

The Definition of the Museum Through Its Social Role



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OBJECTIVES

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This presentation explores how the definition of a museum is evolving, shifting from a traditional focus on collections to a broader social role

2

We will discuss insights from academic debates and global symposia on redefining museums

INTRODUCTION

Museums are evolving beyond traditional definitions.

What is a Museum?

Museums have historically been seen as places that collect, preserve and exhibit historical artifacts

The Evolution of Museums

The role of museums has been evolving over time due to societal changes



ICOM's Role in Redefining Museums

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) is currently working on redefining what a museum should be

Why is Redemption Important?

The role of museums has been evolving over time due to societal changes

THE CHANGING ROLE OF MUSEUMS

Traditional role: Collecting, conserving, researching

- **The traditional role of museums emphasized collecting, conserving and exhibiting artifacts**
- **In recent years, museums have taken on a more dynamic role in serving communities**
- **They are now seen as places that foster education, social inclusion, and community engagement**
- **Many museums now prioritize experiences over objects, encouraging public participation in exhibitions and programs**



KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ICOFOM SYMPOSIA

The International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM)



Global Discussions on Museums

The International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) conducted symposia in France, Argentina, Brazil and Scotland in 2017 to discuss the evolving role of museums

Different Perspectives on Museums

The symposia highlighted significant differences in how museums are perceived globally

Preservation vs. Social Engagement

In some regions, museums are still focused on preservation, while in others, they act as platforms for activism and education

The Need for a New Definition

The findings emphasize the need for a new museum definition that is inclusive and adaptable

THE DEBATE ON MUSEUM FUNCTIONS



- **There is an ongoing debate about whether museums should prioritize traditional roles or embrace new societal functions**
- **Traditional functions include collecting and researching historical artifacts**
- **Contemporary roles involve social engagement, cultural representation and public participation**
- **Digitalization is also a key factor, as museums are now expanding their presence online to reach wider audiences**
- **The challenge is to balance these aspects to ensure museums remain both informative and engaging**

THE SOCIAL ROLE OF MUSEUMS

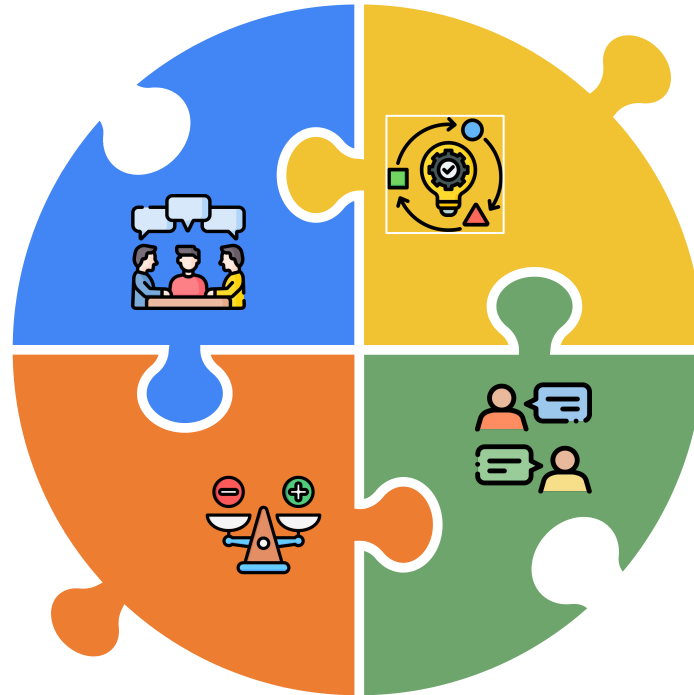
- Museums are increasingly seen as places that contribute to societal development, some museums address historical injustices by presenting untold stories and marginalized voices
- They promote cultural understanding and inclusivity by representing diverse histories and communities
- Museums can also support education by providing learning experiences beyond traditional classroom settings
- They act as spaces for dialogue, debate and reflection on social issues



IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The ongoing discussion around redefining museums will shape how they operate in the coming decades

A balanced museum definition should incorporate both traditional roles (preservation and research) and modern expectations (social impact and inclusivity)

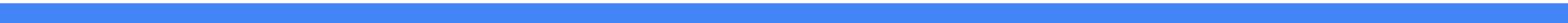


Museums must continue adapting to societal changes while maintaining their core mission of knowledge sharing

Continuous dialogue is necessary to ensure museums remain relevant and accessible to all.



CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

- Museums are no longer just places where historical objects are displayed
 - They are evolving into social platforms that engage with communities, promote cultural awareness, and facilitate learning
 - The shift towards a more inclusive and participatory model presents both opportunities and challenges
 - Discussion point: How do you think museums should balance their traditional roles with their evolving social responsibilities?
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Q/A