THE TRAINING OF ANTHROPOLOGY MUSEUM PERSONNEL

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Anthropology, the study of man from both a biological and a cultural perspective, is a fairly recent discipline and an area in which there is increasing interest. Anthropology departments expanded rapidly during the 1960's as did anthropology museums. A Statistical Survey of Museums in the United States and Canada in 1965, ranked anthropology museums seventh in growth in 1940 and 1950, but first in order of growth in 1960 (1965:15, table E). Little information is available concerning those individuals occupying positions in anthropology museums but there is some consensus that preparation for anthropology museum administrative or curatorial positions should involve prior training.

Traditionally, individuals were trained for a museum career through on-the-job experience and thereby obtained knowledge of museum procedures. At one time it was estimated that 75% of the employees in 90% of American museums had no previous museum experience or training (Reimann 1960:280). Other means of self-education were attendance at museum workshops; at state, regional, and national meetings; and the reading of various regional and national museum publications as well as visitation to other museums. Learning museum work by doing is still considered a feasible method of preparing for a museum career by some museum authorities (O'Dea 1970).
This type of training may be considered provincial in the sense that the experience gained may be applicable to only similar circumstances and limits the variety of programs and exhibit techniques attempted.

The 1973 report by the Museum Studies Curriculum Committee of the American Association of Museums stated in *Museum Studies: A Curriculum Guide for Universities* and Museums the committee opinion concerning this kind of "training."

This kind of training may have been sufficient when the profession was small and few persons were entering it. Even then, though, the hit-or-miss approach wasted time and did not guarantee that the museum personnel had any uniform training. As employer could be sure that librarians, for example, understood the basic requirements of librarianship, he was not as certain of museum professionals. They lacked a shared background of theoretical and technical knowledge, a sense of purpose, and a code of ethics. They often ignored their own professional museum concerns and gave their allegiance to their subject-matter disciplines; they attended art history, historical, or scientific meetings, not museum conferences. This approach weakened the museum profession. The preoccupation of many museum professionals with their subject-matter specialties instead of the total museum welfare has contributed recently to the accusation of counter-culture groups that the museum is an ivory tower (1973:6).

The Belmont Report stated that most American museums were insufficiently staffed and also that many staff members were inadequately trained (Fleming 1969:28). Richard Grove cynically indicated that campus museums have a duty in the
training of professional museum workers.

The evasive genius of the campus museum is probably best seen as it is brought to bear on the training of museum workers. If you are a part of an institution of higher education, you must apply the most advanced skill, the most exquisite rationalizing in order to get away with not educating students in the ways in which you are best fitted. Yet academic museums in droves have managed to evade any effort at all toward training professional museum workers (1969:31-32).

A recent publication of the American Association of Museums shows there are 63 museum studies programs available in this country offered by colleges and universities (Burcaw 1969). Many of them consist of only one or two courses in museum training at each institution. A number of the courses can be taken by undergraduates and graduate students and applied as elective hours in programs leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees. There are 10 colleges or universities which offer masters' degrees in some aspect of museum work. Although many college and university administrators establish prerequisites such as doctorate degrees for employment in higher education institutions, there are at present no doctorate programs in museology in the United States. Academic administrators are not cognizant of the fact that superior academic achievement and advanced degrees alone do not automatically provide potential for museum work or the requisite talent and stamina for a successful museum career in the college milieu.
Burcaw also saw the campus museum as having a responsibility in museum training:

As a museum operated in the public interest by educated people spending, for the most part, tax funds, it has been an obligation to the public and to the profession to raise the standards of that profession and to improve the quality of its product (1969:16).

Burcaw also mentioned that the campus museum as a part of a school, shares in that school's obligation to provide educational and vocational training to its students (1969:16).

Several other studies have been conducted to confirm that there is a shortage of trained museum personnel. Shortage of trained personnel, insufficient space, and inadequate funds were the major problems perceived by museum directors in two studies (Huffer 1971:147; Peikert 1956:218). The problem of the lack of trained personnel is a complicated one. The following conclusions noted by Peikert perhaps summarized the problem. A lack of policy was noted in most colleges and universities regarding qualifications of museum staff members for museum work. The lack of trained personnel was partly due to the lack of university classes available. Because the vast educational possibilities in these museums were remaining hidden to some administrators, a wealth of material held in these institutions was being only partially utilized (Peikert 1956:223).

Peikert recommended revising standards for museum personnel in colleges and universities, initiating an inter-college museum program and the publication of education
journal articles by museum personnel to allow educational leaders to become more aware of the instructional potentialities of museums.

There is lack of agreement in this area. Recently, a spokesman for the Office of Museum Programs, Smithsonian Institution, stated at the Meeting of University Museum Representatives at the 1974 Mountain-Plains Museum Conference that the field did not need additional museum training programs. He thought perhaps there was a need for better ones, but not more (Forrest 1974:3). The lack of trained museum personnel is not a concern only of those interested in higher education but the problem is so apparent that it has gained national attention. United States Congressman John Brademas feels that more Federal support should be provided for "training first class museum staff through museum internships, fellowships, and training courses" (1969:17).

Anthropology departments in the United States have an obligation to provide trained museum personnel to operate the numerous campus anthropology museums. The departments should be aware that an advanced degree in the discipline is not comparable to museum experience and training, and the degree is no assurance that any individual can be a competent museum curator or director. In order to justify the existence of anthropology museums and the necessary expenditures, anthropology museums need to be run in a professional manner and not simply be examples of "open storage." Because of the current financial pressures in colleges and universi-
ties, it is essential that anthropology departments provide trained museum personnel for the successful operation of campus anthropology museums.
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