take years to experience, may be very subtle, and may be hard to distinguish from the results of other life experiences; in art museums, in particular, the experience is visual and cannot easily be described.

Beverley Serrell designed a research technique based on physical behaviour, and showed that visitors to a museum are 'attentive' for very short periods.

Perhaps we should be measuring not the impact of museums alone on an individual, but the impact of a cluster of cultural institutions on a community?

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (*International Journal of Heritage Studies*, May 2004) suggests some measurable learning objectives. But we must stress that museum outcomes are not susceptible to numerical measurement, while we must continue to try to devise appropriate performance indicators.

Stephen Weil: *Culminating Experiment: Trying to Create a Baltic Museum on the American Model*

Participants chose a topic for a new museum: 'The Museum of Everyday Life under Soviet Rule'. They then, in discussion, followed the steps set out in the handout.

- Agreed that museum was best way of meeting public need: 'the real stuff'
- Discussed options for support and dangers of political influence
- Level of public interest expected to be high
- Collections would cover
  - Music: singing, radio, guitar
  - Birthday parties: family/community cohesion
  - Life-story documentation – opportunity to collectMuseum will celebrate creativity of individuals
- Programming
  - Life-story interviews
  - Film documentaries
  - Music
  - Fashion, including uniforms
  - Café life
  - Shops and black market
  - Shortages, eg books
  - Culture and literature
- Audience
  - Middle-aged local people: nostalgia
  - Children/teenagers
  - Indirect audiences
- Outcomes
  - Real understanding of the period
  - Recognition of the value of past lives
  - Better inter-generational understanding
  - Better understanding of *present* society
- The need will still be there in 50 years time
- Agreed to go ahead
- Possibility of cooperation with:



- Factories continuing from Soviet times
- Archives
- Other museums
- Libraries
- Theatre collections
- Any possible objectors?
  - Need to reassure existing museums
  - Need to reassure politicians museum will not be anti-Russian
- How define success?
  - Need to set aside budget for evaluation
    - Formative evaluation
    - Summative evaluation

Much more difficult to convert a large object/research-oriented museum to a modern purpose-oriented museum, than to start from scratch. But you can introduce new programs based on this model.

#### Crispin Paine: *Mission Statement and Strategic Aims*

Each participant proposed a new Mission Statement for his or her museum, on the model: Why? To whom? What?. Also a Strategic Aim defining the aim of its research activity.

The Latvian State Authority proposed:

To ensure sustainable and effective development of Latvian museums, the State Authority of Museums develops cultural policy on museums and implements authority on state, local authority and private museums.		
Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A positive attitude and trust to museums               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New funders</li> <li>○ Positive publications</li> <li>○ Number of visitors</li> <li>○ Museums – part of the national programme</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
Raise Standards of museum operation	Stimulate accessibility and preservation of the cultural heritage	Stimulate correspondence of museums to the contemporary needs of society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation</li> <li>• Analysis of museum sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computerised register of collections</li> <li>• Set standards of collection management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational training</li> <li>• Studies of museology</li> <li>• BMS</li> <li>• Library of museology</li> </ul>

#### Crispin Paine: *The Heart of a Museum Lies in its Collections; How Can they Best Service the Public?*

It is too easy for enthusiasm for high visitor numbers, new technology etc, to result in down-grading of collections. Collections exist to support the purpose of the museum. We need to ensure that they do so effectively.

The role of the collections and arrangements for their management must be written into all the museum's policies. Every museum should have:

- Collections Management Policy
- Regular condition survey
- Documentation to *at least* inventory level
- A way of telling the world what we've got.

A discussion developed about these various requirements, particularly about collecting policies, disposal policy, preventive conservation, insurance, documentation and the concept of the 'dispersed national collection'.

*Handout: ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*

## **Friday July 2**

### Visit to Turaida Museum Reserve

The Director, Anna Jurkane, led a tour of the museum, followed by a presentation on the museum's Forward Plan.

The museum began in 1988 when Sigulda Museum was moved, and a new type of museum was created with land, monuments and collections. The museum cares for 38 buildings on 41.5ha. All buildings are now weatherproof.

The maximum visitor capacity is estimated as 300,000; 1988 saw 418,000, last year 150,000.

The 'Vision for 2013' was based on analysis of the past 15 years' experience, plus archaeological research, and developed with the help of a consultancy. New displays are planned in 20 buildings, and numerous historic structures to be restored or reconstructed. New visitor facilities are planned.

300,000 visitors would enable the museum to be self-sufficient and independent of state support.

After lunch, the Director led a tour of the sculpture park, and there followed a general discussion, led by Crispin Paine. Issues raised included:

- Is the Vision realistic? Will improvement to the museum attract another 150,000 visitors? The Director believes it will, if both local and international tourism develop as planned.
- Is the museum too clearly just a museum? Might other related – but more fun – activities/attractions be added? Some are already planned, but the decision to create a *museum* is firm.
- Is Turaida in competition with other museums? Initially there is inevitably some competition for government support, but the Ethnographic Museum is very different, and together with Cesis the three museums make an attractive tour package. (Note

that Turaida's cost per visitor is L3.40, compared eg to the History of Riga & Navigation Museum's L49)

- Does the museum effectively consult its visitors and evaluate its success?
- What partnerships might the museum develop? The location, with its natural history and sporting opportunities, is crucial to tourism development.
- What educational programmes might be developed?

Dinner at Krimulda Manor, and trip by cable car over Gauja river valley to Sigulda

Social evening in hotel sauna

### **Saturday July 3**

Crispin Paine: *Continuing Professional Development*

Every participant carried out a Training Needs Analysis of his/her neighbour, to discover the skills he or she will need both in their present job and in their future career. The principal skills required were listed, and then refined to identify the broad categories of training the group needed. These may possibly form the themes for future Baltic Museology Schools.

- Learning in Museums
  - Theory of learning in museums; educational psychology
  - Communication skills
  - Design: both basic do-it-yourself and skills for working with a designer
  - Evaluation skills
  - Education
- Museum management
  - Teamwork
  - Fundraising
  - Project management
  - Evaluation
- Audience development
  - Marketing & PR
  - Familiarity with the tourism sector
- Collections management
  - Documentation
  - Preventive conservation
  - Collecting policies

Formal courses, though, are only one type of learning opportunity. Others include reading, on-the-job training, distance-learning, staff exchanges, visits and discussions.

Stephen Weil: *'The Red Hat Exercise'*

9 groups were formed at random, each comprising a Director of the Latgovinian Museum of Daily Life in the Soviet Era, together with a questioner and two assistants. They asked:

1. Why should the new museum reflect your way of understanding the Soviet era, rather than mine? Who made you so important?

2. Why does the museum cost so much for visitors? Are you trying to attract visitors or keep them away?
3. I thought museums showed rare and beautiful things; why are you showing such tatty and familiar stuff? Who decides what to collect?
4. My son came in after basketball practice and was told to stop bouncing his ball. Where is the rule that says he cannot bring in a ball?
5. My brother applied for a job at the museum, and he is well-qualified. Instead of him, the Director hired her sister who is not qualified. Why?
6. You are saying that life in the Soviet period was very happy, but you are not showing the bad side.
7. One of the guards offered me a drink in the café. Is this allowed?
8. I'm a village schoolteacher, and wanted to bring my class of 12-year-olds, but I found no educational programme. Why is this?
9. I found the museum very confusing. Can you explain?

In museum work we deal with a constant flow of problems and issues, and a big variety of people. We need always to bear in mind the *purpose* of the museum. Often when we say 'we can't afford it' we mean 'it's not a priority'; we need always to be clear about priorities.

#### Visit to Ethnographic Open-air Museum of Latvia

#### Dinner and closing of the session

#### **Some Personal Comments**

- The organisation of the course was admirable, and contributed hugely to its pleasant and focused atmosphere.
- Participants were committed and hard-working; there was no 'passive resistance', but a strong feeling of cooperation.
- Despite their very varied backgrounds and current jobs, participants already shared a commitment to the 'outward-facing' museum. Tutors felt they were preaching to the converted.
- The tutors felt their approaches had meshed well, and where they did offer different views or emphases, the resulting debate was constructive and helpful.
- Had I realised how closely Baltic museums' experience paralleled that of UK museums in recent years, I would have given more attention to the implications of 'agencification' (privatisation), for example the use of Service Level Agreements by government, how performance indicators are chosen and used, evaluation, and the importance of cost centres in forward planning. All these were covered, but could usefully have had more attention.
- All-in-all the mixture of topics seemed to work well, as did the balance between theory and example.
- I await the results of students' evaluation with anxious interest!